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SABRETACHE

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The aims of the Society are the encouragement and pursuit of study and research in military history, customs, traditions, dress, arms, equipment and kindred matters; the promotion of public interest and knowledge in these subjects, and the preservation of historical military objects with particular reference to the armed forces of Australia.

Constitution and Rules

The Constitution and Rules of the Society are printed in the January-March 1993 and April-June 1997 issues of *Sabretache* respectively. Section 12 of the Constitution was amended in the June 2010 issue of *Sabretache*.

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Editorial

To say that this year has been a tumultuous one would be an understatement. But through the bushfires, Covid and the US election, matters of a military nature continue to progress here. Beside the substantial expansion of military expenditure announced in June, the controversy over the Australian War Memorial's \$498 million upgrade continues unabated. Whether you think the money is well spent depends on your priorities. When former chief of the AWM, Brendan Nelson, announced the expansion in November 2018 he said that the museum had run out of space, particularly to display the collection from more recent conflicts. and there was needed due recognition of post-traumatic stress disorder within the veteran community. Many cultural institutions, such as museums and art galleries, have protested over the extravagance of the budget, to what is an already well-funded institution. Others, such as *Guardian* journalist, Paul Daley writing in July, argue that the money would be better spent on veterans rather than about them. The Institute of Architects protested over the planned demolition of Anzac Hall to accommodate the new design, and 'Honest History', a group of historians, has actively campaigned against it. Both views are right. Yes, the AWM is overflowing and requires more room to adequately display its collection, especially as some of it, such as aircraft, is large. And, yes, recent conflicts are as deserving of recognition as others. As the premier tourist attraction in Canberra the AWM needs to remain attractive for repeat visitors. However, the almost half a billion dollars is a lot of money for one institution, particularly following the savage cuts to the federal arts funding in 2016. The impact, architecturally, on the AWM will be substantial, as well and will forever alter Bean's and the original architect's image. The expansion has merit and will enhance the collection and visitor experience. To see whether the architect's vision complies with Bean's original we will have to wait.

Justin Chadwick

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Geoffrey Serle's mistaken portrayal of Charles Bean in his biography of John Monash

Instances of Serle's misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Bean's private war diaries and Bean's character

Anne Carroll¹

Introduction

In the preface to his 1982 authoritative biography, *John Monash*, Professor Geoffrey Serle advised of the inconsistent approach he had adopted in telling the First World War general's story compared to Charles Bean, Australia's official war correspondent and later official historian, and one of Serle's many sources.² Serle made the curious and disturbing admission that he 'had to write of Bean in a critical vein' without providing reasons. This is curious given his description of Bean as a 'man of the highest ideals and decency' and given his assertion that 'my admiration for him as a man and as a historian remains'.³

Serle's compulsion to write of Bean in a critical vein contrasts with his intended fair-minded approach to Monash. In the biography's preface Serle also stated: 'I have possibly been too generous to him [Monash], it is more likely that I have been too hard on him. One cannot be sure: one can only strive to be fair-minded'.⁴ However, in two addresses given at the time of the biography's publication, Serle spoke of the 'certain obligation' he had to be fair-minded to [Monash's story] as the biographer who had first use of the [Monash] Papers.⁵

The focus of this paper is not Serle's unexplained and inconsistent approach – his lack of fair-mindedness to Bean - and his possible harshness or generosity to Monash. Rather, its focus is on Serle's misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Bean's private war diaries and his mistaken portrayal of Bean.

1 Anne Carroll is Charles Bean's granddaughter. She knew Bean well and has taken an active interest in his life and work. In 2016 Anne assisted in curating the exhibition on Bean at UNSW Canberra.

2 Geoffrey Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne (1982).

3 Serle, *John Monash*, p. 393; p. xii.

4 Serle, *John Monash*, pp.xi-xii.

5 1982 Eldershaw Memorial Lecture, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Vol. 29, Dec 1982, p. 135; Geoffrey Serle, 'The writing of biography - General Sir John Monash 1865-1931', Address to the Victorian Historical Society, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-195421189/listen>

Bean's private First World War diaries given to the Australian War Memorial (AWM), were written at the battle front – a unique and personal record of his experiences and observations throughout that conflict. Numbering more than 220 items, the diaries were the basis of Bean's monumental multi-volume official history.⁶

This paper will argue that Serle demonstrated an overall misunderstanding of Bean's private war diaries as they related to Monash; misinterpreted and misrepresented elements of Bean's private war diaries; and misinterpreted and misrepresented aspects of Charles Bean, the man. To address and support that contention this paper will provide an outline of Bean's character and the forces that shaped it; an outline of Bean's war diaries, his embargo on access to them, their affixed cautionary label, and the significance of the embargo and the label to Bean and Serle; evidence that Serle's overall opinion of Bean and his war diaries, as related to Monash, was mistaken; and instances of Serle's misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Bean's diary entries relating to Monash and Bean and their relationship.

Bean's character and the forces that shaped it

Charles Bean was my grandfather. My knowledge and memory of him, his values, his demeanour, and his works have prompted me to comment on Serle's portrayal of him which is at odds with my experience. Bean's values were fostered by his parents and by his education, both of which were strongly influenced by 'The Arnold Tradition', the model of moral values and education championed by Dr Arnold of Rugby School. The Arnold Tradition was 'the core of Bean's belief system; a sense of duty and commitment to truth were deeply imbued in his psyche'.⁷

Bean's mother, Lucy Bean, advised her six-year-old son, in a personal diary she gave him, which he maintained during his lifetime, and which is now in the family's possession, to:

Be too brave to tell a lie.
Be honest in school.
Be honest in business,
& remember 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world & lose his own soul.'
I do not want to see you a rich man, or man holding a leading position,
so much as to see you a good, charitable man... you cannot be happy
unless you are good. Be kind & unselfish...⁸

⁶ Bean to Director of the AWM, correspondence dated 30 May 1942. AWM315 419/008/001 01

⁷ Peter Rees, 'Bean's Straight Line', in Peter Stanley (ed.), *Charles Bean: Man, Myth, Legacy*, UNSW Press, Sydney (2017), p.120.

⁸ An extract dated 8 August 1886 from 'Charlie's Book' which is held in the family's collection.

Such family advice and his formal education provided the moral foundation of Bean's life and the values he upheld during his lifetime and respected in others. The Arnold Tradition was summarised by Justice Geoff Lindsay of the Supreme Court of New South Wales in his paper 'Be Substantially Great in Thy Self: Getting to know C.E.W. Bean; Barrister, Judge's Associate, Moral Philosopher' as:

a form of Christian humanism of a democratic (albeit patrician) kind, emphasising individual self-worth and qualities associated with 'good character': trust and reliability, honesty, openness, self-discipline, self-reliance, independent thought and action, friendship, and concern for the common good over selfish or sectional interests.⁹

With these qualities, it is not surprising that Bean's biographer, Peter Rees, having read the war diaries and much of his papers described Bean as a 'social missionary'.¹⁰ This description recognised the lesser known aspects and works of Bean who, in 1918, wrote *In Your Hands, Australians* which articulated the values and actions required in peacetime of everyday Australians to ensure a compassionate, educated and healthy nation. Bean returned to this theme in 1943, writing a second 'secular sermon' to his fellow Australians in anticipation of post-war reconstruction.¹¹

9 Geoff Lindsay, 'Be Substantially Great in Thy Self: Getting to know C.E.W. Bean; Barrister, Judge's Associate, Moral Philosopher', <http://www.forbessociety.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/bean.pdf>, p. 28; Other works on Bean and his character by Justice Geoff Lindsay 'A Literary Event: The Launch of Bearing Witness (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2015) by Peter Rees.' http://www.supremecourt.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/Publications/Speeches/2015%20Speeches/lindsay_20150412.pdf; 'The Forgotten C.E.W. Bean', 2016, http://www.supremecourt.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/Publications/Speeches/2016%20Speeches/Lindsay_20161110.pdf; "'Having a voice: C.E.W. Bean as a 'social missionary' ", 2017, http://www.supremecourt.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/Publications/Speeches/2017%20Speeches/Lindsay_20170420.pdf

10 Peter Rees, *Bearing Witness: The remarkable life of Charles Bean, Australia's greatest war correspondent*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney (2015), p. 468.

11 C.E.W. Bean, *In Your Hands, Australians*, Cassell and Company, Melbourne (1918); C.E.W. Bean, *War Aims of a Plain Australian*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, (1943). In 1930, Bean founded the Parks and Playgrounds Movement in NSW, Peggy James, *Cosmopolitan Conservationists: Greening Modern Sydney*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne (2013), p. 77; The Parks and Playground Movement file (MLMSS 8129), Mitchell Library, Sydney; Geoff Lindsay, 'Having a voice', p.13.

Bean's war diaries, his embargo on access to the diaries, their affixed cautionary label, and the significance of the embargo and the label to Bean and Serle

Serle's 1982 biography preceded two publications, both edited by historians, that focussed exclusively on extracts from Bean's private war diaries. These two works have facilitated access to the diaries and assisted in understanding Bean and the context in which he wrote over 100 years ago - against the backdrop of the views and attitudes of those times.

The first was Kevin Fewster's 1983 publication *Gallipoli Correspondent: The frontline diary of Charles Bean* which contains a selection of extracts from and annotations of Bean's Gallipoli diaries. Fewster who had been researching Australia's part in the Great War for nine years noted that Bean accounted for the vast wealth of information he had recorded at the war in terms of it being collected 'by a trained investigator, mainly at the time of events, and in most cases from the actors themselves'.¹² The second publication was Peter Burness's 2018 book *The Western Front Diaries of Charles Bean*. Burness was a senior curator and historian at the Australian War Memorial for 43 years until 2017. With a special interest in the First World War, for 20 years he led annual battlefield tours to the Western Front. In his editorial note to the publication, Burness described the context of the diaries, the variety of people to whom Bean had access and the wide-ranging events he witnessed:

Charles Bean's Western Front diaries contain the words of a close and active observer of the Australian experience of the war between 1916 and 1918. Throughout these years, Bean moved among ordinary soldiers, the military leaders and senior politicians. The diaries he kept reflect the feelings and views of an individual who witnessed an array of events ranging from intense and bloody battles to planning and discussions in headquarters, and even to men at rest and in training.¹³

This was a unique situation for a war correspondent/war diarist, both then and now, as historian Garth Pratten and Bean biographer, Ross Coulthart, have recognised.¹⁴

The access available to Bean, together with his sense of responsibility to his official commission and his fellow man, led to his endangering himself both on the Western Front and at Gallipoli where he was struck in the right thigh by a stray bullet. He declined the recommended medical evacuation choosing to stay

¹² Kevin Fewster, *Gallipoli Correspondent The frontline diary of C. E. W. Bean*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney (1983), p. 204.

¹³ Peter Burness (ed.), *The Western Front Diaries of Charles Bean*, NewSouth, Sydney (2018), p. 10.

¹⁴ Garth Pratten, 'Doing history in the digital age', in Peter Stanley (ed.), *Charles Bean: Man, Myth, Legacy*, pp. 203-213; Ross Coulthart, *Charles Bean: If people really knew: one man's struggle to report the Great War and tell the truth*, Harper Collins Sydney (2014), p. x.

in his dugout close to the frontline. The bullet remained in his thigh for the rest of his life. Also at Gallipoli, Bean helped a wounded man under fire for which he was recommended for the Military Cross. However, as a civilian, he was ineligible. As Fewster observed: ‘The great integrity which shone through Bean’s approach to war correspondence arose out of his total dedication both to the work and the men he was reporting on’.¹⁵

When giving the diaries to the AWM in 1942, Bean had placed an embargo on the public’s access to them, with a few named exceptions, until after his death (in 1968).¹⁶ The embargo was subsequently extended to 30 years after his death. Permission for the diaries’ earlier release was, however, given in mid 1978 by Bean’s close friend and sole surviving literary executor, Angus McLachlan.¹⁷

The significance of the embargo was twofold. According to McLachlan, Bean imposed the embargo upon the release of the diaries, ‘lest words, written in haste and often in the heat of battle might be less than the truth and thereby give hurt to men still living’.¹⁸ It is noted here that Monash had died in October 1931 before the imposition of the embargo.

For Serle the timing of the lifting of the embargo enabled him to access Bean’s papers and diaries. But Serle observed: ‘As the collection [consisting of wartime dairies, notebooks and a mass of correspondence] was only recently released and was not comprehensively indexed at the time I consulted it, I am likely to have missed relevant material’.¹⁹ This is unsurprising given that Serle had already consulted a great volume of source material and that the diaries were also not then digitised or in print form, as they are now. Indeed, from two talks Serle delivered at the time his Monash biography was published, one senses the challenge to Serle’s understanding caused by this situation.²⁰

Bean had made it conditional that a cautionary label be attached to the cover of each of his diaries ‘so that the reader could not fail to be drawn to it

15 Fewster, *Gallipoli Correspondent*, p. 16.

16 Bean to Director of the AWM, correspondence, dated 30 May 1942, AWM315, 419/008/001 01.

17 Angus McLachlan to Director of AWM, letter, 13 June 1978. AWM315, 419/008/001 03. McLachlan was a director of The Federal Capital Press of Australia Pty Ltd, executive of *The Sydney Morning Herald* and John Fairfax Ltd, for 32 years, retiring as managing director in December 1969.

18 ‘Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean MA BCL (Oxon). Litt.D. (Melb.) Hon LL.D. (A.N.U.) 1879-1968’, address by Angus Mc Lachlan, Memorial Service, St Andrew’s Cathedral, Sydney, 2 September, 1968. Bean Family Papers.

19 Serle, *John Monash*, p. 585.

20 1982 Eldershaw Memorial Lecture, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Vol. 29, Dec 1982, p. 138; ‘The writing of biography - General Sir John Monash 1865-1931’ [sound recording]: address to the Victorian Historical Society, by Geoffrey Serle at playlist 2 session 2 03 25, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-195421189/listen>

before he consulted the notes'.²¹ Apart from the caution, the label also reveals aspects of Bean's character, namely his understatement about the duress he was under in obtaining the first-hand, front-line information recorded in the diaries; his concern for and pursuit of the truth; and his concern for others. Written by Bean, predominantly in the third person, it cautioned:

These writings represent only what the moment of making them I believed to be true. The diaries were jotted down almost daily with the object of recording what was then in the writer's mind. Often he wrote them when very tired and half asleep; also, not infrequently, what he believed to be true was not so – but it does not follow that he always discovered this... These records should, therefore, be used with great caution, as relating only what their author, at the time of writing, believed. Further, he cannot, of course, vouch for the accuracy of statements made to him by others and here recorded. But he did try to ensure such accuracy by consulting, as far as possible, those who had seen or otherwise taken part in the events.²²

Serle's overall opinion of Bean and his war diaries, as related to Monash, was mistaken

Serle's mistaken overall opinion of Bean and his war diaries as they related to Monash is evidenced in two talks which Serle gave to historical societies in 1982 following the publication of his biography: Serle's Eldershaw Memorial Lecture to the Tasmanian Historical Research Association and his address to the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.²³ In both talks Serle stated that Bean's 'war diaries **teem** with highly prejudiced and derogatory comments on Monash ...'. Serle's distinct emphasis on the word 'teem' is notable in the sound recording. He further alleged in the talks that Bean possessed an 'extraordinary antipathy towards Monash'. A similar opinion appears in the biography where he wrote: 'In his diaries, throughout the war, and especially in 1918, Bean displayed extraordinary prejudice against Monash ...'.²⁴ On the other hand he also stated in the talks that 'Bean was hardly known to have spoken or written harshly of any man' which accords with the experiences of those who personally knew Bean. Nevertheless, Serle's assertions imply that of the multitude of people and events that Bean wrote about in his diaries over four and a

21 Bean to Director of the AWM, letter, 30 May 1942. AWM315, 419/008/001 01

22 The complete diaries are available online: www.awm.gov.au/collection/AWM38. The warning label, entitled 'Diaries and Notes of C. E. W. Bean Concerning The War of 1914 -1918' is dated 16 September 1946.

23 1982 Eldershaw Memorial Lecture.

24 Serle, *John Monash*, p. 393.

quarter years, he repeatedly singled out and targeted Monash with a great number of highly prejudiced and derogatory comments.

These opinions of Bean by Serle are not supportable. While an audit of references to Monash in Bean's more than 220 diaries is not practicable at this stage, a reasonable guide to the frequency and nature of references to Monash has been derived by reviewing the indices of Fewster's *Gallipoli Correspondent* and Burness's *The Western Front Diaries of Charles Bean*. These two works by Fewster and Burness contain a total of 680 extracts from Bean's diaries, but their indices disclose only a total of 67 diary references by Bean to Monash, of which just 11 contain elements of varying criticism of Monash. These statistics strongly suggest Serle's assertions that the 'diaries **teem** with highly prejudiced and derogatory comments on Monash', that Bean possessed an 'extraordinary antipathy to Monash' and that 'Bean displayed extraordinary prejudice against Monash...' are gross exaggerations that distort and misrepresent the reality.²⁵

Additionally, amid the mass of wide-ranging, exceedingly detailed material recorded during the war in his private diaries, Bean included deprecating comments about himself and comments, praiseworthy and critical, about others. His evaluations were not confined to Monash. Furthermore, the diaries represent the evolution of Bean's thoughts over time – a sense of forming, then testing and revising opinions. Bean thought deeply about issues and felt obliged to write about them truthfully and later modify them, if appropriate, in the face of new evidence. An instance of Bean modifying an opinion is in one of the diary entries critical of Monash which has the essential emendation 'I do not now believe this to be true'.²⁶ Bean did record in his comments about Monash: 'At the back of one's mind all the time is the conviction: The Corps and the men in it are safe with White; he will put great ideals into it and the spirit of real devotion. Monash is a man of very ordinary ideals - lower than ordinary I should say'.²⁷ Bean also recorded that he rather dreaded 'Monash's attitude of wanting battle honours. There is no question as to his being a big man but it is an utterly wrong motive for the commander of the Corps though very common in all armies'.²⁸ Bean also wrote that 'Monash is certainly a very able man. I can never get over the fact that he is not out for the A.I. F. but for his own credit'.²⁹ Each of these diary extracts reflects the values system which was the core of Bean's character.

25 Serle's assertion 'throughout the war' is inconsistent with another of his comments that from mid-1915 on Gallipoli, Monash and Bean 'rarely met again until 1918', p. 393. Bean's diaries were predominately written daily about events and thoughts pertaining to that particular day.

26 Burness, *The Western Front Diaries of Charles Bean*, footnote, p. 502.

27 Bean diary, entry 18 June 1918, AWM38, 3DRL 606/115/1, p.56.

28 Bean diary, entry 7 July 1918, AWM38, 3DRL 606/116/1, p 23.

29 Bean diary, entry 5 August 1918, AWM38, 3DRL 606/116/1, p. 47.

Bean also acknowledged Monash's abilities that Serle has overlooked. In the diary entry of 27 March 1918, Bean wrote he found the headquarters of the 3rd Australian division at Franvillers on the Somme where 'General Monash gave me a full statement of exactly what he was doing – as lucid as usual'.³⁰ Prior to the Battle of Hamel Bean wrote:

There is no question that the old man [Monash] gave us, as always, a very able discourse indeed. Very few men could have done it....He had drawn up a huge agenda list covering systematically everything that he could think of....the thing has been planned with a thoroughness like that which went before Messines – every particle of the plan, down almost to the action of the companies, being known to the commander of the corps.³¹

To Bean, for whom repatriation meant the future of Australia, the following provides further strong endorsement by Bean of Monash's abilities.³² In October 1918 he urged the Prime Minister, William Hughes, 'that it was all important to get some plan of repatriation ...drawn up by the A.I.F. at the earliest possible moment – put Monash in charge – Birdwood is not the man for it at all. It was urgent, I said, if they did not want a catastrophe'.³³

Instances of Serle's misinterpretation and misrepresentation of elements of Bean's war diaries relating to Monash and Bean and their relationship

Serle misrepresented aspects of the diaries by the exclusion of relevant material. Serle cited Bean's diary entry of 17 May 1918 but edited it to exclude references to a key person in, and key aspects of, a discussion which took place among four Australian front line observers: Will Dyson, political cartoonist and Australia's first official war artist; Fred Cutlack, journalist, AIF intelligence officer, and Bean's then assistant official war correspondent; Hubert Wilkins, explorer, war correspondent and official AIF photographer; and Bean. The four had been discussing the proposed changes to the leadership of the Australian Corps that involved Monash and Brudenell White, the one surviving founding father of the AIF.³⁴ In backing

30 Bean diary, entry 27 March 1918, AWM38, 3DRL 606/103/1, p. 17.

31 Bean diary, entry 3 July 1918, AWM38, 3DRL 116/1, p. 18. The use of 'old' has been used by Bean to describe others including his, Bean's, younger brother, Major Dr John Willoughby Bean.

32 Bean to White, 28 June 1918, AWM38, 3DRL 6673/60. Serle quotes from this letter on other matters, page 321. The letter is actually dated 28 June 1918, not 26 June 1918.

33 Bean diary, entry 13 October 1918, AWM38, 3DRL 606/117/1, p. 54.

34 Major-General Sir William Bridges, the other AIF co-founder, died on 18 May 1915 of a gunshot wound received at Gallipoli.

Brudenell White they were supporting a man of whom it was generally recognised that, while he was General Birdwood's loyal Chief Staff Officer, he was responsible for running the Corps while Birdwood exercised command through regular and direct contact with the men.³⁵

Serle's editing of the diary entry did not acknowledge Cutlack's presence in the four man discussion nor did it reveal his [Cutlack's] views, at the time, as recorded in the diary, that Brudenell White was the best man for the command of the Corps. Bean wrote: 'Cutlack could not understand White's attitude – he must know he is the best man for the command of the Corps – why does he not push for it.....?', Bean further wrote that it was Cutlack who asked 'why not Monash for G.O.C. A.I.F. and White G.O.C. Australian Corps?' an idea that had also occurred to Bean. Additionally, Serle omitted reference to Dyson's relevant and significant statement about White's reluctance to self-advertise and about self-advertising in general: 'anyway that's not your job – your job is to do the work and not worry about yourself'.³⁶

In describing the discussion and its outcome, Serle wrote 'Bean and Dyson, at least, agreed that if White would not act for himself it was up to his friends to work for him'. Serle thus failed to acknowledge that there were four participants in the discussion, and that Bean recorded all four of them, not just two of them, holding that view, at the time.³⁷ The group's determination and the reasons for it could be considered key to the subsequent action agreed to be taken by two of them, Dyson and Bean, on behalf of the four, to lobby for Brudenell White to become G.O.C. Australian Corps. Serle's biography does not accurately convey this. Even though Serle had decided to confine his biography to one volume, and whilst he had no special responsibility to Bean – the focus being Monash and to present his own interpretation of Monash's life and career – Serle nevertheless had a duty not to misinterpret or misrepresent entries in Bean's diaries.

Charles Bean was a man of outspoken principle. If he believed a man was a better man for the job than another he would have said so, considering it essential and a responsibility to do so. Burness summarised it thus: 'The diaries show that Bean did recognise Monash's ability and was not concerned that he should be promoted, but he considered that Major General Brudenell White was better fitted to command the fighting corps'.³⁸ According to journalist and author, Les Carlyon, Keith Murdoch, Australian journalist, 'engaged in all manner of intrigue to have Monash's appointment changed...unlike Bean, he [Murdoch] was simply playing at king making'. Carlyon further observed that 'Bean, decent man that he was, later

35 Jeffrey Grey, 'White, Sir Cyril Brudenell (1876-1940)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 12, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne (1990).

36 Bean diary, entry 17 May 1918, AWM38, 3DRL606/111/1, p. 18.

37 Serle, *John Monash*, p. 319.

38 Peter Burness, 'Notes from the Western Front', *Wartime*, Issue 84 (2018), p. 63.

wrote in his diary and elsewhere that he had been wrong about Monash. Murdoch never explained his part'.³⁹ Burness noted that 'Monash had little to worry about from Bean (although Murdoch could be another matter)'.⁴⁰ Bean wrote to Murdoch: 'Monash is a very capable man, ... And as he is there now and further change would do no good, as things are, I intend to work loyally by him'.⁴¹ Bean later wrote in *Two Men I Knew: William Bridges and Brudenell White Founders of the A.I.F.*:

[W]hatever I may have believed it to be at the time, my motive was to see retained in the leading position of the A.I. F. the most noble and, as we believed, most brilliant of our leaders. At that time neither Monash nor White was intimately known to the troops, or indeed to any of the staff except those who came into close contact with them. Those of us who took action did so, as I afterwards realized, without adequate appreciation of Monash who, though his reputation as a front-line soldier had been poor, was nevertheless a much greater man than most of us then thought.⁴²

Serle also misrepresented Bean and his diary entry for 1 June 1918. Colonel Thomas Dodds, Birdwood's deputy adjutant general, and Bean had a chance encounter when Dodds passed Bean while he was writing, seated on a stone seat near the chateau of Bertangles, Headquarters of the Australian Corps. Serle wrote in the biography that 'Colonel Dodds rebuked Bean to his face as an "irresponsible pressman"'.⁴³ Bean's diary did not record either the rebuke or the name calling being directed at him as described by Serle. Bean recorded Dodds asking him a question and naming Murdoch, as one of two, an 'irresponsible pressman' while specifically excluding Bean from this comment: 'Dodds... asked [me, Bean] why Murdoch and another irresponsible pressman ("I don't mean you") interfered and wired to Australia that the force universally desired Monash to be G.O.C. A.I.F. and White G.O.C. Corps. ("Which is not true" - Dodds said: "it's a lie.>"). Only one General out of 5, whom he [Dodds] had consulted, wanted this'.⁴⁴

Serle further misrepresented Bean and his diaries in writing of Bean and Murdoch both arguing vigorously with senior AIF officers. Bean's diary does indeed acknowledge Murdoch's vigorous powers of argument, but recorded how he [Bean]

39 'Charles Bean and the Gallipoli journalists', address by Les Carlyon, 27 August 2001, Old Parliament House, Canberra.

40 Burness, 'Notes from the Western Front', p. 63.

41 Bean diary, letter dated 2 June 1918, affixed AWM38, 3DRL 606/113/1, p. 53. Keith Murdoch, journalist, who, at the time acted as an intermediary between the prime ministers of Britain and Australia.

42 Bean, *Two Men I Knew: William Bridges and Brudenell White Founders of the A.I.F.*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, (1957), pp 170-171 and footnote.

43 Serle, *John Monash*, p. 319.

44 Bean diary, entry 1 June 1918, AWM38, 3DRL 606/113/1, pp. 49-50.



Image 1: Cover of May 1931 *Reveille* featuring Charles Bean. Source: Author.

‘at times... almost hated to be there’ during the encounter on 15 June 1918 with Dodds.⁴⁵ Serle’s inclusion of Bean in this aggressive verbal encounter is inconsistent with those who remember Bean’s measured voice and manner.⁴⁶ Whilst he was a straight talker Bean engaged in even-tempered discourse, ‘I never heard him raise his voice’.⁴⁷

Serle wrote that about September 1918 Monash and Bean ‘were at loggerheads’. A review of Serle’s references, points to a theme based on differences involving personal qualities of self-publicity, attitude to accuracy and Bean’s prioritising eyewitness accounts.⁴⁸ The 2 September 1918 diary entry records that Monash ‘is very dissatisfied with the publicity that he is getting, and he has always been a man who would have liked to have his own publicity in his own hands’.⁴⁹ In another of Serle’s references to ‘loggerheads’, Bean recorded his telling Monash of Bean’s mistaken opinion and then referred to ‘John’ and he working together professionally. Writing on 17 September 1918, Bean ‘saw John Monash this morning and told him I thought I was mistaken in thinking he was out of sympathy with the Australian policy of having these visitors here. John explained to me then, and tonight more fully, the details of the attack which we are to make tomorrow’.⁵⁰

Serle described the relationship between Bean and Monash as being ‘inharmonious’.⁵¹ Writing from the perspective of his experience, Burness summarised the relationship in *The Western Front Diaries of Charles Bean* thus: ‘Despite not being friends, Bean and Monash nevertheless enjoyed a professional relationship’.⁵² Serle has overlooked examples in the diaries of Monash and Bean working together:

The G.O.C. [Monash] sent a message last night [Sunday 4 August 1918] asking me [Bean] to see him this morning. He wanted to give me the tip that there was this operation [Battle of Amiens] coming off. He said he would tell me more on Wednesday [7 August 1918] afternoon – if that suited me... Monash told me, by the bye, that the Germans certainly did not expect an attack in this quarter.⁵³ ...At 5 o’clock or a little after [7 August] old Monash

45 Serle, *John Monash*, p.322; Bean diary, entry 15 June 1918, AWM38, 3DRL 606/114/1, p.100. The date of the encounter is not 13 June 1918 as given in Serle’s ‘Notes’, p. 560.

46 ‘Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean’, address by Mr Angus McLachlan, Memorial Service, St Andrew’s Cathedral, Sydney, Monday, September 2, 1968.

47 Edward Bean Le Couteur, Bean’s grandson, recorded conversation, December 2019.

48 Serle, *John Monash*, p. 393; ‘Notes’: ‘at loggerheads in 1918 e.g. Bean, D, 21 Aug., 2, 6, 11, 13, 16, 17 Sept. 1918’, p. 568.

49 Bean diary, entry 2 September 1918, AWM38, 3DRL 606/116/1, p.115.

50 Bean diary, entry 17 September 1918, AWM38, 3DRL 606/116/1, p. 124.

51 Serle, *John Monash*, p. xii.

52 Burness, *The Western Front Diaries of Charles Bean*, p. 42.

53 Bean diary, entry 5 August 1918, AWM38, 3DRL 606/116/1, p. 46A.

gave myself and Wilkins an explanation of what was going to happen. It was as interesting as his explanations always are.⁵⁴

On 19 September 1918 Bean recorded:

Tonight I went to see John Monash in order to have a talk over the future plans amongst other things. He had before him a map of the Hindenburg line with certain circles and semicircles marked on it protruding from our line. He told me that if I would keep the matter absolutely confidential, he would show me a paper which he had been drawing up for Army today, and the map which accompanied it, but that if anybody came into the room, I was to close the map. What the plan was I cannot put down at the moment, but it was certainly John Monash's plan, the whole thing apparently being worked out and suggested by him and Blamey.⁵⁵

The professional relationship continued after 1918, as demonstrated by their correspondence in May 1930 over the controversial *Smith's Weekly* articles relating to the AIF. Concerned by the articles, Bean wrote to Monash urging him to be 'cautious in your interviews with the press, and ... give them something that we can all feel is really worthy of your great calibre of mind and of the very great position which you occupied'. As Rees observed, Monash responded by acknowledging that he was "very much indebted" to Bean for his "helpful and understanding letter", that he [Bean] had been right to take strong exception to aspects of the articles and that "I greatly appreciate your entire goodwill towards myself".⁵⁶ The professional relationship is also demonstrated by the intervention in 1931 of Monash, then Vice-Chancellor of Melbourne University, to cause Bean to overcome his reluctance to submit to that university volumes of the *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918* written by him as a thesis for the Degree of Doctorate of Literature.⁵⁷

Concluding comments

Whilst Charles Bean eschewed personal honours for himself – on more than one occasion he quietly asked to be excused from accepting a knighthood – he received and accepted recognition of his works.⁵⁸ In 1931 the University of Melbourne

54 Bean diary, entry 7 August 1918, AWM38, 3DRL 606/116/1, p. 50.

55 Bean diary, entry 19 September 1918, AWM38, 3DRL606/116/1, p. 135.

56 Peter Rees, *Bearing Witness*, p. 451.

57 A.W. Bazley, 'Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean', *Australia Army Journal*, No 235, December 1968, p. 54.

58 Bazley, 'Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean', p. 54. For Bean's letter (undated) courteously declining a knighthood see Brenda Niall & John Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford Book of Australian Letters*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne (1998), p. 209.

awarded him the Degree of Doctorate of Literature for the *Official History* and in 1959 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Literature by the Australian National University, an institution which he had been one of the first to foresee.⁵⁹ In 1930, the Royal United Services Institution in London awarded Bean the Chesney Gold Medal – an award to the author of any ‘especially eminent work calculated to advance military sciences and knowledge’.⁶⁰ Bean ‘was the guiding vision’ in the establishment of the Australian War Memorial and for 17 years ‘chaired the committee which established the foundations for managing the official records of the Commonwealth of Australia’.⁶¹ This ultimately led to the establishment of the National Archives of Australia. Bean’s lifetime of works both in prose and person, both military and non-military, showed him to be a visionary and a man for others. McLachlan said of Bean:

... [H]e was a whole and integrated man... In him there were none of the contradictions, the conflicting values that dwell in so many men. There were no hidden vanities lurking behind the modest exterior. ...His wholeness lay in being at all times himself... He was completely dedicated to the truth ... He was a man of peace and he was a gentle man... It was a gentleness born of deep understanding and great strength of character. It was certainly not a gentleness that would ever tolerate injustice, cruelty or thwarted opportunities for those who deserved them.⁶²

In October 1931 Bean wrote in ‘Monash - The Soldier’

If only people saw their interests in peace as clearly as in war we should have men like John Monash continuously at our head; and with such men in charge of all Governments and all great undertakings, how much happier would all countries be?...It is quite certain that the A. I. F. contained no brain better than that of John Monash....He had the immense power of application in the working out of detail without any tendency to become fogged in it.⁶³

Geoffrey Serle’s *John Monash* is an important biography of a major figure in Australia’s Great War history. Even though Serle was a significant and respected

59 K. S. Inglis, ‘Bean, Charles Edwin (1879-1968)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 7, Melbourne University Press (1979).

60 Robert O’Neill, Preface, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918* https://www.awm.gov.au/official-histories/first_world_war/preface; <https://rusi.org/inside-rusi/prizes/chesney-gold-medal>

61 A. Conde, ‘Bean and the making of the National Archives of Australia,’ in Stanley, Charles Bean, p. 63.

62 ‘Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean’, Address by Angus McLachlan, Memorial Service, 2 September 1968.

63 C.E.W. Bean, ‘Monash - The Soldier’, *Reveille*, 31 October, 1931, p. 2.

historian and biographer, his work should not be exempt from review and, where justified, from criticism.

The forgoing evidences that, in writing his respected biography of Monash, Serle's use of Bean's private war diaries as a source for his portrayal of Bean and his relationship with Monash was, in a number of aspects, neither complete nor accurate. The biography should, in these respects, be read and considered accordingly.

Acknowledgments

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Image 2: Informal portrait of Charles Bean working on official history. Source: AWM A05389.

Correcting the Record: Captain E.F.'Tab' Pflaum, Australian Flying Corps (AFC)

Peter Harvey

In my article in September 2017 *Sabretache* 'To War On A Horse and in a Camel' about Tab Pflaum, I concluded that during his active service in France with No 4 Squadron, AFC from January to 28 March 1918 he scored one victory – in February. That was despite his being credited with another success on 21 March 1918.

My first article focused on the events of that March day when a flight of No 4 Squadron Camels, led by Lieutenant A.H. 'Harry' Cobby, encountered a gaggle of enemy aircraft in foggy weather. In a short, sharp action, Cobby ended up credited with two successes and Lieutenants A.E. Robertson and Pflaum one each. Cobby claimed that the enemy aircraft were part of Richtofen's Circus. Research as mentioned in my article showed that they were not part of the Circus and that no enemy aircraft were lost in the action.

However, further research, particularly by Brenton Brooks, a member of the SA Branch of the Society now based in Canberra, has brought new information to light. Despite the earlier research which showed that no enemy aircraft were lost in the action on 21 March, the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) communique for that day credited Cobby (two) and Robertson and Pflaum with aircraft being driven down out of control.

But there is more to the story. A recent check of the No 4 Squadron Record Book which forms part of the Squadron's War Diary has shown that Pflaum scored a victory on 24 March. The Germans had just started their last big 'push' of the war and No 4 Squadron, with many others, were very busy making bombing and low flying attacks on enemy transport and troops aimed at blunting the German offensive. Early in the afternoon of 24 March, Pflaum took part in an offensive patrol (OP) in which he attacked motor transport. An entry in the record for Pflaum reads as follows: 'Fired 180 rounds at M.T. on road running N.E. from Peronne at about 2000 feet'. Then at 6.05pm he and other pilots took off on what the record book shows as 'Escrt. and Recon' (escort and reconnaissance). They all returned from between 45 minutes and an hour after takeoff. However, the entry in the record book for Pflaum's sortie states 'Decisive Combat see Report', but there is no copy of the report in the War Diary.

Pflaum's flying log records his sortie on 24 March as an OP commencing at 12.40pm and lasting 1 hour 40 minutes and the second of 45 minutes commencing at 6.05 pm on 'Escort and Rce' as shown in the record book. There is no mention in the log of a 'Decisive Combat'. In the log the later flight is shown as being on 26 March which is clearly a mistake by Pflaum because there is no record in the record

book of his flying on the 26th. Although there is no copy of the combat report in the War Diary, Brenton Brooks's research found an entry in an RFC communique which reads as follows:

HOSTILE AIRCRAFT

24th after 4 p.m.

E.A. activity was slight.

While on Special Reconnaissance east of DON, Lt E.F. Pflaum, No. 4 Squadron, A.F.C. attacked an enemy scout. He dived three times on E.A. firing a burst each time. The third time he fired about 250 rounds at a range of 30 yards. E.A. rolled over and fell completely out of control.

(Confirmed by other pilots).

Two days after his success, Pflaum was on his way to Home Establishment (England) to become an instructor, as mentioned in my earlier article. With the establishment in late 1917 of four AFC training squadrons, Nos 5-8, there was need for instructors with active service experience. He continued instructing until the war ended when he was posted back to No 4 Squadron, confirmed as captain and served in Germany as part of the British Occupation Army before the squadron returned to Australia, arriving home in June 1919.

During his active service in France, Pflaum scored two victories and was credited with one enemy aircraft driven down out of control, although there is some doubt about the latter. Having fought as a Light Horseman in the desert in the Middle East and an AFC pilot in the air over France, he returned to Australia to live a full and successful life before his death in 1977, aged 84. My two articles are my tribute to him.

Acknowledgement

This article would not have been written without the research carried out by Brenton Brooks and passed to me.

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OPERATION DELUGE 11 May 1945

Jim Underwood

INTENTION. 6 Aust Div will land a force at SAND BEACH in DOVE BAY and prevent enemy movement to the EAST

Extract from 6th Australian Division Operation Order 6, dated 8 May 1945.

On 11 May 1945 Farida Force,¹ a composite force drawn from the 6th Australian Division, carried out a shore-to-shore amphibious assault in the Wewak area on the north coast of New Guinea. The object of the operation – Operation DELUGE – was to land a force to block the coastal road leading east from Wewak to prevent the Japanese garrison escaping eastwards towards the Sepik River as the 6th Division's 19th Australian Infantry Brigade mounted a strong attack on the Wewak Point defences from the west.

The composite force comprised the 2/6th Cavalry (Commando) Regiment minus one squadron supported by detachments of artillery, engineers, machine guns, mortars and logistic elements. Naval support was drawn from the Royal Navy and the Royal Australian Navy. Landing craft were provided by the United States Army's 2nd Engineer Special Brigade and the Royal Australian Engineers. Air support was supplied by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) 71st Wing² flying from the Tadjji airfield near Aitape and by United States Army Air Force (USAAF) aircraft based at the Combat Replacement and Training Centre (CRTC) at Nadzab in the Markham River valley near Lae.

The aim of this article is to describe the mounting and conduct of the operation.

1 Why the force was codenamed Farida Force has been lost to the mists of history. Was it to honour Queen Farida, the first wife of King Farouk of Egypt? Probably not. Was it to recall some nefarious incident or location that the old salts on 6th Division Headquarters remembered from their time in the Middle East? Possibly so.

2 71 Wing RAAF comprised three Beaufort light bomber squadrons (7, 8 and 100 Squadrons) and a flight from 5 (Army Cooperation) Squadron with Boomerang and Wirraway aircraft.

Early Plans and Problems

Operation Deluge had a long gestation period. During his visit to Aitape between 19-21 March 1945 the Australian Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Thomas Blamey, directed the 6th Division commander, Major General J. E. S. Stevens, to prepare plans immediately for the capture of Wewak. Stevens proposed two plans. The first provided for an overland advance along the coastal plain; an extension of the existing operations. The second plan envisaged an amphibious assault at Dove Bay, 15 kilometres east of Wewak, in conjunction with the coastal advance. During these discussions, Blamey indicated that his present view was the capture of Wewak should be achieved by an advance along the coast as there was little hope of securing sufficient landing craft for a major amphibious assault.³

At the same time, Headquarters First Australian Army at Lae advised that the American landing craft then being used to unload ships at Aitape; and also providing limited coastal maintenance to the 6th Division; would move to Morotai at an early date.⁴ The move would occur soon after 1 April when Australian landing craft, newly arrived in New Guinea, reached Aitape. The 6th Division was advised that the initial allocation of Australian landing craft to Aitape would be ten ALC-40 and one ALC-120 crewed by Army personnel of No 43 Australian Water Transport Operating Company (Landing Craft) AIF.⁵ This Company would augment the 12 Australian and US Landing Craft Tank (LCT) then unloading ships at Aitape and provide vessels for the coastal maintenance of 6th Division.

Headquarters 6th Division argued that the proposed allocation of landing craft to the Aitape base was inadequate given the base supported the 6th Australian Division, the 3rd Base Sub-Area, 71 Wing RAAF and some 4,000 native refugees.⁶ Landing Craft Mechanised (LCM) and amphibious trucks (DUKWs) currently at Aitape were proving unsuitable for unloading cargo ships due to the prevailing weather conditions causing a heavy swell and high surf in the exposed waters

3 Headquarters 6th Australian Division War Diary, entries 19-20 March 1945, AWM52, 1/5/12/61.

4 Headquarters 6th Australian Division War Diary, entry 21 March 1945, AWM52, 1/5/12/61.

5 ALC – Australian Landing Craft. The number after the ALC indicated the load carried in tons. Several of the smaller ALC-20 were also deployed to this unit prior to Operation DELUGE. The ALCs were manufactured at the Ford Motor Company at their Eagle Farm (Brisbane) and Corio Bay (Geelong) works. Numbers produced from 1942-1945 were: ALC-20 – 137; ALC-40 - 106; and ALC-120 – 5. The unit is usually referred to as 43 Landing Craft Company in official orders and reports. Many of its members were volunteers from the disbanded 2/8th Armoured Regiment of the 1st Australian Armoured Division AIF.

6 The ration strength provisioned by the 3rd Base Sub-Area located at Aitape on 31 March 1945 totalled 28,681 personnel, viz: 6th Australian Division – 17,111; 3rd Base Sub-Area – 4,817; 71 Wing RAAF – 1,951; US personnel – 463 and New Guinea natives – 4,339; 3 Base Sub-Area War Diary, entry May-June 1945, AWM52, 1/8/13/1.

of Berlin (Aitape) Harbour. Vessels sometimes waited weeks to unload. Only the larger Landing Craft Tank (LCT) could be used and even these vessels faced difficult water conditions and were plagued with maintenance problems. Moreover, planners at General Headquarters, South West Pacific Area (SWPA) were persistent in redeploying US landing craft still operating in New Guinea waters to support American operations in the Philippines. In the event, one company from the US 593rd Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, which had been deployed to Aitape in early February 1945 to help unload the backlog of cargo ships there, remained in support of the 6th Division.⁷

On 2 April Headquarters 6th Division recorded that six of the expected ten ALC-40 had arrived in Aitape. The remaining four were diverted to another task by Headquarters First Australian Army at Lae.⁸ On his arrival at Aitape, the commander of the ALC-40 detachment, Major G. D. Mitchell,⁹ advised that all six vessels must proceed together in convoy when engaged in coastal maintenance because there was only one pilot in the unit. 6th Division noted that this was an appalling waste of time in loading and unloading and could only be overcome by the provision of additional pilots. Headquarters First Australian Army was requested to provide two additional pilots immediately.¹⁰ On 5 April these six craft left on their first resupply run to a forward maintenance area established at the former Japanese airfield at But, some 100 kilometres east of Aitape and 60 kilometres west of Wewak.

Meanwhile, on 4 April, a message was sent to First Australian Army from 6th Division asking that HMAS *SWAN* be made available for the maximum possible period from 20 April to support the Division's activities.¹¹ On 6 April Major General Stevens wrote to the Commander First Australian Army, Lieutenant General V. A. H. Sturdee, 'asking for definite information as to the naval and air support which he [Stevens] had indicated was essential if the Division was to be committed in an operation against WEWAK. He indicated that if this support was not supplied the Division would be committed to a difficult task under the worst possible conditions and that the casualties would be far heavier than they should be'.¹²

7 Six of the LCTs were Australian-crewed; Gavin Long, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945: The Final Campaigns*, Griffin Press, Adelaide (1963), p. 281.

8 Headquarters 6th Division War Diary, entry 2 April 1945, AWM52, 1/5/12/62.

9 Major Mitchell was an infantry captain in World War I in which he won a Military Cross (MC) and a Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM). He was a member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly.

10 Headquarters 6th Division War Diary, entry 3 April 1945, AWM52, 1/5/12/62.

11 HMAS *SWAN* was a Grimsby Class sloop built at the Cockatoo Docks and Engineering Co Ltd, Sydney. She was laid down on 1 May 1935 and commissioned on 21 January 1937. Her main armament was three 4-inch guns.

12 Headquarters 6th Division War Diary, entry 6 April 1946, AWM52, 1/5/12/62.

HMAS *SWAN* arrived at Aitape on 7 April to support the 6th Division's advance along the coast. However, a planned bombardment by *SWAN* of the Cape Karawop and Cape Boiken areas about 20 kilometres east of But on 8 April was postponed due to heavy rain obscuring the targets. Targets were successfully engaged the next day after which *SWAN* sailed to Milne Bay to ammunition resupply.

On 8 April First Australian Army advised 6th Division that the headquarters had requested the Naval Officer-in-Charge (NOIC) New Guinea, Captain J. C. D. Esdaile RAN, to make *SWAN* available to support 6th Division's operations against Wewak.¹³ On 11 April, in response to Major General Stevens's letter of 6 April, Lieutenant General Sturdee advised that *SWAN*, two corvettes and four armed motor launches were to be made available to support the Division's coastal advance.¹⁴



Image 1: Australian Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Thomas Blamey (right), with Lieutenant General Frank Berryman (left) and Major General Jack Stevens, Wewak airstrip June 1945. Source: AWM E 093115.

13 Headquarters 6th Division War Diary, entry 8 April 1945, AWM52, 1/5/12/62.

14 Headquarters 6th Division War Diary, entry 13 April 1945, AWM52, 1/5/12/62.

SWAN arrived back at Aitape on 19 April and her commander, Lieutenant W. J. Dovers RAN, assumed command of the newly-raised Wewak Naval Force. The force comprised of the *SWAN*, initially three Australian corvettes: *COLAC*, *DUBBO* and *DELORAINÉ* – the latter soon to depart – and four, later five, Fairmile launches of the 1st New Guinea Motor Launch Flotilla.¹⁵ During the remainder of April, Wewak Naval Force engaged Japanese targets by day and night in the Wewak area and on Muschu and Kairiru Islands off the Wewak coast.

In early April the proposal for an amphibious landing at Dove Bay resurfaced. A 6th Division signal to First Australian Army on 14 April requested a RAN officer visit division headquarters to discuss naval support for the intended Dove Bay landing. Subsequently, Captain Esdaile RAN visited Aitape on 16 April where he was briefed by Major General Stevens on the proposed operation. On the same day Advanced Headquarters 6th Division opened at But and the four missing ALC-40 landing craft arrived at Aitape.¹⁶

On 23 April a conference of brigade commanders and senior staff officers was held at divisional headquarters to discuss the outline plan for the capture of Wewak. The Dove Bay landing was to be coordinated with the main attack from the west against the concentration of Japanese troops entrenched at Wewak Point. This attack was to be mounted by the 19th Brigade once it had relieved the 16th Brigade, which had been spear-heading the coastal drive in recent weeks. As noted earlier, the Dove Bay landing was intended to prevent any Japanese troops escaping to the east of Wewak via the Old German Road which skirted the coast in this area.

Orders were issued on 25 April for the concentration of the 2/6th Cavalry (Commando) Regiment, less one squadron, at But by 27 April. This Regiment was to be the main component of the amphibious assault. The orphaned squadron, 2/7th Commando Squadron, was attached to the 19th Brigade for the coming operation. It was to operate on the inland flank of the 19th Brigade's advance on Wewak. At the same time, Matilda tanks of C Squadron 2/4th Armoured Regiment and additional artillery were ordered forward from Aitape. These elements were to be landed as far east of But as the tactical situation permitted. Following concentration of the 2/6th Regiment, including its attachments described below, training in boat drills and associated briefings would begin.

15 *DELORAINÉ* departed Wewak Force on 28 April 1945 for Madang and eventually Australia for refit. ML804, ML808, ML811, ML816, ML820 and ML427 served in the 1st ML Flotilla. Initially, ML811 was not present as it had been detached for tasking by the Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB) and ML808 and ML820 had not yet joined the Flotilla. The Wewak Force was often referred to as 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' because of the radio callsigns allocated to the vessels:

HMAS <i>SWAN</i> - Snow White	HMAS <i>COLAC</i> - Grumpy	HMAS <i>DUBBO</i> - Dopey
ML804 - Bashful	ML808 - Prince	ML811 - Doc
ML816 - Happy	ML820 - Charming	ML427 - Sneezy

16 Headquarters 6th Division War Diary, entries 14-16 April 1945, AWM 52, 1/5/12/62.

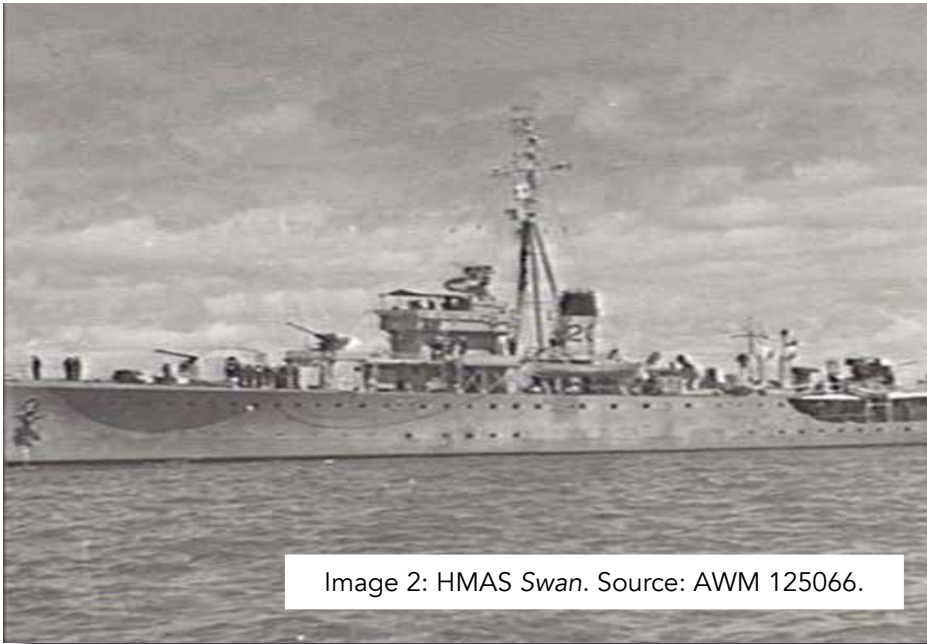


Image 2: HMAS Swan. Source: AWM 125066.

Also on 25 April, the Air Officer Commanding New Guinea, Air Commodore A. L. Walters and Group Captain V. E. Hancock, Commander 71 Wing RAAF, visited divisional headquarters and discussed the air support required for the forthcoming Wewak operation. This meeting was followed by a visit from representatives from the US CRTIC, Nadzab on 26 April to discuss air operations for support of the operation.

On 26 April Captain Esdaile RAN returned to divisional headquarters. He reported that he had received a signal from Vice Admiral Kinkaid, Commander US 7th Fleet, asking for the requirements for naval support for the forthcoming operation. After discussions with General Stevens, a request for a battleship, if available, or two heavy cruisers, and some destroyers to arrive in the Wewak area on 7 May and be available for a fortnight was submitted. On 29 April Captain Esdaile signalled both HMAS *SWAN* and Headquarters 6th Division: 'Information received that HMAS *HOBART* and two destroyers will be made available for Wewak operations'.¹⁷ Vice Admiral Kinkaid's staff originally stated that one US Navy destroyer and one RAN destroyer would accompany *HOBART*, but this was subsequently changed to two Australian destroyers: HMAS *ARUNTA* and HMAS *WARRAMUNGA*. At the same time, Kinkaid sought RAN Commodore H. B. Farncomb's view as to flying his broad pennant in *HOBART* during this operation. At this time Commodore

17 G. Hermon Gill, *Australian in the War of 1939-1945: Royal Australian Navy 1942-1945*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra (1968), p. 629.

Farncomb was in Sydney in his flagship HMAS *SHROPSHIRE* which was then not fully operational. Farncomb welcomed Kinkaid's suggestion and arranged to fly to Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea to join *HOBART* about 7 May.¹⁸

At this juncture, the Royal Navy got into the act. On 1 May Admiral Lord Fraser, Commander-in-Chief British Pacific Fleet, also in Sydney, sought approval from Admiral Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief US Pacific Fleet, for the cruiser HMS *NEWFOUNDLAND* to join Commodore Farncomb's task force. This was approved and *NEWFOUNDLAND* sailed post-haste from Sydney for Seeadler Harbour at Manus Island where she would be refuelled prior to joining *HOBART* at sea north of Wewak.¹⁹

During this flurry of signals, *SWAN* and her seven dwarfs continued to bombard and strafe Japanese targets in the Wewak area and on the off-shore islands.

Meanwhile, on 30 April a conference attended by Blamey, Sturdee, Stevens and Berryman was held at Headquarters First Australian Army at Lae to discuss future operations around Wewak. Both Sturdee and Stevens stated that the 6th Division had the resources to capture Wewak. Blamey then approved plans drawn up by Stevens on 27 April to conduct an amphibious landing in Dove Bay in conjunction with coastal advance against Wewak.²⁰

The Importance of Wewak

The capture of Wewak per se was not the main objective of the 6th Division's operations forward of Aitape. The main aim of operations was the destruction of the Japanese Eighteenth Army. Senior Australian commanders, at several levels, had decided, for reasons which need not concern us here, that the 6th Division would pursue a more active role than the US XI Corps which it had relieved at Aitape in November 1944.²¹ Intelligence reports and prisoner interrogation indicated that the Japanese, despite their desperate straits, would fight to the death. Operations were planned to force the Japanese forces away from their meagre supply dumps remaining on the coastal plain; and, on the inland axis of attack away from their gardens in the Maprik area south of the coastal Prince Alexander Range behind Wewak. These garden areas which produced the staple sweet potato (kau kau), yams, paw paws, bananas, maize, tomatoes, pumpkins, peanuts, taro inter alia were

18 Gill, *Royal Australian Navy 1942-1945*, p. 630.

19 Gill, *Royal Australian Navy 1942-1945*, p. 630.

20 Long, *The Final Campaigns*, p. 342.

21 After the failure of the Eighteenth Army's attack across the Driniumor River in July-August 1944 to eject the US forces from their Aitape enclave, US and Japanese forces embarked on a 'live and let live' phase. The Battle of the Driniumor River destroyed the Eighteenth Army's capacity to engage in large-scale offensive operations.

sustaining large numbers of Japanese troops.²² These manoeuvres would press the Japanese remnants further south into the resource poor region on the kunai plains bordering the mighty Sepik River. General Adachi, Commander Eighteenth Army, had decided that this would be the location of the final battle but in the meantime his forces would fight tenaciously to defend the areas they held.

The capture of Wewak did, however, play an important part in the overall Australian plan. The Australians needed a port closer than Aitape to the area of the final battle. It was important to seize and develop Wewak before the onset of the northwest monsoon in November. To the rear, Aitape had no port infrastructure and supplies had to be brought ashore through rough surf by landing craft. The few remaining American-crewed landing craft at Aitape were likely to be withdrawn at short notice. Moreover, there was a long line of communication to sustain Australian forces in the forward area on the coastal axis. Intermediate anchorages between Aitape and Wewak at Dogreto Bay and But were inadequate to sustain the reinforced brigade spear-heading the coastal advance.

Pre-war Wewak – an important Government administrative centre, copra port and cluster of Chinese-owned trade stores – was situated on a high headland between Cape Wom, five kilometres to the west and Cape Moem, nine kilometres to the east. Its harbour is sheltered from the northwest monsoon to a degree by Muschu and Kairiru Islands. Wewak is located 160 kilometres east of Aitape and 100 kilometres west of the mouth of the Sepik.

Landing Force

The main component of the Landing Force was the 2/6th Cavalry (Commando) Regiment minus one squadron. The regiment comprised its headquarters and the 2/9th and 2/10th Commando Squadrons. The regiment's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel E. C. Hennessy, was nominated as the Landing Force Commander. The Landing Force included the following attachments:²³

- One section 2/1st Tank Attack Regiment (two 75 mm pack howitzers);²⁴

22 An experimental agricultural farm was established near Maprik in 1937 to trial new crops for the district. The local natives keenly embraced these new crops and subsequently there was a wide variety of plant foods for the Japanese to exploit. Food plants on the coastal plain were more limited; only coconuts and sago from the sac sac palm – which took time to process – were readily available.

23 Details taken from 6th Division Headquarters War Diary, Operation Order 6, dated 8 May 1945, AWM52, 1/5/12/63.

24 In addition to being trained on its main weapon, the 2-pounder anti-tank gun, the regiment was cross-trained on the American 75 mm pack howitzer.

- Two Forward Observation Officer (FOO) parties from the 2/3rd Field Regiment;
- One section from the 2/14th Field Company (Royal Australian Engineers);²⁵
- B Company 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion, minus 7 Platoon, organized as light infantry and 15 Platoon D Company with four Vickers medium machine guns;
- Two 3-inch mortar detachments from 2/1st Infantry Battalion;
- Medical detachment and surgical team from 2/1st Field Ambulance;
- ANGAU Detachment (to interrogate and control apprehended natives).²⁶

The total number of personnel in the Landing Force was 623.



Image 3: Commodore HB Fairncomb on the bridge of HMAS *Shropshire*, July 1945. Source: AWM 112188.

25 Including one D6 bulldozer.

26 Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit.

Landing Craft

Details of the landing craft required for Operation DELUGE were settled with the Officer Commanding No 43 Landing Craft Company, Major G. D. Mitchell, as follows:

- Seven ALC-40 to carry the assaulting infantry;
- One empty ALC-40 to be held in reserve;
- One ALC-40 to carry fuel in 44-gallon drums and jerry cans to refuel all the ALC vessels for the return trip to Aitape;
- Two ALC-20 to act as 3-inch mortar 'bomb vessels';
- Three US-crewed Landing Craft Tank (LCT) to carry vehicles (details below); and
- One empty American LCT to help recover landing craft from the beach.²⁷

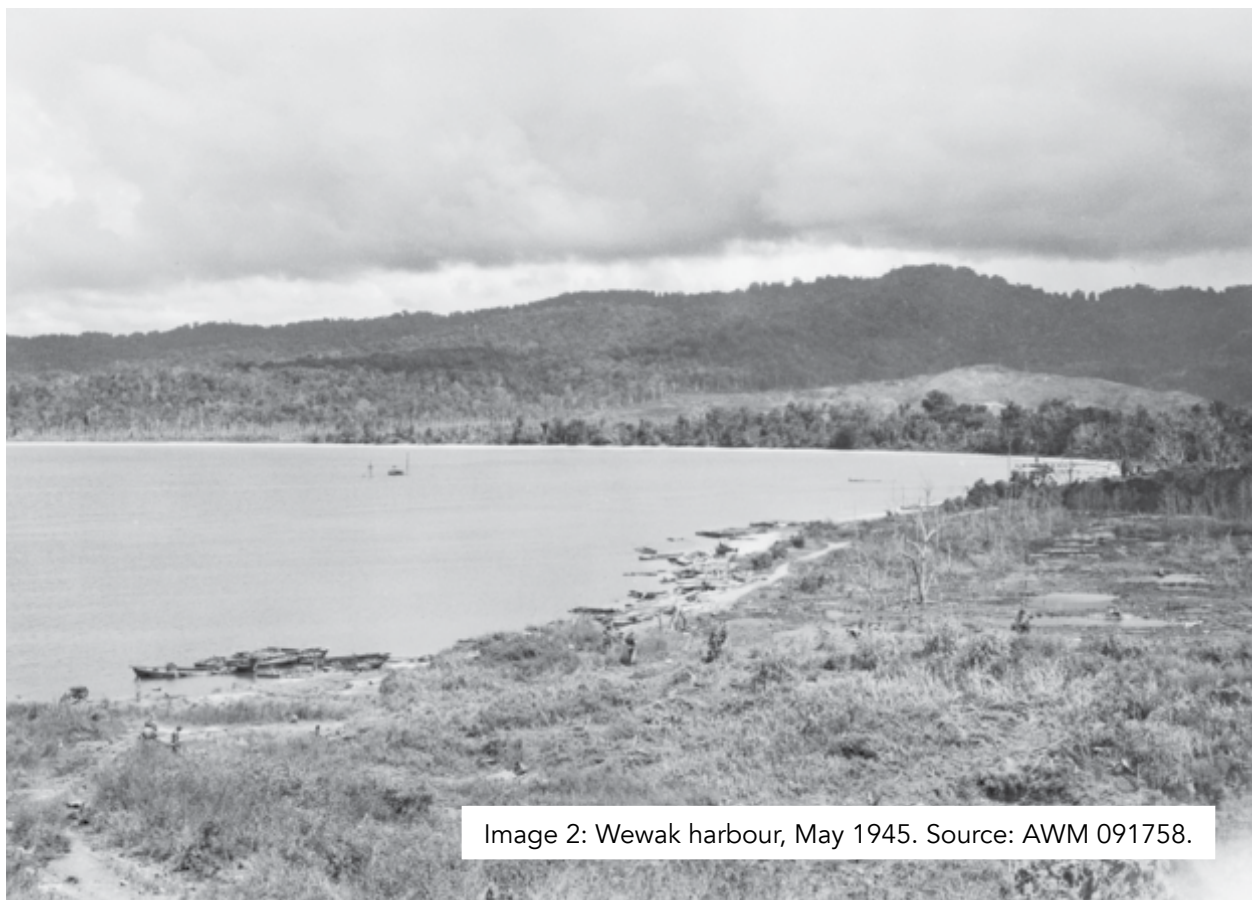


Image 2: Wewak harbour, May 1945. Source: AWM 091758.

²⁷ All detail in the sections headed Landing Craft, Vehicle Loads and Beach Organization is extracted from the 6th Division Operation Order 6, dated 8 May 1945, AWM52, 1/5/12/63.

Each ALC-20 mounted two 3-inch mortars that were to fire close support on the final run-in to the assault beach. These mortars and crews were provided by the mortar platoons of the 2/2nd and 2/3rd Infantry Battalions of the 16th Brigade then in reserve in the Aitape area.

Vehicle Loads

Seven 6 x 6 trucks fitted with winches and one D6 bulldozer were carried in the three LCTs mentioned above. The trucks were loaded as follows:

- Truck No 1 - Medical stores and 2/6th Cavalry (Commando) Regiment unit stores;
- Truck No 2 - Reserve small arms ammunition and engineer stores and equipment;
- Truck No 3 - Fuel for the bulldozer, signal equipment, two 3-inch mortars and four Vickers medium machine guns, each with 2,000 rounds in belts;
- Truck No 4 - 75 mm pack howitzer, 270 x 75 mm rounds;
- Truck No 5 - 75 mm pack howitzer, 270 x 75 mm rounds;
- Truck No 6 - 400 x 3-inch bombs;
- Truck No 7 - 650 field operational rations, 1,300 modified SWPA rations.

Each truck also carried 20 x 2-gallon tins of water to be dumped in the vehicle unloading area.

The bulldozer was in the first LCT to land. It was used during the landing to un-beach stranded landing craft and to cut tracks from the beach to vehicle unloading areas. Crew members of support weapons were carried in the same LCT as their main weapon. For example, machine gunners from 15 Platoon 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion were carried in the LCT which loaded Truck No 3. In addition, each vehicle was allocated an unloading party of six men provided by the 2/3rd Field Regiment. Unloading parties withdrew with their vehicle once the vehicle had been unloaded and re-embarked on its designated LCT. No vehicle was to remain on the beach unless it was damaged during the landing and not recoverable.

During the operation all trucks were successfully recovered and no damage was sustained. The bulldozer remained ashore to carry out engineer tasks, including improving tracks from the beach to the unloading area, 'digging in' the headquarters command post and regimental aid post; filling in Japanese trenches and burying the numerous bodies in the area.

Beach Organization

The Beach Organization was austere. The Beach Master was Major V. P. Chapman, Headquarters 6th Division. His Assistant Beach Master was Lieutenant B. Boyle of the 2/3rd Field Regiment. The Beach Staff consisted of two signallers from 6th Division Signals and three orderlies from the 2/3rd Field Regiment. In addition, there was a Mesh Party of ten men also from the 2/3rd Field Regiment. These personnel were in the first LCT to land and were responsible for laying 15 sheets of arc mesh to facilitate trucks crossing the loose sand on the beach. All personnel of the Beach Organization re-embarked on the last LCT to land.

Landing Rehearsals

As part of their preparation, the assault infantry practised boat drills and swimming fully clothed as soon as they had concentrated at But at the beginning of May. The first full scale landing rehearsal with all landing craft in their correct position in the designated assault wave was held on the afternoon of 6 May on a strip of beach about 2,000 metres east of the But River. The first exercise was successful and only minor changes were necessary to the initial orders. On the morning of 7 May a conference was held chaired by the Commander HMAS *SWAN*, Lieutenant Dovers. Attendees were commanders of the *COLAC* and *DUBBO* and 1st New Guinea Motor Launch Flotilla, coxswains of all the participating landing craft and key Army officers including the Landing Force Commander, Officer Commanding 43rd Landing Craft Company, Commander US LCTs, RAAF and USAAF liaison officers and staff officers from Headquarters 6th Division. Mistakes and difficulties were identified and solutions agreed. The conference concluded with Lieutenant Dovers explaining the procedures to be followed on the passage from the But embarkation beach to the assault area and in the assault area itself.²⁸

The final dress rehearsal commenced at 0400 hours 8 May to replicate as near as possible the timings for the actual assault and for the landing craft to practise keeping station in the dark for a few hours. Local times followed Australian wartime daylight saving times and first light was not until 0700 hours. H Hour for the dress rehearsal and for the actual assault was set for 0830 hours. This time was selected for H Hour as it would permit US aircraft from the CRTIC, Nadzab to fly to the Wewak area in daylight. H Hour was the time the first assault wave would hit the beach. The final dress rehearsal was a complete success and boded well for the operation.²⁹

28 HMAS *SWAN* – Report of Proceedings for May 1945, AWM78, 328/1.

29 HMAS *SWAN* – Report of Proceedings for May 1945, AWM78, 328/1.



Image 3: ALC-40. Source: AWM 018154.



Image 4: Landing Craft Tank (LCT) on beach. Source: AWM 052956.

Embarkation

The operation was a shore-to-shore amphibious assault. The assault troops and vehicles were loaded onto their designated ALC or LCT at the beach near their concentration area at But in the late afternoon of 10 May. Separate embarkation beaches were marked off for ALC craft embarking infantry and for the LCTs embarking vehicles. Immediately off-shore, personnel assaulting the beach in ALC-40 craft transferred to the corvettes *DUBBO* and *COLAC* for the overnight voyage to an Assembly Point for the assault ten kilometres north of Cape Terbebu, a prominent feature five kilometres east of Forok Point, the eastern arm of Dove Bay.³⁰

COLAC reported in her Proceedings for May 1945 that at ‘... 1820K, 10th May, 185 troops of 6th Division Cavalry Commando being embarked. Major

30 Specified Assembly Point - 3°32.4’S, 143°51’E.

General Stevens, G.O.C., 6th Division and Staff joined at 1945K. Weighed at 2030K and formed up in convoy in single line ahead ... convoy underway at 2115K'.³¹

Passage to The Assault Assembly Point³²

Where distances are given in 'yards' in contemporary orders and reports they are also used in this article rather than 'metres'.

Once the assaulting infantry were safely transferred to the corvettes, HMAS *SWAN* led her disparate armada well out to sea to avoid discovery by Japanese coast-watchers on Kairiru Island. Their immediate destination was the designated Assembly Point 10,000 yards north of Cape Terbebu. This voyage involved a night passage of some 120 kilometres. *COLAC* and *DUBBO* followed *SWAN*. Behind the corvettes the landing craft sailed in line. The convoy speed was a sedate six knots to cater for the smaller ALC-20 craft with a distance of 100 yards between landing craft had being ordered. To assist position keeping, each landing craft displayed a shielded, dimmed stern light. However, controlling the movement of the landing craft in darkness, with visibility further reduced by an overcast sky and frequent rain showers, was difficult. The distance between some landing craft increased as the coxswains found it hard to judge how far their craft was from the one in front. Judging distance was aggravated as some stern lights were brighter than others. The ALC craft were not



Image 5: HMAS *Colac*. Source: AWM 075751.

31 K = Kilo. Designation of the local time zone.

32 This section is based on Record of Proceedings for the vessels engaged, the Headquarters 6th Division report on the operation and the following books:

John Pearn, *Watermen of War*, Amphion Press, Brisbane (1993), pp. 151-166; Shawn O'Leary, *To the Green Fields Beyond*, Sixth Division Cavalry Unit History Committee, Sydney (1975), pp. 301-313.

equipped with radios and walkie-talkies were not available. Major Mitchell, in his command ALC-40, was busy throughout the night running up and down the convoy keeping craft closed up to their correct intervals. He was in contact with *SWAN* by radio. RAN Fairmile motor launches, which were equipped with radar, also assisted in shepherding the landing craft throughout the night. No landing craft was missing from its station when the new day dawned and correct intervals were attained before the Assembly Point was reached. The assault infantry, however, spent an uncomfortable night on the open decks of the corvettes as they were subjected to frequent rain showers. Such is the lot of the PBI!

Action In The Assembly Point³³

On arrival at the Assembly Point, all vessels hove to except *SWAN* which proceeded to its shore bombardment position. Command of the landing operation now deferred to *COLAC* in which Stevens had established his tactical headquarters. The assault ALC-40 now approached the two corvettes to load their infantry. An ALC-40 came alongside on both sides of the corvette and the heavily loaded commandos clambered down to their allotted landing craft in pouring rain.

Shawn O’Leary in the 2/6th Cavalry (Commando) regimental history described the scene:

As the barges broke away from the larger vessels the small red-gorgeted figure of General Stevens appeared at the rail of Colac. Stevens had not camped all night in rain on a hard deck. He had a cabin in which to kip.

“There’s Ocker!” a voice shouted

“Hooroo, you old bastard!” a chorus called. The general grinned and waved farewell.³⁴

The commandos boarded their ALC-40s prepared for a fight. Ammunition carried on the man was laid down as: rifle – 150 rounds, Bren LMG – 360 rounds, Owen machine carbine – 300 rounds, EY (extra yoke) rifle - six 7-second 36M grenades, all other personnel – three, 4-second 36M grenades. Each man carried two days combat rations.

Commander *COLAC* was now responsible for the despatch to the Departure Point of all landing craft at the correct scheduled time. The Departure Point was 1,500 yards off Sand Beach in Dove Bay.³⁵ The distance from the Assembly Point to the Departure Point was approximately ten kilometres. All movement was based

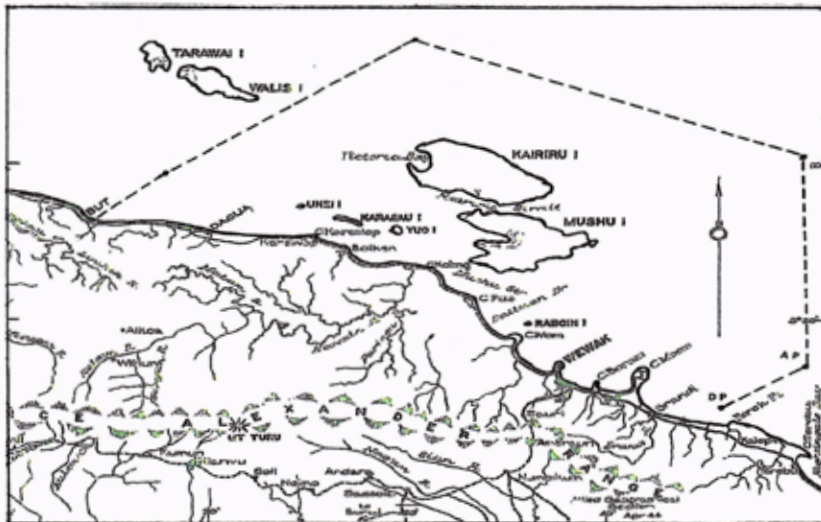
33 Ibid.

34 Stevens commanded the 21st Brigade in the Syrian campaign and acquired his nickname there.

35 Sand Beach is referred to as Red Beach in some orders and reports.

on a generous six knots speed. The Departure Point was marked by Fairmile launch ML427. H Hour, the time the first landing craft hit the beach, was 0830 hours. The despatch of landing craft from the holding area at the Assembly Point to the Departure Point adhered to the following timetable:

WAVE	UNIT	LEAVE ASSEMBLY POINT
Initial Support Wave	ML427 and 2 ALC-20	H - 70 minutes (0720 hrs)
First Assault Wave	4 x ALC-40s	H - 60 minutes (0730 hrs)
Second Assault Wave	1 x ALC40	H - 57 minutes (0733 hrs)
Third Assault Wave	2 x ALC-40s	H - 50 minutes (0740 hrs)
Fourth Assault Wave	1 x LCT	H - 30 minutes (0800 hrs)
Fifth Assault Wave	1 x LCT	H - 10 minutes (0820 hrs)
Sixth Assault Wave	1 x LCT	H + 10 minutes (0840 hrs) ³⁶



MAP 1. --- Overnight voyage 10/11 May 1945

A P = Assembly Point. D P = Departure Point.

36 Operation Instructions. Operation DELUGE. 11 May 1945, cited in Pearn, *Watermen of War*, pp. 156-158.

Naval Bombardment Planning

Earlier a series of discussions had set the naval bombardment programme. On 7 May a conference was held at 6th Division Headquarters between General Stevens, Captain Esdaile, Lieutenant Dovers and Air Commodore Walters (Air Officer Commanding New Guinea) to finalize naval and air support for the amphibious operation. Captain Esdaile then proceeded to Hollandia to await the arrival there of Commodore Farncomb on 8 May when he would brief the Commodore on the naval support agreed for Operation DELUGE.

However, on 8 May Farncomb broke his journey to Hollandia with a stop-over at Tadjj airfield at Aitape. Here he met Stevens and the two officers discussed naval aspects of the landing operation. Stevens sought a D Day no later than 11 May to coincide with the 19th Infantry Brigade's push against Wewak Point. Farncomb advised that D Day need not be delayed beyond 11 May and promised to confirm this date immediately on his arrival at Hollandia. During his visit to Tadjj, Stevens also advised Group Captain Hancock, Commanding Officer No 71 Wing RAAF, that the D Day for Operation DELUGE would be 11 May.³⁷

On his arrival in Hollandia, Farncomb immediately joined his flagship HMAS *HOBART*. At 2130 hrs 8 May, NOIC New Guinea signalled Headquarters 6th Division that D Day was confirmed as 11 May. Headquarters 6th Division now signalled all interested headquarters that D Day would be 11 May and H Hour was set for 0830 hours.³⁸

On 9 May *HOBART*, accompanied by *WARRAMUNGA*, sailed from Hollandia for a rendezvous some 50 kilometres north of Wewak with *NEWFOUNDLAND* and *ARUNTA*. The latter vessels had sailed at the same time from Manus Island. At 0630 hours 10 May *SWAN* met up with *HOBART* at the rendezvous point and passed Lieutenant Dovers's operation order, bombardment maps and the latest local intelligence to the flagship. *SWAN* then returned to But where the assault force was undertaking final preparations before embarking for the overnight passage to the Assembly Point. Soon after *SWAN* departed, *NEWFOUNDLAND* and *ARUNTA* arrived at the rendezvous. The newly combined Wewak Support Force then proceeded to carry out an afternoon bombardment of the Cape Moem area before standing out to sea. At 2320 hours 10 May this force reversed its course and again closed on Wewak to conduct the landing operation bombardment.³⁹

In the meantime, Captain Esdaile arrived back at 6th Division Headquarters on 10 May with a revised naval bombardment programme produced by naval planners on *HOBART*. Some amendments to the original plan produced by Esdaile

37 Headquarters 6th Division War Diary, entry 8 May 1945, AWM52, 1/5/12/63.

38 Headquarters 6th Division War Diary, entry 8 May 1945, AWM52, 1/5/12/63.

39 Gill, *Royal Australian Navy 1942-1945*, pp. 630-631.

and Dovers and agreed by Headquarters 6th Division on 7 May did not suit the Division's requirements. However, in view of the impracticality of contacting *HOBART* in the time available and further negotiating the bombardment plan, the amended plan was accepted. The Headquarters 6th Division War Diary recorded:

This is another illustration of the absurdity of planning an amphibious operation without actual contact between Navy and Army staffs. The main object to the plan as amended by the Naval staff is that it does not secure the maximum fire on the landing beach immediately prior to the landing.⁴⁰

Air Support

Air support for Operation DELUGE involved both RAAF and USAAF aircraft. Number 71 Wing RAAF, flying Beaufort light bombers, with Boomerang and Wirraway spotter aircraft, was allotted targets in the Brandi Plantation and Japanese positions in the hills dominating the landing beach. 71 Wing was temporarily reinforced for the operation with Beaufort detachments from Number 6 and Number 15 Squadrons added to the Tadj-i-based Beauforts. USAAF aircraft were mainly allotted targets in the wider Wewak area. CRTC was, however, also tasked with a crucial mission on D Day to bomb and strafe the area from the dune line to 200 yards inland behind the landing beach from 0800 hours to 0815 hours. As noted earlier, H Hour for the amphibious landing had been set at 0830 hours to permit CRTC aircraft to fly from Nadzab to Wewak in daylight.

An unfortunate accident involving CRTC aircraft occurred in the week before Operation DELUGE. On 7 May nine P-38 Lightning aircraft bombed and strafed Australian artillery positions on Cape Wom instead of the intended target of Wewak Point. The Australian positions were clearly marked with air recognition panels; 50 un-camouflaged artillery pieces were in situ;⁴¹ Matilda tanks, earth-moving equipment and vehicles were in the area and troops were openly moving about. Total casualties were 11 killed and 22 wounded. Following this incident Headquarters 6th Division requested CRTC '... that these pilots be not used again in any operations in this Division's area'.⁴²

Beauforts of 71 Wing were very active in the days prior to the amphibious operation. At his meeting with Group Captain Hancock at Tadj-i on 8 May, Stevens

40 Headquarters 6th Division War Diary, entry 10 May 1945, AWM52, 1/5/12/63.

41 48 25-pounder guns and two 155 mm cannon.

42 Headquarters 6th Division War Diary, entry 7 May 1945, AWM52, 1/5/12/63.

A tardy apology from Commander CRTC was sent to the Division on 12 May. An investigation was launched by CRTC; however, no report was received by 6th Division before the CRTC re-deployed to the Philippines in late June.

requested a maximum effort against Suari Hill and nearby villages on the morning of 9 May. On the afternoon of the same day the priority target selected was the southern area of Wewak Point; and on the morning of the 10 May, the priority targets were Japanese positions in the Wirui Mission area. These targets supported the 19th Infantry Brigade's attack during the final stages of the battle to capture Wewak Point.

More than 60 Beauforts and spotter Boomerang and Wirraway aircraft were airborne on the morning of 11 May. Flying conditions in the Wewak area were difficult. Low cloud and rain showers hampered visibility. Some aircraft failed to find their pre-planned targets, especially those targets on the mist-shrouded ridges running off the Prince Alexander Range inland from Wewak, and bombed alternative targets nearer the coast. Despite the conditions, the 'contribution by 57 Beauforts, from 84 sorties on the "D Day" landing, was 67 tons of bombs and 130,700 rounds in strafing'.⁴³

Thirteen Beauforts from Number 7 Squadron were placed on air alert to respond to on-call tasks during and after the landing. As part of the air support programme, the Air Support Controller, Flight Lieutenant G. Mauger, was co-located with Stevens in the command ship *COLAC*. From here he was able to arrange immediate air support missions requested by the landing force. Shortly after the landing, Mauger directed seven Beauforts on air alert to attack a hill feature overlooking the beachhead.

The pre-planned mission by P-51D Mustang fighters from the CRTC to bomb and strafe the landing beach from H minus 30 to H minus 15 minutes (0800 – 0815 hours) did not take place as the CRTC aircraft were unable to take off from Nadzab due to heavy rain. Operation DELUGE was well named!

Two airborne observers in Boomerang aircraft from Number 5 Squadron – Flying Officers G. A. Syle and K. T. Kidman – helped control the naval bombardment and were able to correct naval gunfire onto several targets.

Departure Point

The Departure Point, marked by the Fairmile ML427 (Lieutenant E. M. Howitt, RANVR) which hove to on the centre line of the run in to the landing beach, was located 1,500 yards off Sand Beach and H Hour was 0830 hours. The position was also buoyed by ML427. Howitt was now responsible for the despatch of the assault waves according to the following timetable:⁴⁴

43 Colin M King, *Song of the Beauforts: No 100 Squadron RAAF and Beaufort Bomber Operations* (2 ed.), Air Power Development Centre, Canberra (2007), p. 243.

44 Pearn, *Watermen of War*, p. 158.

WAVE	UNIT	LEAVE DEPARTURE POINT	
Initial Support Wave	2 x Mor ALC-20s	H - 15 minutes	(0815 hrs)
First Assault Wave	4 x ALC-40s	H - 7 minutes	(0823 hrs)
Second Assault Wave	1 x ALC 40	H - 4 minutes	(0826 hrs)
Third Assault Wave	2 x ALC-40s	H + 3 minutes	(0833 hrs)
Fourth Assault Wave	1 x LCT	H + 23 minutes	(0853 hrs)
Fifth Assault Wave	1 x LCT	H + 43 minutes	(0913 hrs)
Sixth Assault Wave	1 x LCT	H + 63 minutes	(0933 hrs)

In the event, the First Assault Wave was four minutes late in leaving the Departure Point.

However, Howitt maintained the correct intervals between succeeding waves and all waves reached the beach at their approximate planned time of arrival.



Figure 6: A Bristol Beaufort bomber at Tadj airstrip, 1945.

Source: AWM P03698.001.

Landing Beach

Sand Beach – Red Beach – was described in the 6th Division Operation Order Number 6 as hard sand, 50 yards wide at low tide. The beach extended for some 300 yards in length. The ground behind the beach was low with no abrupt bank at the dune line. Vegetation was classified as stunted swamp forest with undergrowth between the dune line and the Old German Road. This overgrown track paralleled the coast at a distance of 750 metres from the shore. Occasional coconut groves, native gardens and extensive sac sac (sago palm) swamps were also noted. Beyond the Old German Road were rain forest covered spurs running down from the Prince Alexander Range. East of Sand Beach was the forested knob of Forok Point. At a similar distance to the west of the landing beach was a strip of coconut palms extending along the shoreline for 400 metres,

The sea approach to Sand Beach was surveyed on the night 18/19 April by ML804 using a hand lead to take soundings. ML804 was accompanied by ML816 to provide fire support in the case of a Japanese response. The MLs closed to within 250 metres of the landing beach and spent some two hours in close proximity to the shoreline but there was no hostile reaction by the Japanese.⁴⁵

There was no surf on the day of the landing operation with low clouds and rain showers hindering visibility to seaward. The beaching of landing craft between 0830 hours and 0945 hours was on an ebbing tide. High water in the Wewak area on 11 May was at 0430 hours and low water at 1220 hours. The fact that the landing was on an ebbing tide may help explain the difficulty in retracting some of the landing craft from the beach after they had unloaded.

Enemy Force

Little firm intelligence on the Japanese force in the Dove Bay area was available to Farida Force prior to the operation other than that the remnants of the Japanese Eighteenth Army's 51st Infantry Division which were in the general Wewak area would fight to defend their defences. Headquarters 6th Division Intelligence Summary Number 20, dated 1 May 1945, simply stated that:

(c) DOVE BAY

- (i) The BRANDI PLANTATION area shows extensive signs of occupation.
- (ii) Defensive positions are located along the coast of DOVE BAY.⁴⁶

45 Peter Evans and Richard Thompson (eds.), *Fairmile Ships of the Royal Australian Navy, Volume II*, Loftus, Australian Military History Publications (2005), p. 72.

46 Headquarters 6th Division War Diary, May 1945, AWM52, 1/5/12/63.

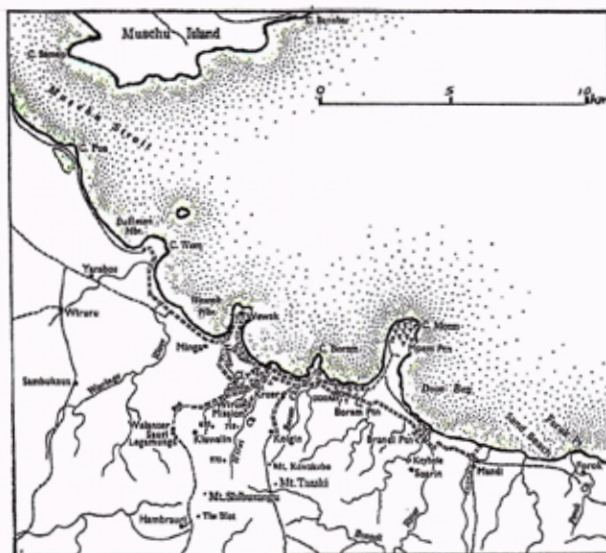
Headquarters 6th Division Operation Order 6 noted that the most likely units to be encountered were the 60th, 102nd and 115th Infantry Regiments and the 14th Field Artillery Regiment of the 51st Division and the 5th Engineer Shipping Regiment. Their estimated strength was 500-1,000 personnel in the coastal area from Cape Moem to Forok Point with most activity in the Brandi Plantation. Brandi Plantation was a coconut plantation located on the coast some six kilometres west of Sand Beach.

Naval Bombardment

The original naval bombardment program developed by Headquarters 6th Division and Captain Esdaile and Lieutenant Dovers had *HOBART*, *NEWFOUNDLAND*, *ARUNTA*, *WARRAMUNGA*, *SWAN* and *DUBBO* all firing at the landing beach area from H minus 60 minutes to H minus 35 minutes (0730 hours to 0755 hours). The two cruisers would then switch their fire to the following targets:

Cape Moem	-	0800 hours to 0815 hours;
Brandi Plantation	-	0820 hours to 0840 hours;
Cape Moem	-	0845 hours to 0900 hours.

The two cruisers were then on standby for calls from the Landing Force.



MAP 2. Sand Beach Area

From 0800 hours to 0815 hours the two destroyers would also fire on Cape Moem. Following this shoot, the destroyers would fire on the flanks of the landing beach from 0820 hours to 0840 hours. They would then be on standby for calls from the Landing Force. *SWAN* and *DUBBO* would also fire on the flanks of the landing beach during this time.

The amended naval bombardment program had only *HOBART*, *ARUNTA*, *SWAN* and *DUBBO* shelling the landing beach area from the dune line to 200 yards inland from 0730 hours to 0755 hours. The target area extended for 1,000 yards along the beachfront. During this shoot, which was controlled by a Boomerang spotter aircraft, *HOBART* fired at a range of 14,300 yards and expended 200 x 6-inch rounds. *ARUNTA* fired direct and used 120 x 4.7-inch rounds. *SWAN* fired 360 x 4-inch rounds. *DUBBO*'s contribution is not shown in the available records.⁴⁷

During the same time *NEWFOUNDLAND* and *WARRAMUNGA* fired on suspected Japanese artillery positions on Cape Moem, ten kilometres north west of Sand Beach. It was feared that Japanese guns located there could fire into the beachhead. *NEWFOUNDLAND* fired 171 x 6-inch rounds and *WARRAMUNGA* 200 x 4.7-inch rounds during this shoot.

This was the crux of 6th Division's reservations of the amended plan. The fire of only one of the cruisers and one of the destroyers was directed to the landing beach.

From 0820 – 0840 hours *HOBART* and *NEWFOUNDLAND* fired on Brandi Plantation located on the coast six kilometres west of Sand Beach. During this shoot *HOBART* expended 185 x 6-inch rounds; *NEWFOUNDLAND* 173 x 6-inch rounds. This shoot was also controlled by spotter aircraft. On completion of this shoot the two cruisers were on standby calls for fire support.

From 0820 – 0900 hours *WARRAMUNGA*, *ARUNTA* and *SWAN* fired on the flanks of the landing beach. Fire was brought within 200 yards of Sand Beach. The limits of the landing beach were marked by 6 foot x 4 foot red panels soon after the landing. During this time *WARRAMUNGA* fired 72 x 4.7-inch rounds into the line of coconut palms on the western flank of Sand Beach. *SWAN* also fired onto this target. *ARUNTA* fired 179 x 4.7-inch rounds onto Forok Point. On completion of this shoot, *ARUNTA* was ordered to screen the cruisers to seaward and to conduct an anti-submarine patrol. This shoot also completed *WARRAMUNGA*'s contribution to the shore bombardment.

At 1215 hours *NEWFOUNDLAND* reported a suspect submarine contact. From 1215 – 1715 hours the two cruisers manoeuvred to avoid a submarine attack. *ARUNTA* fired depth charges on the suspect contact. Both destroyers then carried out a box search. At 1320 hours *WARRAMUNGA* reported a contact that was

47 Information on the Naval Bombardment Program is extracted from Commodore Farncomb's report on Operation DELUGE, NAA B6121, 73B.

classified as 'non-submarine'. Nevertheless, the two destroyers carried out a 'square search with 4 mile sides' until 1655 hours when the search was called off.⁴⁸

Earlier, at 1245 hours, *HOBART* received a call for a fire mission on suspected Japanese positions overlooking the beachhead. Due to the absence of a spotter aircraft at this time, the shoot could not be fired until 1625 hours when a spotter aircraft arrived on station. This fire mission was completed at 1705 hours after 37 x 6-inch shells were expended. Subsequently, Farncomb, in a communication to Stevens dated 18 May 1945, advised that the delay in meeting the fire request occurred because he had '... no information on the procedure to be adopted to call forward a spotting aircraft. The delay was extended by radio failure on the part of the aircraft'.⁴⁹

At 1900 hours 11 May, the cruisers and destroyers of the short-lived Wewak Support Force sailed into the sunset for Hollandia. *SWAN*, *DUBBO* and the MLs departed for an overnight anchorage at But, leaving *COLAC* as the guard ship off the beachhead during the night of 11/12 May. At 1930 hours *COLAC* fired at lights near the base of Forok Point, expending 36 rounds in an area shoot, resulting in fires flaring up in the target area throughout the night possibly indicating a dump had been hit. Otherwise the night in the beachhead was quiet.

Assault Phase

Returning now to 0815 hours. The two mortar-firing ALC-20s – each equipped with two 3-inch mortars – were despatched on time and proceeded to within 1,200 yards of Sand Beach. As they moved forward they spread out to leave a gap of 300 yards. This gap was the approach avenue for the First Assault Wave of four ALC-40s carrying the bulk of the 2/6th Commandos. On their arrival at their first firing position, the ALC-20s commenced firing at H – 12 minutes (0818 hours).

At the same time as the mortar ALC-20s commenced firing, four Fairmile motor launches of the Wewak Naval Force – ML804, ML808, ML816 and ML820 – closed to within 600 yards of Sand Beach and began strafing the landing beach area with all their considerable firepower.⁵⁰ Each Fairmile was heavily armed for its size, carrying a 40 mm Bofors gun, two 20 mm Oerlikon auto-cannon, two .303 inch Gas-Operated (G-O) Vickers K machine guns⁵¹ and two or three .5 inch

48 Operation DELUGE, NAA B6121, 73B.

49 Operation DELUGE, NAA B6121, 73B.

50 ML804 – Lieutenant N. F. Brooker, RANVR; ML808 – Lieutenant D. A. P. Smith; ML816 – Lieutenant Commander K. J. McLaren, RANR; ML820 – Lieutenant J. Milne, RNVR.

51 The Gas Operated Vickers machine gun was not the same weapon as the Vickers Medium Machine Gun found in the infantry battalions. Designed in 1928 as an aircraft observer's weapon, it was a twin-mounted, air cooled machine gun built by Vickers-Armstrong. In World War II it was also used by naval and land forces. Each gun used a 97-round drum magazine. It had a high cyclic rate of fire of 900 rpm and consequently suffered from a hot barrel if fired in a long burst. Many Fairmile crews replaced them with US .30 calibre Browning machine guns. The G-O Vickers machine gun is also known as the Vickers K.

Browning heavy machine guns.⁵²

ML804 dashed in even closer to Sand Beach and at 300 yards from the beach dropped a buoyed flag to mark the centre of the landing beach for the First Assault Wave.

As the Fairmiles cleared the area, the First Assault Wave swept towards the landing beach. When the First Wave drew level with the two mortar ALC-20s, these two craft joined the flanks of the First Wave, moved forward with it, and continued firing until within 200 yards of the beach. The four seaborne mortars fired a total of 770 mortar bombs during this phase of the operation.

As the four ALC-40s neared the beach, their sole twin G-O Vickers machine guns also opened fire to add to the weight of support fire in the landing beach area. This G-O Vickers was the only offensive weapon system the ALC-40 possessed. As described in the 2/6th Cavalry (Commando) Regiment unit history: 'Aboard a barge Major G. D. Mitchell, who commanded 43 Landing Craft Company, backed a pair of plunging Vickers guns which chattered incessantly'.⁵³ Such is the privilege of rank!

The two right-hand landing craft contained the 2/9th Commando Squadron; the 2/10th Commando Squadron occupied the two left-hand ALC-40s. The operation plan called for these two squadrons to establish a perimeter 250 yards inland from the dune line while the rest of the assault force landed.

The landing itself was something of an anti-climax. Only a few rifle shots were fired at the approaching barges from the landing beach defences. One landing barge was holed above the waterline by small arms fire. There were no casualties. During the run into the beach, a Japanese 20 mm automatic cannon emplaced on the western slope of Forok Point briefly opened fire on the assault craft, but this was soon neutralised by the MLs that had remained in the vicinity of the landing beach. Some Japanese light artillery or mortar rounds were also reported fired on the landing craft from the jungle-covered spur-lines overlooking Dove Bay. There were splashes but no hits.

There was only one Australian Army casualty on 11 May. Corporal R. K. Ilsley of the 2/6th Cavalry (Commando) Regiment was accidentally wounded by a member of his section. The only damage to the naval contingent was to ML804 and ML808 – both having the top part of their Bofors barrels blown off – later found to be due to defective ammunition. An unnamed seaman was lightly wounded in the ML804 incident.

52 Many Fairmile motor launches 'acquired' 0.50" Browning HMGs from US Navy sources; allegedly in exchange for hard liquor. The RAN was a 'wet' navy and the US Navy a 'dry' one.
53 O'Leary. *To the Green Fields Beyond*, p.308.

Consolidation

The two commando squadrons moved forward quickly to establish their initial perimeter some 250 yards inland. The 2/9th Commando Squadron on the left was more fortunate than its brother squadron. The assault had landed some 200 metres west of where it had been planned and the 2/10th Commando Squadron advanced into a sac sac swamp. This error is probably explained by ML804 incorrectly deploying the buoyed flag to mark the centre line of the assault landing. Not a major error, as it did not affect the assault landing, but unfortunate for the soldiers of the 2/10th Squadron who had to wade waist deep through the unpleasant conditions of the stinking swamp. Woe is the life of the infantryman! Difficulty was experienced by both squadrons digging in on the perimeter line. The water table was only about one third of a metre below the surface and trenches soon filled with water. Fortunately, there was no Japanese counterattack.



Figure 7: A Fairmile motor launch of the RAN. Source: AWM 106661.

The follow-up waves of landing craft reached the beach on time and were rapidly unloaded. The only problem was that there was difficulty in retracting two of the ALC-40 craft. These craft could not retract under their own power and had to be pulled off the beach by the reserve American LCT which had been allocated this task. One ALC-40, which had broached on hitting the beach, required considerable



Figure 8: Part of Farida Force landing at Dove Bay, May 1945. Source: AWM OG2945.

effort before it could be recovered. This problem might be explained by a design fault of the ALC-40. The craft were not equipped with a kedge anchor and power winch to assist in retracting from the beach. Other factors which may have played a part included coxswains' enthusiasm driving their craft hard onto the beach, the shallow, shelving nature of the beach and that the landing was made on an ebbing tide. Once recovered the ALC-40 craft were refuelled. All landing craft then formed a convoy for return to Aitape with navigation courtesy of the senior US LCT.

Exploitation⁵⁴

There was no organized opposition in the beachhead area. Soon after landing Captain S. R. McDonald of the 2/9th Commando Squadron killed two dazed Japanese soldiers. After a firm beachhead had been consolidated, patrols were

⁵⁴ The EXPLOITATION Section is largely based on 6 AUST DIV INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY 21 dated 18 May 1945 and 6 AUST DIV INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY 22 dated 7 June 1945 in Headquarters 6th Division War Diary, May 1945, AWM52, 1/5/12/63 and O'Leary, *To the Green Fields Beyond*, pp. 301-313.



Figure 9: Members of the 6th Australian Division stream from the landing craft onto Sand Beach, May 1945. Source: AWM 018501.

immediately pushed inland to block the Old German Road. This was achieved by early afternoon. At the same time a 2/10th Commando Squadron patrol was tasked with clearing Forok Point. A 20 mm auto-cannon had briefly fired from there during the initial landing before being suppressed by Fairmile ML strafing. From its position it could easily enfilade Sand Beach. When the patrol moved onto Forok Point it discovered evidence of a garrison of approximately 50 personnel who had apparently hastily abandoned the defences there. A smouldering cigarette and unconsumed food indicated a speedy retreat. The 20 mm auto-cannon, still in situ, was recovered and booby traps laid before the patrol returned to the beachhead.

On 12 May the 2/9th Commando Squadron began to advance westward along the Old German Road toward Brandi Plantation and a link-up with 19th Infantry Brigade elements advancing eastwards from Wewak Point. In a contact with a Japanese force of unknown size at 1430 hours, Trooper A. F. Peel was mortally wounded. One Japanese soldier was confirmed killed in this contact. On the morning of 13 May the beachhead was fired on by an 81 mm mortar firing from a concealed position in the rugged foothills of the Prince Alexander Range south of the coastal road. During the following days a suspected 105 mm gun, 75 mm mountain gun and 81 mm mortar fired intermittently into the beachhead. These weapons were skilfully hidden and operated. Sound ranging and air reconnaissance failed to locate them. Air attacks by RAAF Beaufort and Boomerang aircraft,

naval gunfire by *SWAN* and *COLAC* and artillery fire from the 2/1st Tank Attack Regiment's 75 mm pack howitzers located in the beachhead failed to destroy these targets. On 14 May Mandi village on the eastern side of Brandi Plantation was reported clear of the enemy. A large, abandoned Japanese ammunition dump was located in the village.

For the next 17 days Farida Force engaged in patrol clashes with Japanese elements in its area of operations. These were predominantly small groups of Japanese stragglers trying to exfiltrate from their positions on Cape Moem and in the Brandi Plantation towards the Prince Alexander Range. Patrols probed into the overgrown coconut plantation on the west bank of the Brandi River and to the south and south east of Sand Beach towards the deserted Forok village. There was no large-scale movement of Japanese troops east along the Old German Road. However, Farida Force failed to intercept a Japanese force of some 300 personnel which exfiltrated south from Cape Moem through the Brandi Plantation on the night of 16/17 May and made their way south into the foothills of the Prince Alexander Range to join the main concentration of Japanese in the high ground to the south of Wewak. Farida Force suffered its heaviest casualties on 28 May when an isolated Japanese shell impacted in the 2/1st Infantry Battalion's mortar detachment position in the beachhead. Corporal D. M. Owen and Corporal A. G. Bowles were killed and four others wounded.

At 1700 hours 22 May a patrol from the 2/8th Infantry Battalion of the 19th Infantry Brigade advancing from the west established contact with a 2/6th Cavalry (Commando) Regiment patrol at the mouth of the Brandi River. The following morning a second 2/8th Infantry Battalion patrol reached the commando force blocking the Old German Road in the Brandi Plantation. On 22 May Farida Force was placed under command of Headquarters 19th Infantry Brigade. Subsequently, on 1 June when the 16th Infantry Brigade relieved the 19th Brigade in the Wewak area, the 2/6th Cavalry (Commando) Regiment came under command of Headquarters 16th Brigade and Farida Force was disbanded. All elements of the force reverted to command of their parent units.

An Assessment

Tactically, Farida Force was a qualified success. The force made a surprise landing in a lightly defended sector of the Wewak coastal defences and prevented any organised bodies of Japanese troops escaping to the east. It was not successful, however, in blocking the withdrawal of the main Japanese combat unit from the Cape Moem defences during the night of 16/17 May.

Planning and execution for Operation DELUGE was a tri-service success given that the operation was mounted on a logistical shoestring and that there was

only a limited opportunity to rehearse the operation. Earlier amphibious assault training at Trinity Beach near Cairns in 1944 no doubt also played its part in the success of the operation.

Despite 6th Division's misgivings in the reduced level of the naval gunfire support on the landing beach, the bombardment was successful in neutralising the Japanese defences at Dove Bay. Post-assault examination of the Japanese defences revealed three lines of trenches with integrated bunkers covering Sand Beach.



Figure 10: HMAS *Dubbo* crew members assist 6th Australian Division troops into the landing barges for the assault on the Wewak Peninsula, May 1945.

Source: AWM 018496.

These works were largely destroyed in the pre-assault naval bombardment. The bodies of numerous Japanese soldiers, recently killed by shellfire, were discovered in the vicinity of Sand Beach.⁵⁵

The lifting of the naval bombardment on the landing beach area 35 minutes before H Hour and the non-arrival of the CRTC aircraft due to bomb and strafe the landing beach between 0800-0815 hours did not affect the landing. However, it could have done so if the Japanese defenders of Sand Beach had used these 35 minutes to reoccupy their beach defences. There appears to have been no flexibility in the naval bombardment program once it was obvious that the CRTC mission was aborted. These aircraft were due to depart Nadzab at 0630 hours. Stevens's tactical headquarters on *COLAC*, which had a direct radio link with the CRTC, presumably knew some two hours before H Hour that the CRTC mission had been cancelled due to heavy rain at Nadzab. However, from the existing records, there appears to have been no effort to compensate for this failure by extending the period of naval gunfire into the landing beach area, even at a reduced level of effort, or to have used the Beaufort aircraft on air alert in the vicinity of the landing beach to replace the CRTC mission. The direct fire light armament of the ML shoot from 0815 – 0825 hours and the mortar 'bomb vessels' could not compensate for the absence of the heavier weight of the cruisers' and destroyers' guns. Had the Japanese defenders been combat troops rather than poorly trained and equipped logistical elements occupying the area, Farida Force might have suffered significant casualties during and after the landing. The enemy contacted by Farida Force are not identified in the records examined but were most likely troops from 19 Field Machine Cannon Company, 39 Independent Motor Transport Battalion, 44 Line of Communication Sector Company, 44 Field Road Construction Company or 27 Field Freight Unit. These units were subsequently identified as being in the area at the time of the landing.⁵⁶

The use of the ALC-20 craft as 3-inch mortar 'bomb vessels' was an example of inspired improvisation and helped compensate for the absence of heavy naval gunfire on the run in to the beach.

The landing on an ebbing tide due to the requirement to set H Hour at 0830 hours contributed to the difficulty in retracting two of the landing craft from the beach. No doubt the absence of a kedge anchor and a power winch in the

55 Totals of Japanese killed at Sand Beach in several naval references consulted are inflated. There was no accurate count of Japanese killed in the bombardment of the Sand Beach defences on D Day. Bodies were discovered and buried over several days and some of these may have been killed by air attack. However, the figures quoted in the final paragraph do not include Japanese killed on Cape Moem as this area was outside Farida Force's Area of Operations. There was evidence of heavy Japanese casualties caused by naval and air bombardment in the Cape Moem area when this area was occupied by the 19th Brigade in late May.

56 6th Australian Division Intelligence Review No 4, dated 30 May 1945, AWM 52, 1/5/12/63.

ALC-40s to assist in retracting was a wartime economy measure. Furthermore, the fact that the bow ramp of the ALC-40 was raised by a slow hand-powered winch probably contributed to one of the ALC-40s broaching on the beach. It required considerable effort by the US LCT tasked with this work to free this landing craft. Operation DELUGE appears to be the only occasion in which the Australian manufactured ALC-40s were used in an amphibious assault against a defended beach, albeit, a much depleted defence.

Air support was generally good other than the failure of CRTC aircraft to bomb and strafe the landing beach during the assault phase. CRTC aircraft were absent during the morning of D Day and several pre-planned missions were cancelled. During the afternoon CRTC aircraft successfully engaged targets in the wider Wewak area. RAAF 71 Wing aircraft made a maximum effort on the morning of 11 May. Despite difficult flying conditions RAAF aircraft successfully bombed and strafed Japanese targets which could have interfered with the landing. The only criticism of RAAF support is the absence of an airborne spotter aircraft at 1245 hours during the time when the cruisers were on standby call and the Landing Force requested a fire mission. Without a spotter aircraft the cruisers were ineffective. It



Figure 11: General Sir Thomas Blamey greeting Major General Stevens on arrival at Wewak Airstrip, June 1945. Source: AWM 093113.

was not until 1625 hours that this mission could be fired when a Boomerang aircraft arrived on station. Farncomb's comment in his communication with Stevens that he did not know the procedure to call for a spotter aircraft and this contributed to the delay in firing the mission is somewhat disingenuous. A simple message from *HOBART* to the RAAF air controller located in *COLAC* at 1245 hours could have rectified this problem immediately and would probably have had a spotter aircraft available much earlier.

The logistical support was well planned and executed. Separate embarkation beaches at But on the afternoon of 10 May for personnel and vehicles facilitated the loading of the landing craft. The use of a Mesh Party, the landing of a bulldozer on the first LCT to beach and the use of dedicated unloading parties for each of the vehicles assisted in the smooth unloading of the LCTs.

Three members of Farida Force were killed and six wounded during the time the force existed. Japanese losses were significantly heavier. In the period 11-18 May Farida Force was credited with killing 59 Japanese soldiers in ground operations. At the same time, a further 65 Japanese killed by naval, air or artillery bombardment were buried by Farida Force.⁵⁷ Japanese casualties in the Farida Force area of operations for the period from 11 May to 7 June 1945 were recorded in the 6th Division War Diary as totalling 213 personnel, though there is no break-up of casualties inflicted by infantry or by naval, air or artillery bombardment.⁵⁸



Figure 12: A 6th Division soldier inspects a captured Japanese 20 mm machine gun, May 1945. Source: AWM 018551.

57 6th Australian Division Intelligence Review No 4, dated 30 May 1945, AWM 52, 1/5/12/63.

58 6th Australian Division Intelligence Summary 22, dated 7 June 1945, AWM 52, 1/5/12/64.

Reviews

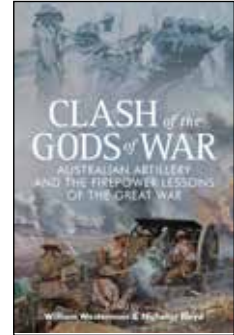
Clash of the Gods of War: Australian Artillery and the Firepower Lessons of the Great War

William Westerman and Nicholas Floyd (eds.)

A\$34.99

Big Sky Publishing, Newport, 2020

Hardback, 624 pp



The culmination of the Firepower Lessons from the Great War seminar series, *Clash of the Gods of War* is an excellent collection of research papers on artillery during the First World War. Written by an array of historians – both professional and amateur – the book covers many aspects of artillery during that conflict and lessons for today.

While not claiming to be a comprehensive book on the topic, of which there surely is the need, *Clash of the Gods of War* includes chapters that are general in approach and very specific in others. A welcome contribution are the chapters on the Ottoman and French artilleries, the Indian mountain artillery on the Gallipoli peninsula and artillery use during the Palestine campaign. The biographies of Talbot Hobbes and Walter Coxen provide a personal context. The impact of technology is addressed, as is the changing nature of warfare throughout the conflict. Case studies, such as Neuve Chapelle, Menin Road, Amiens and Hamel, give the reader a sound understanding of the importance of artillery to the success – or otherwise – of Western Front battles.

Due to the nature of the book – a collection of seminar papers – there is some repetition of information, and the final product is let down by poor reproduction of images. However, this does not detract from the value of the book and its important contribution to Australian military historiography.

Justin Chadwick

You Shouldn't Have: A Memoir

General Sir Peter Cosgrove

\$49.99

Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2020

Hardback, 440 pp



One Australian who requires little, if any, introduction is General Sir Peter Cosgrove. He came to national attention

as commander of INTERFET in 1999 leading the UN forces that oversaw the independence of East Timor. In his previous memoir, *My Story* (2006) Cosgrove explored his military career and experiences and in *You Shouldn't Have: A Memoir* he revisits this. This provides valuable context for the Cosgrove's post-military career as board member and, more importantly, as Governor General from 2014, for which most of the book is focused.

We get interesting insights into Cosgrove's time as Governor General and an understanding of the needs of the role and how he carried them out. Throughout, Cosgrove notes how experiences have contributed to his ability to fulfil the requirements of his role. Receiving his AM from the Queen in 1985 he was surprised to hear from her more than was on the citation – a procedure he emulated. While ADC for the Governor General in 1972, Cosgrove began his understanding of international diplomacy.

Cosgrove's latest memoirs are written in a pleasant, chatty style that is easy to read and is very much conversational. We gain interesting and valuable insights into the man and his various roles to date.

Justin Chadwick

Adventures, Pioneers and Misfits

Jim Haynes

A\$29.99

Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2020

Paperback, 264 pp



After reading the information sheet on the author and that he has published over 30 books I am sorry I have not looked at his other books in the past, but after reading *Adventures, Pioneers and Misfits* I will make every effort to locate his other works. I am always interested in any information on our pioneering characters and this book certainly describes many of the somewhat odd characters who helped shape our Australian make up. The twelve chapters provide an interesting look into the past of people who perhaps have been lost to time, such as George Morrison. He was born in 1862 and led an adventurous life, becoming a story teller and a special correspondent in Asia. After the Boxer Rebellion he was considered a hero, saving many diplomats and their families from being killed by the boxers. He exposed the Kanaka trade in Australia. After finishing a medical degree, Morrison journeyed to New Guinea and made for the interior where he was almost killed by the local natives. He had travelled extensively to such places as the United States, the West Indies and Canada. He also explored the deserts of Africa where few Europeans had ever travelled. During his travels he sent articles to various papers in Australia,

giving readers an insight to how others in the world lived. What's not to like about George Morrison?

Another chapter looks at eccentric composer Percy Grainger, another character of which we can be proud of. The author lists Grainger's life achievements in a carefully crafted style. The great Annette Kellerman, a swimming legend in her own time, is described as a great entertainer and show person who at an early age overcame the disease rickets by learning to swim. As she grew stronger, Kellerman realized she liked swimming and decided to use her skills as a career. She performed all over the world, including swimming the English Channel. Does anyone remember Annette Kellerman? If you don't this book will give you an insight into this great woman.

Other chapters look at characters such as Bert Hinkler. An early Australian aviator who served his country in the great war, Hinkler continued with his flying becoming a test pilot for four years, honing his skills flying in many solo flights across the sea at a time when there were not many navigation aids to help the flyer. In 2008 A Bert Hinkler Hall of aviation was opened to the public in Bundaberg, Queensland, dedicated to a great character.

I liked the chapters on the convict era when criminals were transported to Australia. It seems these days it's alright to have a convict in the family. In days gone past it was never really spoken about. The author presents several chapters on individuals who were transported and after serving their time they became the very fabric that is Australia.

I liked the book as I found it easy to read and flowed easily from chapter to chapter. The author has obviously conducted extensive research into the various topics and should be congratulated on his efforts. Being a paperback, the book is easy to handle and if you only read it a chapter at a time you should enjoy the experience. All in all, a good read.

Michael English

Atomic Salvation: How the A-Bomb attacks saved the lives of 32 Million People

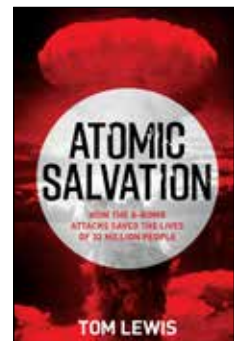
Tom Lewis

A \$29.99

Big Sky Publishing, Newport, 2020

Paperback, 364 pp

The book *Atomic Salvation* seeks to explain one of the great issues of the Second World War - the dropping of the Atomic bomb. The author, Tom Lewis, describes the events leading up to, and the effects on the Japanese after, the bomb was dropped on the cities of Hiroshima



and Nagasaki. Lewis describes the events in eighteen chapters clearly describing the reasons why, the how and the what that led to the dropping of the atomic bombs. His investigation into the use of the atomic bombs is thorough with clear explanations on the issues confronting the Americans. The Americans and their allies had fought the Pacific war through the islands and as they neared the Japanese homeland it was thought that the troops assaulting the Japanese mainland would lose over a million casualties.

I found the book easy to read as each chapter flowed from the designing of the bomb to the eventual dropping on the two cities. The Japanese had a culture of not surrendering under any circumstances as it was considered shameful. But to die in the defence of their homeland the Japanese people would not have thought this to be out of order according to their culture. With the Japanese culture in mind, the American authorities saw that the only way to reduce a heavy casualty toll was to drop a bomb so powerful that the Japanese had no alternative but to ask for peace. In that event thousands of lives would be saved as limiting the bombing to two cities even though as drastic as this was, assaulting the mainland and destroying even greater numbers would have turned Japan into a waste land.

The author has provided facts and figures to explain the losses of materials and food to the people by 1945. This was a grim picture as to the possible outcome for the Japanese population. Food was becoming scarce, resulting in tens of millions dying from hunger and exposure. I found the author's conclusions at the end of each chapter beneficial as it provided a short summary.

Tom Lewis puts forward a compelling case as to why the atomic bomb was dropped. All in all an informative book which I would recommend to anyone who is interested in the facts behind the dropping of the atomic bomb.

Michael English

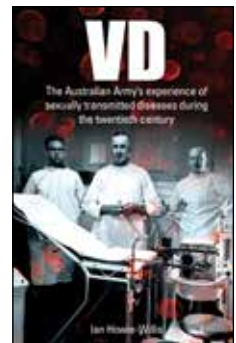
VD: The Australian Army's experience of sexually transmitted diseases during the twentieth century

Ian Howie-Willis

\$34.99

Big Sky Publishing, Newport, 2020

Hardback, 386 pp



Ian Howie-Willis's latest book, *VD: The Australian Army's experience of sexually transmitted diseases during the twentieth century*, covers a topic that may appear either a little specific or a little macabre.

However, the impact of sexually transmitted diseases (STD) on the Australian Army of the twentieth century as it fought in major and minor conflicts was significant.

Drawing from the official medical histories and an extensive range of primary sources, Howie-Willis has produced a narrative history that explores the impact of STDs on a conservatively estimated 125,000 soldiers. The various diseases, contraction, treatment and prevention are examined. The two world wars, rightly, dominate the work, and reflect changing attitudes towards STDs. The graphs that are included are useful, though the image reproduction quality, as with many Big Sky publications, is of a poorer quality.

VD: The Australian Army's experience of sexually transmitted diseases during the twentieth century is a valuable addition to Australian military historiography that is a well-written and engaging narrative.

Justin Chadwick

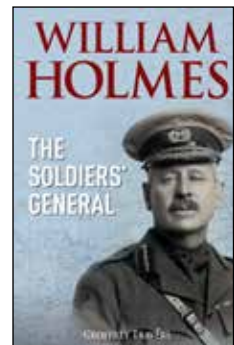
William Holmes: The Soldiers' General

Geoffrey Travers

\$34.99

Big Sky Publishing, Sydney, 2020

Hardback, 447 pp



If one senior Australian officer of the First World War epitomises the citizen soldier, then it is William Holmes. If one senior Australian officer of the First World War is possibly the least known, then it is William Holmes. Coming from a military family, Holmes served during the South African War and commanded the AN&MEF in 1914, being the first Australians to fight German forces. His experience as an administrator on the Sydney Water Board meant that he was well-suited to act as administrator of the captured territory. Serving on Gallipoli and then the Western Front Holmes became the third Australian officer to reach divisional command during the war. Holmes's command abilities are aptly demonstrated throughout *William Holmes: The Soldiers' General*, as are his concern over the officers and men under his command, regardless of the formation size.

Geoffrey Travers shows us a Holmes that was brave, dedicated and talented in command and administration. He draws from extensive research and describes operations with skill. At times, though, I felt that Travers could have been more critical of his sources and conducted greater analysis. During his discussion of Holmes and Monash he accepts Bean's criticism of Monash's self-promotion – as opposed to Holmes who did not – without questioning Bean's motives or prejudices. However, this is a personal preference and should not detract from a thorough work of narrative history.

It is certainly time that a full biography of Holmes has been written and Travers has done a great job in his research and presentation.

Justin Chadwick

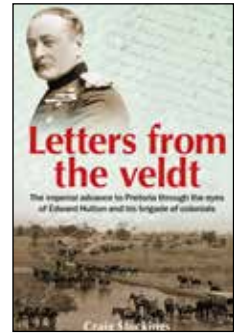
Letters from the Veldt: The imperial advance to Pretoria through the eyes of Edward Hutton and his brigade of colonials

Craig Stockings

\$29.99

Big Sky Publishing, Sydney, 2020

Paperback, 286 pp



An interesting book. The author has taken letters of Major General Edward Hutton, commanding the 1st Mounted Infantry Division, written home from the Boer War to his wife Eleanor and reproduced them with notation for the Boer War uninformed, like me. These letters were always intended for publication, or notes for a future memoir, so there is a total absence of intimacy with the wife.

It seems the conception of a mounted infantry was Hutton's brainchild, which he promoted for years with divisive effect. He had a poor opinion of British cavalry, thought they were chinless privileged amateur soldiers in posh uniforms. He thought a mounted infantry would be more effective. Pity because the upper class twits in posh uniforms were the dream of every amateur theatrical production of White Horse Inn and its ilk. A colourful era of stupidity.

Hutton and his mounted infantry, mostly Colonial soldiers, found their niche very nicely in South Africa. The right place at the right time.

Oh, dear, this is a blokey book. Our author has penned his assessment of Hutton and everything Hutton says in his letters to Eleanor backs this assessment up. He had a wonderfully high opinion of himself, 'You have no idea how well the Australians have welcomed me'. 'You may imagine how glad they were to see me'. There's a touch of the martyr, 'I have to do all the work'.

Hutton 'dearly loved a Lord' and the British Empire. 'Our enemy must be made to feel the effects of fire & sword – we must kill & slay if our superiority as a race is to be established over that of the Dutch in South Africa'. Unfortunately, there was the time that 35,000 British troops were held up by 5,000 Boers. No mention of the rich gold and diamond deposits the British wanted to nick.

Naturally God was on the side of the British. According to the chaplain, 'our services as soldiers of the empire upon the highest plane of human responsibility and reminded us that we represented the cause of Christianity, of liberty and of justice'. Then they rounded up all the Boer women and children, three train loads of them, invented the concentration camp and 26,000 of them died of disease and starvation.

If you are a student of Great War tactics (or lack thereof), this will introduce you to another world totally. They moved around, came up a rise and could see columns of Boers on the move. It was not the blood bath of the Great War. Hutton lost four officers and 17 men killed. No wonder there are no great cemeteries of Boer War dead in South Africa.

The letters home to Eleanor describe every day-to-day advance, pincer movement, right flank, left flank and what time they had breakfast. In one letter he says Eleanor must be eager to hear of everything he has done. Oh, dear, I hope not. If Eleanor's eyes did not glaze over, he was very fortunate in his choice of wife indeed.

Gail Gunn

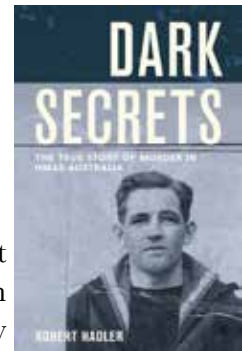
Dark Secrets: The True Story of Murder in HMAS Australia

Robert Hadler

\$29.99

Wilkinson Publishing, Melbourne, 2020

Paperback, 320 pp



Picking up the book I had certain misgivings as I know little about the Australian Navy. That being said, after reading the book I am now aware of how this dark secret and the efforts by the Navy bureaucrats and politicians did their best to ignore this shameless episode in Australian naval history. Robert Hadler has delved into the history and produce a credible story which should have been exposed before. His research does him credit in bringing the story to light.

Those who served on the HMAS *Australia* would have been aware that a murder had occurred on board ship. However, the details of the stabbing of a ship mate and the two sailors who were involved were hidden from the general public for over two generations. Hadler has put together the story which, in hindsight, paints a poor picture of those who were in charge of service people and the general public. The senior officers at the time (1942) would have had a hard time exposing a motive for the crime which could have unleashed a propaganda coup for the enemy to exploit.

The story does not end with the stabbing. In fact, it is only the beginning, as the two accused sailors faced a court martial, were found guilty, and received the death penalty. However, this was later overturned and they received jail time. The fairness of the trial is discussed, particularly whether a naval or civil court should have carried out the trial. Hadler explains in detail the process and presents a valid argument for the eventual outcome. The final chapters look at the jailing of the two men involved and with legal help how their sentences were reduced. I found the story a sad tale of poor government decisions and the lack of empathy on the part of Naval and Government officials. The author is to be commended as he has presented a credible book which has investigated a dark time in our naval history. All in all I found the book an interesting experience.

Mike English

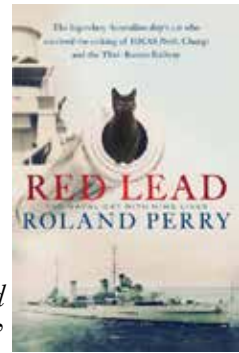
Red Lead

Roland Perry

\$29.99

Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2020

Paperback, 327 pp



Roland Perry provides an author's note at the beginning of *Red Lead* in which he explains that the book is a 'dramatised narrative' based on real events. Roland Perry, adding to his works on animals and the military, writes an easily read and interesting book on the travails of HMAS *Perth*, its crew and its adopted cat, 'Red Lead'. The focus is on dialogue and drama with the history of events that occurred around woven in deftly (though at times with a degree of license, the 8th Australian Division, for instance, was not 'in Singapore' at the outbreak of war in December 1941). However, this should not detract from a rollicking story that takes the reader from Australia to Changi and the Thai-Burma railway and home again.

If you like your 'history' with plenty of 'story', then you will enjoy *Red Lead*.

Justin Chadwick

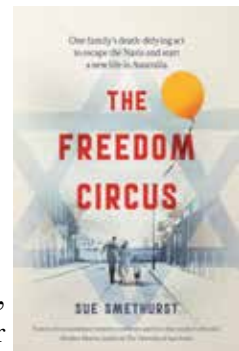
The Freedom Circus

Sue Smethurst

\$34.99

Ebury Press, Sydney, 2020

Paperback, 303 pp



Journalist Sue Smethurst has written an engaging, captivating, harrowing and heart-felt constructed narrative of events of her Jewish grandmorth-in-law, Mindla Horowitz. By the author's own admission *The Freedom Circus* is not a historical text, but she has used family documents and interviews with Mindla to construct her story.

Beginning in Poland prior to the outbreak of war, the story follows Mindla and Kubush, a performer in the famous Staniewski Brothers circus. The invasion and occupation of Poland by Nazi forces in 1939 begins a truly incredible journey that takes the small family through the Soviet Union, the Middle East and Africa to finally find refuge in Australia.

Filled with constructed dialogue, *The Freedom Circus* creates an intimate understanding of the pain and joy that one Jewish refugee family endured to find peace.

Justin Chadwick

Technology

The L4 Radar Array: Australian Battlefield Technology

Rohan Goyne

The L4 Radar Array was an Australian scientific military development between the most unlikely of collaborators – the University of Sydney and the New South Wales Railways – begun in 1940. The collaboration occurred as a result of the urgent requirement for an early warning radar to provide coverage of Australia's approaches from potential air attack.

It was like so many domestic military technological inventions during the Second World War in Australia, constructed from the materials which were available at hand with the expertise available domestically. The array for the radar itself (Figure 1) was constructed of galvanised pipe which was readily available locally. The NSW Railways Engine Works was commissioned to construct the array. Its design was simplicity itself with the sections of galvanised pipe screwing into each other with the ends being threaded together to form the array. Figure 1, showing a rear view of the array, highlights the simplicity of its construction, which was designed to be collapsible and air transportable, later being sent into the forward areas of the Pacific Theatre.

The whole station was designed to be demountable and transportable in the tent (Figure 2) which formed the ground station building for the radar. The American equivalent of the L4 needed to be transported in three Dakota Transport

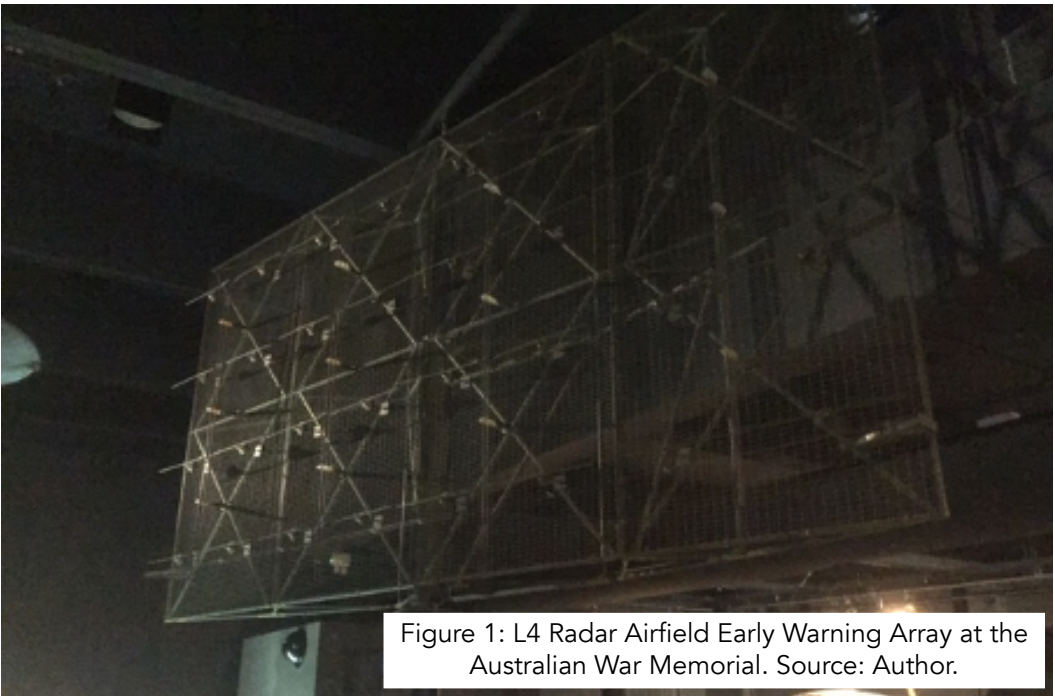


Figure 1: L4 Radar Airfield Early Warning Array at the Australian War Memorial. Source: Author.

aircraft to be deployed in the Pacific Theatre. The Americans were astounded that the Australian L4 could be collapsed into the tent which formed its ground station. The L4 lost nothing in terms of technical and operational comparison with its American equivalent.

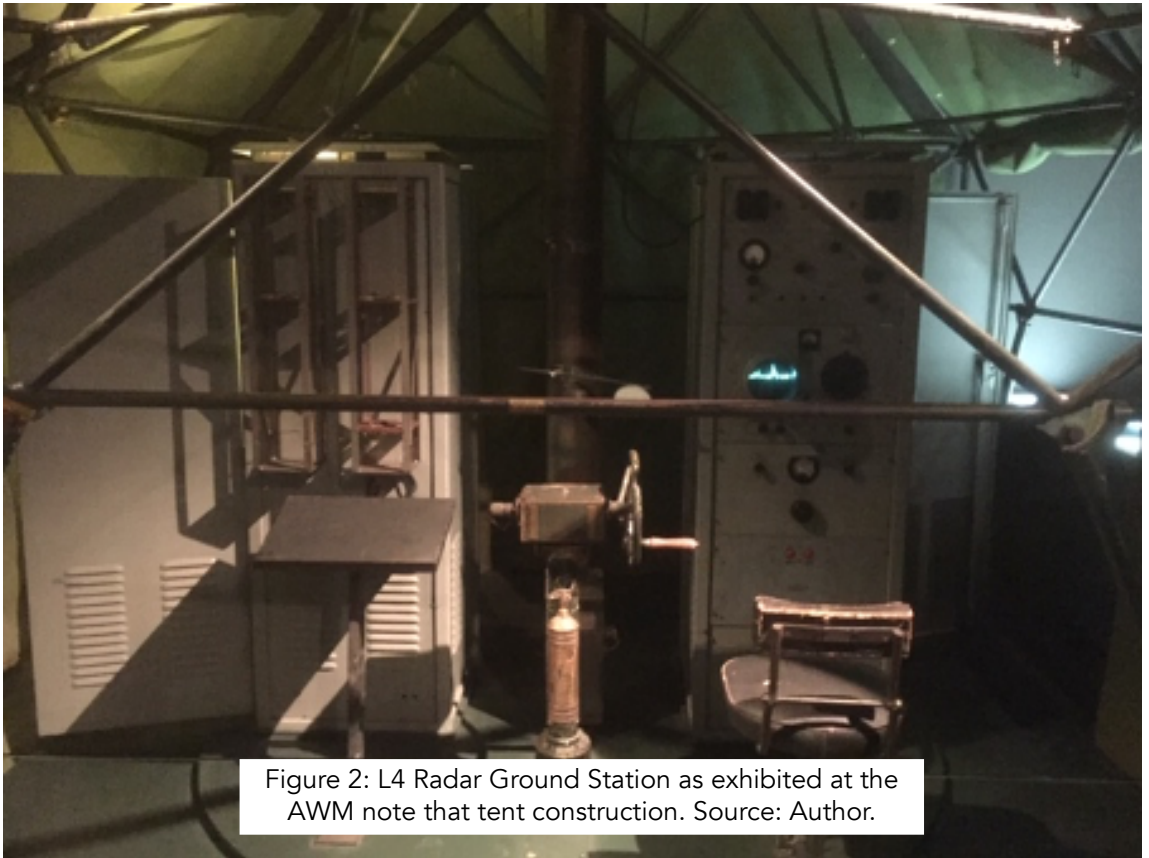


Figure 2: L4 Radar Ground Station as exhibited at the AWM note that tent construction. Source: Author.

Society Matters

Letter to the Editor

Reference the article 'Military and Political Risk in South East Asia 1971-1989' by Ken Marsh, published in volume LXI number 3 dated September 2020.

A nicely written article with much political interest but I dispute the fact that it is a military history article but more a personal opinion.

The RAAF Base at Butterworth was never involved in any violent act and it is extremely unlikely that it ever faced a direct threat.

Ray Alcorn

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