



# THE SECOND WORLD WAR, 1939 – 1945

## 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion AIF

Primary Source: 2/1st Battalion War Diary

### Raising the Battalion

2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion was raised at Victoria Barracks, Sydney, on 16 October 1939 as part of the 16th Brigade of the 6th Australian Division. The 2/1st Battalion was one of the first Infantry Battalions raised as part of the all-volunteer Australian Imperial Force [often referred to as the Second Australian Imperial Force] at the start of World War II. The Battalion's first Commanding Officer was Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Eather, a former Militia officer.

After formation, a brief period of basic training was undertaken at Ingleburn, New South Wales, before the Battalion embarked for overseas service aboard the SS *Orford* on 10 January 1940.

After sailing via the Suez Canal, the 2/1st Battalion arrived in Egypt on 13 February 1940 and then moved to Palestine where it concentrated with the rest of the 16th Brigade at [Julis](#) near Gaza. In August 1940 the 16th Brigade moved to Egypt for active service with the 6th Australian Division.

### North Africa

2/1st Battalion's first campaign of World War II was the advance from Egypt into eastern Libya in January and February 1941. On 3 January 1941, 2/1st Battalion took part in the first Australian ground action of the war, spearheading the 6th Division's

attack to capture the Italian held stronghold of Bardia.

Striking from the west, the 16th Brigade attacked just after dawn supported by artillery, armour and aircraft. Breaching the wire defences in front of the Italian positions the 2/1st Battalion quickly established a bridgehead for the remainder of 16th Brigade to exploit.

Later in the month, 2/1st Battalion was once again in the vanguard when the 16th Brigade led the 6th Division's assault on the Italian-held port of Tobruk. Following its capture, 2/1st Battalion was left to garrison Tobruk as the Allied advance continued.

### Greece

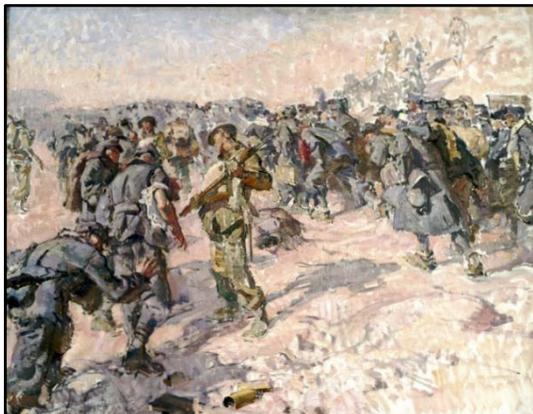
2/1st Battalion left Tobruk on 7 March, ultimately bound for Greece with the rest of 6th Australian Division, amidst concerns of a German invasion.

2/1st Battalion arrived in Greece on 22 March and was quickly deployed to the north of the country to resist the anticipated German attack. The Battalion took up positions at Veria on 7 April but, the Allied forces were quickly overwhelmed and were forced to withdraw south on 12 April, eventually being evacuated by sea from Megara on 25 April. Instead of returning to Egypt, the 2/1st Battalion was landed on the island of Crete, arriving on the 26 April where with 2/11th Battalion it was tasked with the defence



**Above: Bardia (action leading to the fall of Post 11)** by Ivor Hele. Post 11 was the last Italian outpost to fall to the Australians during the battle for Bardia. AWM ART27576

**Below: Italian Prisoners** by Ivor Hele depicts some of the 25,000 Italians captured at Tobruk. AWM ART23700







**Above:** Troops from the 16th Brigade, including some from the 2/1st Battalion, crossing the Owen Stanley Range in October 1942. AWM 027052

**Below: Taking a foxhole, Sanananda, New Guinea** by Roy Hodgkinson depicts three Australian soldiers attacking Japanese positions at Sanananda, New Guinea.

AWM ART 21352



of the airfield at Retimo, On 20 May, the Germans launched an air-borne invasion of Crete. Two Battalions of German parachute troops attacked the airfield and the 2/1st Battalion, now commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Ian Campbell, was heavily engaged as they put up a strong defence during the Battle of Retimo.

Against increasing and overwhelming German forces the Allied evacuation of Crete began on 28 May, but the message to withdraw did not get through to 2/1st and 2/11th Battalions holding the airfield, and they continued to hold until 30 May. At that point, though, they were overcome as the Germans, having been victorious elsewhere on the island, were able to bring in reinforcements – including armour and artillery – and concentrate their efforts against the two Australian Battalions holding Retimo. As food and ammunition ran out, the two Battalions were forced to surrender. Most of the survivors became prisoners of war.

The fighting on Crete cost 2/1st Battalion heavily, with 43 killed, 64 wounded and 511 captured.

The losses on Crete represented the vast majority of the Battalion's personnel, but by June there were about 70 men from the 2/1st in Palestine, some of whom had managed to escape after the fall of Crete and some who had been brought back there after the evacuation from Greece instead of landing on Crete.

The decision was subsequently made to re-form the Battalion, rather than disband it. This was done by transferring 200 experienced men from the 16th Brigade's other two Battalions - the 2/2nd and

2/3rd Battalions – and bringing in 500 newly arrived reinforcements. In October 1941, after 2/1st Battalion had been reformed, it was allocated to garrison duties, taking up defensive positions in northern Syria, which had been captured from the Vichy French during the Syria-Lebanon Campaign that had been fought earlier in the year.

### **Return to Australia**

Japan's entry into the war in December 1941 resulted in plans to bring the 6th Division back to Australia to help bolster the country's defences and on 10 March 1942 2/1st Battalion embarked for home. During the voyage, the Battalion was diverted to Ceylon to defend it from a possible Japanese invasion. The invasion never came and the Battalion finally arrived in Melbourne on 7 August 1942.

### **New Guinea**

After a period of home leave 2/1st Battalion was deployed to New Guinea, arriving there in September 1942

When the Japanese advance was halted at Imita Ridge the tide of the Kokoda Track campaign began to turn back in the favour of the Allies. 2/1st Battalion subsequently joined the Allied pursuit of the withdrawing Japanese north towards their beachheads around Buna-Gona, and during the counter-offensive the 2/1st Battalion were involved in the battles at Eora Creek, Gorari and Sanananda between October and late November 1942. Heavy casualties were suffered by the Battalion during the campaign, with over 60 percent being killed, wounded or evacuated sick.



**Above: Infantry and carriers moving up to Tobruk** by Ivor Helle depicts Australian Infantry with Bren gun carriers moving forward to attack the Italian held port of Tobruk.

AWM ART23364

**Below: The Battle of Retimo** by Vernon Jones. The 2/1st Battalion and 2/11th Battalion were the main defenders of the airfield at Retimo. During the fighting at Retimo 2/1st Battalion suffered heavy casualties with over 500 members being captured. The Battalion was brought back to full strength in Palestine.

AWM ART27776



Subsequent to the Kokoda campaign, the 2/1st Battalion returned to Australia to be reinforced, re-equipped and retrained. At this time they received a large batch of reinforcements from the 49th Battalion, a Militia Battalion that had fought around Sanananda before being disbanded. During this time of reorganisation the Battalion was reduced to the jungle warfare establishment, which saw its authorised strength fall from around 900 men to just over 800.

In December 1944, 16th Brigade including 2/1st Battalion was sent back to New Guinea to take part in operations against an estimated 35,000 Japanese in the Aitape-Wewak region. The campaign lasted until the war ended and saw the 2/1st Battalion join the Allied advance along the coast towards the main Japanese base at Wewak along with the rest of the 16th Brigade.

The Battalion was finally disbanded in December 1945.

### **BATTLE HONOURS**

In 1961 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion was awarded the following Battle Honours for its service during the Second World War:

#### **North Africa**

A campaign honour awarded for participation in operations in North Africa (Egypt, Libya and Tunisia) against the Axis forces. The beginning and end dates of the individual honour are amended to denote the period of service of the unit concerned.

#### **Bardia 1941**

Awarded for participation in the capture of Bardia in the Libyan province of Cyrenacia.

#### **Capture of Tobruk**

Awarded for participation in the capture of the port of Tobruk in the Libyan province of Cyrenacia.

#### **Greece 1941**

A campaign honour awarded for involvement in the operations to defend Greece in 1941.

#### **Mount Olympus**

Awarded for participation in operations in the vicinity of Mount Olympus in northern Greece.

#### **Brallos Pass**

Awarded for participation in the rearguard operations centred on the Brallos Pass in southern Greece.

#### **Middle East 1941-1944**

A campaign honour awarded to units that served on operations in various parts of the Middle East, which was deemed to include Crete, Madagascar, the Aegean and Adriatic Seas, and the Dodecanese islands. The beginning and end dates of the individual honour are amended to denote the period of service of the unit concerned.

#### **Crete**

Campaign honour awarded for participation in the defence of and withdrawal from Crete.



**Above: Two soldiers resting on the Track, Owen Stanley Range** by William Dargie.

AWM ART 22073.

### **Retimo**

Awarded for participation in the defence of Retimo airfield on Crete.

### **South-West Pacific 1942-1945**

A campaign honour awarded to units for participation in operations in the geographic, and command, area known as the South-West Pacific. It included the Dutch East Indies, New Guinea, Papua, New Britain, New Ireland and the northern Solomon Islands.

### **Liberation of Australian New Guinea**

Campaign honour awarded for participation in the operations to clear the Japanese from the Australian-mandated territory of New Guinea

### **Kokoda Trail**

Awarded for participation in operations in Papua along the path that ran between Ower's Corner, outside of Port Moresby, and the village of Wairopi, on the west bank of the Kumusi River. The honour encompasses both the retreat from the north coast of Papua to Imita Ridge (July-September), and the advance from Imitia Ridge back to Wairopi (September-November).

### **Eora Creek-Templeton's Crossing II**

Awarded for participation in the fighting to secure the strongly-defended Japanese rearguard positions at Templeton's Crossing and Eora Creek during the Australian advance forward from Imita Ridge.

### **Oivi-Gorari**

Awarded for participation in the fighting to secure the strongly-defended Japanese rearguard positions

at Oivi and Gorari during the Australian advance forward from Kokoda. These positions were the last major Japanese strongpoints forward of the Kumusi River.

### **Buna-Gona**

Awarded for participation in the operations to destroy the Japanese 'beachheads' in Papua. This honour includes the actions at Buna, Gona and Sanananda.

### **Sanananda Road**

Awarded for participation in the operations along the track between Soputa and Sanananda, known as both the Sanananda Road and the Sanananda Track. This was the site of the main Japanese defences to protect Sanananda and these operations concluded with their abandonment on 14 January 1943.

### **Nambut Ridge**

Awarded for participation in the operations to secure Nambut Ridge (also known as Nambut Hill) on the northern coast of New Guinea, east of Aitape.

### **But-Dagua**

Awarded for participation in the operations mounted to clear the coastal hinterland between the villages of But and Dagua on the northern coast of New Guinea.

### **Hawain River**

Awarded for participation in the coastal advance from the village of Kofi to the village of Hawain, and the subsequent establishment of a bridgehead across the Hawain River.



**Above: Burial of a soldier** by Sali Herman depicts a group of Australian soldiers burying a dead comrade.

AWM ART22891

### **COMMANDING OFFICERS**

The following officers commanded the Battalion:

Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) I. Campbell, CBE, DSO

Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) K.W. Eather, CB, CBE, DSO, ED

Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) P.A. Cullen, AC, CBE, DSO\*, ED

Lieutenant Colonel (later Colonel) T. White.

### **AWARDS AND DECORATIONS**

Distinguished Service Order: Three one with a Bar

Military Cross: Fifteen

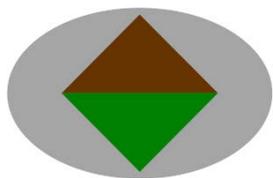
Distinguished Conduct Medal: Seven

Military Medal: Twenty-eight

Mentioned in Dispatches

### **CASUALTIES**

Throughout its service 2/1st Battalion lost 263 men KIA and 418 WIA. 513 members of 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion were captured after the fighting at Retimo on Crete and became prisoners-of-war of the Germans.



## 2/19th Australian Infantry Battalion AIF

Primary source: 2/19th Australian Infantry Battalion War Diary

Secondary source: The Grim Glory – The Official History of 2/19 Battalion AIF

### Raising the Battalion

The 2/19th Infantry Battalion opened its headquarters at Walgrove Camp, west of Sydney, on 15 July 1940 with the Battalion's first Commanding Officer being Lieutenant Colonel DS Maxwell MC

The Battalion's recruits were drawn principally from the Monaro and Riverina regions of Southern New South Wales. They came from Gundagai, Hay, Griffith, Leeton, Narrandera, Wagga Wagga, Lockhart, The Rock, Cootamundra, Temora, Tumut, Young, Grong Grong, Weethalle, Cooma, Bombala and all towns in between. They told yarns bushmen tell, about sheep and drovers, cow-cockies and wheat. Due to this strong country connection it was known unofficially as the "Werriwa Regiment".

It also included a draft of 42 men from Sydney and another smaller draft of 16 from New Guinea. The New Guinea men clung together at first, and their talk was of Rabaul, Salamua, Madang and Bulolo, gold, copra, Burns Philp and Carpenters.

After initial equipment issues, organisation into HQ Company and Rifle Companies it commenced initial individual training at Walgrove and Ingleburn.

### Move to Singapore and Malaya

Further training at Company, Battalion and Brigade level exercises at Bathurst followed before 2/19 Battalion embarked for Singapore on board HMT

*Queen Mary*, as part of the 22nd Brigade of the 8th Australian Division, on 2 February 1941.

Immediately upon its arrival in Singapore on 18 February, the 2/19th moved north to Seremban in southern Malaya, where it commenced training for operation under tropical conditions.

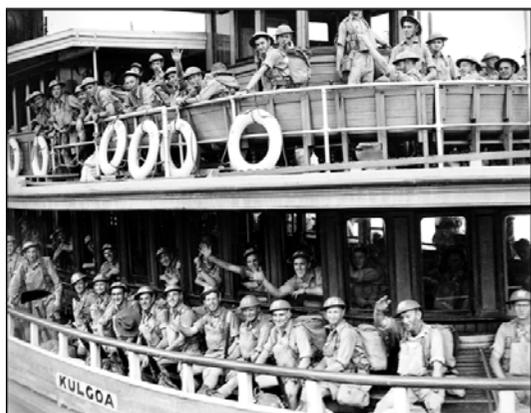
### Change of Commanding Officer

On 31 July 1941 the Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Duncan Maxwell was, promoted to Brigadier to command 27 Brigade. Major Charles Grove Wright Anderson MC was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and assumed command 2/19 Battalion AIF. Major Rowley Oakes, Officer Commanding A Company, was appointed as the Battalion Second-in-Command.

The Battalion remained in the Seremban until early-September, rotating between Seremban and Port Dickson on the western coast. It spent most of September based around the airfield at Kluang and on 3 October began to move to Jemaluang on the east coast. Jemaluang was the site of a vital road junction and, with Japan's involvement in the Second World War becoming increasingly likely, much of the Battalion's time was devoted to preparing defensive positions.

### Japan enters the war and first contact with the enemy

The 2/19th moved into a war footing on the night of 6 December 1941 the evening of the Japanese



### On board the ferry *Kulgoa* for transhipment to the *Queen Mary*

**Top Deck:** Some A Coy chaps including Rumph, Thomas, Cpl McCoy, Stafford, Cousens, O'Brien

**Bottom at windows:** Parfrey, Shaw, White, Hughes, Donaldson, Reid

**Outside:** Lynch, Williams, Bridge, McGowan, Carr, Cordingly, Bryce, Tyson, McNabb, Howe, Bradshaw, Cox.

AWM 005471



**Lieutenant Colonel Charles Grove  
Wright Anderson VC, MC**  
Commanding Officer 2/19th  
Australian Infantry Battalion AIF

This image from page XV of the 3rd Edition of THE GRIM GLORY the Official History of 2/19th Battalion AIF is with the kind permission of 1st/19th Battalion RNSWR Association proudly incorporating 2/19th Battalion Association

invasion of Thailand and at Khota Baru northeast coast of the Malaya. However, a month would pass before the first of its men were in action. On 7 January D Company was detached to form half a special force deployed to delay the Japanese approach to Endau, a town further north along the coast. 17 Platoon commanded by Lieutenant JA Varley was involved in a clash against a much stronger Japanese force on 14 January. In a short sharp running battle Varley's Platoon inflicted a number of casualties on the larger Japanese force. Skilfully he was able to break contact and withdraw the majority of his platoon. In this initial fighting around Endau the Battalion lost six KIA. D Company returned to the Battalion in time for its redeployment to the west coast on 17 January.

#### **Crisis on the West Coast**

With a crisis developing on the west coast 2/19 Battalion was ordered to go to the aid of the beleaguered 2/29th Australian Infantry Battalion then in support of the 45th Indian Brigade near Bakri south of the Muar River.

#### **The fighting at Bakri**

The 2/19th was rushed forward to assist 2/29th Battalion by holding the vital road junction at Bakri holding it throughout 19 January. Despite repeated Japanese attacks from the direction of Muar to dislodge them 2/19th Battalion's resistance was long enough to allow for the withdrawal of the remnants of 2/29th Battalion and the 45th Indian Brigade from the direction of Muar.

However, the Japanese had already outflanked the 2/19th's position, and on the morning of 20 January

a torturous withdrawal from Bakri towards Parit Sulong commenced. Commanded by LTCOL Charles Anderson this force comprised 2/19th Battalion, the remnants of 2/29th Battalion and of 45th Indian Brigade.

#### **The withdrawal**

Anderson's force managed to fight its way through a succession of Japanese roadblocks, while constantly harassed from the rear and from the air, but was halted by strong positions around the bridge across the Simpang Kiri River at Parit Sulong. With its ammunition exhausted, casualties mounting, and no chance of relief, the force broken up into small groups struck out through the jungle for Yong Peng on the morning of 23 January.

#### **The massacre**

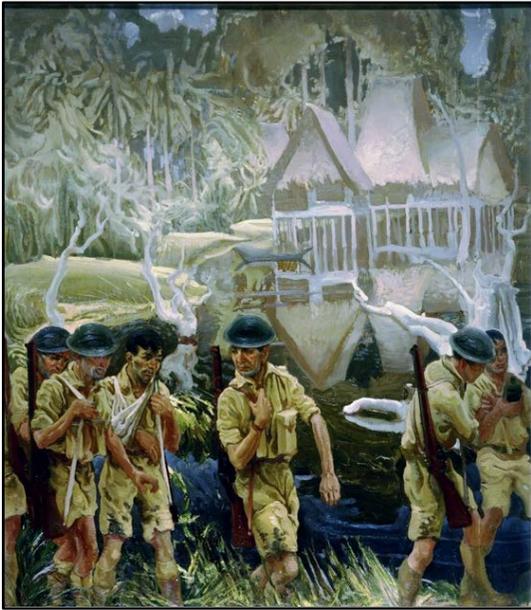
Sadly, Anderson was forced to leave its wounded and sick behind expecting they would be treated humanely by the Japanese. Unfortunately the Japanese in a most despicable act of savagery and cowardice massacred those left behind.

#### **Recognition of valour**

For his courage and leadership throughout the action, 2/19th's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Anderson MC, was awarded the Victoria Cross.

#### **Rebuilding the Battalion**

Only 271 members of 2/19th Battalion were mustered at Yong Peng and withdrawn to Johore Bahru. There, on 26 January the Battalion received 650 fresh reinforcements, very few of whom had any individual training and almost no training at the



**Above: Withdrawal from Parit Sulong** by Murray Griffin depicts a small group of Australian soldiers making their way back to Yong Peng after the bitter fighting from Bakri to Parit Sulong.

AWM ART26529

Section, Platoon or Company level. A hasty period of reorganisation and training commenced.

### **The move to Singapore Island**

2/19th Battalion crossed onto Singapore Island on 31 January and took up defensive positions on the left of the 22nd Brigade's sector on the island's west coast. The wide frontage it was required to cover, however, meant its platoons and sections had to be widely dispersed with little opportunity to provide mutual support to flanking companies.

### **Change of command**

On the morning of 8 February 1942 the much revered and respected LTCOL CGW Anderson was ordered to hospital and left the Battalion. LTCOL AE Robertson was placed in command and in a misguided effort to enforce his will over his new command began an ill-advised reorganisation of the Battalion's defences which would have grave consequences in the ensuing battle.

### **The Japanese attack**

When the Japanese launched their invasion of Singapore Island on the night of 8 February the 2/19th Battalion defences were in the path of the Japanese 18th Division axis of attack. The Japanese, in such overwhelming numbers, easily infiltrated the Battalion's positions and the battle degenerated into vicious scattered minor engagements in the dark. Like most Australian units involved, 2/19th Battalion was forced into a desperate withdrawal.

Despite attempts to reorganise the survivors into cohesive fighting elements which would allow

resistance to continue the order was given by General Percival that all resistance should cease.

### **The surrender**

The defenders of Singapore including the survivors of 2/19th Battalion eventually surrendered on the outskirts of Singapore city on the night of 15 February 1942

### **Imprisonment, slavery and ill treatment**

Initially imprisoned in the sprawling Changi prisoner of war camp, it was not long before members of the 2/19th Battalion were allocated to external work parties. The largest of these groups was D Force, which was sent to work on the Burma-Thailand railway.

Lesser numbers were dispatched with other parties bound for the railway and to camps in Borneo, Japan, French Indochina, Java, Sumatra, and Malaya. The senior Officers were removed from their commands and were imprisoned in Formosa, Korea and Manchuria.

The survivors suffered three and a half years of brutal treatment, beatings, starvation and lack of proper medical care at the hands of the Japanese captors and their even more brutal Korean guards.

### **Japan surrenders and repatriation begins**

Eventually after the non-conditional surrender of Japan the surviving prisoners were liberated from late-August 1945 onwards and began returning to Australia.



### **GOING HOME**

. Lieutenant CR Bayliss of 2/19th Battalion being transported to the Australian Hospital Ship *Wanganella* by a USN Submarine Chaser. Kuching, Sarawak, Borneo, September 13 1945

AWM 118497

### **Disbandment**

The 2/19th was formally disbanded later in 1945, having suffered the highest casualties of any Australian Army unit during the Second World War.

After the completion of the administrative wind up 2/19 was finally removed from the Order of Battle of AIF on 1 May 1947.

### **CASUALTIES**

2/19th Australian Infantry Battalion has the grim distinction of suffering more casualties than any other Australian Infantry Battalion during the Second World War. Appendix 5 of the 3rd Edition of *The Official History of 2/19 Battalion AIF – THE GRIM GLORY* page 648 lists the following detail:

Killed in action: 21 Officers and 441 Other Ranks.  
Died while prisoners of war: Four Officers and 334 Other Ranks. One Other Rank accidentally killed.  
Total 801.

Wounded in action 23 Officers and 677 Other Ranks. Total 700.

### **BATTLE HONOURS**

#### **Malaya 1941-1942**

For operations against the Japanese in Malaya, Sumatra and Java from 8th December 1941 until the final capitulation in Java on 12th March 1942.

#### **Johore**

Awarded for participation in operations in Johore, the southern state of Malaya. Having quickly

advanced down the Malaya Peninsula, Australian, British, and Indian troops fought a series of delaying and rearguard actions, as they withdrew to Singapore Island. The battle honour includes the ambushes at Gemas (14–15 January 1942) and Jemaluang (26–27 January 1942), and the bitter fighting at Muar (16–23 January 1942).

### **Singapore Island**

This battle honour was awarded for participation in the defence of Singapore Island.

### **The Muar**

Awarded for participation in the engagements in the Muar area, as well as the subsequent fighting withdrawal by Australian and Indian troops to Simpang Jeram and Parit Sulong.

### **COMMANDING OFFICERS**

Lieutenant Colonel Duncan Maxwell MC

Lieutenant Colonel Charles Grove Wright Anderson VC, MC

Lieutenant Colonel Andre Esmond Robertson

**AWARDS AND DECORATIONS** Victoria Cross: One

Military Cross: Two

Military Medal: Three

Member of the Order of the British Empire: Three

Mention in Despatches: Seven

## 1st/45th Australian Infantry Battalion (Militia)

Primary source: 1st/45 Australian Infantry Battalion War Diary December 1941 to 1944.

Secondary source: The Lineage of the Australian Army by Alfred N. Festberg

### 1ST AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BATTALION – 1939 to 1942

Out the outbreak of the Second World War 1st Battalion still linked with 19th Battalion was tasked to patrol and secure the Sydney eastern suburb beaches in preparation against a Japanese invasion.

In 1941 1st Battalion was unlinked from 19th Battalion and was re-designated as 1st Australian Infantry Battalion and placed under command of 31st Australian Infantry Brigade.

The Battalion remained in the Greater Sydney Metropolitan area and was eventually called up for full-time service as a result of Japans entry into the Second World War.

For most of December 1941 the Battalion was camped at the Royal Agricultural Showgrounds at Moore Park.

On 26 December the 1st Battalion War Diary notes that the Battalion moved to “Battle Stations” along the Coastal Area and commenced construction of barbed wire entanglements and their repair and maintenance to when damaged by rough seas.

The beach defences stretched from North Bondi through Nelsons Bay, Coogee, Maroubra, Little Bay, Little Congwong, Congwong, Botany, Frenchman’s Bay, Malabar, Bondi, Tamarama, Bronte, Long Bay and Little Bay. These activities continued from December until March 1942.

In late March 1st Australian Infantry Battalion moved to Narellan where it commenced “elementary training” in both offensive and defensive operations and engaged in both day and night exercises.

### Death of Lieutenant AH Hartnett

On 16 April 1942 N35009 Lieutenant Athol Harnett Dawson was accidentally shot with a revolver while on duty at Battalion HQ. He died at Ingleburn Military Hospital on 18 April and was cremated with a full Military Funeral Service – he was 22 years of age. He is commemorated at the Forces Memorial Wall Niche 19SB, Rookwood Crematorium, Rookwood, Sydney, NSW and on Panel 64, Commemorative Area, AWM, Canberra, ACT.

### Relocated to Wiley Park

On 2 June 1942 the Battalion was relocated to Fenwick Estate at Wiley Park from where it continued training and took part in a rotating series of beach patrols. The Battalion War Diary records that on the night of 7-8 June 1942 a Japanese submarine shelled the eastern suburbs of Sydney which caused considerable concern for not only the Military Authorities but the local civilian population.

### Now under command of 9th Australian Infantry Brigade

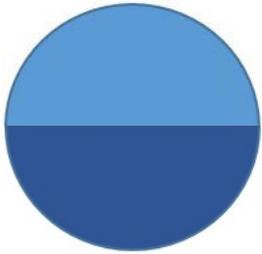
On 26 August 1942 1st Australian Infantry Battalion was removed from under command 31 Australian



**Below:** Children playing in a hole caused by one of four shells from Japanese submarine I24 which fired on Sydney’s Eastern Suburbs on 8th of June 1942.

AWM 012589





Infantry Brigade and place under command of 9th Australian Infantry Brigade.

### **45TH AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BATTALION – 1939 TO 1942**

At the outbreak of World War II 45th Australian Infantry Battalion (The St George Regiment) was called upon to guard vulnerable points in the La Perouse area but suffered a loss of manpower as its members joined the AIF and RAAF. When Japan entered into the war 45th Battalion was mobilised onto full-time duty and was given responsibility for the defence of the Cronulla area. Suffering further manpower losses in 1942 on the 18th September 1942 45th Battalion was amalgamated with the 1st Australian Infantry Battalion and re-designated as 1st/45th Australian Infantry Battalion.

### **1ST/45TH AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BATTALION – 1942 to 1944**

#### **Further movements**

On 25 October the amalgamated 1st/45th Battalion moved to St Ives on the North shore where the Battalion was involved in the construction of a camp at North Turramurra. On 25 November 1st/45th Battalion moved to Narellan to establish a new camp and start on a training syllabus which emphasised weapons training and range practices. This regime continued until 17 February 1943 when the Battalion moved to Balgownie Camp near Wollongong where it continued in training with an emphasis on Anti-Aircraft exercises. There was opportunity for swimming parades at Gairie and for blackberry picking parades for all messes. The

officers were involved in a number of TEWTS in particular the “advance to contact” phase of war.

The time at Balgownie came to an end when 1st/45th Battalion moved a short distance to Warrawong on 31 August 1943. The Battalion stayed at Warrawong until it moved back to the camp at Narellan on 31 December 1943. It stayed at Narellan until 29 January 1944 when it was moved back towards Sydney to accommodation at Canterbury Racetrack.

#### **Ship loading duties**

From Canterbury on a daily basis the Battalion supplied a number of work parties involved in wharf duties and loading ships at Walsh Bay, Pyrmont, Darling Harbour, Circular Quay and Woolloomooloo. These ship-loading duties continued throughout February and March until the Battalion was relieved by 13th/33rd Australian Infantry Battalion in late April.

The Main Body then moved back to Narellan on 29 April 1944 where it was engaged in normal camp administrative duties of a sedentary nature as the Battalion was wound down with its members being transferred to other units or as volunteer reinforcements into AIF Battalions.

#### **Disbandment**

In the *Lineage of the Australian Army* by noted Army Historian Alfred N Festberg the author contends that 1st/45th Australian Infantry Battalion was disbanded on 6th April 1944. However, the Battalion’s War Diary tells a different story as diary entries continue to indicate that it continued on as a



**Above:** Australian Militia undergoing anti-aircraft training with a Vickers Machine Gun mounted for anti-aircraft fire in the Sydney defence systems during the Second World War.

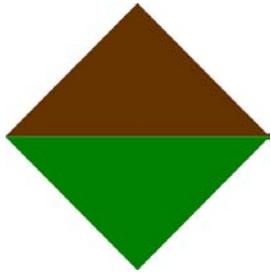
AWM 040658

unit under the Administrative Command of Major EJ Gerling who continued to publish Routine Orders until 24 July 1944.

The final entry into the 1st/45th Australian Infantry Battalion War Diary dated 28 July 1944 reads: *"The final wind up and disposal of records is now being carried out by the Adjutant who is attached to 20/34*

*Battalion pending posting. It is anticipated that all records will be filed at D.R.O by 12 August 1944.*

It appears that while the actual date it was removed from the Australian Army Order of Battle is not entirely clear it may be assumed that 1st/45th Infantry Battalion no longer existed after 31 July 1944.



# 19th Australian Infantry Battalion AIF

## Second World War

At the start of the Second World War 19th Battalion remained linked with 1st Battalion designated as 1st/19th Battalion. In 1941 it was unlinked with 1st Battalion then linked with 20th Battalion and designated 20th/19th Battalion. Later that year it was unlinked from 20th/19th Battalion and redesignated as 19th Infantry Battalion with part of the Battalion being transferred to the Darwin Defences (Darwin Mobile Force) as the Darwin Infantry Battalion.

## At Darwin

The Darwin Mobile Force was disbanded and as a consequence 19th Infantry Battalion received a cadre of experienced regular former non-commissioned officers who were subsequently commissioned and the Darwin Infantry Battalion was redesignated as 19th Infantry Battalion (The South Sydney Regiment). Shortly after it was redesignated as 19th Australian Infantry Battalion AIF when it was accepted into the AIF.

During their time as part of the Darwin garrison, the 19th Battalion provided a significant part of the Army's contribution to the defence of Darwin against Japanese attacks; they remained there until September 1942 when they were relieved by troops from the 10th/48th Battalion, which had been transferred to Darwin from New South Wales.

## Back to NSW and more training

After their relief, the 19th was transported to Mt Isa and then flown back to Narellan where the

troops were given a long period of leave. Upon reorganising in October, the Battalion was re-equipped and a period of training around the Nepean River followed. Consisting of about 750 personnel, the 19th was re-assigned to the 28th Brigade, along with the 20th and 34th Battalions. In November, the 19th moved to a training camp near Newcastle where they received amphibious training alongside US personnel to become a demonstration unit for the Joint Overseas Operational Training School.

## New Guinea

Afterwards, the Battalion moved to Woodford, Queensland, where jungle training was undertaken. In April 1943, the 19th Battalion moved to Gordonvale and was re-assigned to the 6th Brigade. In July it deployed to the Buna area in New Guinea where it was used on defensive duties carrying out patrols and providing labour for work parties. In late May 1944, the Battalion was transported aboard the HMAT *Duntroon* to Lae, occupying positions around Buolo.

## New Britain

In December 1944, the Battalion was sent to New Britain, embarking upon the transport *Francis J. Parkman*, and over the course of the next five months they undertook a campaign of harassment operations to keep the large number of Japanese forces stationed there off balance. Using barges to advance up the coast towards the Gazelle Peninsula, the 19th Battalion relieved the 14th/32nd Battalion and on 28 February 1945



**Above:** 19th Battalion soldiers on the deck of the troopship *Francis Parkman* waiting for the order to go ashore at Jacquinot Bay, New Britain 15 December 1944.

AWM 084311



**Above:** A patrol from C Company 19th Battalion about to head for the ridges behind the Waitavalo plantation on 16 March 1945.

AWM 079864

crossed the Mevelo River, whereupon they began advancing towards the Wulwut River. At this point they came up against the forward Japanese defensive positions that had been dug-in along the Waitavalo ridge, which lay behind the Wulwut and overlooked the Waitavalo and Tol plantations. On 5 March, the Battalion attempted to cross the river, but was initially turned back by intense Japanese mortar and machine-gun fire. However, a second attempt later in the day was successful.

After which, the 19th Battalion subsequently captured a number of Japanese positions before moving on to Bacon Hill, the crest of the ridge where the main Japanese defensive position was located. At this point they were relieved by the 14th/32nd Battalion.

The Australians subsequently secured a position along a line between Wide Bay and Open Bay, at which point they changed to a defensive posture, designed to keep the Japanese bottled up on the Gazelle Peninsula. As a result, the Battalion took no further part in major offensive operations.

#### **Home to Australia and disbandment**

In April 1945, the Battalion was brought back to Australia in order to prepare for further operations.

In July, however, as it became clear that the war was about to end the 19th Australian Infantry Battalion was disbanded as it became surplus to Australia's military requirements.

#### **CASUALTIES**

During the course of the war 19th Battalion suffered a total of 69 casualties, of which 18 were KIA or

died on active service. The remainder were wounded in action, injured or evacuated due to disease or illness.

#### **AWARDS AND DECORATIONS**

Members of 19th Australian Infantry Battalion AIF received the following decorations for their service:

Officer of the Order of the British Empire: One.

Military Cross: Four.

Military Medal: Two. Mention in Despatches: Thirteen

#### **BATTLE HONOURS**

##### **South-West Pacific 1945**

A theatre honour awarded to units for participation in operations in the geographic and command area known as the south-west Pacific.

It included the Dutch East Indies, New Guinea, Papua, New Britain, New Ireland, and the northern Solomon Islands.

##### **Liberation of Australian New Guinea**

Campaign honour awarded for participation in the operations to clear the Japanese from the Australian-mandated territory of New Guinea

##### **Waitavolo**

Awarded for participation in the offensive operations that led to the capture of a series of Japanese positions in the Waitavolo area, east of the Wulwut River, near Henry Reid Bay, part of Wide Bay, New Britain.