



---

## **New Guinea action : a pictorial record of the Allied advance on the world's most treacherous battlefield**

AUTHOR(S)

Australia Dept. of Information

PUBLICATION DATE

01-01-1944

HANDLE

[10536/DRO/DU:30096840](#)

Downloaded from Deakin University's Figshare repository

Deakin University CRICOS Provider Code: 00113B



# NEW GUINEA

*Action*

PRICE 1/6





SPALF 940.5426  
Aus/Nga

## PORT MORESBY

Picturesque Port Moresby (below), bastion of the South-West Pacific defence, and gateway of the New Guinea advance, is chief port and seat of administration of the Territory of Papua.

The Territory is not only strategically vital, but it is a valuable possession whose wealth is incalculable. It is rich in minerals—gold, copper, tin, lead, zinc, osmiridium, etc., have been found. Petroleum, also, has been traced, and experts expect that payable fields exist. Rubber, copra, hemp, sugar, and other tropical products thrive, and the fast flowing rivers offer great possibilities for hydro-electric development.

On September 16, 1942, a Japanese column reached Ioribaiwa, only about 30 miles from Moresby, and it seemed likely that this rich possession would be lost, and the mainland of Australia gravely menaced. But our troops, in the face of terrific difficulties, recaptured Ioribaiwa on Sept. 29, and made the epic trek over the precipitous Owen Stanley Ranges, pushing and prodding the Japs across the peninsula, and beginning the first phase of the victorious New Guinea action.

On Right—Bomb bursts around a Jap freighter lying at anchor in Wewak harbour.





# NEW GUINEA *Action*

A pictorial record of the  
Allied advance on the  
world's most treacherous  
battlefield.

## Beating the Jungle and the Jap

For centuries the huge island of New Guinea slumbered in the moist tropic heat, unknown to all save a handful of prospectors, planters, and explorers . . . then suddenly, it sprang into the news. Its valleys and mountains became hallowed ground, glorified by the blood and bravery of Australian and Allied troops.

This wild, mysterious country seemed in itself to resent the intrusion of the soldiers. It fought them—fought them with evil-smelling swamps and awful, treachy mud; fought them with towering peaks and tortuous rivers; with "wait-a-while" vines, sword-sharp and cruelly curved; with malarial mosquitoes that caused more casualties than the enemy. It fought them, step by step, as our troops advanced along the treacherous travesty of tracks, enduring hardships unknown in any other campaign. But they carried their gear, hacked steps up the ridges, sweated as they man-handled the heavy guns through country where it seemed impossible for men to travel . . . AND BEAT THE JAP.

Our boys had two grim foes to conquer: New Guinea and the Japanese—nature at its cruellest and mankind at its meanest. But even this formidable combination could not stop the victorious advance of soldiers who sang as they went, joked as they fought, and took unbelievable hardships in their stride.

Photographs used in this publication were taken by  
THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION  
(MILITARY HISTORY SECTION (S.D.9),  
General Staff, L.H.Q.)

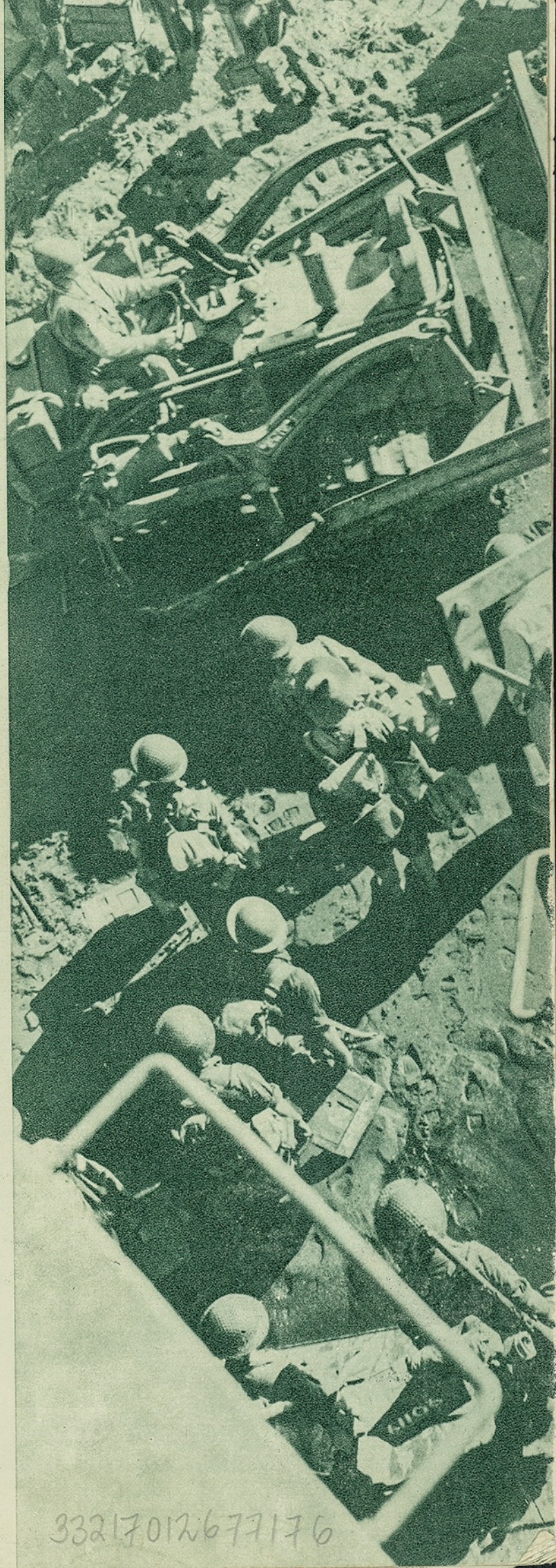
U.S. 5TH ARMY AIR FORCE  
U.S. ARMY SIGNAL CORPS

and their valued assistance and co-operation is gratefully  
acknowledged.

Enquiries regarding prints of any photographs appearing in  
these pages should be addressed to:

THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION  
84 Pitt Street, Sydney.

Right: Landing near Lae—from the open bow of a beach landing craft, soldiers file on the beach north west of Lae, while a busy bulldozer sets off to start building a road through the jungle.



33217012677176



# FORWARD FROM SANANANDA

From Port Moresby, the Allied advance led over the Owen Stanleys, Kokoda, Oivi, to Buna and Sanananda. Salamaua and Lae were next in line, but although not far away as a bomber flies, miles of merciless mud and mountain torrents and incredibly wild country lay between.

A force of Australians had been flown to Wau, and then began a nightmare march along jungle tracks that climbed to cloud level, then dropped suddenly to dank valleys, tracks so steep that steps, sometimes as many as 1,000, had to be cut into the mountainsides, so rough that for miles it was laced overhead by the roots of myriad trees. Eventually the troops reached Mubo, where they were met by Americans who had come by sea to Nassau Bay, 12 miles south of Salamaua.

On September 16, 1943, the airfield was captured, and the following day Salamaua itself fell, having been in Japanese hands since March 8, 1942.

## G.H.Q. COMMUNIQUE

Aug. 23: With support from the air our ground forces were pressing on towards Salamaua and had gained control of ridge overlooking airfield.

Aug. 30: Sharp fighting at Salamaua with frequent counter attacks by the enemy.

Sept. 13: Possession gained of Salamaua airdrome, by southern force.

Sept. 14: Salamaua captured and remnants of enemy fleeing in the hills.



In pouring rain Sgt. Gordon Ayres of Shepparton, Vic., helps a wounded mate across a creek to an advanced dressing station.



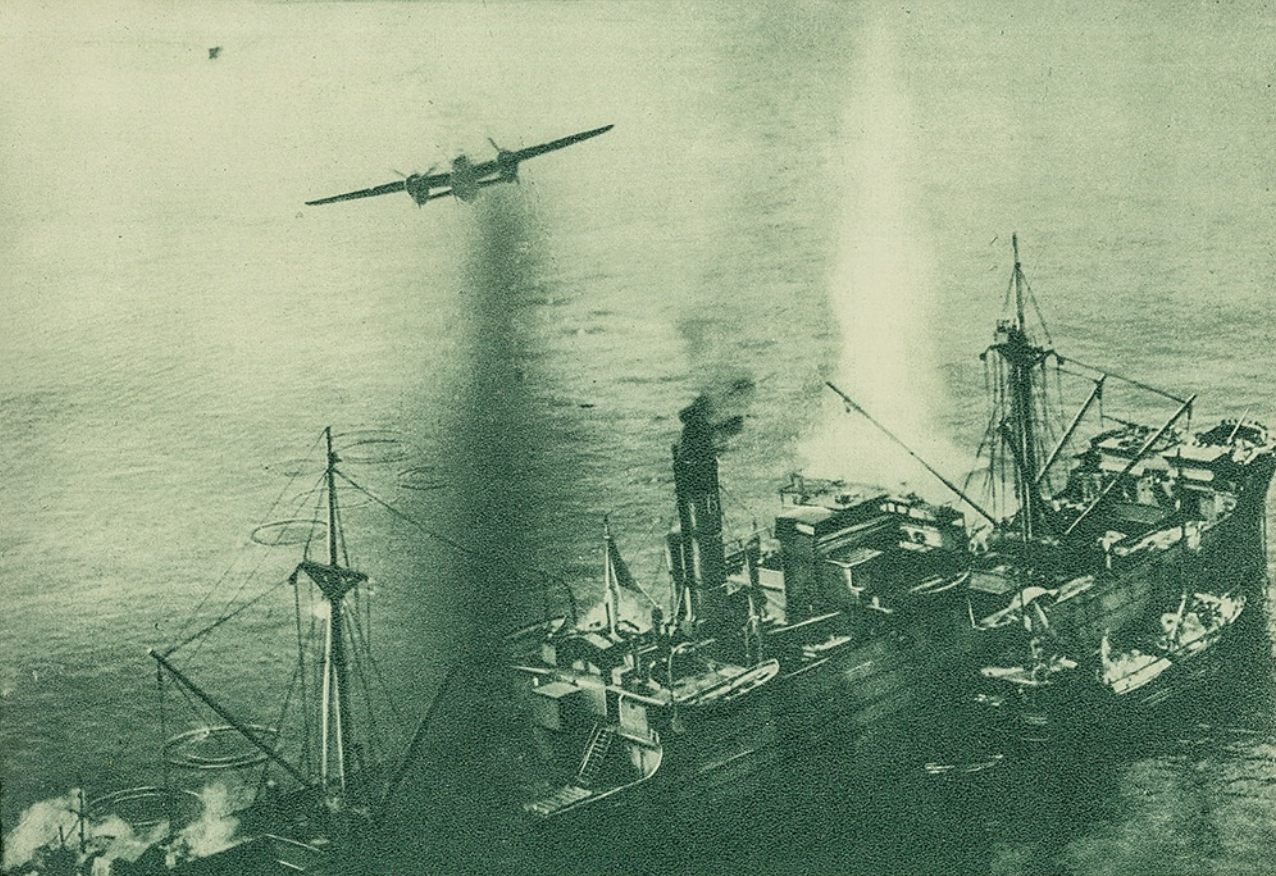
Weapons change hands . . . From this captured Jap mountain gun we use captured Jap ammunition to fire at the retreating enemy.



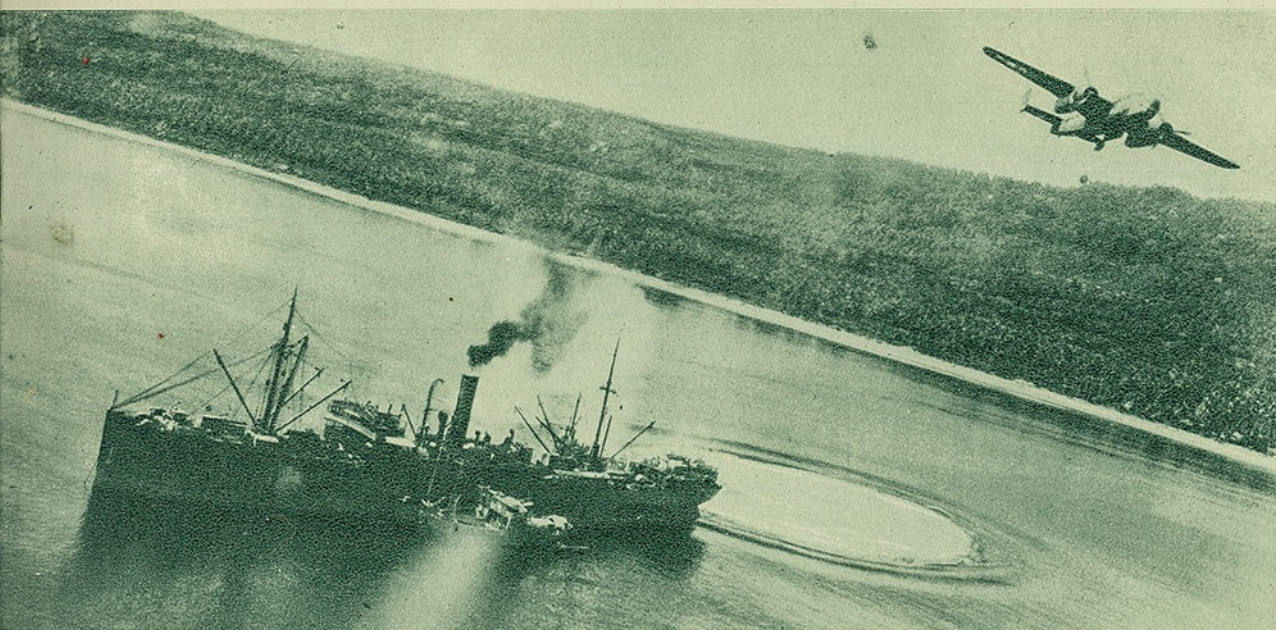
High in the mountains, with rain and mist as a sombre background, Father English conducts a burial service for three Australians killed in the advance on Timbered Knoll, Salamaua.

Fuzzy-wuzzies carry a wounded Digger down steep Buosi Ridge. The track was just slippery red mud. It took 6 hrs. to climb the 2,500ft. to the Ridge; 1½ hrs. to descend.





Close view of Japanese freighter as U.S. medium bomber makes an approach prior to releasing its bomb load on the doomed vessel.



The bomber delivers its load. Note anti-aircraft shell burst near plane. Tied to ship are small loading lighters used to carry supplies to shore.



Aerial view of Wewak, much blasted Japanese base on the north coast of New Guinea.

## WEWAK

Meanwhile, as part of the Allied strategy, Trobriand Islands had been bloodlessly captured, and heavy air attacks made on Wewak, important Jap base to the north of Lae. Shipping, planes, and installations were consistently strafed, tremendous damage was done, and enemy supply lines considerably disorganised, thereby threatening his whole perimeter of defence.

These dramatic pictures show U.S. medium bombers coming in at a very low level to attack enemy freighters in Wewak Harbour.

### G.H.Q. COMMUNIQUE.

- Aug. 18. Heavy air attack on Wewak surprising over 225 enemy planes on ground.
- Aug. 19. Completion of Wewak destruction.
- Aug. 22. Another attack on Wewak which enemy continues to reinforce, despite his losses.
- Sept. 1. As result of heavy losses, enemy air strength being withdrawn from Wewak to rear airdromes.

## BEHIND THE LINES OF THE COMMUNIQUE

Official Communiques are couched in language bald and terse as a petty cash docket. There is no waste of words, no heroics and fanfare.

"Our heavy units bombed the aerodrome at —, destroying 30 planes on the ground and setting fire to fuel dumps." That is a typical General Headquarters communique, but think what lies behind it:—The planes roaring down the runway to take-off in the half light; the flight high over the dense jungle; the objective coming into view, and the sudden swoop over the target; "Bombs away" as the deadly cargo falls from the plane to the drome below; the dense smoke from the fires spiralling upwards; the ack-ack guns popping and the sky studded with flak; then the attack by enemy planes; the running fight high in the clouds; the long run home in the crippled plane, landing with hardly a thimbleful of gas to spare . . .

Between the lines of each cryptic communique is hidden a story of enterprise and endurance, valor and sacrifice.

In these pages a digest of the communiques is quoted from time to time, providing a running commentary of Allied progress.



# Landing Near Lae

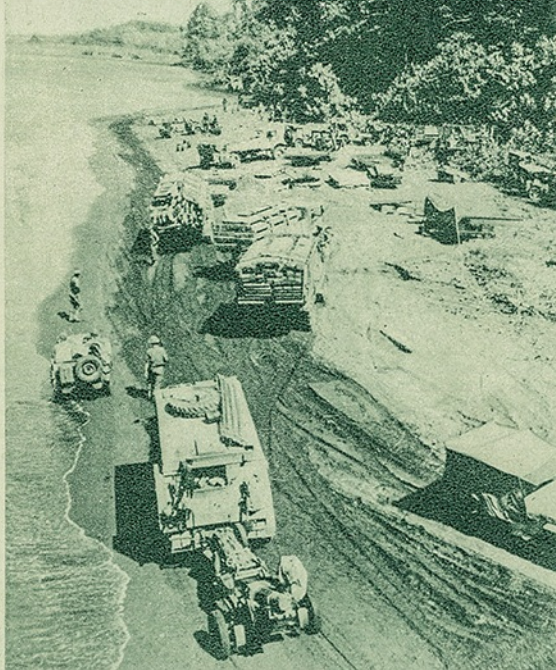
In the largest amphibious operation yet undertaken in the South-West Pacific, and in a boldly conceived and well timed attack, Australians landed in force at Huon Gulf, north east of Lae, at 6.30 a.m. on September 6, 1943.

As the rising sun touched the hilltops, great green barges disgorged through their snub noses columns of green-clad troops, and within three quarters of an hour, jeeps, bulldozers, caterpillar tractors, road graders, and trucks, were streaming inland through the jungle towards Lae.

The operation went like clock-work, the Navy protected the busy landing barges, while the Air Force provided an overwhelming umbrella overhead. The Japs were taken completely by surprise—and Lae, the base which they had risked the ill-fated Bismarck Sea convoy to reinforce—was soon to be captured.

## G.H.Q. COMMUNIQUE

- Sept. 6. Under air and naval cover large force troops landed north-east of Lae, cutting enemy's lines of communication with Finschhafen.
- Sept. 9. Lae sea-borne troops advancing against slight opposition.
- Sept. 10. North-eastern force at Busu River within two miles Mahlang aerodrome at Lae.

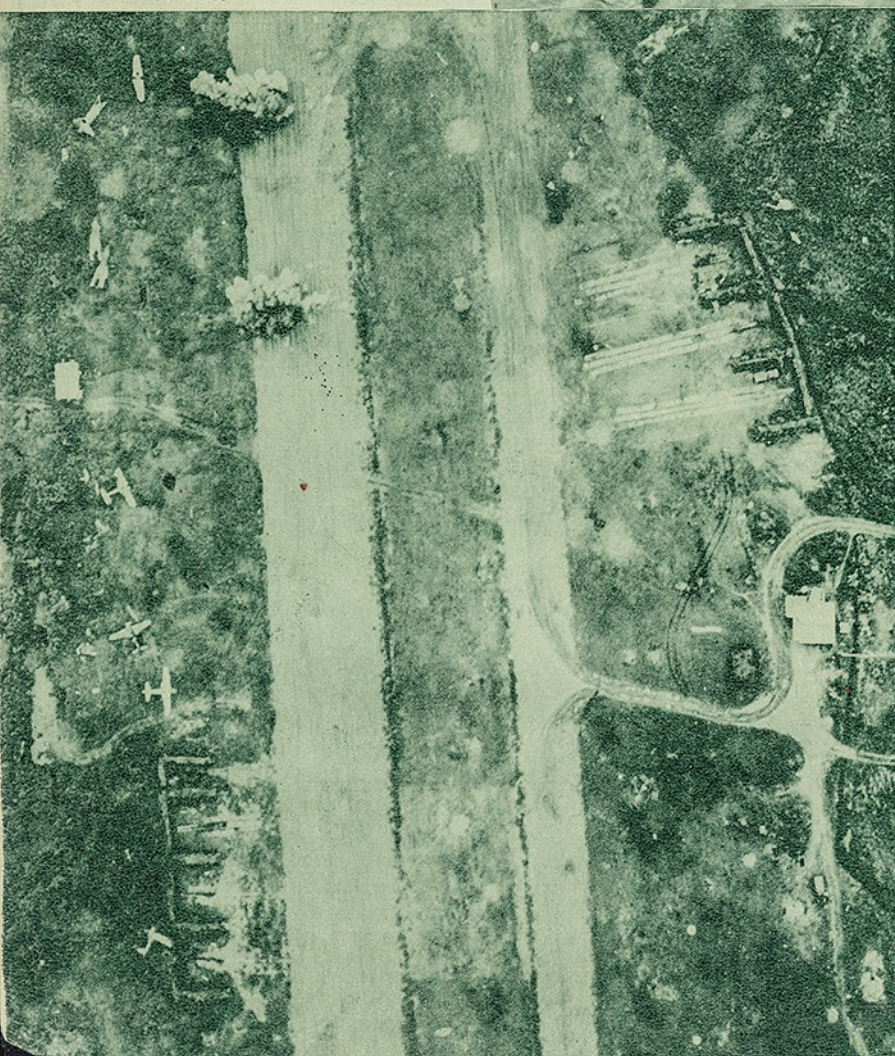


An artillery tractor and gun follow well-laden trucks inland from the narrow beach of black sand.



A hive of industry: in the foreground Pioneers place iron mesh on the soft sand to facilitate passage of vehicles along the beach, while landing craft drop soldiers, trucks, jeeps.

An hour earlier there was no sign of war—now men, material and equipment move forward fast on the heels of Australian troops forcing their way towards Lae.



Bombs burst on the runway at Lae, as this important Jap base is being "softened up" by the Air Force.

Picture taken 70 minutes after the landing. Pioneers cut tree trunks to build a road through wild jungle country.





Ah, creme de la dixie! A Staff Sergeant inspects the food.



Typical of the terrible terrain—these boys watch the result of smoke shells finding the range.



A welcome wash in the Busu River, while an Army truck crosses a newly-built bridge.



Engineers erect a pontoon bridge across one of the many rivers.



Hanging out the washing near a native hut at Alukie village.

## BUSU RIVER AREA

The eastern seaborne division advanced steadily along the Busu River area from Huon Gulf towards Lae. It was tough going. The swollen rivers, racing seawards, were a continual obstacle, and thick forests and tangled undergrowths hampered the progress. But once again our troops proved resolute, resourceful and wonderfully adaptable.

Converging on Lae, also, was a western advance from the Markham Valley, where paratroops had captured Nadzab airfield, enabling ground troops to be flown in.



# Paratroops

The most thrilling and spectacular episode in the New Guinea campaign was the parachute descent on Nadzab, in the Markham Valley west of Lae. This completed the ring around the Lae-Salamaua area, and trapped the remnants of four Japanese divisions.

American paratroops and Australian artillerymen jumped from a lower altitude than ever attempted before in battle, and this was the first time in the South-West Pacific war that a parachute landing had been attempted.

Medium and heavy bombers came over first, above them flew a blanket of fighters. Two planes came low, laying a smoke screen, and then scores of giant transport planes came in, suddenly a myriad of parachutes dotted the sky, billowing earthwards . . . and the affair was completed in a little over a minute from the time the first troops jumped until the last man landed. Some of the Australians were jumping for the first time—a valiant feat that ranks with any exploit of the war.

The suddenness and boldness of the action bewildered the enemy. Once again Nippon was caught napping.

## G.H.Q. COMMUNIQUE

Sept. 7. Paratroops in force seized western inland approaches along Markham Valley. Estimated that, combined with sea landing, this cut off Jap force which had maximum strength 20,000 at beginning.

Sept. 8. Nadzab airfield seized by paratroops. Ground reinforcements being flown in.



Awaiting the order to join the giant transport planes lined up ready to take them to Markham Valley, troops have a final check over of chutes and equipment.



Prior to the take-off: Gunner Anderson assists Gunner Gribben to don his parachute. Both are Australian artillerymen. Gun parts, dropped by Parachutes, were quickly assembled and ready for action.

Aust. gunners, many of whom jumped for the first time, ready with their chutes and weapons. Their feat ranks with any A.I.F. exploit of the war.



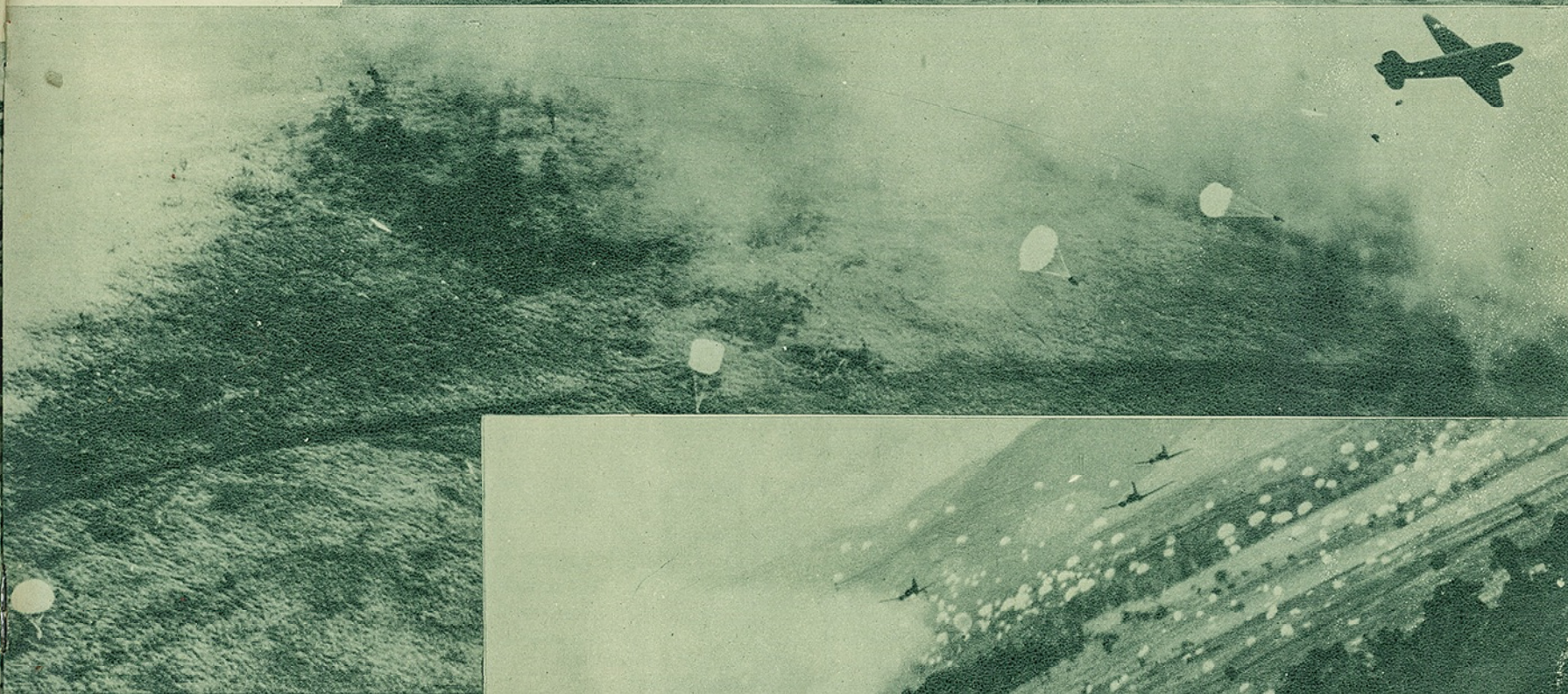




Boston Bombers lay a heavy smoke screen to prepare the way for hundreds of parachutists who dropped a few minutes later.



Through the smoke screen come twelve of the scores of transport planes used in the manoeuvre.



The various stages of the parachutes opening as they drop is vividly demonstrated in this photograph.

The hills of the Markham Valley make a drop curtain for the scene as hundreds of differently colored parachutes float earthwards.





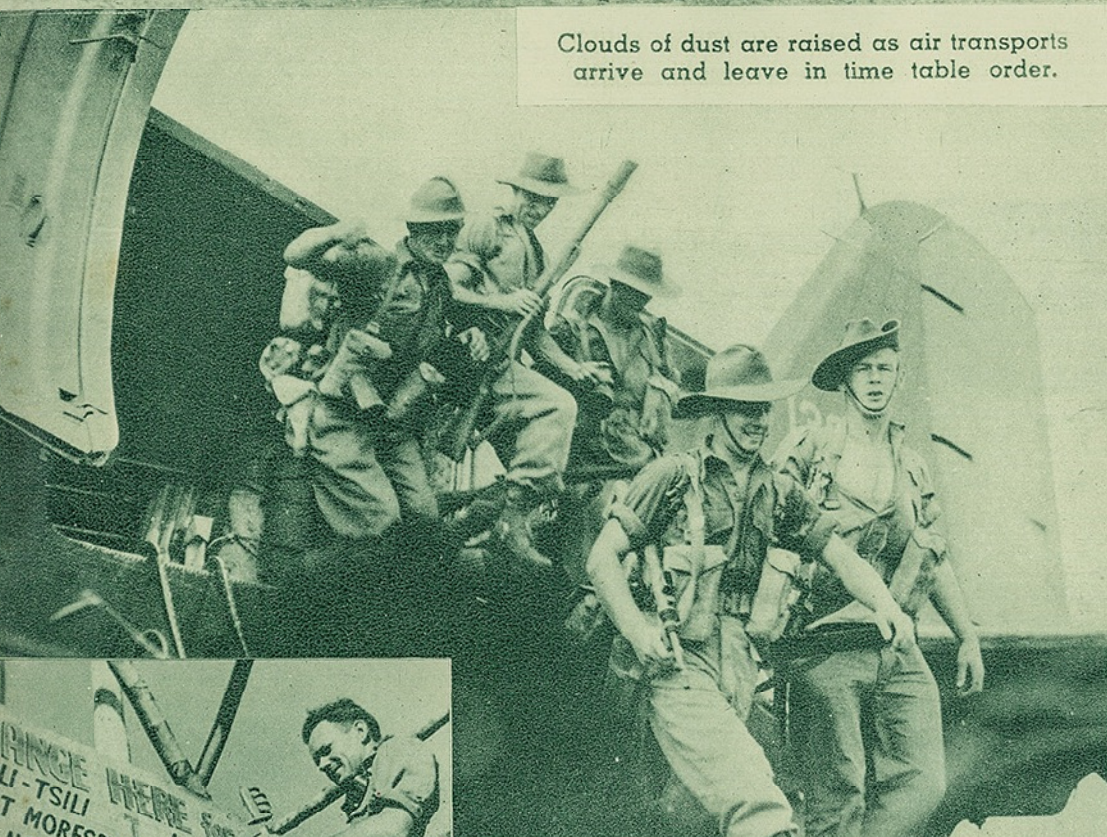
# NADZAB

Engineer units which had come overland, joined the paratroops soon afterwards, and an hour or two later began preparing a landing ground.

Very soon the message went out, "You can bring the planes in," and then commenced a steady stream of transports, carrying men, material, and equipment for the western drive on Lae, and for the advance up the Markham and Ramu Valleys. In the first twenty days after the airstrip at Nadzab was hacked out of the kuni grass, more than two thousand plane loads were put down there, and hour after hour the transports landed at the rate of one a minute.



Clouds of dust are raised as air transports arrive and leave in time table order.

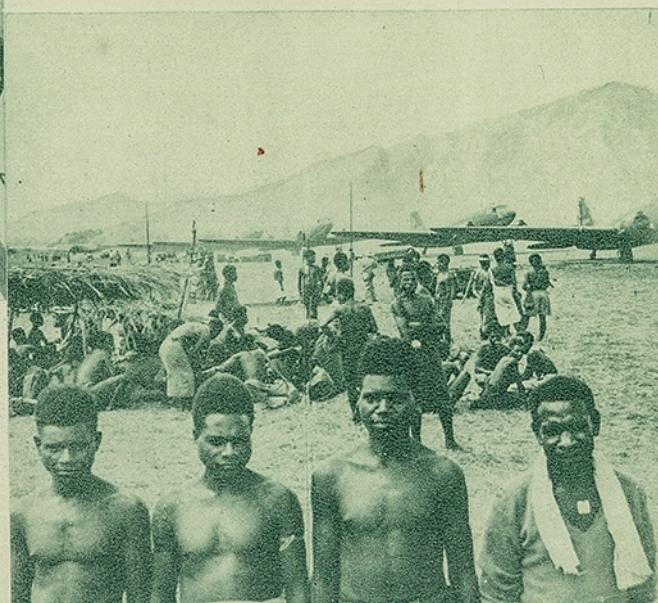


Aussie troops leave a transport plane at Nadzab airstrip, ready for the drive on Lae.



Change here for Tokio and points west . . . a sign post is nailed up at the airfield.

Typical of the type of natives who did such yeoman service in the sweltering heat.



Diggers help a wounded mate along outside Lae.

Slithering through



Calling the platoon roll at a jungle camp. These men inflicted particularly heavy casualties on the enemy.

Part of the constant fight against the jungle—heavy artillery ploughs through the slush.





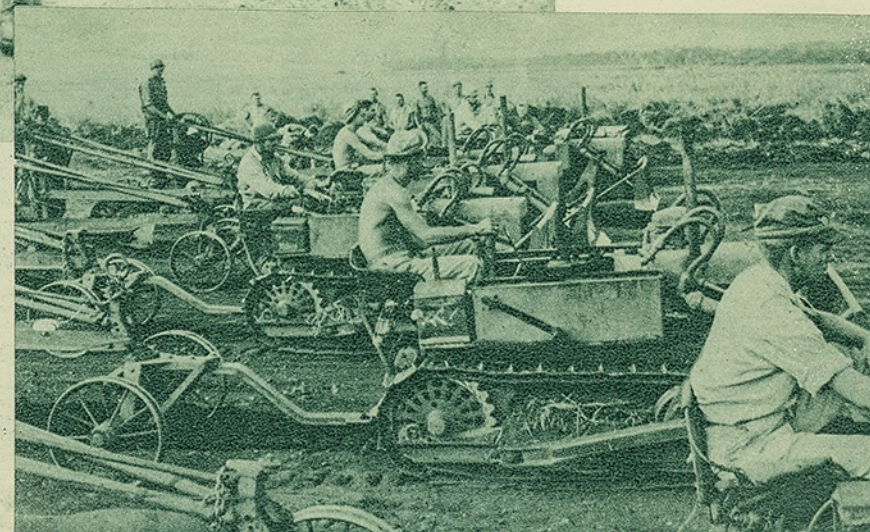


Through the everlasting mud, the injured make their way to the advanced dressing station.



Australian troops enter Lae—the crowning success of months of plotting, plodding, sweat and strife.

The ubiquitous bulldozers played a big part in forming roads for the artillery to traverse.



## Approaching Lae

The two-pronged advance on Lae proceeded "according to plan." The synchronized campaign against Salamaua was now shown to be actually a feint attack, not to be pressed home until the right moment. This was designed to fool the Japanese into believing that the main fighting was to be centred at Salamaua. Reinforcements were rushed in to stem the expected attack. Thus the enemy was taken completely by surprise when the Allies descended in force on Lae.

It was a shrewd, successful, and magnificent bluff.

### G.H.Q. COMMUNIQUE

Sept. 15. At Lae, pushing west from the Busu, north-eastern force captured New Yango. Western forces pushing along Markham Valley.

Sept. 17. Ground forces converging on Lae.



Study in black and white. It's outside Lae and it's washing day.



# FALL OF LAE

The Seventh beat the Ninth Division into Lae by about two hours, and one of the strongest and most fortified positions in N. Guinea was ours.

General Douglas MacArthur, in praising all who took part in the campaign, used these words:

"The conduct of the ground troops was splendid beyond words. The Australian contingent included two of the most famous A.I.F. divisions, who added new lustre to their colors. They are magnificent troops, unsurpassed in the world."

General Sir Thomas Blamey, in a special order of the day, said:

"The capture of Lae is a signal step along the road to victory. Again the superiority of the combined Allied forces has been overwhelmingly demonstrated."

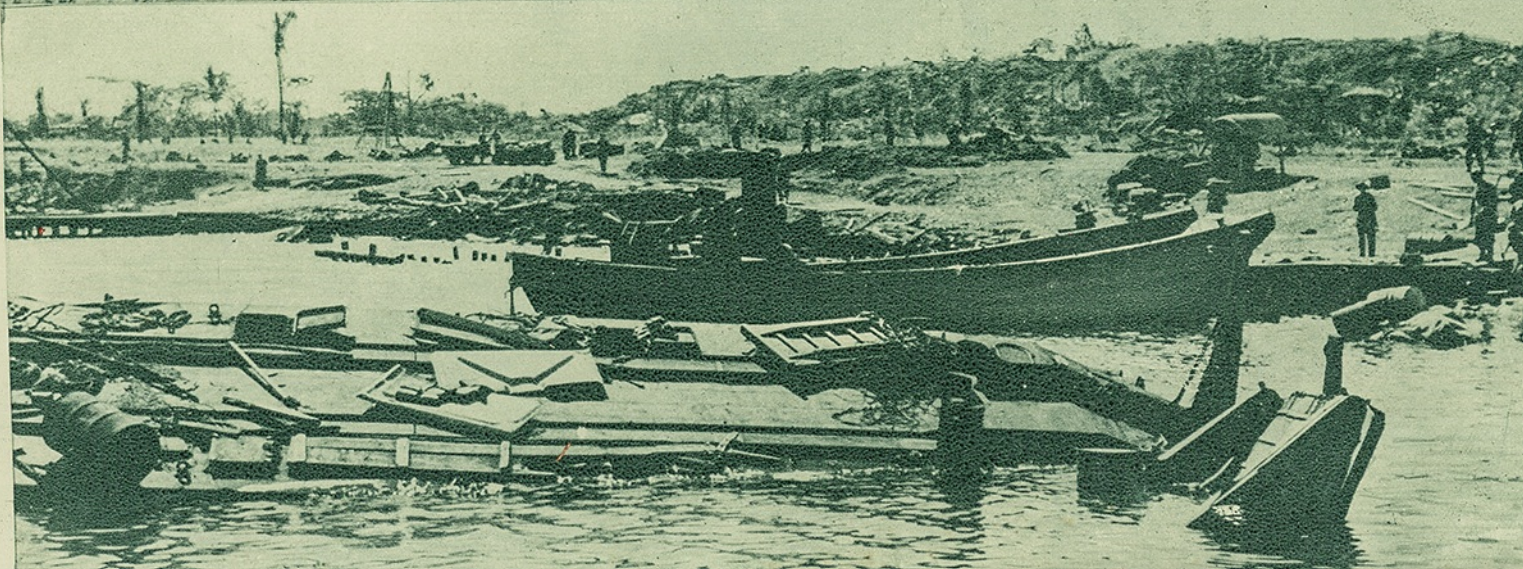
## G.H.Q. COMMUNIQUE

Sept. 18. Lae in our hands. Scattered elements of enemy tried break out to north but destruction certain.



Australian troops enter Lae, and inspect some of the shattered buildings in the shambles of the former Japanese stronghold.

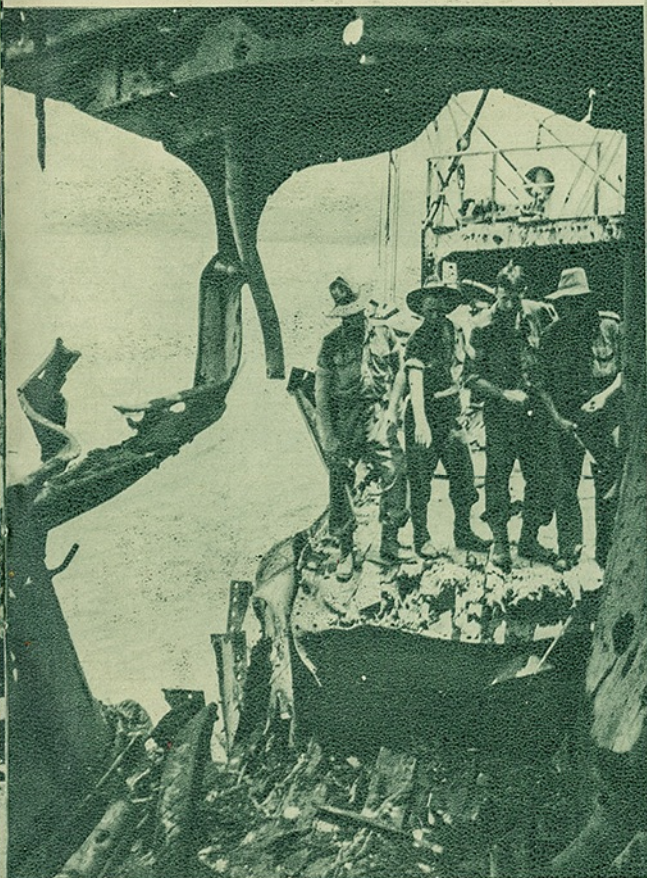
Indicative of the damage done: dozens of derelict barges litter the waterfront.



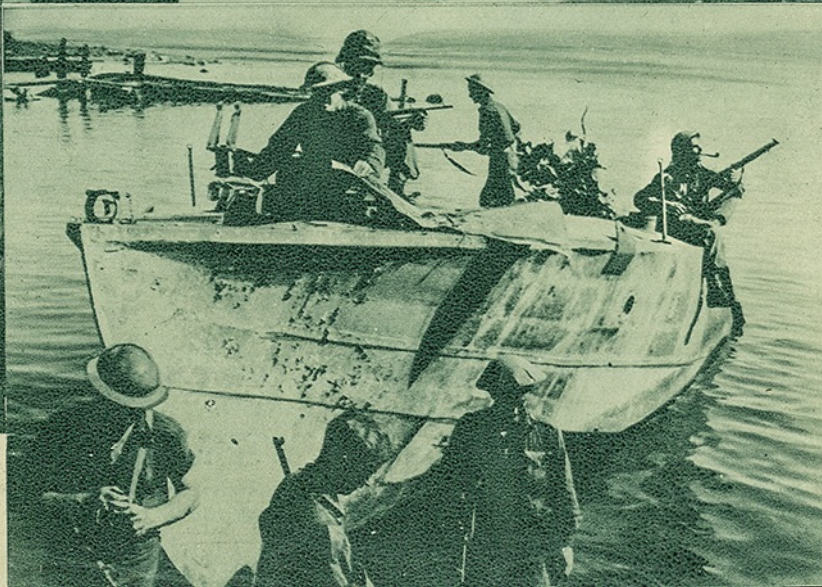




Soldiers file past a dead Japanese on their way into Lae.



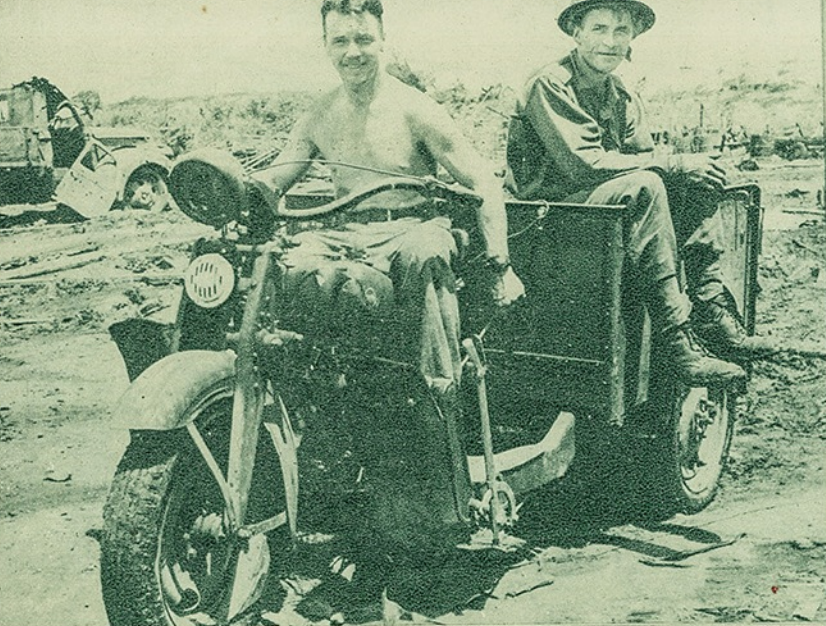
Close-up showing some of the damage done to the Jap freighter "Myoko Maru" by well placed shois.



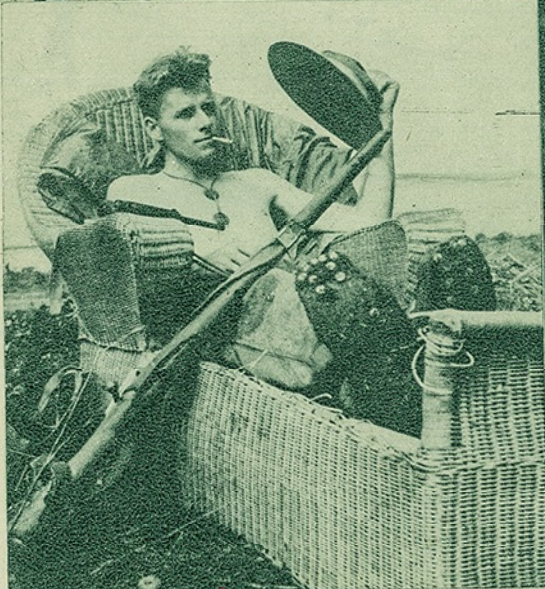
The wrecked Japanese "Myoko Maru" high and dry on the beach near Lae.

Wrecked Japanese barges on the beach are thoroughly searched by our men.





A free ride on an abandoned motor tricycle left behind when the Japs fled.



A Digger makes himself at home on a settee where the Jap Commander used to loll.



The lick of their lives! A scene inside the shattered ice works.



The "Rising Sun" has fallen down. Men rest beside the Japanese Headquarters flag.



It plays a different tune as these boys gather round a piano that the enemy C.O. once proudly possessed.

## BOOTY . . .

Amongst the equipment left by the fleeing Japanese at Lae was a large quantity of artillery; of both the Army and Navy types. Another asset we gained was the excellent aerodrome, which was soon repaired and ready for use again.

The boys weren't slow in finding and using many amenities in this well furnished and well fitted Jap base. It had been in Japanese hands since March 8, 1942.



# FORWARD FROM LAE

Within a few days of the capture of Lae, we had begun another record advance, this time up the Markham and beyond its head-waters into the Ramu Valley.

The Japanese were fully aware of the importance to them of this area. The Markham Valley was the first place they occupied in New Guinea and the last place they wanted to lose. It was their stepping stone to the proposed recapture of Wau and Port Moresby. But this plan was knocked on the head well and truly; our forces chased them further and further back.

Out-fought and out-maneuvred, the Japs crouched in their filthy foxholes, or ran screaming before the cold steel of our bayonets. Gone was the bombast and arrogance . . . the myth that the Japanese prefer death to surrender was disproven. The yellowness of the sons of Nippon was not confined to their complexions.

## G.H.Q. COMMUNIQUE

Sept. 22. Ground forces transported by air seized Kaiapit, sixty miles above Lae, repulsing several enemy counter attacks.  
Sept. 23. Two hundred strong enemy patrol dispersed at Kaiapit. Over 6,300 enemy dead counted at Lae-Salamaua.



They've patched the Lutheran Mission organ, and stage a sing-song under the Mission bell.



Australian troops ride through the captured village of Kaiapit.

Fruit! A sight to send greengrocers green with envy.



Marching onwards out of Kaiapit—there's 25 miles to go to Marawasa, 44 to Dumpu.



# Finschhafen

After ten days of some of the hardest, bitterest fighting in New Guinea, "guts and the bayonet" drove the Japanese from Finschhafen, and the heights surrounding it. Caked with mud, gaunt, begrimed, and desperate from lack of sleep, the troops finally drove the enemy out of its strongholds. For several days food ran short, because of the difficulty of getting supplies forward; every hardship and privation was suffered, from shattering gunfire to sheer physical exhaustion.

In this engagement the enemy fought with frenzied determination and incredible savagery. Practically every inch of the way meant bloody hand-to-hand fighting; until at last the defeated Japs left in a hurry, leaving meals half eaten, card games unfinished, as they dashed through the closing gap of the Allied pincers.

The fall of Finschhafen ensured our complete control of the Huon Gulf, and with the simultaneous advance to the head of the Markham River and down the Ramu River valley outflanked all the enemy centres south of Madang.

## G.H.Q. COMMUNIQUE

Sept. 23: Landing six miles north of Finschhafen.

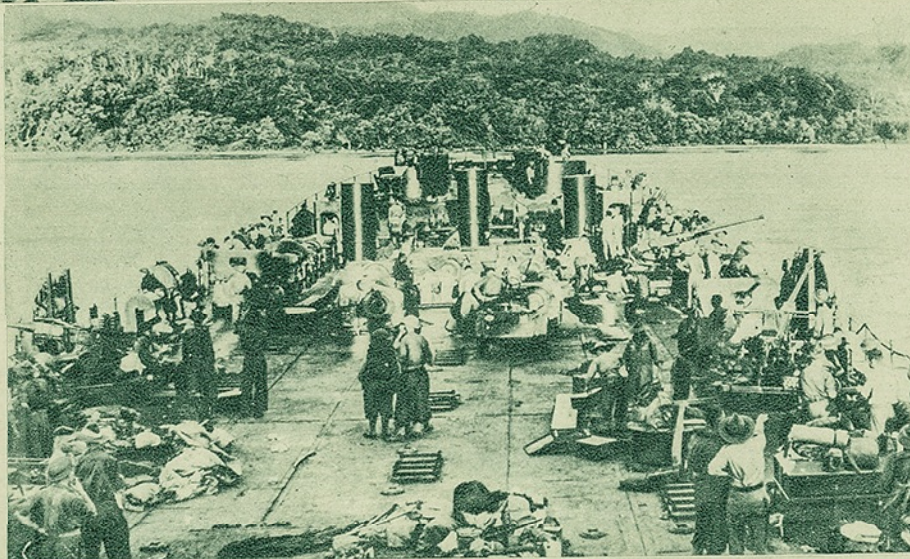
Sept. 24: North end of Finschhafen reached with close support by planes.

Oct. 3: Finschhafen taken by troops of 9th Aust. Div. eleven o'clock Sat. morning.



Ready for the assault on Finschhafen, Australian troops line up on board the boats.

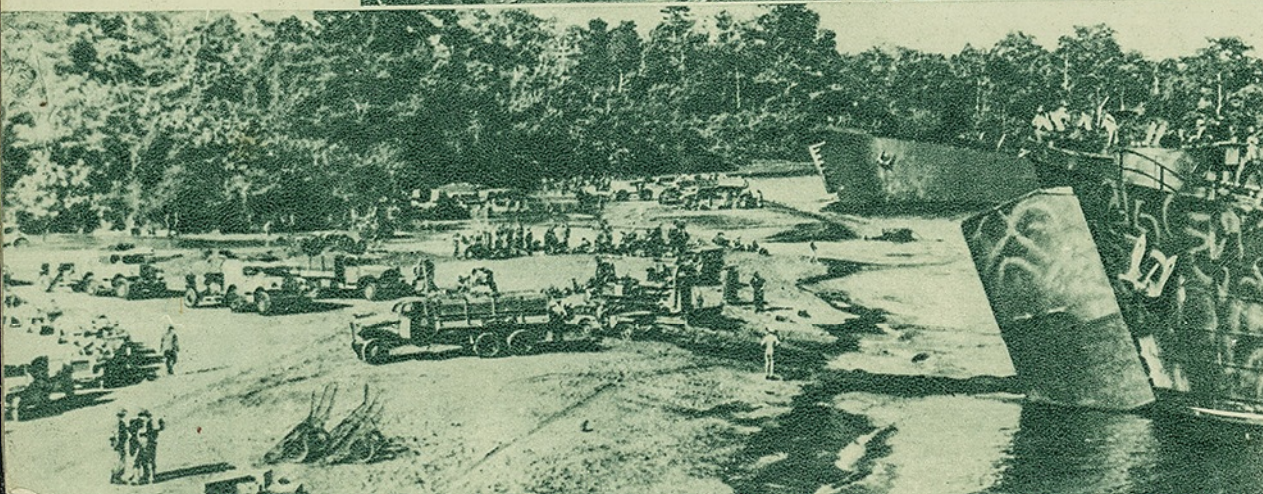
Interesting shot of landing barge as it nears the beach at which troops disembarked.



Smoke from bushfires started by Allied bombs. Finschhafen harbor can be seen behind peninsula jutting into the foreground. The town itself is directly behind the harbour.



Spoils to the victor! Members of 9th Division inspect captured motor bike, complete with trailer.



Busy scene as transports wait in readiness to be loaded on to the landing barges.



# Markham— Ramu Valleys..

This campaign is unique in that, for the first time, a great military force was entirely transported, serviced, and maintained by air. Everything in the valley, from food to field hospitals, from bombs to bulldozers, was brought in by planes. In one hop men were brought across mountains and swamps that would have taken weary weeks to cover on foot. From the forward airstrips roads were carved through the dense bush, new landing grounds found and formed, men advanced further through the jungle along the Upper Ramu Valley.



They've earned a spell after trudging twenty long miles in sweltering kundi grass country.



Members of the A.I.F. waded through the shallow Yati River in the Markham Valley.



Passing a forward wireless spotter on the track to Marawasa.



Ramu Valley—Engineers drag jungle-cut logs which will be man-handled into a bridge over a 10 knot river.



Eagles have nothing on Spr. J. Rich, as he keeps a watchful eye on the surrounding hills.

Natives cling to ropes as they cross the strongly flowing Bumi River.





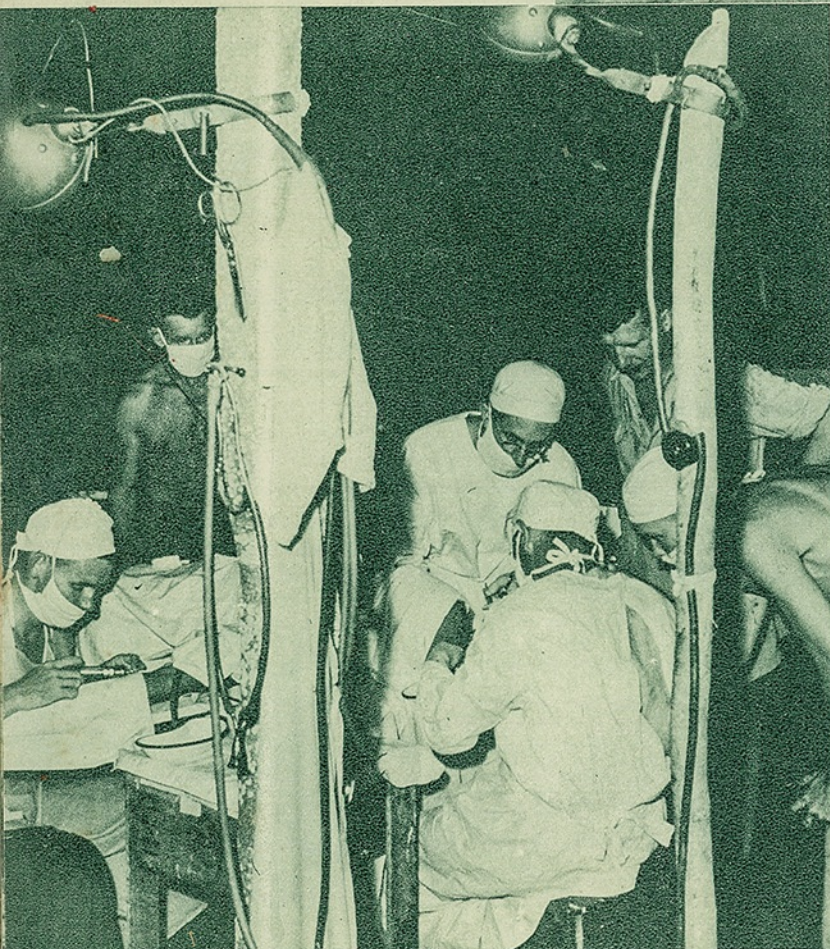
# Healing Hands

Deserving tribute must be paid to the medical units. Through the terror and carnage of war, these gallant little hands carry on, their operating theatres, crude shelters midst the mud, the tattoo of bombs and bullets, the grim accompaniment of their surgical feats. In this difficult terrain it often took three days to carry wounded men five miles—they had to be lowered down cliffs by ropes, carried on primitive stretchers, brought in by all manner of means to the mobile posts; but once there, the intrepid, untiring surgical teams performed medical miracles.

This series of pictures, taken in the upper Ramu Valley, gives some idea of the conditions under which these humanitarians worked.



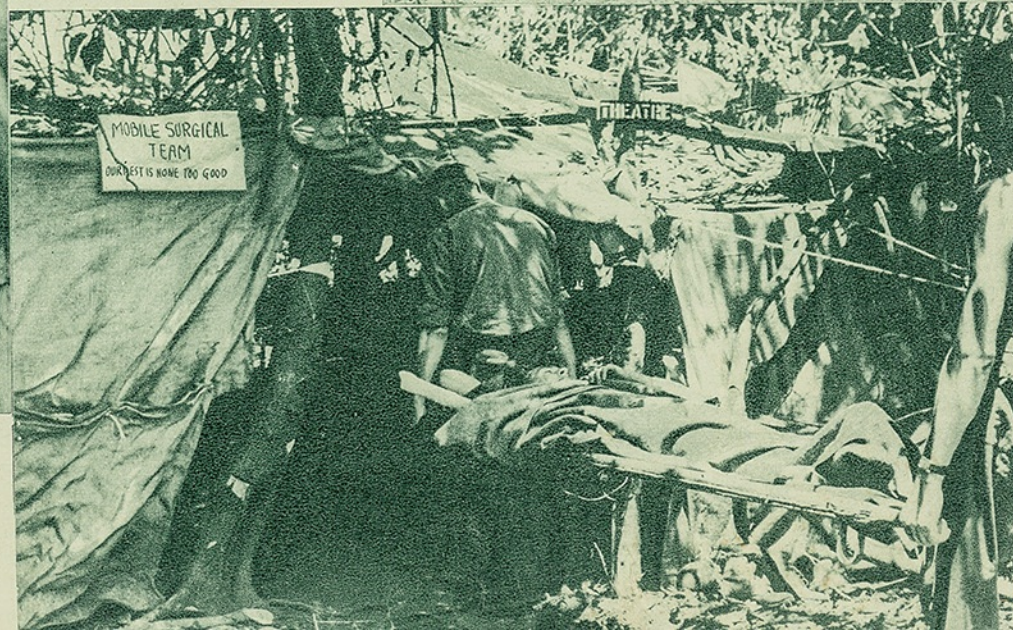
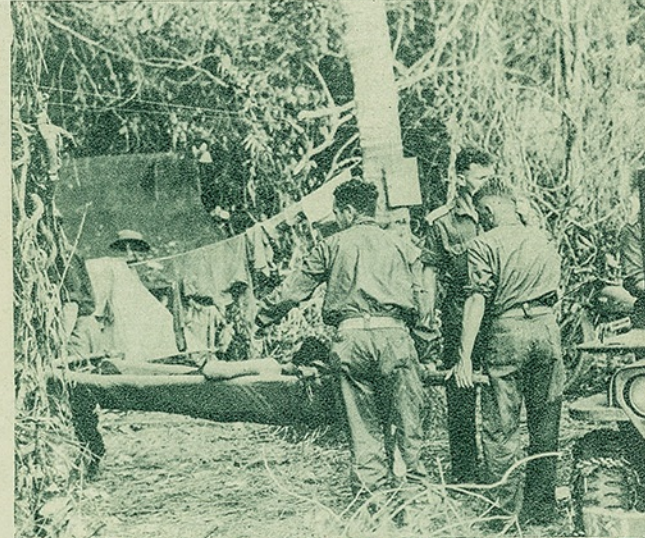
A jeep brings in the wounded to the forward medical post.



The M.O. goes to work on his mission of mercy. Note the improvised furnishings with car headlamps for arcs.

The breeze unfurls the Red Cross flag as the casualties come in.

The stretcher is carefully carried into the "Operating Theatre."



Headquarters of Mobile Surgical Team—the most forward medical post in the battle area.





## AUSTRALIA MARCHES ON ... with the Allied Nations

The pieces in the pattern of the New Guinea campaign can now be fitted together. First of all was the push over the Owen Stanleys, driving the Japs from their strongholds and beating them in the swamps round Buna, Gona, and Sanananda, thus winning the coastal areas where we could build the forward airfields and bases that were so vitally needed. Then the fight to save Wau, and the march through that terrible terrain towards Salamaua; the landing of the sea-borne division east of Lae, coincident with the paratroop descent at Nabzab—operations which led to the capture of Lae, Salamaua, and then Finschhafen, thus opening up the Markham and Ramu Valleys for forward airfields; the battering of Wewak; the smashing air blows on Rabaul . . . all parts of a mosaic pattern to expel the enemy from the southern arc can be traced in the accompanying maps.

**"A GREAT DEBT"** Commander of Land Forces in Forward Areas of New Guinea, Lieutenant-General Sir Edmund Herring, in a tribute to those who took part in all stages of the campaign, fittingly concluded:—

"I feel we owe a great debt to these men, and I cannot tell Australians too often what they suffered and achieved. But for their efforts I believe that Australia would have been to-day at the mercy of the invading Japanese and enduring the murdering, ravaging, and raping that China and other countries have known at Japanese hands.

"I would like all in Australia to thank God for their courage, endurance and self-sacrifice, which alone have saved and are today saving us from the lust and cruelty of a savage foe."



