

*MILITARY HISTORY FOR
WILLIAM EDWARD (BILL) MOLD*

PART TWO



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INTRODUCTION...

Dear People,

My intention is to record this war record for those members of my family and others who are interested now and for those who may be interested in the future.

I am but one who is interested, I hope there will be others...

Through the following pages of this war story, I hope to capture and cover some of the events and experiences of one of our Kiwi soldiers during World War Two (1939-1945) also the history of his Battalion and the huge commitment and sacrifice "**The Twentieth**" made for its country and mother-land.

With other members of his family, including grandparents, brother's, brother's in-law, uncles and cousins, they fought, were killed, wounded and risked losing their lives during many wars down through the troubled times of history. Because of their courage and commitment, Kiwi's of today can live their lives with freedom and in peace.

Our Soldiers letters to his Mum and family and condensed information taken from "*Official New Zealand Military History Books*", and personal stories from his comrades in arms, will give some account of the hardship, terror, humour and comradeship "**our soldier**" experienced while helping to defend, Greece, Crete, Palestine, North Africa and Italy from Germany's Adolf Hitler, the Nazis and their Allies.

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The contributions the many military members of our families and other Kiwi families made during the Wars of the World, have made it possible for me to sit here to-day and write this account without fear of prejudice and with the freedom to write the words of my choice. I thank them all for giving me this opportunity.

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Dear Dad,

I dedicate this small part of history to you.

During this journey I have learnt to understand and know you better.

I am sorry you were unable to discuss in full this life changing time in your life. I now know why.

Your son,

Roger Mold.

RETURN TO THE DESERT

JUNE 1942

May 27: Rommel's Army, which was now largely reinforced, attacked the 8th Army again in Libya, and on the 4th June the great battle turned against the 8th. On the 14th June the New Zealand Division was ordered to return to the Western Desert with the utmost speed and on the 17th June the 20th Battalion were ready to move.

June 21: After a very tiring journey of 900 miles and without very little water the men of the 20th finally reached Mersa Matruh, back in the Desert. While bedding down in the unoccupied huts and the flea-infested dugouts of an Egyptian Army Barracks, a Native Troop from a South-African unit woke and put on an impromptu concert with commendable harmony.

June 22: The 20th Battalion, along with the 18th, 19th and Maori Battalions were reassigned to 4 Brigade. Four Brigade which was now under the command of 30 Corps, moved out to take up positions around an area called Charring Cross. They had great difficulty in moving forward against the solid stream of 8th Army transport that was in retreat. A weird mixture of vehicles were being driven, towed or pushed, nose to tail and four a breast. They created a confusion that was increased when Enemy bombers appeared over the cross-roads. In the circumstances, the Tommy-drivers laconic greeting, '*you're gain the wrong way choom*' was understandable.

June 23-25: During this period the Division was bombed and strafed and on the 25th the 20th was relieved by a Brigade of 10 Indian Division and returned to take up defence of Matruh. In the meantime, however the general situation was changing rapidly. The NZ Division was passed to the command of 10 Corps with 30 Corps HQ retiring to prepare the El Alamein line. After handing over the defence of Matruh to 10 Indian, the NZ Troops would move south, organise into battle groups and operate in a mobile role, this time under 13 Corp. As there was not enough guns to protect the infantry and their vehicles it was decided to send back to base in Amiriya one company out of the 7 Infantry Battalions. The CO decided to send back B Company of the 20th and once again as time would prove, a very lucky break for our soldier.

BELOW: LEAVING SYRIA ON THE DAMASCUS ROAD

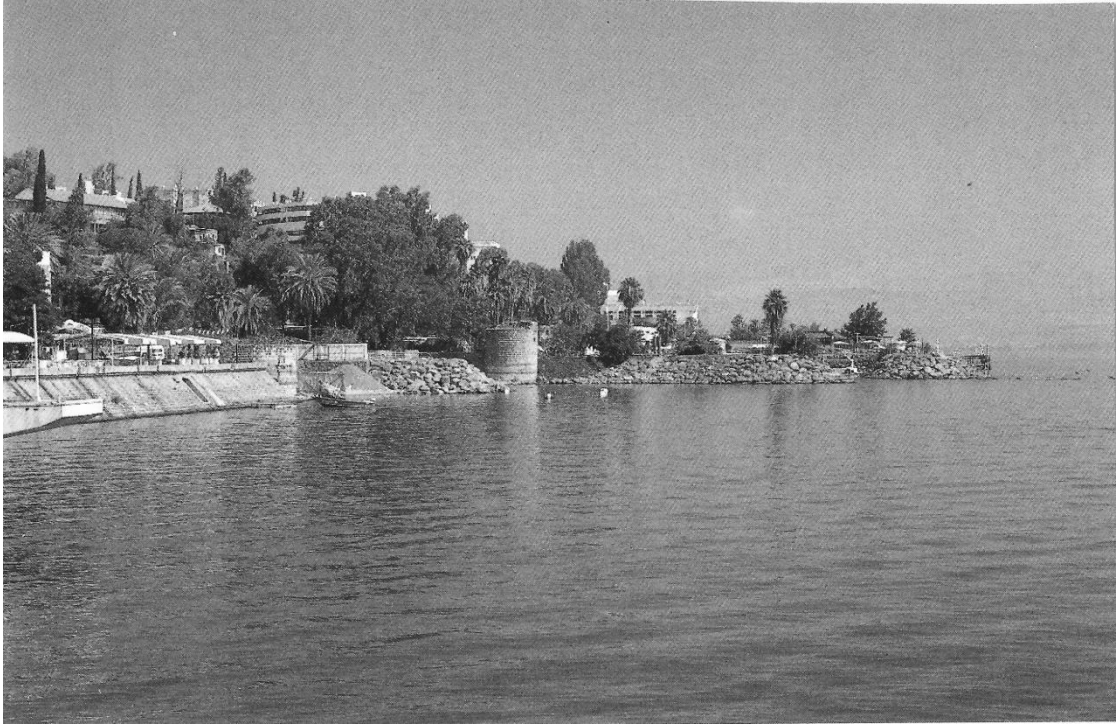




NEW ZEALAND DIVISION RETURNS FROM SYRIA TO PLAY A HEROIC PART IN THE WESTERN DESERT BATTLES

**FOLLOWING PHOTOS TAKEN BY YOURS TRULY AS I RETRACED THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR SOLDIER THROUGH EGYPT,
PALESTINE AND INTO LEBANON...**





TIBERIAS AT THE SOUTH END OF THE SEA OF GALILEE AND BELOW LOOKING ACROSS THE SEA OF GALILEE FROM THE GOLAN HEIGHTS



BELOW: AT THE GOOD FENCE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND LEBANON



ABOVE: MILITARY ESCORT ALONG THE SYRIAN BORDER ABOVE THE SEA OF GALILEE



LOOKING ACROSS THE DEAD SEA TO JORDAN FROM THE ISRAELI NATIONAL PARK

WE CONTINUE BACK WITH THE 20TH

June 26-29: In its light mobile role the New Zealand Division spent these few days in the Minqar Qaim area, criss-crossing the Desert, attacking and counter-attacking against the Germans. On or about the 28th June, 21 Panzer Division encircles the New Zealanders and on learning of this, the CO orders a bayonet attack on a narrow front to try and break through the surrounding Enemy. The infantry of the 19th, 20th and 28th Battalions moved forward slowly for the first 1000 yards. The Enemy had no knowledge of the approach until they were right on top of them and then to a man, without any orders, the whole of the Brigade charged forward. With shouting, cheering and war cries every man broke into a run knowing exactly what was expected of him. The 28th (Maoris) swung to the right and made short work of gun-nests in that area. The 19th cleared the high ground with the 20th dropping down into a Wadi on the left. It was here that the fiercest fighting took place and it wasn't long before the 19th were there to lend a hand. As soon as it was obvious that the break had been made Brigadier Burrows ordered the Verey flares to be fired and then the transport moved forward.

One of the drivers gives his impression of this move...

It was a gripping sight, the dark lines of the infantry melting away silently into the night. There was a long silence as we huddled in our closely packed lines of vehicles, wondering how our mates would fare. Planes droned overhead and night bombing took place nearby but fortunately no flares were dropped. A tank battle was in progress to the north-west and ricochets cut red arcs in the sky. All at once the splutter of automatics told us that the show had started. Tracer criss-crossed in the sky and we could see fires burning. At last the flare signal went up and off we set with a grinding of gears and in a choking cloud of dust. Suddenly around a bend we saw them. Some were standing others were lying on the ground,

casualties obviously. There were cries of 'D Company over here', 'this way C Company' and then the Enemy machine-gunning started. Men jumped on to the nearest vehicles and the convoy lurched forward...

After a journey of 108 miles and 18 long hours of dodging the enemy, the Brigade eventually laagered to the south-east of Daba. The Divisions casualties were surprisingly light, with fewer than 150 men killed.

BATTLE FOR RUWEISAT RIDGE ON THE EL ALAMEIN LINE

July 1: In the Eighth Army plan, 13 and 30 Corps was now organising the defences of the El Alamein line, extending south from the coast some 38 miles to the Qattara Depression, an area of soft sand which was impassable for heavy transport. At intervals in the line were 'boxes' areas prepared for all-round defences. Over the next two weeks, the 20th Battalion along with the balance of the NZ Division in 4 Brigade and along with 5 and 6 Brigades would come in fierce contact with the Enemy along this line and around an area just east called, Ruweisat Ridge.

July 14: Ruweisat Ridge was a long, low feature ranging from 150 to 200 feet in height. Rising gradually from the surrounding Desert, it ran east and west, parallel with the coast. South of Ruweisat the country stepped up in a series of low ridges to a plateau south of Alam Nayil, the surface being broken by large 'deirs', steep-sided depressions with rocky outcrops, used by both sides as tank-harbors or infantry assembly areas. Whoever held Ruweisat Ridge could dominate the northern front with artillery fire by direct observation and behind this and other ridges could operate against the exposed Plateau of the southern sector. There-fore the possession of this ridge was vitally important to the success of the campaign.

At 6.55 pm, word was received that the attack on the ridge would take place at night. Orders from Divisional HQ required the NZ Division to attack and capture the western end, 4 Brigade's objective being Point 63 and westwards, 5 Brigade being responsible for the area east. It was understood that an armoured Brigade would protect the open flank. Zero hour was 11 p.m.

Brigadier Burrows explains the attack...

Our objective was exactly 6 miles from the start line. Information told us we would encounter Enemy out-posts about 3 miles out, but these would not be as strong as the Troops on the ridge. It was considered that we would reach our objective before daylight, and the Artillery along with our Bren-carriers, 2 and 3-inch mortars and the A Tk Boyes rifle's, would then move up into position under the protection of the Armed Brigade.

*We moved out and about an hour after zero an infernal din broke out and I knew that the 18th and 19th Battalions were engaged. Further to the right I could also here 5 Brigade employed. It took all I could to stop the 20th Battalion, who I had held back in reserve, from racing forward to help their mates. I wanted to employ them at a later stage as circumstances demanded. Suddenly we were pinned down by heavy fire, loosing several men and a vehicle. After about an hour the fire lifted, and we were able to move forward again. I tried to make wireless contact with the chaps in front but without success. The firing was getting further away and I needed to know if they were getting carved up or not, so I sent Upham forward in our staff car to find out. He returned in about an hour, having encountered various pockets of the Enemy and with the disturbing news that he had not been able to contact the 19th, but that he had met Major Playle with a Company of the 18th who were lost: **'There seemed to be complete confusion on all sides'** he said **'The Germans were getting their trucks out and pulling guns back by hand and ropes. All this went on under cover of fire from tanks, which in groups of three were covering the withdrawal. All the time this was going on there was a grumble of tanks from our left. We thought it was from our tanks which were supposed to be there'**.*

We continued pushing forward, passing abandoned Enemy equipment and groups of our wounded and dead men. It was now growing light and the resistance was still very strong. On approaching the head of the 20th I became dismayed at the new development. Our Anti-tank vehicles looked an easy target for their tanks, so I then shouted orders to the 20th to go straight in with the bayonet. Upham led C Company forward in grand style. Their tanks moved back and it wasn't long before we were on the ridge. Our 6-pounders quickly got into hull down positions facing the direction that the tanks had disappeared and when it was properly light there was an angry battle with 3 tanks knocked out. On the northern side of the ridge I found the 19th in position with odd bits and pieces of the 18th. Further along to the east were small groups of men belonging to 5 Brigade. To the north was a scene of the utmost confusion, there was transport scattered everywhere with Italian Troops wandering about, completely disorganised and in complete panic. It was a real shame that our tanks were so long in coming to exploit our success. It was reported to me that a Battalion from 5 Brigade had been surrounded and captured just on light by a Division of tanks. It was later discovered that they did not have their Anti-tank guns with them. I found a trench which had been dug a lot deeper than most by the Italians and then settled in to assess the continuing battle...

Shelling and mortaring went on steadily all day and the mounting casualties placed great strain on the Battalion Medical Officer "Doc" Feltham and his staff.

Lance-Corporal Dickson describes their valiant efforts...

On the side of the ridge the RAP staff along with Sgt L. R. Sutherland worked heroically to cope with the casualties. Men passing through the area looking for their sections, or helping wounded comrades back to the post, attracted fire to this concentrated area and some of the men were hit a second time. Sutherland, who was later wounded, called to the men to keep away or to leave their rifles behind when they brought in the wounded. An RAP flag was improvised from a white towel on which a red cross was marked with the only medium available-----blood. This desperate measure seemed to have the desired result, however, as no further shelling came from Enemy areas that could see this pathetic signal. Men from the Intelligence section did splendid work as stretcher bearers, bringing in wounded under heavy fire, and two of them obtained a drum of water some distance away and gamely rolled it down the shell and bullet swept slope to the RAP...

During the afternoon there were signs that the enemy were collecting for an attack. Tanks and infantry were assembling in the Wadi's to the west and south-west. A big Enemy pocket in the area between Rear-Brigade HQ and the ridge was preventing the Artillery and Armoured from coming forward to assist the Battalions. Just 2 hours before the Jerry attacked though, some of 19 Battalion carriers and supplies got through.

At 4 pm, 20th Battalion reported to Brigadier Burrows that the attack had been launched. The Brigadier explains this attack...

Their tanks came in with a slight wind behind them. They set fire to what vehicles they could in their path, and soon there was an excellent smoke screen across everything. I had word that some of our armour was about a half mile away so sent back word to send the tanks forward immediately as the situation was critical. I hoped our people could hang on long enough for them to arrive. Our Anti-tank guns fought as well as they could but with no Arty and with the heavy casualties amongst our gun crews I knew we could not last long. Soon machine-gun bullets from armed cars were whistling about and I knew the Enemy was in amongst us. I shortly saw tanks moving past our flank and along the ridge. Two armed cars and an Anti-tank gun stopped about 100 yards away. The noise, confusion and smoke made it difficult to know what was happening. An armed car came straight for us, it came right alongside our trench and someone from inside threw 3 hand-grenades at us. Luckily they exploded on either side of the trench; otherwise someone else would be writing this account. We were deafened and somewhat dazed, but the three Officers with me in the trench were unhurt. The Enemy tanks began to withdraw and I was hopeful we would be left alone,

but unfortunately our HQ had been sorted out for special attention and three cars came up and took us out...

Brigadier Burrows was captured and then escaped twice during the evening after this battle. He finally found himself back with an Anti-tank group of the Indian Division.

And so, the disaster at Belhamed had been repeated. The infantry in a most successful night attack had gained their objective, had hung on despite heavy casualties and because of the failure of tank and heavy-gun support had finally been over-run by an enemy armoured attack.

July 15-17: During this period the remnants of 4 Brigade withdrew back behind 5 Brigade on a line south of Ruweisat Ridge to reorganise and hand over their transport and heavy guns to 6 Brigade.

July 18: The three worst hit Battalions, 19, 20 and 21 then moved back east to the base at Amiriya where they were able to wash away the sweat and grime for the first time since the start of this campaign.

July 19: During the morning a roll call was called for the 20th Battalion. The parade formed a hollow square. At its base stood Head-Quarters Company, on the left was the 'LOB', which was B Company, looking tanned and fit and on the right was a short single rank of the survivors of the 3 Rifle Companies. The 'old hands' some of them veterans of Greece, Crete, Libya and now Egypt were noticeably serious. The long list of unanswered names intensified the feeling of disaster, so that when someone straightened to attention and responded it came as a mild shock and the speaker almost felt it unnatural to be there. There was not a man who had not lost friends. Padre Spence, himself limping from a painful leg injury, concluded with his customarily fitting words during a simple memorial service. It was a very poignant occasion. Next day the Battalion moved back to Maadi for some well-earned leave in Cairo.

CONCLUSION FOR THE BATTLE FOR RUWEISAT RIDGE

Once again the disappointment of defeat had to be surmounted, both to the rapidly diminishing number of old hands and to the rawest reinforcement. The complete collapse of the Ruweisat operation would last long in the memories of the 20th Battalions survivors. Twice now, after gaining its objective, the Battalion was practically annihilated as a result of an Enemy counter attack with tanks. Again the failure of Allies armour to give support at a critical time caused harsh criticisms to be levelled at the invidious muddlers, 'the heads' but not at their own. There was no criticism of the leaders of the New Zealand Division, whose bold planning and intrepid leadership had extricated the Brigade from the collapse of Greece, the nightmare of Crete, from the Belhamed disaster and the encirclement of Minqar Qaim. The men in the tanks were immune from blame. Their smoking derelicts, strewn across the Desert, was sufficient prove of their willingness to engage the Enemy when ordered. The frank admiration for the infantry by these tank crews had been expressed by an English Grant-tank sergeant who describing the advance of the 4th Brigade leading up to Ruweisat Ridge under heavy shell and mortar fire. He said: *'I never saw anything like it. They just walked over a ridge through a perfect hell of fire as calmly as if they were going to a picnic. I take off my hat to your infantry'*, and pulling off his oil-stained beret, he suited the action to the word. Resentment against such men was unthinkable.

It is interesting to analyse the factors in its make up that enable a unit after each serious reverse to return once more to the fight. Undoubtedly it was the high standard of discipline and morale in the Battalion, coupled with the responsibility felt by all survivors, to maintain its identity in spite of such heavy casualties that assisted, everyone, to settle down again. The ability to carry on after four successive reversals, still with confidence in the ultimate victory goes further back. It is part of the Kiwi's lifestyle. In a country where there is a healthy climate and a high standard of living, the type of the Nation's youth is good. In addition, few men in New Zealand have not at some stage in their lives engaged in a team sport. The sense

of comradeship thus developed the necessity for mutual support, the knowledge that co-operation and co-ordination are the chief factors in success were lessons early learned and never forgotten. Qualities of leadership: fortitude in the face of tough opposition: the undaunted return to attack after each reverse modesty in victory and courage in defeat. All of these were developed on Rugby playing fields from the Cape to the Bluff. The ability of teams to fulfil their fixtures Saturday after Saturday, season after season, had no doubt, some connection with the recovery of the Battalion after reverses on the field of battle. The time-honoured method, also, of drowning the afternoon's disappointment in the boisterous conviviality of a Saturday night, found an echo in the canteens and Naafi's of Egypt. Encouragement to return to the job was drawn from the knowledge that they were not alone in adversity. The stout heartedness of the Londoners during the fury of the Blitz, the suicidal heroism of the sailors of Sebastopol, the dogged defenders of Stalingrad and the tenacious Aussies of Tobruk, all portrayed the spirit necessary to tide over the dark days after July 15.

THE 20TH BATTALIONS CASUALTIES FOR THE PERIOD 26 JUNE TO 17 JULY WERE...

• Killed in action	45
• Died of wounds	24
• Wounded	117
• Wounded and prisoners	34
• Prisoners of war	<u>173</u>
• TOTAL	<u><u>393</u></u>

Note: As Fate would have it Bill Snowden mentioned in one of our soldiers letter's would become his brother in law, posthumously. Uncle Bill was killed at the battle of El Alamein in North Egypt.

Fortunately our soldier would miss the next stink the twentieth took part in. During this time he was running the headquarters canteen and his letter gives no evidence for the reasons why he did not go into battle.

Reading between the lines I believe the powers to be had decided that our soldier and his Company had given his all in previous battles both mentally and physically and it was time for him to have a spell from the front-line.



LEFT:
UNCLE BILLY SNOWDEN IN EGYPT. HE WAS KILLED IN THE BATTLE FOR EL ALAMEIN...

RIGHT: 1992. MYSELF BESIDE UNCLE BILLY'S MEMORIAL STONE AT THE BRITISH WAR MEMORIAL CEMETERY AT EL ALAMEIN, EGYPT

LEFT BELOW: NEAR EL ALAMEIN



Note: The **Second Battle of El Alamein** (23 October – 11 November 1942) took place near the Egyptian coastal city of El Alamein. With the Allies victorious, it marked a major turning point in the Western Desert Campaign of the Second World War. It followed the First Battle of El Alamein, which had stalled the Axis advance into Egypt, after which, in August 1942, Lieutenant-General Bernard Montgomery had taken command of the British Eighth Army from General Claude Auchinleck. This victory turned the tide in the North African Campaign and ended the Axis threat to Egypt, the Suez Canal, and of gaining access to the Middle Eastern and Persian oil fields via North Africa. From a psychological perspective, the Second El Alamein battle revived the morale of the Allies, being the first major offensive against the Axis since the start of the European war in 1939 in which the Western Allies achieved a decisive victory.



WATCHING A TANK BATTLE FROM THE SHELTER OF A WADI

ABOVE: NEW ZEALAND INFANTRY WATCHING A TANK BATTLE

BELOW: MYSELF AT THE BRITISH WAR CEMETERY, EL ALAMEIN, EGYPT 1992



Note: Hitching a lift back to Alexandria with some Egyptian soldiers from the nearby Army camp at El Alamein was not a very good idea. At one stage of the journey I thought Val and I were going to be left under a rock in the desert with my Uncle and all of the other Kiwi soldiers who were killed there during WW2. Egypt we discovered when travelling under one's own steam is a very volatile country. Take heed; stick with the tourists when touring Egypt.



Minqar Qaim. Not much time to dig in here. A No 3 Platoon gun in action in a hastily scooped out gun-pit.

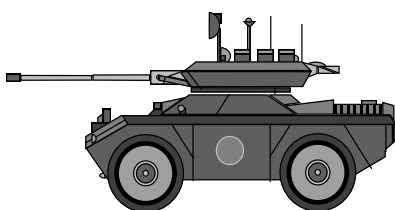


No 11 Platoon in action at Menastir. W. P. Gibson, T. E. Doyle, and M. Homer (with binoculars), are the men in this gun team.

ABOVE: NEW ZEALAND MACHINE GUNNERS DURING THE BATTLES FOR NORTH EGYPT

INFANTRY TO ARMOUR AND THEN FAREWELL TO MAADI

AUGUST 1942 TO SEPTEMBER 1943.



August: The 20th Battalions survivors settled down to monotonous days of a modified training syllabus. News of the Japanese advance in New Guinea to within 40 miles of Port Moresby received through Squadron and mess radios, kept attention focused on the Pacific.

September: Sweeping changes were afoot. After beating off Rommel's determined drive and attack to the south of El Alamein, 5 and 6 Brigades were in urgent need of reinforcements. For reasons that were not hard to guess it had been decided that the NZ Division should have its own Tank Brigade. For this purpose 4 Infantry Brigade was to be trained in Armour and reinforced by the tank Brigade already in training in NZ. Those men who had not been with the Battalion for 6 months were posted to 5 and 6 Brigades and began training for the epoch-making battle for El Alamein.

Note: This battle turned the tide for the 8th Army, and over the next few months they would send the Hun scurrying back to Italy.

Spasmodic air raids over Cairo and the suburbs enlivened the nights from time to time and on the 26th, large fragments of anti-aircraft shells fell in the camp area. The most spectacular sight was provided by German planes diving on and machine-gunning searchlights.

October: On the 5 October, the 20th Battalion was officially designated, "**The 20th NZ Armoured Regiment**". This also coincided with the third anniversary of the first Echelon into camp. It was an occasion for celebration and so a very elaborate and successful party was organised. Trucks formed walls with a canopy of canvas overhead. There were real seats and tables, a real bar and efficient barmen. Distinguished guests were invited including the CO and a supper of oyster patties interrupted a programme of speeches, songs and music that included master-pieces in verse from the chairman, Ray Lynch.

Note: This was also the second anniversary for, our soldier, since his arrival in the Middle East. He had been the, Canteen Manager, for some time now and had been kept very busy, collecting supplies and preparing for this celebration.

The canteen was the hub of the Regiments life, crowded each evening with thirsty patrons whose wants were given considerable initiative by the canteen staff. The canteen truck toured far and wide in search of supplies and the news that beer was to be found in a certain Naafi was sufficient to set the wheels a turning. As a result, a varied collection of labels was accumulated, including Egyptian, Australian, New Zealand, Greek, German, Shanghai, Hong-Kong, Canadian, Indian, Syrian, Palestinian, British and South-African. Even with this source of supplies, the supply during September and October grew steadily less and so permission was given to sell zibbib in the bars. The 'Wog' session, will always be remembered by those in the Regiment at the time. On a primus, the charcoal would be heating, the zibbib would be drunken Egyptian style out of tiny glasses and at a suitable stage 'George' performed the 'can-can'. It was the friendly atmosphere of the unit canteen that made it popular with visiting American Instructors from Almaza and others. As always the canteen had its sidelines: 'Housie' inside and 'two-up' outside. Perhaps the most outstanding event in the canteens history took place in September 1943, when it was used as a polling booth for the parliamentary general election.

NOVEMBER 1942 TO OCTOBER 1943

REFERENCE FROM OUR SOLDIER'S PERSONAL MILITARY FILES

20 Armoured Regiment	Marched out 20 Armed Regiment att 178 Pal Coy RASC	Middle East	25.10.42
	March in Ct BA 178 Pal Coy	Middle East	27.10.42
20 Armoured Regiment	Adm 23 NZ Fwd Amb and Frd to x (ii) hish	Middle East	30.11.42
NZ Reception Depot	Dschr 1 NZ Gen Hosp and attchr NZ Reception Depot	Middle East	4.12.42
NZ Reception Depot	Marched out to 20 NZ Armed Regiment's/ox(ii)List	Middle East	7.12.42
20 Armoured regiment	Marched in posted from NZ Reception Depot and s/o x (ii) List	Middle East	7.12.42
20 armoured regiment	Adm 23 NZ Fwd Amb and Frd to x (ii) hish	Middle East	19.1. 43
NZ Reception Depot	Dschr 1 NZ Gen Hosp and attchr NZ Reception Depot	Middle East	19.1.43
NZ Reception Depot	Marched out to 20 NZ Armed Regiment's/ox(ii)List	Middle East	20.1.43
20 armoured regiment	Marched in posted from NZ Reception Depot and s/o x (ii) List	Middle East	20.1.43

The next 12 months can be covered briefly. The men of the now new, **Armoured Regiment**, all went back to school to be taught a new kind of warfare. As the Regiment was originally intended to consist of one light Squadron of Crusader tanks and two heavy Squadrons of Sherman's, it was necessary for men to learn no fewer than ten guns. They were the 75-millimetre, 37-millimetre, 30 inch Browning, 50 inch Browning, Thompson's sub-machine gun, two-pounder, six-pounder, 7.92 Besa and later, the seventeen-pounder.

The coming of cooler weather brought a revival of winter sports and a new festive season. About a week before Xmas an unofficial fixture aroused interest in the Regiment. It was noticed that the cooks were spending all their free time away from their normal tasks of preparing stews, etc. They could be found on the rugby-field kicking and passing foot-balls around. Thus it was learned that the match of the season was about to take place, (Cooks v Transport). The trophy, the 'Maadi-Dixie' was aluminium painted utensil mounted on a handsome home-made stand and rumoured to contain, zibbib.

On December 20 at precisely 1.30 pm sharp the Cooks marched smartly on to the field and were played into position by the Bag-pipes, (the rumoured secret weapon) and were then followed on by the stalwarts from Transport. Each team was accompanied by its, Cat mascot: "Wallad" for the Cooks and "Tiger" for Transport. A fair crowd gathered on the field and escarpment to watch this battle between weight and youth. Betting odds however were rudely upset with both sides having had a pre-match celebration the night before. The pace was slower in the second half with both sides lacking wind and no one managed to carry through to the goal-line. A hard fought struggle ended without score and with both teams exhausted. It was a bright beginning to another good after-noon of fellowship.

Christmas and New Year passed with lots of mail and parcels from home and a Xmas dinner to be remembered by all. There was turkey, pork, peas and potatoes and finished off with Xmas pudding and fruit salad. There were also generous supplies of beer and cigarettes. Colonel Burrows, and the other Officers along with Padre Spence went up and down the mess exchanging greetings and the whole atmosphere showed that the 20th had not lost that fellowship and friendly understanding which was an enduring part of its character.

WE RETREAT A LITTLE IN TIME NOW AND CATCH UP WITH THE LETTER WRITING OF OUR SOLDIER...

Letter Forty Eight...

4. October. 1942

Dear Mum,

Your letter dated June 2nd arrived the day before yesterday. It had been weeks since I had heard from you as you can see by the date, and I was beginning to think I must be a bit of a black sheep. However you seem to be having the same trouble as me at getting mail so will call it square. I cannot understand how you have not got more mail from me because although I have not written as much since the Airmail stopped I have written every third week and usually every fortnight. I received your cable the other day saying you had got the parcel I sent from Syria, so that's a good show. What do you think of the sewing I did on it? I sent you a couple of cushion covers for a Xmas box the other day, but they are not very classy, pretty hairy in fact, but maybe you can put them to some use. You did not mention Pop in your last letter. How is he doing? I have been to Town twice looking for something to send him for Xmas, but could not find anything that looked suitable. Cairo is a hell of a place to buy anything this time of the year all the prices are double and for a chap who likes his beer the little money we get does not go very far. I got a parcel myself yesterday from Zel I got a bit of a shock when it arrived too, because it is about the first I have had all year. I am still running the canteen over here but am thinking seriously of throwing it in and getting back to work. We had a bit of an accident while we were away in Maadi Township for beer and ice this morning, when a staff car came shooting out of a side road and collected an ambulance coming the opposite way to us. We stopped dead but the other two were going

so fast when they hit they both piled into us. Allan the driver and I must have been of the same mind, because as soon as we could we both dashed round to see if there was any beer broken. One of the other drivers yelled out and asked if we were alright and Allan said "Yes, there is none broken". We were able to drive away after a while, but they had to get the break - down wagon to the other two. There is a big spree being held over here tonight, it will be three years for the old hands and two for us, and for another thing this is the last day for the old 20th. I have got just in, 100 dozen of beer so she should be a good show. I believe Xmas mail closes tomorrow so I expect this will be the last letter you will get before then. I was hoping last Xmas I would be home for this one, but by the looks of things if we make it by the third from now we will be lucky. I will wish you a Merry Xmas now and you can have an extra helping of lamb, green peas and new spuds "OH BOY" for me

Letter Forty Nine...

3. November. 1942

News is scarce but seeing I had a nice long letter from you about ten days ago, I thought I had best try and scratch a few lines. I had a letter from Joyce last mail too with a snap of Jenny enclosed. She has grown some hasn't she? And looks to be a hard shot. Looking at her makes a man realise more than ever how long he has been away. As I suppose you have heard by the wireless the stink has started up the blue again, and I am afraid Harold is stuck into it to. He wrote and asked me to claim him which I did, a few days before the show started, but evidently it did not get to his unit in time to keep him out. All we can do now is wait and hope for the best. It is very hard to find out anything definite about what is going on up there, but as far as I can gather his unit has not been badly smacked. Football is in full swing over here now, and we have already played quite a few games. Last Sunday the Regt team played a team from base A.S.C. and got cleaned up!!-o. They have got me playing at 2nd five-eight with Ron at 1st. We have got a beaut Squadron team and so far have not been beaten. We played a team from the 18th last Wednesday and won 37 nil. Ron is playing his usual game and makes all the openings for the rest of us backs. The boys all want to know how the hell I follow him, so I tell them we work to a system. They all reckon he is pretty tricky but I tell them to wait till they see him play on the grass. I made a good resolution a while back and signed the pledge but it did not work out to good. I stopped off Mr Booze for a month and was never so crook in all my life. I got headaches, bound up and had the flue twice. So I have decided, to live and keep fit in this country, a man must have his suds. Things are a bit tight just now, but, they have got us cut down to two bottles a week per man. The weather is a lot cooler at nights now and last week we got our battle dresses. They are all old and the jacket I got is about 7 shades lighter than the strides. So believe me I look as if I have walked out of a second hand shop. However I for one am not nearly as fussy about my dress as I used to be so "What the hell"? I just heard the midday news on the radio from Cairo and things seem to be going pretty well up the top. I hope they clean him up properly this time and then who knows perhaps we will all be home for next Xmas. I reckon myself once they make a landing in Europe he will crack like a rotten egg. Well I have rambled on long enough and seem to have written a hell of a lot about nothing so I will close now. Tell Joyce I will answer her letter one day soon ...



THE ARMoured BRIGADE RUGBY TEAM WHICH DEFEATED MAADI CAMP BY 33-3 EARLY IN DECEMBER 1942. ¹

BACK ROW L TO R, R W BRIEN, J L SULLIVAN, M KENNY, L ISLES, B N BEECHY, R NEWLAND,
R E WESTERBY, A C GLEN, A G MOWDAY, J SNOW.
FRONT ROW, C FISHER (EMERGENCY), R G RIDDELL, R J SHAW, T FOWLER, K WELSH,
D PARSONS, H M KIRSCHBERG, R ARNOLD.

Note: Our soldier's comrade in arms Ron Shaw is third from left front row.

No sign of our soldier as he had been in hospital for some reason: Appendicitis or a badly sprained ankle.

20 Armoured Regiment	Adm 23 NZ Fwd Amb and Frd to x (ii) hish	Middle East	30.11.42
NZ Reception Depot	Dschr 1 NZ Gen Hosp and attchd NZ Reception Depot	Middle East	4.12.42



THE HQ MAADI CAMP RUGBY TEAM WHICH WAS DEFEATED BY THE ARMoured BRIGADE TEAM BY 33-3 EARLY IN DECEMBER
BACK ROW L TO R, C LAREDO, E H HAMPTON, F COLLINGE, N A ELMES, C TAIT, J BRANKIN, P FOOTE, D V SCOTT.
FRONT ROW L TO R, N J COLLINS, K R VILLARS, W P MCHUGH, J KING, RTP WARETINI, R B BARNEY, H GRANT. ²

Letter Fifty...

I haven't had any mail for quite some time, but I did get your wire saying you had received some from me. I didn't wire you back because funds are a bit low. For a chap who likes his 'wee drop', a pound doesn't go very far. I had a note from Harold last week saying he was in Hospital with malaria but that he was getting on O.K. and expecting to go for Comp shortly. I'm as fit as a fiddle myself and at present am carrying more weight than I ever have. So evidently the heat doesn't affect me much. I'm still running the canteen so perhaps that accounts for it.

Ron, Big Andy and I spent a day in town last Saturday and had plenty of fun. We had a few bottles of beer and saw a picture in the afternoon and then went to the skating at night. Needless to say we didn't do it all on skates, but never the less had a great time. I've been in the wars properly of late. Last week I got thrown off a truck into a barb-wire entanglement, but with the exception of a few rips on the old rear, elbows etc. not much damage was done. Mail came in yesterday and I got two letters from Zel, but so far none have arrived from you. According to one of the little ladies letters you must have been telling tales, because she wants to know if this Miss Soar is very nice. I'll have to tell her the truth I suppose because she was rather 'chic' wasn't she? The Yanks have been getting a pretty good hearing in recent letters too, and a lot of the boys are not very happy about it. However a few of us have decided if the home girls throw us over we'll go back to Greece when the shows over and marry something nice from there.

Well that's about all I can think of for now so I'll close...

Letter Fifty One...

Your long looked for letter arrived yesterday and after waiting almost three months you can imagine how pleased I was to get it. I had a letter from Harold the other day too, saying he had been in hospital, but had now been shifted to a con camp. We Mold's seem to have struck it lucky this time, because I believe his B.N. has had a pretty bad smack and so has mine. I am still in base and having a fairly good time. Last week we all went out to where there are trees and the grass grows green for a picnic and spent a great day. Some of the boys played cricket or football, but most of us just lolled around under the trees and enjoyed the shade. Bert Nicholson is down here with us and yesterday he Ron and I had a day out together. We spent the afternoon at Maadi and went to the pictures at night. No beer strange as it may seem, but we all are a wee bit short of cash. Nick's still his old giggling self and is wearing two stripes. He has just come out of hospital after being there with bad feet but seems to be O.K. again now.

Ron and I got a lot of snaps back yesterday we took in Syria so I will stick a couple in with this. We all look pretty rough but it was blowing a gale the day we had them taken so don't blame Mr Booze. I had six letters from Zel this last mail and she still seems to think I am not a bad sort of Guy. It is a wonder she has not been discouraged by now though, because I don't write such a devil of a lot to her. I kid to her a fair bit when I do but, so perhaps that is what keeps her going. You have no idea how hard it is to settle down and write now days. Nothing much happens from day to day and I think I have told you all about this land of sun and sand you would want to know. In my estimation she is very uninteresting. I have started lots of letters to you in the last few months but don't seem to be able to concentrate long enough to finish them. Practically everybody seems the same and I suppose the time between mails has a lot to do with it. Ron was saying he writes home and asks them something and by the time he gets a reply he cannot make out what they are talking about. I have not had a letter from Joyce for months so perhaps she has given me up as a bad job. Although I did not write to her very much I did enjoy getting her letters, so you had better tell her to drop me a line once in a while. Well I am afraid that is me stumped so I will shut up now...

Letter Fifty Two...

I received a big mail a week ago and with it was one from you written 23 Sept. I've been in Hospital and back through Base Reception since then so this is the first chance I've had of answering it.. I steeped on a stone and ricked my ankle pretty badly and the MO, thinking a bone may have been broken sent me out to have it X rayed. Luckily there was none, so now I'm back on the old job again.

Lately I've been talking to a lot of chap's both from up home and from Huntly who have come down from the Desert wounded and some few who have been in Con. Depot. One chap who comes from Huntly and is in the same Company as Harold, tells me he saw him up there, and says he is looking even better than he did when he re-joined the unit after his bout of Malaria. I believe he had a very narrow squeak but evidently is none the worse for wear. As far as I can gather he got the full blast from an H.L. shell which knocked him to the ground and out cold for some time, but luckily he never stopped any

shrapnel. Foot-ball is in full swing over here now and Ron has been picked in the Kiwis team to play the Spring-Box next Saturday. They played the trial match last Wed. I didn't see it myself but the Boys were telling me he was the best back on the paddock. He's a fair bit heavier than he was in Civvie's life and is as fit as a fiddle. He and another chap are the only two out of the whole Regt. I had a letter from Joyce the other day telling me Alex is in camp with a possibility of him coming overseas. Evidently he's too proud to appeal but to my mind he is a Goddamned fool. There's a lot of things I could say that won't stand putting down, but to my mind his place is at home on the farm with his family and not over here where he stands a fifty-fifty chance of getting bumped off.. Nick and I got on the beer the other night, and had a big debate on happenings on the home front, if the old saying is correct there should have been a lot of hot ears in your part of the world that particular night. Thank Lois for her letter and tell her I'll deliver her little message to Ron. I think that's about the lot for this time so I'll call it a day.

P.S. Thanks a lot for the parcel; she was a beaut, especially the oysters and soup...

Letter Fifty Three...

I have had two letters from you this week so thought I had better get cracking myself, but like you I am afraid there is not a hell of a lot to write about. The last one I got from you startled me a wee bit, I could not make out who would be calling me darling Willie in that part of the World. It came on me suddenly that perhaps a certain lady had tired quickly of married life, but then I did not think it possible because I knew her pretty well. Talking of "Spring in the Rockie's" how is little Joan doing? I thought she would be a proud mother before this. Who is to blame I wonder? Perhaps they are both shrewd. I might be wrong but I thought the war would have spurred Harry to greater efforts. I just remember, I was talking to an Aussie in town the other night who has been over here a couple of years and he was telling me his wife had just adopted a two month old baby. May be right, but to me there is a strong smell of fish in the air. Foot-ball is in full swing over here just now and Ron has been picked in the N.Z. team. They played the Spring-Box last Saturday and beat them 33-3. So far the Kiwis have not been beaten in this part of the World. I have not heard from Harold since he was bowled over, but I have talked to chaps who have seen him in Con camp and they tell me he is O.K. again. By the looks of things this is the last action the Kiwis will see in this country. I wouldn't mind going back and chasing hell out of him in Greece. There was a lot of weeping and wailing when we left so I wouldn't be surprised if we were pretty popular if we ever get back. I have had a lot of parcels lately. Three from home, one from Mrs Downey, one from Ruth and one from the Wells family. I don't know whether it came from you or the old people. Thanks a lot for it anyway. The fruit will come in very handy next time there is a move on. The stuff we save from parcels is the only thing that keeps us cracking on some of these long fast shifts we get. Well old thing I am afraid this is a bum sort of letter but better luck next time.

P.S. I suppose Alex knows what he is doing, but I know where I would be if I had a little wifey...



Training at Baggush for the 1942 Desert Test against the South African Division. R. Anderson, Padre Green, A. Lambourn, G. Fowler and J. Coull.



A. Wesley and Jack Sullivan get in some training before the big game. The New Zealand Division won 8-0.

Note: Our soldier's very good friend Ron Shaw played rugby for the all New Zealand side against South Africa.

Above: Some of his team mates preparing for the games.

Letter Fifty Four...

I have been in Alexandria on a fortnights leave since I last wrote but am back in camp again now. I got a letter from you yesterday, the first in weeks so thought I would try and scribble a few lines my-self. Ron and I and 3 other chaps went to Alex together and had a great time. We managed to get a room with fine beds and spent most of the time eating drinking and sleeping. The place we stopped at was right on the water front and the sea air was a big change from the stinks of Cairo. The weather was a bit cold for swimming but we spent a lot of time, on the beach just looking. Needless to say we did a fair bit of guzzling and that sure runs away with the chips. It cost me twenty odd quid for the fortnight, but it certainly was worth it. A man gets feed up to the eyes with camp life at times especially here at base. However there are no big guns down here so a man should not grumble. It is almost twelve months since I heard any nasty noises, so I should consider myself a very fortunate boy. I wouldn't be surprised though if there was a lot of dirt flying for Little Willy and Co before many moons have past. Ron and I are still in the same Squadron and as I think I told you before, Harold is over here to. He was suffering from a concussion for a while but looks as fit as a fiddle again now. Everybody gets a bit silly in the head when the big stuff lands close, but after a spell they seem to get alright again. We had our annual fall of rain again last week. It rained for about twelve hours and left everything as sticky as hell. It has cleared up now though and everything is about as dry as it ever was. She is sure a queer country. Here is hoping I am out of it for good before to long. I had a letter from Joyce yesterday to and she seems jolly enough but a bit feed up with the grass widow touch. If you see her tell her I will write one day soon. That is all I can think of for now so I will sign off...

Letter Fifty Five...

I have not written for some time but I have had a nice long letter from you. It was the first I have had for weeks and weeks so you can imagine how pleased I was to get it. Harold is over here with me now and he was saying he hadn't heard from you for a long time either. However I suppose you are a bit like me nothing to write about. I have had a couple of letters from Lois and quite a few from Joyce lately so I get to know how you are doing one way or another. Harold is looking O.K. again but I believe he gets giddy fits now and again, if he bends down to low. He is just the same in other ways as ever he was though, so I expect he will recover in time. I have seen Uncle Karl since he has been wounded to and he is out of hospital. He got a few bits of shrapnel from a mine in his arms and back, but none of them were serious. He is looking alright again any way even better than he was when I saw him that time. Ken Bird was down from the Desert for a few days a while back and we had a few nights together. It was the first time I had seen him for about twelve months, so we had plenty to nag about. He is a lot thinner than he was at home but has not changed a bit in other respects. His gun has got a few planes to its credit and he seems pretty happy about it all. Myself and the unit have been having a pretty easy time for some months now but I would not be surprised if we got a sticky job or two to do when we have completed the training we are on at the present time. I cannot tell you anything about it but I suppose you can get some idea from the change of address. Quite a lot of new hands arrived awhile back and they seem a fair mob of jokers.

I suppose there is some explanation for it, but I am damned if I can understand why they send them over here and keep the yanks in N.Z. They seem all to reckon they would sooner be over here than back there, so what has gone wrong with Kiwi land. I have heard a lot of wild yarns, but I think I will wait and judge for myself before I go in off the big end. That is all I can think of for now so I will close now...

Letter Fifty Six...

18. April. 1943

I am afraid I have slipped badly in my writing of late, but I just don't seem to be able settle down to it. I had a cable from you last week, saying you had some mail from me, but with the exception of the cable I have not had any from you for some time. I did get a couple from Joyce and Lois last mail but they were written at the end of Jan. So you can see I have been a bit short of home news. Our unit is still stationed here at base and I am still running the canteen. Harold is looking a hell of a lot better lately and is at present away on a six week course with a Tommy outfit. I am water man in this new establishment, so if we get any Desert fighting from now on 'Little Willy' should not die of thirst. We went out on a three day manoeuvre last week and I find this mobility a big change from the old foot slogging of the old days. This new show may not be as safe as the old but it certainly will be a lot more comfortable. I suppose a man should be thankful for the long spell he has had down here but it sure gets monotonous at times. Especially now a man is back on the old pound a week again. It was not so bad when we had a bit of a credit and could hit the high spots now and again, but now with things so expensive over here the quid is gone almost before you realise you have had it. The weather is starting to get hot again over here now and everybody is back in shorts. We have been issued with bush shirts and slacks as well this year, but like most Army stuff there is only two sizes, too big and too small. However with a little bit of tailoring they may be all right. Some of the boys call them their "giggle suits" and they sure are damn amusing. I had a bit of a night out with a few of the boys from up your way last week Aubrey Neal, Pat Macalister, Snow Curtis, and Velma Neal. We all got a wee bit tiddly and had songs, dances and recitations. I don't know what time it was when I got home but I don't think it could have been very long before sun-rise. Things are certainly looking up in this part of the world aren't they? But I am afraid if they don't send us home before the whole show is over it will be many more months before I see you all again. However here is hoping. I have got to write to the little Lady yet so I will close now...

Letter Fifty Seven...

Mail arrived in a few days ago and it was a great day for Willy. I got 10 letters the most I've had in any one day since I've been over here. I'm pleased to hear Pop is alright again. I had no idea he was so crook. Is he going to take up fowl raising as a full time job, it sounds like a pretty big thing he's started now. I had two letters from Lois and the same from Joyce this mail and they both seem to be doing alright for themselves. What does the winner of the competition get; it seems to me there may be one going on between the two sisters (Joyce and Gladys I mean). All these kids arriving make me feel about

sixty. What's the sailor boy Lois is doing a heavy line with like, by her letters he must be at least a Rear Admiral or something just as important. She said in her last letter she had sent a studio photo of herself, but so far it hasn't come to hand. Life goes on just the same over here and nothing very exciting ever happens. The week-end binges we used to have are a thing of the past, because they've still got us on a bottle a week per man of the old brown stuff. The spirits they make over here is pretty near as hard to take as the country so we don't go it much: When we can run a primus on their Gin, Whisky, etc. It must be pretty potent stuff. We have been out on manoeuvres this last fortnight so things are starting to stir along a bit. I'm water man for our Squadron and Harold is driving a three ton truck. I had my doubts about him making a successful driver, but he has surprised everybody including him-self. He talks about trucks as if they were horses. The other day we were talking about the driving business and he said, "I don't like those bloody two toners, they buck like a skittish filly when you sink the spurs". He is still as dry as ever and every - body gets a good laugh out of him. Ron is still going strong and he is a gunner in one of the Sherman's. I don't envy his job, these tanks are hot dusty damn things in the Desert, but it will take a bit more than dust and heat to damper his spirits and I don't think he will ever change until he is a hundred. He tells me he owes you a letter and will drop you a line one day soon. Don't think any less of him for not having written, because it is pretty hard to find anything to write about in this god forsaken hole. I am sure when we get to new diggings we will all get cracking again. I must tell you the latest developments in my love affair; it is pretty near as good as a novel. I think I told you the little lady wrote and said she was getting engaged, so I washed my hands of her. I get two or three letters after that and she signs herself "your old pal". Now in this last mail I get a letter from her saying she has made a big mistake and wants to know if I will forgive and take her back again. Also a bit of the usual stuff how she loves me and what a great guy she thinks I am.

Quiz, who does she love?

1. The guy she is engaged to?
2. Me?
3. Herself?

Myself I am in favour of no 3, but being a dumb male I might be making a mistake. So what do you think? I think I will be hard and tell her now she has made her bed she can lie in it. "Ha-Ha". Will you thank Joyce and Lois for their letters for me and tell them to keep up the good work. They can write about anything they like. Who is getting married, who is having babies or anything else. It all sounds good to me. I will close now with love to all.

P.S. I will cable today.

P.S.S. Thank Joyce for the snap, but tells her I think there must be something wrong with the camera. "He-He"...

Letter Fifty Eight...

I have not had any word from you since last I wrote, but I have got a wee bit more time on my hands now, so here goes for a few lines. Harold, Ron and I are still all together

and we are fit as fiddles. The weather is cooling down quite a lot again now and that helps. I had my second swim in the Med yesterday and it was great getting back in the old salt water again. Ron and I have bags of fun he is like a blinking seal in the water. He was down in the canteen writing letters last night because I have got the only light that is any good, when he drags out a cigar about a foot in length and about two inches round. He said he was keeping it for Xmas, but seeing it looked as if we would be fairly busy at that date he might just as well smoke it now. It took six of us to finish her off and needless to say damn near floored the lot of us. I noticed all the mossies, and scarabs did a bunk smartly so don't get the idea we are getting soft. We had a big, do, in Cairo some time ago, a sort of an old "B" company reunion and it turned out a big success. We had some money left over from the canteen we ran in Kabrit and Syria so we used it up on a dinner. We all got a bit silly with the booze and after saying a few nice things about each other we all sang, danced and recited. There was a couple of fights after we got back to camp, but that is just the usual proceedings during a booze up, and they are always good cobbbers again the next day so there is never any real harm done. That is the funny thing about Kiwi's if they can't find any Pom's to fight with they fight amongst themselves. A lot of the chaps over here have been getting tobacco parcels which I think is brought through the Patriotic Society. I wonder if you could make enquiries and send me one now and again. You get it very cheap and we get it duty free. I think you can buy it for about eleven shillings a pound, but I am not sure. If you do get on to it, it does not matter about sending me anything else, because I believe tin stuff and the like is pretty hard to get over there just now and you may as well have whatever extra you get for yourself. The result of the election came through today and as I expect you realise I had my first vote this time. It was more or less a guess as far as I was concerned because I have not taken much interest in politics. My one ambition is to get the war over and get home away out of this god-forsaken hole. "I have spoken". I'll close now...

Letter Fifty Nine...

*Xmas celebrations are over now and my hands stopped shaking enough, here goes for a few lines. This is the first time our units spent Xmas in base, and believe me we have all made the most of it. For Xmas dinner the cooks put the best feed I have had since we left home and to help things along the officers and sergeants waited on us. To give them their dues they made a blinking good job of it too. Although beer is a bit short over here just now, we managed to save up a good supply and by the actions of most of us this last four or five days I don't think anyone went short. Of cause we have been able to get into Town and that has helped things a lot. Harold was over for Xmas dinner and reckons she was a pretty good show. In the afternoon he Ron and I each with a parcel, went down to Nick who is in Hospital and spent a few good hours there. We got back to camp about midnight and carried on till the early hours. Harold ended up by going to sleep in Ron's bed and he in someone else's. Saturday and Sunday were just a continuation of Xmas day so you can imagine what sorry sights we were on Monday. I have completely lost my voice and guess I must have scolded tonsils with something pretty potent. Well, I reckon I had better get of the beer subject or you will be thinking "Little Willy" has gone to the dogs altogether, but after all Xmas, COMES, but once a year, and the old saying goes, **EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY FOR TOMORROW-- WHO KNOWS !!!!!**. I have put in a claim for Harold, so if everything goes according to plan he should be over here for*

good shortly. He looks fit, but says he still suffers from headaches. I don't think we will be shifting from here for a while yet so a bit of a spell will do him good. We have all been given a Xmas issue of our N.Z. E.F. Times and I have a snap here that I had enlarged, so I will send them both on to you with this. I think I will knock off now and drop a line to the little lady.

All the best in the New Year.

Letter Sixty...

To his Sister

Dear Joyce,

Lots of water has flowed under the bridge, and many bottles of Mr Booze has been consumed since last I wrote, but now that the Xmas and New Year festivals are over, here goes for a few lines in answer to some of the letters I've had from you lately. I must say you've excelled yourself. I've had at least half a dozen but some of them were pretty old. Evidently they've been held up somewhere but all the same, much better late than never. I can't make out where the Weekly's you've been sending are getting too though because I haven't received a single one. However perhaps I'll get a sack full one day. From Xmas Eve until New Year's night was about the most hectic time I spent in my life. This is the first Xmas our unit has spent in base so believe me we made a bird of it. The cooks turned on a great feed for Xmas dinner, but I'm afraid "Yours Truly" partook a little too much stagger juice over the holidays, because by New Year's night a little white man about six inches kept riding just past me on a bike with a bottle of rum in his hip pocket, so "Little Willy" decided it was time he had a spell. However she was good while she lasted and a good time was had by all. There were many songs, dances and recitations. Harold was up for Xmas dinner and for the fun making that followed. He slept in Ron's bed that night (or the following morning I should say) and Ron slept all night in someone else's. Football is in full swing and Ron has been picked in the all N.Z. team. They've played and beaten the Spring-Boks twice and the papers acclaim him the best back on the field. So you can see the Army hasn't done him any harm as yet. This is the worst month of the year over here and for the last forty eight hours it's been blowing like hell, so don't be surprised if you get half the desert posted with this. However there are no big guns down here so a man shouldn't growl too much. Well old tart there's really very little to write about, so I'll close now...

And so training and life at base-camp continued on towards the middle of the year with successive leave drafts, each fortnight, to the Eighth Army rest camp at Nathaniya in Palestine. The camp provided Troops with a cheap restful holiday under ideal conditions. Organised sightseeing bus trips, a fun fare, open air concerts, an excellent library and ample sea and sun bathing were the chief pastimes.

Towards the end of May, parties began to erect tents for the return of the Division from Tunisia. The sense of unreality in being left behind at Maadi while the rest of the Kiwi Division had trounced and routed the old Enemy, 'Africa Korps', had to a certain extent been forgotten in the whirl of new training and equipment as an Armoured unit. But from time to time rumours had swept the mess rooms. The New Zealand Division was in again. At, El Alamein, El Agheila, Medenine, Gabes, Wadi Akarit, Enfidaville and the grim heroism of Takrouna.

On the 23 May, it was announced that married men serving in the first three Echelons and a proportion of single men would return to N.Z. on furlough, leaving on the 15 June. (History would prove that a lot of these men would refuse to return including my uncle by marriage Bob Wigglesworth)

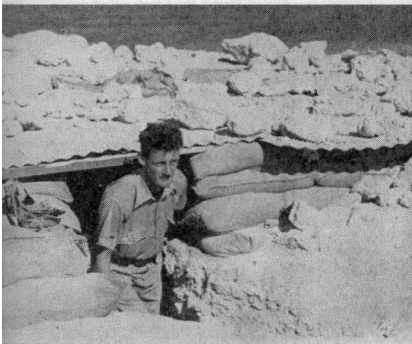
New Sherman tanks were received from time to time to replace the Crusaders which had been on loan and during September rumours of a move began to stir the lines. Late issues of equipment were received and base kits packed and received. The Regiments days in the Desert were fast drawing to a close.



ABOVE: MARCHING OUT OF EGYPT



MAORIS HURDLE WIRE ON MANCEUVRES



Centre : A DUGOUT NEAR THE SEA
Bottom : OFF DUTY UNDERGROUND

Centre : ACK ACK GUNNERS JOIN THE DIVISION
Bottom : BATHING PARADE

TRAINING NEAR THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

The North African campaign had been a long hard struggle with major advances and retreats. Eventually the success of the Allied forces at El Alamein in November 1942 ensured their victory, which was not finally achieved until May 1943. The cost to New Zealand was heavy with **2,989 killed, over 7,000 wounded and over 4,000 taken prisoner.**



NEW ZEALAND DIVISION BASE CAMP MAADI EGYPT

Mess queue during the march from Maadi to Burg el Arab, September 1943





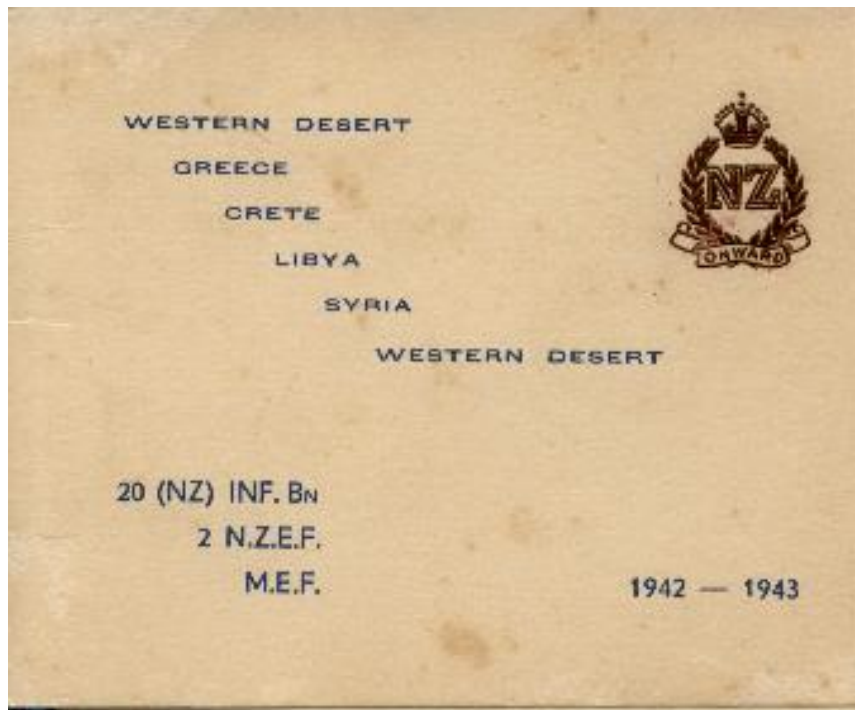
Mobile Surgical Unit equipment van, Maadi

Egyptian laundry, Maadi

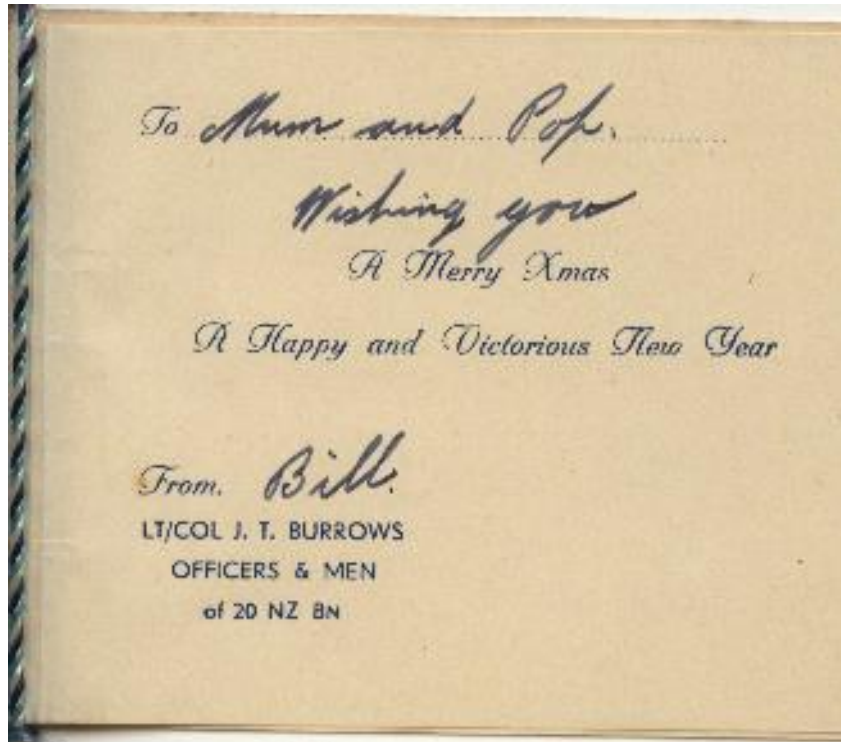


REFERENCE FROM OUR SOLDIER'S PERSONAL MILITARY FILES

	Qualified for award of Africa Star 20 NZ Armed Regiment	Middle East	
20 armoured regiment	Embarked Alexandria	Middle East	17.10.43
20 armoured regiment	Awarded Africa Star	Middle East	6.12.43



1942 CHRISTMAS CARD

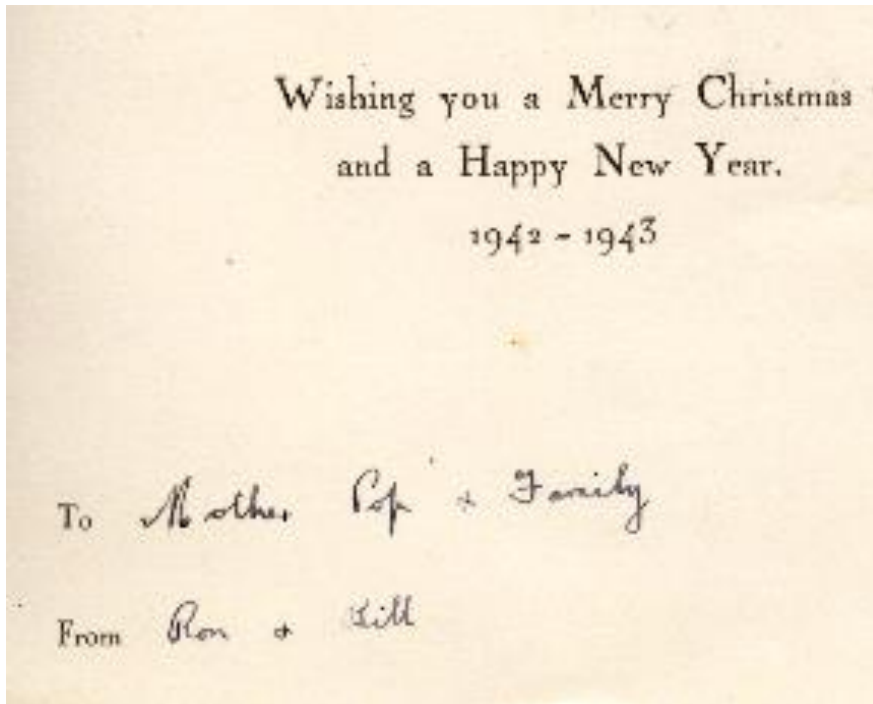


To Mr & Mrs Hold and Family from
Ron Show

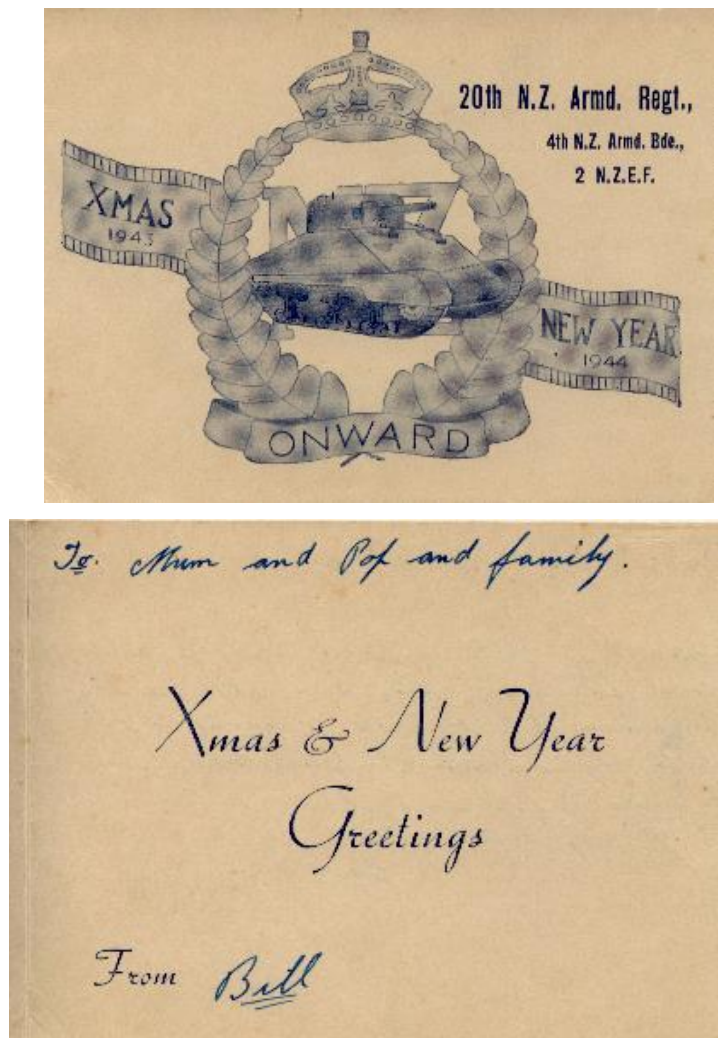
Here's wishing you all a Merry
Xmas and Happy New Year and will
be seeing you before the next Xmas.
Harold and Bill a box of birds. Sorry
I failed to answer your letter then
but will do so this week. You can
take it out of my hide with the
broom when we meet enjoying nice
weather and good swimming just now.
Cheerio for now all the best from
Ron

1943 CHRISTMAS CARD





1943 CHRISTMAS CARD



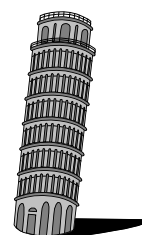
Dear. Mum

I haven't written for some time but both Harold and I are both fit and well. I'm still running the carter, but they are back to South shows again now. I guess I'll manage to write a few more letters from now on. "Be." my last letter.

Love from
Bill.

ITALIAN CAMPAIGN

OCTOBER 1943



Note: During his time in Italy our soldier did not participate in any front line fighting with his Battalion other than keeping his unit supplied with supplies on a regular basis.

AN EXCERPT FROM THE BATTALIONS HISTORY JOURNAL

“But, hardest worked of all was the reconnaissance Troop. As *‘maid of all work’* which entailed, reconnoitring, message running, delivering supplies and water, the Troop was required to cover the whole front, taking it’s tanks over country in which the heavier Sherman tanks would have sunk up to their belly’s”

We continue...

October 1943: The 20th Armoured Regiment along with the rest of the NZ Division, prepared to say farewell to Maadi, which for nearly four years had been its base and Army Home. Now the Desert as a field of campaign was finished with. (It was hoped for ever) Future activities lay across the Mediterranean and on the 17 October the Infantry of the NZ Division embarked on the ships *‘Letitia’*, *‘Liangibby Castle’* and the *‘Nieuw Holland’*, from Alexandria. This journey took them west along the coast of North Africa and eventually landing in the Port of Taranto in Italy on the 22 October. In the early evening, the Regiment arrived at the bivouac area near Galese, here the men pitched their tents beneath spreading Olive trees that brought back memories of Greece. A jovial celebration of their arrival in Italy was helped with a supply of wine from a nearby wine-factory where their quota was drawn from a fourteen foot high vat and carried back to camp in two-gallon water tins. Dusk fell and around the crackling log fires of pine the red-wine flowed freely and happy voices lifted freely in unison to the old, old ways, of soldiers between campaigns.

November: The vehicle and tank parties re-joined the Regiment and each group had its own story of the crossing from Egypt to tell. While they were in Galese and throughout the Italian campaign rations were supplemented with purchases of turkeys, poultry, sheep and pigs. Some of these supplies just happened to be 'acquired' and several orderly-room inquiries were held as a result of complaints from some of the new civilian allies. An identification parade of the suspected livestock 'rustlers' was held, but owing to the numbers of moustaches amongst the suspects the Italian farmers were baffled and so there-fore, the Regiment continued to live like Kings.

As usual, sports were soon under-way with a working party clearing and marking out a field in a stubble field. The inter-Squadron games of rugby would continue.

The Germans had established a strong winter line across the Italian Peninsula near the area of the Sangro River. General Montgomery had decided to break this line before the end of the month. The 8th Army, which included 5 Corps, 78 British Division, 8 Indian Division, 13 Corps, 1 Canadian Division, 5 British Division and the New Zealand Division, would move up, link up with the Fifth Army and attempt to cross the river, then try and push the Hun north.

On the 16th, the 20th Regiment of tanks and heavy guns moved out from Galese, and after several days of very slow progress over boggy roads which had been caused by torrential rains, they reached their destination. The NZ Division by this time had taken up positions along the Sangro and was awaiting orders to attack. For the 20th, it was with some satisfaction to be back in the front lines again, after a long absence of nearly sixteen months.

During the night of 27-28 November, New Zealand Infantry, using ropes fixed to posts on either bank of the Sangro, waded and hauled themselves through the bitterly cold waters to the enemy's side. Engineers built two bridges under fire and over the next few days armour as well as supporting arms would cross the river under difficulties.

OUR SOLDIER'S FRIEND RJ SHAW EXPLAINS SOME OF THIS PERIOD IN THE FOLLOWING LETTER'S...

Letter Sixty Seven...

9. January. 1944

To the Mold Family;

Dear Mum, Pop and family,

I guess you have just about given up hope of ever getting that letter I promised to write some months ago but they say it's never too late to start, so here goes for a few lines and hope they find you all in the best of health and that you had an enjoyable Xmas and New Year. We moved back into an Italian house yesterday and took up residence in a couple of spare rooms and are taking things easy for a few days, a pastime I'm pretty good at. I was camped with Harold for a few days just before we left Egypt but have only seen him once over here and he was his usual self then. I met Bill yesterday for the first time for a week or two, and he, like me is a box of birds. We had our first Church service this morning for about a month and are having Xmas dinner tonight so there will be a few bloated Kiwi's around by 6 o'clock. I suppose you have known for a long time now that we are with the 8th Army but this is the first time we have been allowed to mention it. We have had plenty of wet weather since landing in Italy and it is quite a change to be paddling around in the mud again after the sand. I went into one big town for a day's

leave on arrival but had to take our own grub as food and most other things were very scarce. In fact the only shops that seemed to do any trade was wine and barber shops. You could buy plenty of good almonds, grapes and apples when we first arrived for a few cigarettes but in our present position they seem to be very hard up. We camped in an Olive oil factory for a few days and it was quite interesting to see them extracting the oil. The olives are about the size and colour of damson plums and these are crushed to pulp and then squeezed in presses till all the juice is out. This black juice is run into a big vat and from there goes through a De Laval separator and the pure olive oil goes out the cream spout and the black juice out the skim dick. Every inch of ground is taken up with Olive groves and cultivated areas, and everyone gives a hand with the work from Grand-Ma right down to the youngest. All the ploughing I have seen done up to date has been done by bullocks and I had a go with the plough one day but I couldn't manage it and on the way home I saw an old Lady about 60 going along in great style and have been ashamed of myself ever since. The National drink here is wine and they use it as we use tea and have it on the table for all meals, and all hands drink it from baby up. We have 5 of a crew (Sherman Tank), and at different times do our own cooking and we jack up some pretty crafty meals with the aid of a few rabbits, cabbage and in one area well set spuds which were just like new ones, so have had no trouble up to late maintaining a large waist line. Much better than padding the hoof around the country side. Our crew represent Southland, Otago, West Coast, Te-Kuiti and the Waikato, so you will have some idea of the arguments that get started at times. When we first landed we all agreed to grow a moustache apiece and keep them on till victory is won and it costs 5 bob to trim and 2 pounds to cut off so there are a few hard looking do-doers now as nobody has weakened yet. I wrote and told Mum if she ever sees a bloke with the ends of his mo hanging on his ears snooping around the back door---not to put the dog on him as it will be me.

12th Jan

As you see I'm not too consistent with the old pen but here goes again, and we had a great Xmas dinner and continued afterwards with a few wines and had a few songs and recitations before the night was over. We spent Xmas day under a hay stack with plenty of rain and New Year's Eve sitting in the old tank and had a 2 feet fall of snow so it was a pleasant change to sit around a big fire for a yarn. Yesterday Bill and I went on his water cart a few miles up the road and met Nick and we had a good old yarn together. Nick is expecting leave to Egypt very soon and follow on to the best little place we know of, and is also very definite that we will be with him so may see you in the near future. Here's hoping anyway. We have had plenty of mail, papers and parcels the last week, so have been living like kings and having a very lazy time. There are 4 little kiddies in the house we live in and a little girl of about 4 years is sitting in the big chimney by the fire making string out of linen flax fibre. The women folk weave cloth with this string and use it for clothing, bedding etc., and seem to do the bulk of the work. Well Mum I reckon I have rambled on enough so will close, wishing you all the best for the New Year.

Cheerio and good health from, Ron.

PS. I may be better with the pen this year.

THE TANKS OF THE TWENTIETH

ORGANIZATION...

The 4th New Zealand Armoured Brigade was composed of three armoured regiments, the 18th, 19th and 20th. The armoured regiments were organized along British lines although with fewer tanks than their British counterparts. A NZ regiment consisted of 52 tanks. These composed a Regimental HQ Troop of four tanks and three Squadrons of sixteen tanks.

In addition the regiment contained a Recce Troop equipped with Stuart V light tanks in both turreted and turret less configurations and an Intercommunication Troop equipped with Lynx light scout cars.

Each Squadron consisted of a Squadron Headquarters with four tanks and four Troops each of three tanks.

EQUIPMENT...

The NZ Armoured Brigade in Italy was equipped with the diesel powered Sherman III (M4A2). The exception to this was during a brief period when they took control of some Canadian Sherman's. In October 1944 limited supplies of Sherman Firefly ICs began to be received, but these were soon replaced by the VC Firefly model and the following two issues of Firefly tanks consisted of the VC model.

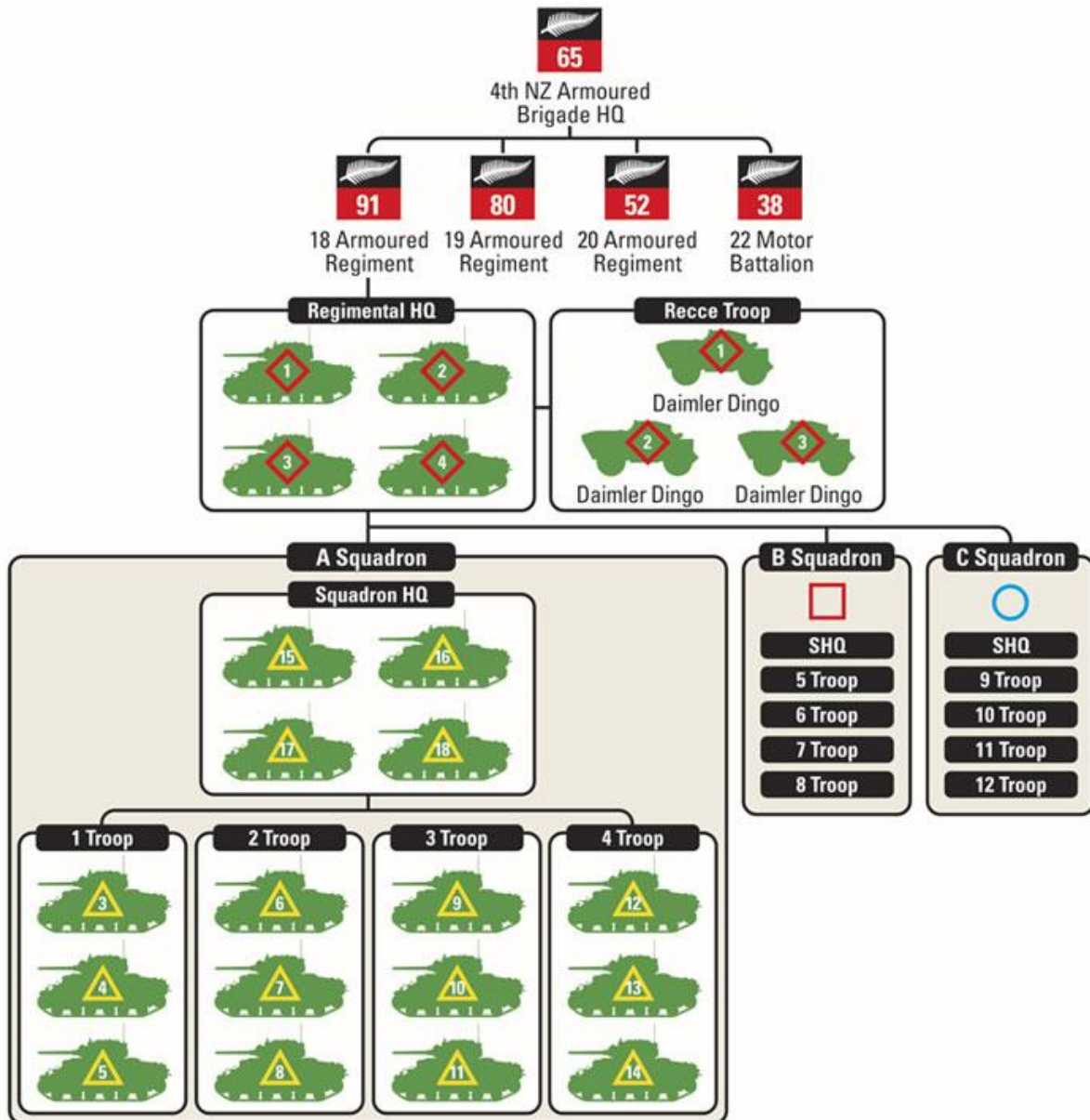
The reconnaissance Troop was originally equipped with the Daimler Dingo scout car, but these were quickly replaced by the Canadian manufactured version of the same vehicle, known as the Lynx as they were found to have better off road performance.

These in turn were replaced by Stuart V Honey light tanks, with the standard organization being three turreted models and eight turrets less jalopy models. As well as scouting duties these were found to be invaluable for a range of roles such as bringing up ammunition, Troop carrying and towing AT guns

CAMOUFLAGE...

When the Kiwi's initially arrived in Italy all tanks and vehicles were painted in a two tone disruptive pattern. This consisted of a base coat of mud grey (Vallejo 988) with a blue/black (Vallejo 995/950) disruptive pattern superimposed. This scheme was retained until April 1944 when support vehicles were ordered to be repainted in with a green base coat and black disruptive pattern. Most tanks remained in the mud grey and blue/black scheme at this time, the exception being 18th armoured regiment who repainted their Sherman IIIs in a dark green and brown disruptive pattern for a period during mid-1944. By the end of June 1944 orders had been issued to repaint all vehicles and tanks in an all over olive drab scheme (Vallejo 924). Due to rotation from the front, supplies and time constraints it took about 6 months to fully implement this order and vehicles and tanks could still be seen in older schemes as late as December 1944.

Organisation Structure and Markings diagram



MARKINGS...

In Italy the Divisional Markings and the arm of service markings were combined into a single marking. The top half was the 2nd NZ Divisions Silver Fern in white on a black background whilst the bottom half of the marking had the unit serial number on the arm of service colour. In the case of Armour this arm of service colour was red with the unit serial number in white. NZ Unit serials were as follows...

- 18th Armoured Regiment - 91
- 19th Armoured Regiment - 80
- 20th Armoured Regiment - 52

Tactical Markings followed the British practice with a diamond for Regimental HQ, a triangle for A Squadron, a square for B Squadron and a circle for C Squadron. These were in regimental colours...

- 18th Armoured Regiment - Red
- 19th Armoured Regiment - Yellow
- 20th Armoured Regiment - Blue

Tank Identification numbers appeared adjacent to the squadron tactical marking until March 1944 when the practice of painting the vehicle number in 18 inch high lettering in the regiment colour on the side of the tank. Numbers were based on the tanks position within the squadron and although the numbering system varied slightly from regiment to regiment.

BELOW: A M4A2 SHERMAN UNDER A CAMOUFLAGE NET AROUND THE TIME THE UNITS WERE AT CASSINO. THE OUTLINES TO THE SQUADRON INSIGNIA AND THE VEHICLE NUMBER OF THE 20TH ARMoured REGIMENT



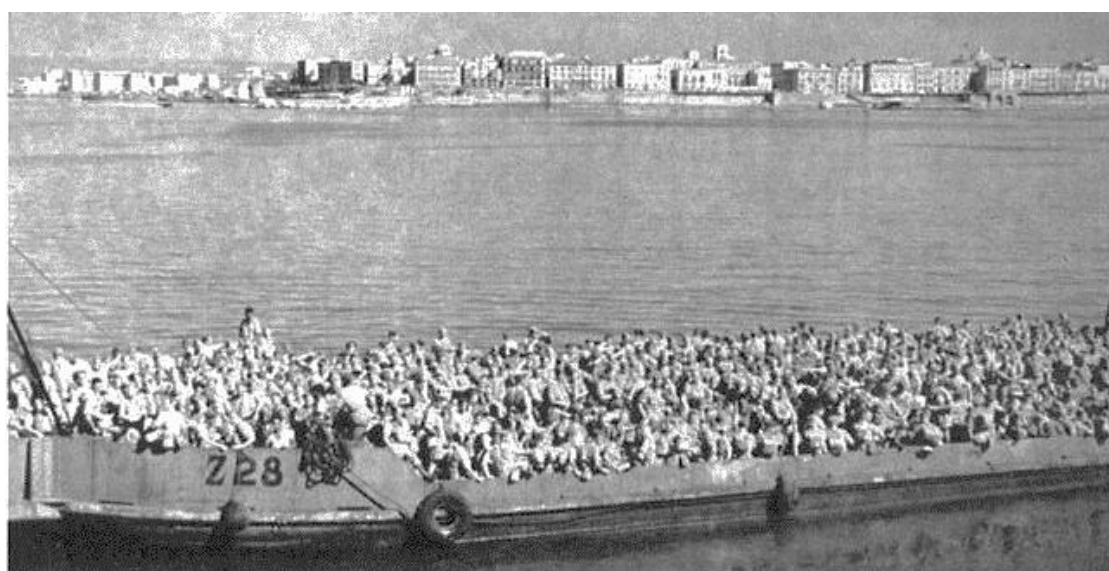
THE SANGRO RIVER

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Now the North African Desert as a field of campaign was finished with, (It was hoped for ever) future activities lay across the Mediterranean and on the 17 October the Infantry of the NZ Division embarked on the ships *Letitia*, *Llangibby Castle* and the *Nieuw Holland*, from Alexandria. This journey took them west along the coast of North Africa and eventually landing in the Port of Taranto in Italy on the 22 October. In the early evening, the Regiment arrived at the bivouac area near Gallese; here the men pitched their tents beneath spreading Olive trees that brought back memories of Greece. A jovial celebration of their arrival in Italy was helped with a supply of wine from a nearby wine-factory where their quota was drawn from a fourteen foot high vat and carried back to camp in two-gallon water tins. Dusk fell and around the crackling log fires of pine the red-wine flowed freely and happy voices lifted freely in unison to the old, old ways, of soldiers between campaigns.



LEFT: MEN OF 2ND NEW ZEALAND DIVISION ON THE WHARF AT ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT, EN ROUTE TO ITALY. ³



ABOVE: GOING ASHORE AT TARANTO

November: The vehicle and tank parties re-joined the Regiment and each group had its own story of the crossing from Egypt to tell. While they were in Gallese and throughout the Italian campaign rations were supplemented with purchases of turkeys, poultry, sheep and pigs. Some of these supplies just happened to be *'acquired'* and several orderly-room inquiries were held as a result of complaints from some of the new civilian allies. An identification parade of the suspected livestock *'rustlers'* was held, but owing to the

numbers of moustaches amongst the suspects the Italian farmers were baffled and so there-fore, the Regiment continued to live like Kings.

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BELOW: AERIAL VIEW OF ALTINO SHOWING THE SANGRO RIVER IN THE SNOW COVERED VALLEY ⁴





ABOVE: FLAT LAND NORTH OF THE SANGRO RIVER CUT UP BY VEHICLES OF 2 NZ DIVISION



LEFT: FANNING A CHARCOAL BRAZIER BY SWINGING IT

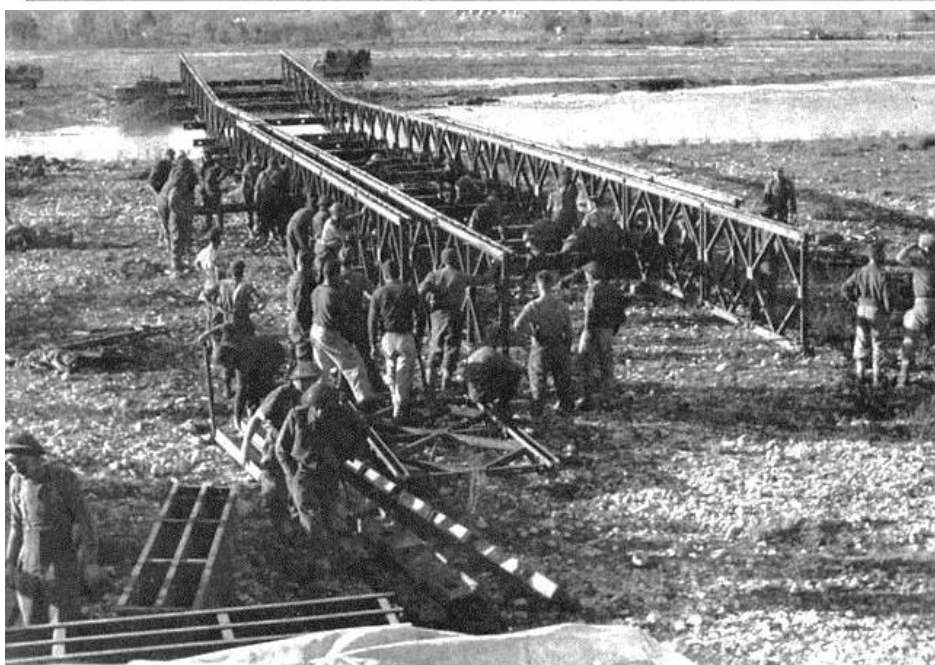
Gunner Gordon Johnston, 63740 remembers...

'It was our first River, it was right at the bottom of Italy and that was our first big barrier, across the Sangro River. It was a big barricade across there and the Germans tried to stop us there. And we fired a lot of stuff there but we got caught shortly afterwards by the snow. We got snowbound and, here's another wee story because we, the Division-nobody could move... Most of

the guys, they got either into bivvies' or into casas. But I had this armoured car, and it had a hole. How did we keep warm? We had these, probably you've heard of these things-we had these charcoal - a tin with charcoal in, and a couple of bits of wire on it, and you poured a bit of petrol on, lit it and it would keep going but the charcoal would die down, so every now and then you had to get out, give it a swing round to get a bit of air in it. And at night time you'd look out over wherever everybody was, the Division was, and you'd see these, these things swinging round in the night'.



LEFT: MANHANDLING A TRUCK BOGGED AT THE SANGRO



LEFT: A BAILEY BRIDGE OVER THE SANGRO RIVER

THE BATTLE FOR ORSOGNA

December: With the advent of winter bringing heavy rain and snow the tanks of the 20th Regiment along with the Infantry of the NZ Division would make several attacks on the enemy in and around the town of Orsogna. The area was surrounded by many steep ridges which gave the enemy a huge advantage, defensively. There was only one road leading into the town and this made progress for the tanks very difficult. On leaving the road, several tanks would be bogged down resulting with several casualties, as they then made easy targets for the well dug in guns of the Germans. Two D 8's (Bulldozers) were used to pull them out. The battle continued right through December with neither side gaining ground, one way nor the other.

Captain Rolleston, Commander of B Squadrons tanks, gives a clear idea of the difficulties of a winter campaign in mountainous country...

I was Officer in charge of 3 of our tanks which are in the FDLs at present held by the Maori Battalion. These tanks are unable to move at present owing to the snow and heavy going but are otherwise, runners. They are situated on a reverse slope, about 150 yards from the top of the ridge which forms the FDL. There is one platoon of infantry of whose HQ and residence is on the crest immediately in front and they are responsible for the ridge from the house to the Orsogna Rd and so could give covering fire along the forward side of this p.l ridge. (This was the position when the 24th Battalion held the position).

The platoon puts out listening posts at night along this ridge while the balance live in the house. The tanks have 3 men in each and during the night one man in each tank are always awake and there is always a man with his head out of the turret of one tank. During the morning of the 5th January it was snowing and blowing hard from the direction of the Enemy and visibility was limited as well as very difficult. About 0530 hrs. there was a shout from the pl's house followed by a burst of firing, then a stream of Maori's poured down the slope shouting to us to open fire on the house. This we did with our Browning's directed by the platoon commander. A certain amount of SA fire was returned but it was spasmodic and brief. A Maori patrol was then sent forward and found the house clear of Enemy except for one dead German who had been killed by Browning fire and a wounded German who could be heard shouting "Kamerad" forward of the FDLs. I recovered the pay book and papers of the dead German and forwarded them to Company Commander.

In my opinion, the German patrol would have had no difficulty in getting through and destroying tanks. Tanks at night are helpless against patrols and their only protection is by infantry on the ground. Owing to the snow, infantry weapon pits are not manned by night and the fact of there being only 3 men to a tank makes a ground piquet by tank members impracticable...

**BELOW 1: AERIAL VIEW OF THE ENEMY HELD TOWN OF ORSOGNA IN ITALY DURING WORLD WAR II. SHELLS FROM
NZ DIVISIONAL ARTILLERY CAN BE SEEN BURSTING IN THE SNOW: SHOWING CENTRAL RIDGE UP WHICH
24 NZ BATTALION ADVANCED IN EARLY STAGES OF ATTACK. ⁵**



LESSONS LEARNT...

A lot of lessons were learnt in this battle for the newly established tank crews. It had become obvious early in the battle that an attack with armour could not be mounted at short notice. The assembly of tanks, refuelling, and reconnaissance by Commanders were factors which could not be skimped if success was assured. Co-operation with the infantry, of course, depended largely on communications, whether by radio or visual means. Under the muddy conditions tanks were forced to keep mainly to the road, with the result that infantry going to ground or deploying to avoid Enemy fire were soon out of sight and lost touch. Minefields created a major problem and invariably the going required to be cleared by sappers or infantry mine sweeping parties, otherwise tanks were disabled in a futile attempt to get forward. The restriction of movement to the roads was the cause of most of the tank casualties and at one stage the Regiment had no fewer than 33 immobilised, of which 25 were the result of Enemy action. The rest had either been bogged or had suffered mechanical trouble. Casualties in men, too, had been heavy, with 24 killed, 31 wounded and 4 taken prisoner of war. In spite of these losses, most of them highly trained members of tank crews, all Squadrons continued to operate with efficiency till the end of the campaign.

Towards the end of the month and into the fifth New Year of the war, there was over a foot of snow on the ground. With the Troops on both sides seeking shelter from the blizzards it soon became obvious to General Alexander that the battle along the Adriatic front had become a stalemate and so he then decided to switch the offensive, to the western side of the Apennines.

BELOW: NEW ZEALAND TANKS UNDER SNOW AT ORSOGNA, ITALY, DURING WORLD WAR 2, 1943 OR 1944





LEFT: NZ SOLDIERS PASS A DEAD GERMAN SOLDIER AS THEY MOVE UP IN FULL DAYLIGHT TO ATTACK THE GERMAN HQ OF THEIR SANGRO RIVER DEFENSE LINE AT CASTEL FRENTANO: BY GEORGE FREDERICK KAYE.



LEFT: GERMAN PRISONERS CAPTURED ON THE SANGRO RIVER FRONT, IN ITALY, BEING MARCHED BY NEW ZEALANDERS TO REAR AREAS, DURING WORLD WAR II. 1943 BY GEORGE FREDERICK KAYE.

MONASTERY OF CASSINO

JANUARY 1944

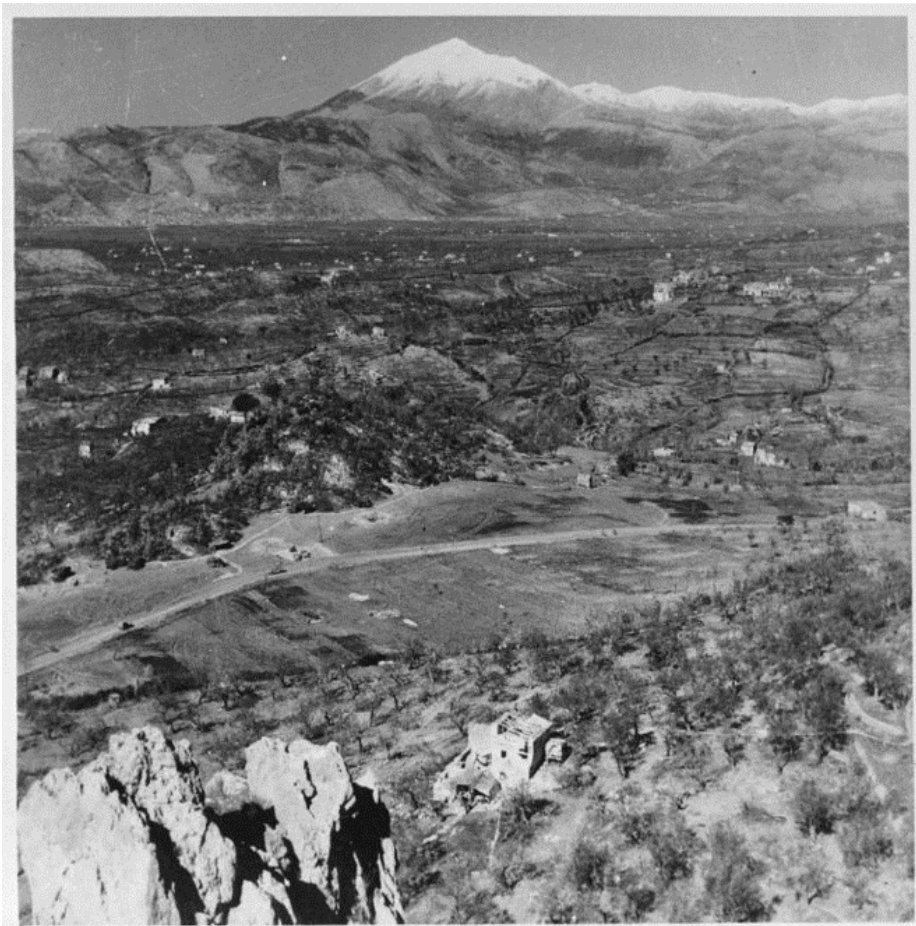
Note: It was not until May, when our soldier and his good friend re-joined their unit in Italy. Ron Shaw took up his role once again as a Sherman tank driver. He had spent some time back at Advance camp recovering from a wound to his back which he had received in one of the previous battles. Our soldier who had also spent quite some time at Advance camp had now recovered from first, a sprained ankle and then appendicitis. He re-joined his unit as water man and was responsible for supplying water at all times to the tank crews in B Squadron. In Casino this was a very hazardous job...

REFERENCE FROM OUR SOLDIERS PERSONAL MILITARY RECORDS

20 armoured regiment	Adm 4 NZ Fd Amb ADS and ifd to x (11) list		2.2.44
NZAC x List	Discharged. 1 NZ Conv Dep and att 2 NZ Reception Depot and remains onX (II) list	Italy	30.3.44

Note: I believe that it was during this time our soldier had his appendix out...

January 1944: Five Divisions including the New Zealand Division, (who by this time had been relieved by 4 Indian Division) were transferred from the Eighth Army to the Fifth Army and from the 15 January would be transported by road and rail across the mountains to take up an attacking line on the Rapido river near the town and Monastery of Cassino. The railway across the Apennines had been reopened by American Engineers only 7 or 8 days before but only one train ran each day. It took almost a week to transport all of the tanks across the mountains with the 20th eventually receiving there 45 near the village of, Alife, on the 22 January. The blizzards of the Orsogna front gave place to crisp spring days; the men relaxed, serviced their equipment, did a little training, played a lot of sport and went on foraging excursions for eggs, oranges and 'vino'. Women from neighbouring villages did the soldiers washing and mending.



LEFT: A VIEW OF MONTE CAIRO, CASSINO

At dawn on the 22 January, 6 United States Corps had landed at Anzio, 30 miles south of Rome and 60 miles behind the Gustav line at Cassino. It had been hoped that the landing would cause the Enemy to withdraw from this line, just as the Divisions left hooks had forced him more than once to withdraw in North Africa. Although the seaborne left hook at Anzio surprised the Enemy, it did not drive him from the field. Reinforced from Northern Italy he pinned the Americans and British down to a small beach-head and strengthened his hold on Cassino.

The town of Cassino with its inhabitants of around ten thousand was nestled under the

foot of what had become known as 'Monastery Hill'. This hill, 1,700 feet high was crowned by the Monte cassino Abbey. The elite, *1 Parachute Division*, of the German army along with about 180 heavy guns and tanks had dug themselves, in, extremely well, on and around these areas and over the next few months would hold out in desperate defence against the British, United States, French, Indian and New Zealand Corps who were now all of the Fifth Army.

February: The New Zealand Division moved up from Alife too Mignano, some 10 miles from Cassino. Here under the command of General Freyberg the Division became the NZ Corps and were strengthened by 4 Indian Division, American Combat Command 'B', and a Division from 78 British, plus several more heavy guns, tanks, transport and Engineers.

Freyberg, true to form, again favoured a heavy-weight punch for the following attack using all available air power to blast through Route 6 in the town and then the Rapido line across the river. The plan adopted was that 4 Indian Division, whose Ghurkhas, Punjabis and Rajputs were hill-men trained on the North-West Frontier and tested in mountain warfare in East Africa and Tunisia, would operate north of Route 6 in the hills and the New Zealand Division in the Liri Valley. Two United States Corps would attack again over the hill tops north-west of Cassino and towards the rear of Monte cassino. All the artillery that could be brought to bear would hammer the Enemies defences and 4 Armoured Brigade would then crash over the Rapido River with the help of all available air support.

By the 6 of February the NZ Infantry Division had moved forward and taken command of the Rapido line just south of the village. Facing the New Zealanders across the river and in the village was *15 Panzer Grenadier Division*, well equipped and confident.

Note: The 20th Regiment were still based at Mignano and were placed on two hours' notice.

Before the NZ attack was launched it was decided to bomb the Monte Casino Abbey. Its commanding position made it a perfect observation post, its walls looped holed by many small windows, were 5 feet thick and 15 feet high. On the 15th February, wave after wave of bombers attacked and left it a smoking ruin, 5 Brigade patrols then probed the Enemies defences and surveyed the ground between the river and the railway station, the New Zealanders objective. On the night of the 17-18 February the Maoris made an attack towards the station. They had to flounder through water and heavy mud, across fields sown with anti-personal mines. By mid-night after very heavy fighting and with many casualties, they took and held the station buildings, but by three the next after-noon the Germans counter attacked with tanks and forced the Maoris back across the river. The NZ and American tanks were unable to give support as they were unable to move across the water logged ground and the Engineers could not repair all the demolitions that blocked the way along the road. By next morning, in spite of difficulties, both arms of the Rapido had been bridged by the engineers, but demolitions to the west still blocked the way to the station.

In the meantime the 20th waited idly for orders and because of the very wet and cold conditions, they spent their time making ingenious charcoal stoves from ammunition boxes and shell cases. Home-made oil-drip stoves warmed the bivvies efficiently but had to be treated with respect. The stove's oil tank was usually an old margarine tin, its explosion chamber a two-gallon water tin, its chimney a string of food tins wedged one inside the other with the ends cut out. Its worst fault was a tendency to go out and relight itself a few seconds later with a nerve-shattering explosion and a shower of soot. When '*revved up*' it glowed red hot and threw out a terrific heat, but most men preferred to warm themselves from a respectful distance.

On the evening of the 24th, 16 tanks of C Squadron moved to San Michele to support 5 Indian Brigade. '*I can well remember the fright we got when passing practically under the guns of the Yank widow-makers, when they all opened fire*' said the Squadron leader, '*When we recovered from the shock the language was lurid in the extreme*'.

On entering the war and over the last few months, the Americans had attacked the fortress three times and had failed and now the job had to be done again. The NZ Corps, being on the spot and assembled ready to attack were ordered to do it. Most of the previous attacks had been made in the mountains and across the Rapido to the south. General Freyberg now decided to take Cassino town. He planned to clear the Germans out of it house by house, first demolishing it with bombers and then sending in tanks and infantry immediately afterwards under an artillery barrage. Cassinos narrow streets, stone buildings and deep cellars had been converted into a fortress, with strong points in the hills behind it from which the defenders could watch almost every move made by the besiegers and sweep all approaches with fire. On these approaches, bridges had been demolished and craters blown. Flooding, barbed wire and mines girdled the town. In the town were hidden self-propelled guns and tanks, snipers with Spandau's, machine-gun posts and concrete bunkers all of which presented a challenge for the attackers. The orders to attack were received on the 23 February, but because of the extremely wet conditions it did not take place until the 14th March.

For everyone it was a miserable three weeks. As day followed day the forward Troops in Cassino whirled away the hours waiting wretchedly in cramped, unsanitary buildings and cellars, suffering, besides the cold and wet, the strain of a ceaseless watch in close contact with the Enemy. At night strained sentries saw a target in every shadow. Whenever they could hear the Enemy working on his position they called down artillery fire. The Enemy retaliated, or shelled the supply points and roads over which carrying parties from the reserve Companies each night humped food and ammunition to the forward posts: A carry of about half a mile. During this waiting period the Division suffered an average of ten battle casualties a day, more of them on the roads and in the reserve company areas than in the forward posts. The most notable, was Major-General Kippenger who had trod on a Schu mine and had lost both of his feet.

March 14: Operation 'Dickens' was about to start. The forward Troops withdrew back behind the safety line and at 8.30 am. The bombing started. 338 heavy bombers and 176 medium bombers would drop 1100 tons of bombs that morning on Casino and then at midday over 600 heavy guns would fire on all known German gun positions. The town was flattened, with about a Battalion of German soldiers killed, however, this did not break the Germans spirit as the attacking infantry soon found as they swarmed on in through the ruins. The Enemy were well dug in and over the next few days the New Zealanders and their Allies would attempt to clear the town, house by house, but would fail to take the town outright. Because of some misdirected bombs causing piles of rubble and craters, the 400 odd tanks available to support the infantry could not advance forward and had to wait for bulldozers to clear the way, therefore, valuable time was lost giving the Germans time to rally and reorganise.

March 19: It was thought that a tank thrust towards the Monastery from the rear would create a diversion and so finally, C Squadron from the 20th Regiment were ordered forward to attack under the command of 7 Indian Brigade. The general plan was that the Squadron, consisting of 15 Sherman's, 12 open-topped Honey tanks along with a company of 760 USA Tank Battalion, 3 American 105--millimetre self-propelled guns on a Sherman chassis and a Troop of 5 Honeys from 7 Indian Brigade would attempt to capture Masseria Albaneta. Then, they would exploit south-east towards the monastery, linking up if possible with the Ghurkhas and the Essex Troops from hangman's corner.

The Squadron got under way at about 4 am and headed off up Cavendish Road to rendezvous with the rest of the force at Madras Circus. The going was over some of the toughest bits of ground that any of them had asked a tank to take before. At about 7.30 the rendezvous was reached and they then moved on up a grassy valley between rough, bush-covered hills. The ground was sown with S-mines, which went off like crackers under the tracks. These mines were meant for foot-soldiers so did no harm to the tanks. The leading tanks had only met opposition from infantry, the self-propelled guns had knocked out most effectively an enemy blockhouse, but as the valley narrowed down into a bottleneck the advance came under heavy artillery fire.

BELOW: BOMB BURSTS AND SMOKE FROM SHELLS DURING THE BOMBER RAID ON THE ITALIAN TOWN OF

CASSINO PRIOR TO THE ASSAULT: ⁶



Corporal Dick Jones explains the advance...

Buck called on the wireless to say that we would advance to Albaneta House in two up formation, covering the left scrubby hillside while Jack Hazlett looked after our right with his Troop. Our 'two up' formation consisted of Buck and myself forward with covering fire from our Sergeant's tank. We decided to advance, leap-frogging each other with approximately 300 yard bounds, each giving covering fire in turn. Here we found for the first time how vulnerable a tank is on the move in rough going. I tried at first to secure hull-down positions at the end of each advance, but soon gave up this idea as we nearly got stuck twice, and anyway our advance was much quicker than we anticipated. Just as Buck gave the word to move a German crawled out of the scrub waving a white flag. Here I think, if we had Infantry we could have captured many prisoners as they were starting to appear everywhere, but just then our covering tanks were through and opened up. As we leaped frog our way forward it became obvious that we had caught Jerry napping. Just through the gap Buck wiped out a machine gun nest, the Germans bravely firing away at us until the end. All the way we pounded the hillside and I think we must have inflicted heavy casualties as we could pick up a good few Germans moving about. As we advanced up the plateau we were conscious of a narrow part, and my crew knew as well as I that if Jerry had anything heavy in the 'Nunnery' (Albaneta House) we would be a sitting shot. With the way our advance had gone it was our tank's turn to advance first through the 'bottle neck,' as Buck and I had been calling it. As we prepared to advance through I told our driver, Jack Hodge, to drive as fast as possible, swerving from side to side. Buck opened up on Albaneta House and Jack Hazlett's Troop was also concentrating on it. When it was practically obscured by dust we moved. In the turret we tossed about as the tank swerved and bucked. I am sure we all held our breath in spite of this. When we stopped Steve Lewis, our gunner, opened up on the 'Nunnery' with AP and HE while Joe Costello, our spare driver, raked it with his .30 Browning, much to his delight. Buck moved through while we kept up the bombardment...

Albaneta House, proved to be a hard nut to crack, and although the big square building with its very thick walls of stone had taken a pounding from artillery and bombs, the soldiers within stood their ground gamely and caused many casualties to the tanks and their crews with constant fire from their snipers and Bazookas. Orders came through to Major Barton to bypass the house and make an attempt to close in on the Monastery.

He explains the next move...

We had orders to see what the chances were of getting around the corner to the Monastery. We knew from the aerial photo that a track of some kind was in existence but it did not look very promising. From our position it was not possible to see the track. I ordered Buck Renall to have a try and see what the reaction was. Jack Hazlett's two tanks were to cover Albaneta House as we were certain some Jerries must be there, we had seen four pop up from behind a wall some time earlier. It was not possible to go around the rear of the house as it was perched on the edge of a gully and the going was too tough. All this time we had been shelled with varying degrees of intensity, some of it heavy stuff which fortunately had little effect except to make sightseeing out of the turret undesirable. Rennall's Troop disappeared around the corner and we waited anxiously to hear from him. All went well for a while then silence. The next moment his tank appeared and came out, holed several times with bazookas. Buck was killed, by a sniper. His other tanks had a further attempt with equally disastrous results. A wireless operator, Tom Middleton killed and one or two of the crew badly wounded. Jones lost an arm in one of the tanks. Bazookas and snipers did the damage. I am hazy about the third tank but I know that one pulled out and reported it was holed badly and I think casualties to the crew. To complicate matters this tank got badly stuck on the track up from Albaneta. We tried to get smoke down to let the crew make a dash for it as the sniping was severe. I was reluctant to send down another tank as we only had 3 genuine runners left, and the chances of being stuck were obvious. I had just decided that they would make a dash for it when a Yank Honey dashed up alongside and took all the crew off. It was a gallant effort as they were very likely to have become bogged

alongside. Throughout the day they displayed great dash and calmness, especially as they had, open Honeys. Their casualties were very heavy as a consequence. We greatly admired them...

And so throughout the day the Squadron made several attempts to take the Monastery and at one point came within 1000 yards of it, but the shelling from the Enemy was too heavy and persistent. Because the support from infantry had failed to come forward and assist, it was decided to withdraw the tanks as soon as it was dusk to Madras Circus. Here, over the next 3 days they would lick their wounds and after leaving one Troop behind to support the Essex infantry they would then withdraw to their old laager area at San Michele.

The attack for C Squadron was a disappointment. It had lost 9 tanks in action (5 were recovered later) and had, had 2 Officers and 3 other ranks killed and 1 Officer and 8 men wounded. However though, to get tanks into the heart of the Enemy's defences was a feat of skill and determination. And to quote a remark from General Freyberg: *'It was primarily a raid, (a side show.) One arm of a pair of pincers that could accomplish nothing without the other'...*

Over the next few days, A and B Squadrons from the 20th would advance into the town of Cassino and eventually after some fierce fighting alongside their fellow Kiwi infantry would take control of the centre of town and the railway station. During the following month of April, they would play a cat and mouse game with the remaining enemy tanks in the streets of the town and give support to the foot-soldiers whenever they could.

April: At night the tanks in Cassino acted as a sort of welfare centre for the infantry in the town. The crews would brew tea for them, hand out any food they had to spare, or help bury their dead. The crews of the tanks, but not the tanks themselves, would change every two or three days. The main reason for not changing the tanks was the difficulty the Engineers had in keeping the bridges over the Rapido repaired. As regularly as they fixed them by night the Enemy blew them apart by day, or as a variation, shelled them at night while the engineers were working on them, causing heavy casualties. The relief's would come and go by either walking, running or crawling, according to individual preference and Enemy viciousness at the time. The Enemy seemed to have plenty of ammunition and the hours of relief had to be changed almost every day.

One of the crew's main worries was the recharging of batteries to keep the wireless working and to start the tanks engines. Carrying parties had to bring in petrol, often under fire and the noise of the Homelite charger was almost certain to bring down fire.

Sergeant Russel describes his experience on entry into the town as a relief...

I went in with the first relief, Martin Donnelly and Ces Brown showing us the way in. This trip we still had bridges over the Rapido and took the jeeps over. Later we had to walk this mad mile, or more or less. This first trip we were mortared or shelled quite a bit, at least I remember flattening out on the road a few times and was carrying a 4 gallon tin of petrol for our Homelite charger to keep the batteries up so our wireless would still be of use to us. That's the heaviest tin I hope I ever carry.

At our first refuge we had to get down on our hands and knees and enter the Crypt. This was our main dressing station for the wounded. From here we scrambled out the other side and proceeded 100 to 200 yards to the tank positions in the buildings. We also had infantry in these positions with us and as far as I know there was nothing ahead of us except the Enemy. Jerry was able to shell the yard between the church and the tanks but seemed unable to get short enough to hit the tank building. All the same we were close enough to receive a rifle grenade with pamphlets.

We had dug trenches under our tanks and took our turns on sentry with the Tommy guns ready for action, but we were never really called on to patrol or defend ourselves this way. But, I will always remember those positions, with the shells and mortars falling close behind us, and Jerry talking and screaming, and worst of all the croaking of frogs when listening and peering for forms in the darkness...

Early in the month the New Zealand Infantry in Cassino were relieved by Regiments of the Guards Brigade. As the days went by and the little cover that was left was whittled away by the Enemies fire, the difficulties of keeping tanks in Cassino began to cause anxiety. None were sorry when the Squadrons tour of duty in the town finished on the night, 25-26 April. The tanks and the wireless set in the Crypt were handed over to a Squadron of 12 Royal Canadian Tank Regiment. Squadron guides from the 20th led the Canadian crews into town. The Kiwi tank crews were very pleased to see them. Arriving back at Squadron HQ, their tour of duty complete, the tired crews were well looked after. No matter what hour of the night or morning the Troops from the forward area arrived back, there was always a hot meal ready.



LEFT: A SOLDIER AT THE CASSINO BATTLEFRONT, ITALY.

B SQUADRON TWENTIETH ARMoured REGIMENT

Note: Once again we pick up the story of our soldiers old B Company, which by now is B Squadron and follow its trail as they head north towards Trieste assisting the rest of the Army with the decisive retreat of the Germans.

His letters and telegrams describe the period leading up to this time

Letter sixty one....

31. February. 1944

Dear Mum,

I have not written for some time but I have heard from you and also received parcels. Thanks a lot. Since I last wrote I have been operated on for appendicitis, but am practically well again. I should be in Con Camp within a week so there is no cause for worry. Harold is camped not far from where I am at present and from what one or two of the boys that have seen him he is doing fine. Has he told you the ins and outs of things? With a bit of luck you may see him before me. I sent a cable yesterday. Thank Lois for photo...

Letter Sixty Two...

17. March. 1944

Since I last wrote have spent a fort-night in Con Camp and am feeling better now than I have for some months past. Harold was with me here for the first week and as I suppose he has told you he is now grade C which is not a homer but will keep him out of the front line. Which is a good thing? He is not ill but he cannot stand big noises, for they bring on bad headaches. There is no need to worry about him because he is looking very well and

appears the same to me as he ever was. I have had quite a bit of mail lately including one from Mrs Soar (?). She tells me she has lost track of Ray for some time, but I have since heard from Les Pratt who is in Con too, that he is now POW in Germany. It will be at least a month before I get back to the unit so don't worry about me. Thank Lois for her aerograph...

	CRZ AEVAE 25 JAN MRS HJ MOLD HASIMONA ST DARGAVILLE NZ	DATE-STAMP
Rec'd at	By	
<p><u>NEW ZEALAND POST-OFFICE CABLEGRAM</u> (IN CONJUNCTION WITH CABLE AND WIRELESS LIMITED.)</p> <p>= BA U UN =</p> <p>ALL WELL AND SAFE LETTERS RECEIVED MANY THANKS LOVE</p> <p style="text-align: right;">BILL MOLD</p>		
Tel. 139. 4.000 pads/12/42-8460]		

ABOVE AND BELOW: COPIES OF TELEGRAMS SENT TO HIS MUM IN FEBRUARY 1944

O X35380 Overseas 16 Feb Rec'd at 11 - 40	Mrs H J Mdd Haimona St Dargaville By Js	DATE-STAMP
<p><u>NEW ZEALAND POST-OFFICE CABLEGRAM</u> (IN CONJUNCTION WITH CABLE AND WIRELESS LIMITED.)</p> <p>Writing health fully restored love</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Bill Mdd</p>		
Tel. 139. 4.000 pads/12/42-8460]		

Letter Sixty Three...

Easter Sunday 9th April. 1944

Here I am again with not much to write about but thought I would drop you a line to let you know I am still kicking and fit and well. I have been through Con camp and now at

Advance Base waiting to go back to the unit. I was on leave the day before yesterday and was talking to Harold who is doing a guard job at one of our General Hospitals. He is looking fit and says it is the best job he has ever had. Ron is there too with a slight wound in his back. He is up and about again though and still his old self. I wish you could drop him an Aerogram Mum, because he is always asking after you and I think enjoys getting your letters. There has been no talk of any more drafts going home yet, but the war should not go on for more than a couple of years now and I am getting a bit to cunning to get skittled this part of the piece. What has gone wrong with Joyce? I have not heard from her for ages. Have I offended her in some way or has she just got writer's cramp. Perhaps the family are getting her down. I was talking to Scotty Primrose and he told me he had seen Pop.

Am looking forward to your long letter...



LEFT: NEW ZEALAND SOLDIERS, DURING A BREAK IN THE FIGHTING ROUND MONTE CASSINO, ITALY 1944: ⁷



LEFT: NEW ZEALAND RADIO OPERATORS AT CASSINO

⁷ REFERENCE NUMBER: DA-05455-F

Rec'd at	By	DATE-STAMP
CRZBAN4 12MR = MRS HJ MOLD HAIMONA DARGAVILLENZ =		
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>NEW ZEALAND POST-OFFICE CABLEGRAM</u> (IN CONJUNCTION WITH CABLE AND WIRELESS LIMITED.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">U DB UN</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LETTERS RECEIVED MANY THANKS AM WELL AND FIT LOVE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">BILL MOLD</p> <p>Tel. 139. 4.000 pads/12/42--8460]</p>		

ABOVE AND BELOW: COPIES OF TELEGRAM'S SENT ON 22 MARCH 1944 AND 17 MAY 1944

Rec'd at	By	DATE-STAMP
CRZDBEA 8MAY MRS H J MOLD X13190 HAIMONA ST DARGAVILLE NZ		
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>NEW ZEALAND POST-OFFICE CABLEGRAM</u> (IN CONJUNCTION WITH CABLE AND WIRELESS LIMITED.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">V AEB A6</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TELEGRAM RECEIVED MANY THANKS MY LOVE AND GREETINGS ON MOTHERS DAY WRITING</p> <p style="text-align: center;">BILL MOLD</p> <p>Tel. 139. 4.000 pads/12/42--8460]</p>		

**LETTER FROM OUR SOLDIER'S FRIEND RON EXPLAINS OUR SOLDIERS ROLE
TO THE MOLD FAMILY**

Letter Sixty Four...

10. June. 1944

Dear Mum, Pop and family,

It is some time since I last wrote to you and I hope these few lines find you just as fit and well as they leave me at present. Just now we are camped in a very nice spot on the banks of a river and taking things easy with a spot of sun bathing and swimming when we feel like it. Bill brings water to the area each day and he is very fit on it, while Harold is still on the other side of Italy on his job. Old Peter Frazer has been around some of the units lately but gave no promises of when the next furlough draft would go home but I reckon now that Rome has fallen and a successful landing has been made, that the Hun is getting near the end of his race, so we ought to make old N.Z. for next Xmas at the latest. Jerry supplied the Itie with grain and in our present area there are acres of wheat ripening up now but the advance was a little too quick for him and he pulled out before he could get it gathered so the Itie will do alright out of it. The weather is very warm just now and we are living well on new spuds, onions and cherries. Best wishes to all and cheerio from, Ron.

REFERENCE FROM OUR SOLDIERS PERSONAL MILITARY RECORDS

NZAC x List	Marched out Adv Base 2NZEf and tfd from x (11) to x (IV) list NZAC	Italy	1.4.44
NZAC Adv Base	Marched in from 2 NZ Reception Dep TFD from x (11) L X (IV) List	Italy	1.4.44
	Marched out to Follout as Reinforcement and remains on x (IV) list	Italy	13.4.44
NZ Fwd Delivery Sqd	Mrch in Att FAP from Adv Base 2NZEf	Italy	15.4.44
20 armoured regiment	Marched in posted CTBA Fwd delivery Sqn and 5/0 x (IV) list	Italy	19.4.44
20 armoured regiment	Eligible for E.D. Pay of 1/- a day as Dor - Mech	Italy	24.4.44



LEFT: IN THE FOREGROUND IS CASTLE CASSINO ON SMALL HILL AND THE MONTE CASSINO MONASTERY ON THE LARGE HILL BEHIND: PHOTO TAKEN 6 FEBRUARY 1944.



LEFT: AIR RAID AT MONTE CASSINO, FEBRUARY 1944: PAINTING BY PETER MCINTYRE



LEFT: A PARTY OF NEW ZEALAND ENGINEERS REPAIR A DEVIATION BY A DEMOLISHED BRIDGE.



LEFT: RUINS OF THE ITALIAN TOWN OF CASSINO AFTER ITS SEIZURE BY TROOPS OF THE BRITISH EIGHTH ARMY AND POLISH SOLDIERS, ON MAY 18, 1944, SEVEN DAYS AFTER THE ALLIES LAUNCHED THEIR MAJOR OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE GERMANS IN CENTRAL ITALY: PHOTOGRAPHER UNIDENTIFIED.

Note: on back of the file the print reads "Shattered remains of the German bastion in Italy. Cassino is a silent ghost town of toppling walls and water-filled bomb craters after its seizure by Troops of the British Eighth Army and Polish soldiers, on May 18, 1944, seven days after the Allies launched their major offensive against the Germans in Central Italy. More than 1500 enemy soldiers were taken prisoner by Allied forces which encircled the town in a pincers movement. At the same time, U S Troops of the Allied Fifth Army smashed through German defences on the west coast of Italy and advanced northwest to affect a juncture with other American forces which slashed out from the Anzio beachhead



LEFT: NEW ZEALAND SOLDIERS HIDE IN THE RUINS OF MONTE CASSINO DURING THE BATTLE



ABOVE: EVICTING THE ENEMY. A HARD NUT TO CRACK

BELOW: PROPAGANDA LEAFLETS FROM THE GERMANS



**A damned hard nut,
just the right job for our New Zealand pals**

Hello, Boys of the N.Z.E.F.!

You ought to have found out by now that you are facing

German crack troops at Cassino!

Months have passed, and the Allies are still trying to break through this sector.

The Americans have failed to – they were inflicted heavy bloody casualties!

The British did not even dare to take their turn!

But you, the pluckiest soldiers of the British Empire, you're just good enough to be thrown as cannon fodder into the hell of Cassino!

And what is the result?
A few yards of ground gained – soaked with precious New Zealand blood.

What for? For a few ruins?
For a completely destroyed railway station?
For the glory of the British who prefer keeping back at less dangerous lines?

Stop it! You're good soldiers, a good soldier fights for his home and not for other people's interests.

New Zealand needs her men, also after the war!

Save your lives for your home, for your wives and your children!

The way home leads via the German camps

CONCLUSION FOR THE NEW ZEALAND CORPS BATTLE FOR CASINO

Cassino, to quote a German propaganda leaflet, '*was a damned hard nut to crack*'. The New Zealand Corps had won some ground, had built some firm bridge heads over the Rapido river on Route 6. They had fought fiercely for and had taken positions along the railway line and perhaps nine-tenths of the town, but the battle was a defensive victory for the Germans. They still controlled positions in the surrounding hills and the Monastery and it would take the Allied Troops several more days to finally take these areas.

During the period from 15-26 March the Division had lost 115 killed, 70 missing, and 696 wounded, heavy losses for what were in reality small territorial gains. Compared with those of the Infantry Battalions the 20th Regiments casualties were not heavy. Two Officers and 16 men had been killed, 2 had died of wounds, 3 Officers and 29 men had been wounded and 1 man had been taken prisoner. It's tank losses are not so easy to arrive at, but at least twelve, (excluding those that were recovered), of its pre-battle establishment of 53 tanks, were lost through action. Others lost tracks in difficult going or tumbled over banks on narrow tracks, but most of those were recovered and fought on.

TO AVEZZANO

MAY 1944

May: Back in the Volturno valley the Regiment hid its tanks in a sunken road, relaxed and washed the smoke and grime of Cassino from body and throat, talked the battle out of troubled minds in endless discussion and argument and went on leave. So well were the tanks hidden in this pleasant countryside that a German intelligence summary is reported to have deduced that the New Zealand Division had been withdrawn to a rest area and had lost all its tanks.

Rugby along with other sporting contests continued, with the 20th winning most of its games of rugby. One of its most notable victories was against a team of South African engineers.

Away from the unit there was leave to the island of Ischia in the big, blue, sweeping bay of Naples, where parties of fifty spent 3 days at a time in a unit rest camp. In addition there was day leave into Naples where some of the men were enthralled by grand opera and would return to the San Carlo opera house for more entertainment. Later, when some of the other attractions of Naples had begun to prove to popular, leave to visit the city was given less freely and was later cancelled.

Note: Our soldier who loved music really enjoyed this time of opera...

The weeks passed, and then someone mentioned that word, training and so the 20th were back into it again. Most prominent in the Regiments training at Pietramelara was given to shooting practice with the tanks 75-millimetre guns and the Browning machine gun and to exercises in co-operation with the infantry. One of these shoots was followed by a protest that shells had cleared the hills at the back of the range and had landed in amongst some American Troops. The Regiment expressed its surprise and apologies and agreed to fire at lower targets.

The months rest was up and the New Zealand Division prepared to once again, move up. The Division had gained some fresh Troops from the return of the Ruapehu furlough who had been away in New Zealand for almost a year. Their return had allowed others whose leave was long overdue to go, among them, men who had been the core of the unit since September 1939.



LEFT: NEW ZEALAND
SHERMAN TANKS

May 18: The Germans had finally had enough of a battering at Cassino by the Allied forces and those who were not taken prisoner withdrew north behind a screen of demolitions and mines. **Pressed closely behind them were the Poles.**

May 26: A Squadron from the 20th Regiment moved up to support 6 Brigade at Filignano. Half of the Squadron would wait at Filignano while the other half went to an area near Cerre Grosso to support 25 Battalions advance. B Squadron joined 5 Brigade at Sant' Elia. There were many halts while blown bridges and road demolitions were repaired and road and laager areas swept for mines, but no Enemy was encountered. The leisurely advance gave the tank crews a chance to have a close look at the Enemies winter defences at Cassino. The Enemy had obviously planned to stay there as long as possible and had riddled the hillsides 'like a rabbit warren' with trenches, tunnels and dugouts. One man remembers one position on the hillside with a hinged long pole, which was supposed to be used for catapulting a round sort of mine or bomb downhill to explode amongst the attackers. He adds with a comment, 'Appears *an old method, but the evidence was there*'.

May 26-31: B Squadron, with 5 Brigade made fast progress up to Sant' Elia, but unfortunately lost one of their tanks over a bank killing the Commander and injuring two of its crew. After a wait of 2 days among the Olive trees and poppies at Sant' Elia the Squadron then moved up a narrow defile through the hills to Atina. Mines and narrow bottlenecks delayed the move and not many miles were covered. That night the Squadron was split in half and the next day one half would take a left hook through Fontechiari and the other would go straight on to Sora. Captain Familton in command of one of the first tanks to go over the pass at Atina explains with his impression of the view...

It was one of the most beautiful sights I have seen, especially after the dismal aspect of Cassino and Mignano for so long. The valley was bright green, cut by the ribbon of the river weaving its way through a carpet of blood-red poppies.

The left hook had been planned to cut off the Enemies withdrawal, but when the tanks reached the junction north of Fontechiari the Enemy had gone and a blown bridge over the Fibreno blocked the way. 5 Troop who had come over the pass, had had a less peaceful day. The road had been shelled by self-propelled guns from the hills around Brocco and as the tanks approached the river they came within range of the Enemies mortars. Then the fighter-bombers took a hand. Familton writes...

We moved forward to re-join the rest of the Squadron at the demolished bridge and there, for the first time we were dive-bombed by our own fighter bombers of the Desert Air Force. Our advance had been so quick for a few miles that the information to change the bomb line was late in arriving at the airfield. Arising out

of this was an amusing incident which happened to Brigadier Stewart. He came up to see the Engineers to find out when the bridge would be through and was to report back to the General immediately. The Air Force, however, put a stop to this by making another run at us and setting alight one of the Engineers trucks between us and the Infantry and leaving the Brigadier stranded with us until the excitement died down. I believe Brigadier Stewart picked up a marking on one of the planes and when he got back to Division HQ rang the airfield and told them in no uncertain terms what he thought of them and one pilot in particular. The pilot was put on the mat and we did hear he was grounded and given office duty for a week...

8 Troop would detach and head into the hills to assist 21 Battalion and the next day was ordered along with the infantry to take the village of San Donato. On the outskirts of town they were shelled from observation posts which were on several prominent features, but received no casualties. The villagers said the Germans had left the town 3 days earlier to take up these advantage points. The tank platoon prepared to take these areas, but before they could they were ordered to withdraw and link back up with the Squadron. In the meantime the Maoris had crossed the river and after some sharp fighting had captured the hilltop village of Brocco. By this time the bridge had been repaired over the Fibreno and with Jim Bells tank out in front the Squadron set off down the long straight road to, Sora. He describes the entrance into the village...

I remember the doors and windows had been removed from all the buildings and as we seemed to be moving abreast if not a little in advance of the infantry I had the uneasy feeling we might suffer the indignity of a bazooka or some such diabolical weapon firing at us from some of the dark, gaping holes staring at us. Just as we entered the first piazza a Maori on a bicycle who had probably woven in and out down the line of tanks flew past us and attracted Spandau fire, so he swung gracefully and speedily into what appeared to be a large open garage on the right of the piazza. We put a few HE shells into likely spots near the church on a rocky hilltop where the machine-gun fire seemed to come from, and then, as a bridge across the river leading into a second piazza was blown we moved up the Sora-Balsorano road, thankful to be in tanks and protected from mortar fire...

It was early afternoon when the tanks rolled into Sora. The Enemy had left, blowing down and looting houses and even shaking ripe fruit or trees before he withdrew. His machine-guns and mortars still drummed the town from the hillsides about. C Squadron was detailed to stay in Sora while B Squadron was sent on to capture another small hilltop town of Campoli. The surrounding area of this village was heavily infested with Germans and the Kiwis would meet some very strong resistance. One of the tank Commanders, Mac West describes this attack...

'Plonk' Reid in the 5 Troop tank was detailed to lead us in a risky break for the Campoli turn-off. Speed, an essential factor was quickly gained and we rumbled up, 'skittle alley'. I felt like a duck sitting on a pond waiting to be shot at and had Cliff Cochran, my gunner and Charlie McCarthy, my wireless operator, fire American smoke and the 2 inch mortar smoke into trees on our left. One smoke shell burst in branches close by and seemed to drift at our speed, affording a large coverage of beautiful smoke.

We had 2 tanks in front going flat out and 1 behind. "Plonks" tank rounded the corner with a flourish, Charlie Innes, our officer was next. Then came my turn, hand on pistol grip of Ac-ac, 30 calibre Browning, peeking over the cupola ring trying to be ready for anything. With a grinding lurch and much flying gravel we made it and the tension dropped immediately. Parts of the advance to Campoli after that were quite enjoyable, trundling along in warm sunshine, keeping a reasonable distance from another across the general front of the assault.

Peace and quiet was shattered when retreating Germans appeared over a brow about 600 yards on our right. It was practically a case of target practice and we opened up with air burst and the 30 Browning. The Germans quickly threw themselves down in whatever cover they could find. I remember concentrating

with the 30 Browning on one particular gent who seemed determined to snipe someone. Two ambulance men surrendered to us but I am afraid the others suffered terribly.

Moving on again the corporal behind noticed a German near a house and as he had the two ambulance men up on the tank behind him we took this one prisoner and not without some misgivings. I had him standing behind me on the turret. I pointed to my Tommy gun, pistol, etc. and he spoke in excellent English, said he was an Austrian conscript and very tired of it all. He insisted that I share some cherries he had in his mess Dixie. Not to be taken in I drew my finger across my throat and plainly showed him what would befall him if he tried anything. I got in first...

A section of the road further along was covered by some of the Enemies heavy guns, whose first shells fell close to the leading tanks. The Troops drew back into cover and as night was approaching decided to take stock of their position, arrange pickets for the night and draw up a plan in case they should be attacked. Sergeant West describes the night's activities:

Judging by sounds heard on the slope above and on our right at about 8. pm, we estimated that a large party with mules was pulling out. Rumour had it that this party were equipped with mountain guns. Not wishing to bring a hornet's nest about our ears we stood too quietly and waited, knowing full well that our tanks must have showed up very plainly on the road below the Enemy.

A great hush descended on the countryside till about midnight when faint sounds very much like those made by picks and shovels were heard back down the road we had come. Thoughts of laying parties or road blocks flushed through my head and I received permission to take a reconnaissance party and find out what was happening. Several yards down the road our small party encountered 2 German sentries. The moonlight showed them plainly a few yards above us. Recognition was mutual and as they were holding Schmeisser automatics we opened up with our Thompson sub-machine guns. I ducked behind a boulder, tripping as I did so and wondered if the others thought I was hit. In the ruckus the sentries disappeared and we made our way back to the tanks. It was decided that I would take a tank and investigate further. No. 11 tank was used and with the gun traversed and pointing over the rear so that we could make a quick get-away if necessary, it was carefully and faultlessly reversed round several bends by driver, George Leggoe. Some grenades were tossed up the bank where the sentries had been observed. After going a little further I decided to stop and engage the estimated area from which the sounds had been coming. The Ac-ac and co-ax, Browning's were both used and I also used the bottom half of the 2 inch mortar by hand and lobbed several H E's up the road ahead. This was done simply by tilting the gun to the approximate angle and holding it with the butt firmly wedged against the cupola ring. No opposition was encountered and we withdrew. No further sounds were heard that night...



Next morning B Squadrons tanks set out to support the attack in different areas. Innes's Troop and 5 Troop entered the town without opposition and then withdrew to assist the Maoris at Point 351. 8 Troop advanced across difficult country to Pescosolido only to find that the Germans had withdrawn during the night. They all re-joined the Squadron next day.

LEFT: ITALIAN REFUGEES RETURN TO THEIR HOMES AS THE NEW ZEALAND DIVISION MOVES NORTHWARD



LEFT: DEVIATION ON THE ROAD TO AVEZZANO

June: A and C Squadrons by this time had seen very little action but had had their share of being messed around. They had been ordered from one Battalion to another without any set plan. Their role in supporting the Infantry Division however was still a very important one and during June along with B Squadron they would assist the Infantry in a very positive role as they swept the Enemy before them, capturing many villages on the road to, Avezzano.

Once again the Engineers set the pace, for the roads were blown to blazes and they had never seen so many mines. Near Capistrello the cliff face had been blown completely away into the river, leaving 'the *father of demolitions*' with a sheer drop of a couple of hundred feet. The tanks would negotiate around this, up over the saddle then down on to a beautiful plain and then on to the village of, Avezzano. Wild flowers of every colour grew in profusion and from a distance the squares and rectangles of cultivated land gave the appearance of it being painted on canvas. On arrival at Avezzano the people would treat the men as their 'liberators'. There would be many welcome speeches, followed by showers of streamers, flowers and confetti and after all this, the ever present '*vino*', would flow.

CONCLUSION FOR THE ADVANCE TO AVEZZANO

The advance from Cassino to Avezzano cost the Regiment 1 Officer and 2 men killed with 2 Officers and 6 men wounded. Another Officer was killed from injuries after his tank had turned turtle over a bank early in the advance. No tanks were lost and all casualties were recovered. All credit due to the Regiments drivers and the recovery section. Without the additional hazards of demolitions and Enemy mines, the difficulties of driving tanks over Italian mountain roads were considerable. Heavy rain at times had not made the driver's task easier and wet periscopes had also added to the difficulties of the gunners. Like the rest of the tank crews, the drivers were in action for long periods without rest. One Troop Commander reported how he literally went to sleep on his feet while talking to some Infantrymen. He had been without sleep for the past 60 hours.

On the tactical side of tank fighting the retreating Enemy had posed a few new problems. The orchards, trees and fields of crops that fringed the road forward provided grand cover for small enemy rear-guards

armed with anti-tank guns and bazookas. The Enemy were careful not to take post in the most likely positions and tanks and infantry often had to search before they could find the core of an Enemy stronghold. In holding a farmhouse the Enemy would dispose his Troops in outlying buildings, in haystacks, or in vantage points up to 50 yards in front or on the flanks, leaving the main building for living quarters and holding it only lightly. Should the tanks guns wreck the most obvious target, they would not greatly affect the strength of the post. The new delayed-action fuse of the Sherman's 75 millimetre high-explosive shells proved effective in these conditions, especially if the gunners could bounce their shells off the cobbled farmyards and explode them in the air.



LEFT: HOVE DUMP ON THE ROAD TO AVEZZANO BEFORE IT WAS SHELLED BY THE GERMANS

TO FLORENCE

June 13: It was time to rest again and prepare for the next assault. The 20th Regiment regrouped and moved back to the orchard country between Isola Del Liri and Fontana Liri. The men were bivouacked in orchards and wheat field's which had been sown by the Italians with German seed on German orders. The crops were intended to feed German Mules and Horses. The Enemy had had to retreat before the grain was ready to reap and it was still too green to burn. The satisfaction of this happy state with the Italians did not last long when the tanks of the '*liberatori*' crowded into their fields. There were loud protests and even tears, but space was limited and the roads congested and the tanks had to be stabled where ever room could be found. In spite of their disappointment the people were friendly, their wine good and their homes hospitable. In this fertile valley there were plenty of streams in which the men swam on warmer days or rested

in the shade of the willows on their banks when the sun was too hot. This was time to reflect on the last battle and discuss the long awaited good news of the Allied forces landing in Normandy and the opening of the Second Front. Rome, one of the greatest milestones on the long road to the end of the war, had been entered by the Americans a few days before. This was good news indeed so over the next few weeks the men would take some well-earned leave and visit this very Historic City. Descriptions of monuments, paintings, ruins and churches helped to fill many a letter home.

July: Life was not all play and no work for the N.Z. Division. There were route marches, shoots, Squadron Commanders conferences, and that old war diary favourite '*general maintenance*'.

July 13-27: A move was imminent, and over the next two weeks the Regiment would make several moves, eating up a lot of ground and with each move the war would get closer. Those in the know took their last look at Rome.

Wheeled and tracked vehicles of the 20th set off in separate convoys and would meet up again over the next few days in an area just south of Lake Trasimene. It was here that the 4th Reinforcements received the news they had been waiting for, for some time. The married men among them and some single men chosen by ballot were to go home in a few days, in the Taupo furlough draft.

Note: leading up to 20th July, these were the last actions our soldier would see from his water truck. he was lucky to have his name drawn in the Taupo furlough ballot: it was here that our soldier would leave the war his comrades in arms and head home for good after an amazing time of survival and endurance: a job well done. Accompanying him and his comrades of the Taupo furlough would be a little dog from Libya called "Duda":

THE DOGS STORY FOLLOWS...

"DUDA" MASCOT OF THE 19TH NZ BATTALION



LEFT: DUDA PERCHES ON A SHOVEL HELD BY PRIVATE E .C. WHEELER

Duda was rescued at Ed Duda, Libya, during an artillery barrage. She was a small dog and eager to please, as befitted her status as prisoner of war. The Troops called her the 'happiest prisoner of war in the Middle East'. She usually travelled in the cook's truck when the unit moved, and on cold desert nights she had the habit of waiting till her friends were settled and then sneaking in between them to sleep and keep warm.

Duda came to New Zealand with Cyril Muir on the Taupo furlough draft in 1944. Muir smuggled her aboard the ship in his duffle bag and managed to keep her hidden even after they transferred to a United States ship in Bombay. The American sailors knew there was a dog aboard and carried out spot searches, but with the help of a group of Polish refugees Duda managed to evade capture.

Once in New Zealand, she accompanied Muir home to Dunedin where she lived with him and his wife until she died from poisoning. It was a sad end to an affectionate life.

REFERENCE FROM OUR SOLDIERS PERSONAL MILITARY RECORDS

20 armoured regiment	Marched out to 2 NZ Reception Dep and trd NZ Roll special	Italy	20.7.44
NZ Roll Special	C+B eligible for E/D pay 1/- per day Dvr _ mech	Italy	20.7.44
2NZEf Detail	Disembarked Alexandria	Middle East	15.8.44
	Embarked Tewfik for NZ	Middle East	27.9.44
Per 684 Decision of 2.11.44	Boarded Whangarei 2.11.44. Grade 1. Granted 91 days overseas leave expiring 1.2.45. then placed in Area 3 Pool on LLWOP. To report to DMPO regarding future employment. Form NZ.450 No. 2018 issued. File to Area 3.	Whangarei	2.11.44
	Discharged 2 NZEF 1.2.45	Area 3	1.2.45

FOLLOWING IS THE LAST LETTER I HAVE ON RECORD FROM OUR SOLDIER...

Letter Sixty Five...

21. August. 1944

Sorry I have not written for so long but we have been dashing hither and yon a fair bit lately and after all there is not very much to write about. You asked for me to tell you all about Rome if I have seen it, but I am afraid there won't be enough room for that in here. I did buy a book though with illustrations so will post that to you. Last night we had a big family reunion. Harold, Jack, Alex and I all went into the big smoke and had a great time. Jack is a big bloke now alright isn't he? But says he has lost a stone since leaving home. Harold is looking better than I have ever seen him and weighs 13 stone. So there is no need to lose any sleep over him. He has just been up for another board so may get home this time. I'll close now with love from,

Bill.

THE JOURNEY NORTH TO TRIESTE FOR OUR SOLDIERS COMRADES IN ARMS CONTINUES...

July 28-31. At Tavarnelle the Regiment would regroup and prepare for their next supporting role in action. It was reported that the enemy held the high ground across a deep valley from the ridge on which sat the village of Pisignano. On the top of the Enemies ridge was the village of la Romola. Plans were at once laid for an attack and B Squadron with the support of 3 Company from 22 Battalion, a platoon of Engineers, a bulldozer, 4 Field Regiment and a Royal Artillery forward officer, were ordered to advance through Pisignano, down the hill and approach la Romola across the valley floor. At 4.30 am the tanks reached Pisignano without resistance. At first light, 8 Troops Commander would move over the ridge with a section

of infantry to reconnoitre the road down into the valley. He reached the flat safely but was sniped at when he left his tank to reconnoitre a route across the valley. He then called up the rest of his Troop who by this time were only half way through their breakfast.

In a country of narrow roads and rugged hills cut by steep river valleys it is sometimes easier to see an action through a tank drivers eyes. Trooper Bob Middleton was the driver of the Corporals tank in 8 Troop now ordered to follow his leader down onto the flat below la Romola. He explains this move...

The Troop Sergeant moved off as we started to stow our breakfast utensils. This done we followed in his wake up on to the ridge. On reaching the top I looked down. To say I was amazed is to put it mildly. How on earth was I to take a tank down into the valley floor? It was a good three hundred yards to the bottom and very steep. While the track was as wide as the tank and no more and zigzagged to the bottom, each zig, of which there seemed to, be an infinite number, was at right angles to the following zag. On the valley floor and to my right I could see the other two tanks which appeared to be sitting about twenty yards apart.

Off I set, and down this goat track we went. At each corner, as the track was so steep, it was necessary for me to hold back hard on the sticks and push out the clutch, while the spare driver changed gear. What a place to manoeuvre such a thundering great vehicle. About half-way down there was a large casa, behind which was a fair-sized back-yard. Just as I neared this place, I noticed away to my right a large demolition go skywards. My thoughts began to run riot. There was apparently more than one machine-gun post left and I remember thinking that at the time how inviting was that back-yard, from which I could have placed the tank in a good covering fire position. As events later proved, it would have been an excellent position, as one could see the whole of the surrounding countryside and yet be hidden from view...

There were more heavy guns in la Romola than the Troop were first lead to believe. La Romola was now directly above the Troop and was being sniped at by Spandau posts. The three tanks moved forward and then opened up with their Browning's and gave the town ten minutes, 'hurry-up'. There was no reply and after about five minutes of 'death like quietness' Middleton's tank was ordered to have a look at the demolition on the road and see if a path across it could be found. Middleton continues with his story...

As I had pulled the tank up on the edge of a four foot vertical drop, it was necessary to move in between the other two tanks in order to cross. This we did and just as we reached the position I remember saying to the spare driver, 'What the Hell is the drop like in front of us?' I stopped the tank momentarily and pulled myself up out of my seat, by the expedient of hooking my elbows over the edge of the man hole, to have a look myself before proceeding any further. As I completed this operation I seemed to be surrounded by a sheet of flame. There flashed through my mind the vision of a flash-light photographer operating at a dance back home. For a couple of seconds after, my brain failed to function and then my one overpowering thought was to get away as far as I could. I bailed out, jumped on to the road in front and down into a depression in front of me where I lay still and flat. I was shivering. I must have lain there for a couple of minutes, while running through my mind was, 'What had happened to the rest of the crew'? Curiosity got the better of me. I raised myself ever so slightly and had a look at the tank. The whole three tanks were on fire, smoke was everywhere and dust surrounded them. Not a soul in sight, I lay there for another few seconds, scared stiff, wondering whether to make a bid for safety or whether to stay where I was in the meantime. Whether it was the fear of being alone, or what, I just cannot say, but I know that I jumped up and ran towards my tank in the direction of safety. I paused by the old tank, the radiated heat was stifling, and on again as fast as I could...

In less than five minutes, B Squadron had lost the whole of one Troop, a quarter of its fighting strength. Corporal Harrison and two men were killed and Sergeant Bell wounded. (He was later to have one leg amputated).

A Bren-gun carrier under a Red Cross flag was sent down the hill to try and recover the wounded. Jerry honoured the flag and Jim Bell was picked up.

The damage had been done as they learnt later, by a new German tank that had just come into the war, called the *'Tiger'*. It was almost twice the size of the Sherman's but its mobility in close contact would become a hindrance as the Squadron would later prove.

B Squadron spent the rest of the day in behind Pisignano, their positions were heavily mortared and shelled but the Squadron had no further losses. It was later relieved by C Squadron, who along with the 22 Battalion eventually took la Romola on the night 30-31 July.

August: Over the next few days Troops would be borrowed from B Squadron to assist with the many small battles the Infantry would encounter as they recaptured village after village, on the road north too Florence. Point 305, Point 361, the la Poggiona ridge, Giogoli, Scandicci, la Querciola, San Casciano and then finally the River Arno on the outskirts of Florence, are but a few of these encounters the Army had to overcome before they finally took Florence.

August 4: The Maori Infantry along with A and B Squadrons of 20 Regiment and with the South Africans on the south flank would be the first into Florence. Most of the City lay on the far side of the Arno and was still in German hands, but the inhabitants of the southern suburbs across the river were friendly and generous in their welcome. They clambered on top of the tanks, threw flowers, clapped and cheered, kissed all and sundry and pressed gifts of wine and fruit on the tank crews. It was good wine, the *'liberators'* of Florence deserved better than, *'vino rosso'* and *'plonk'* that day and victory was toasted and health's drunk with cognac, cognac in large quantities. From across the river German gunners and Spandau crews could see the welcome from their rooftops but refused to enter into the spirit of the occasion. Their fire quickly cleared the streets. At 7 pm, 19 Armoured Regiment came forward to relieve A and B Squadron who then moved back to Giogoli. *'The boys were very sorry to be withdrawn just as things looked as though they would build into a really good party'*, said one of the Officers.

August 6: During the afternoon the 20th Regiment would move north-west to its new concentration area. Geppetto, was the nearest village. Here they would wait a week in reserve, while to the west the New Zealand Infantry closed in on Empoli.

August 14: 4 Armoured Brigade were relieved by an American Infantry Battalion and in the afternoon the 20th Regiment would move back to a safer position just north of Siena. The same place amongst the Oaks where the tanks had laagered on 22 July before they went north to battle. Another rest was due.



One of 20 Armoured Regiment's tanks which accompanied the first New Zealanders into Florence

CONCLUSION FOR THE MANY BATTLES ALONG THE ROAD TO FLORENCE

In the last 9 days of the advance to Florence the tank crews of 20 Regiment had fought no fewer than nine actions against the 65 ton, Tiger tanks. The area between San Casciano and Florence where these battles took place came to be known as *'Tiger country'*. It was pleasant, undulating countryside, fertile with orchards and vineyards and even the military eye, quick only to recognise whether the *'cover'* was good or the *'going'* passable, could hardly fail to be impressed by its beauty. Wooded hills, sunken roads and steep valleys help the defender rather than the attacker, who is forced by the lack of broad horizons to probe blindly forward, his tanks behind a screen of infantry. As was only to be expected, the Germans made good use of the terrain's natural advantages. With the choice of ground, the Enemy took the hills and ridges. When he was forced off one he retired to the next, leaving behind a sniper or two or an artillery OP, a Tiger tank or a self-propelled gun. As he withdrew he blocked the roads by demolitions or felled trees across them. Camouflaged in hull down positions in the shelter of orchard or narrow village side streets, the Tiger lay in wait. At short range they would make a quick kill with their deadly 88-millimetre gun before withdrawing to an alternative and equally well-chosen position, or else they would form the spearhead of a local counter-attack, make a brief sortie behind a screen of infantry before going back to cover. Almost invariably, a Tiger would have another tank or a self-propelled gun to support it, the supporting weapon keeping silent until its fire was needed. In spite of the Tigers advantages of position, of heavier armour and guns, the Sherman fought back with credit during the Regiment's 9 encounters of the battle. As in any fight between welter and heavyweight, tactics, speed and aggression were the lighter opponent's weapons. The Tigers front and rear armour was too heavy to be battered by a straight punch but its flanks could be pierced by an anti-tank shell. If it could be blinded by smoke, the American 75-millimetre smoke shell was especially effective as its burning phosphorus could set the Enemy tank on fire if drawn into the engines. A few rounds of armour-piercing and high explosive fired from the flank were usually sufficient to drive the Tiger back into cover.

Some of the chief lessons learnt in this battle were...

One: The need to reconnaissance ahead of the tanks on foot was a must. Seldom were the Troop commanders given sufficient time to do this. To blunder blindly on to a hull-down Enemy was to court death.

Two: Breaking up the tanks into half Squadrons was totally impractical. By breaking up armour into *'penny-packets'* to use a popular Desert term, the weight of the tanks gun power was largely lost and the mutual support that Troops could give each other in an attack through the Regiment's wireless net was much less effective.

Three: Finally, there was the question of command. When one arm had to fight in close support of another, the arrangements most suitable for one did not always suit the other. The location of Regimental HQ was not always satisfactory to the Regiment. For convenience, it was usually with or close to the Brigade HQ under whose command the Regiment was operating, but sometimes this site was too far from the forward tanks for the range of their wirelasses. Not the best place from which to serve the fighting Squadrons.

However though, these points of detail are technical points of command and administration. On the whole, the man in the tank and the infantryman on foot were more than satisfied with the Regiment's part in the battle for Florence.

The fighting since 27 July had cost the 20th Regiment, 9 killed and 13 wounded with 6 tanks destroyed. 2 Troopers were missing, but were later confirmed, prisoners of war.

Note: This was the last action our soldier would see. He was lucky to have his name drawn in the ballot and would return to New Zealand in the next few months.



BROTHERS THREE AND BROTHER IN LAW MAKES FOUR.

TAKEN IN CAIRO EGYPT

BACK. LEFT TO RIGHT: ALEX WELLS (BROTHER IN LAW) AND BILL MOLD.

FRONT. LEFT TO RIGHT: HAROLD MOLD AND JACK MOLD.

THIS WAS TAKEN BEFORE JACK WENT INTO BATTLE ON THE SENIO RIVER. HE WAS BADLY WOUNDED IN THE HEAD.

ALL OF THESE LADS RETURNED TO THEIR HOMELAND. MIRACULOUSLY

Note: A Mum gave up all of her sons to war not knowing if any of them would return.

She was very lucky. They all did.

BELOW: TAKEN IN EGYPT WITH OLD CAMPAIGNERS FROM THE TWENTIETH BATTALION

(BILL CENTRE).



FROM FLORENCE TO THE SAVIO RIVER

August-September: The Eighth Army made plans to make an assault on the east coast end of the Gothic line before the winter rains set in. The Enemy still had 27 Divisions left in Italy and the plan was to attempt to break through into the Lombardy plain, over the Marecchia River before October. The attack took place at mid-night on the 25 August. On the 29 August, the New Zealand Division, who by this time had 3 Greek Mountain Brigade under its command, were called on to strengthen the guns pounding the Gothic line across the Foglia River. Next day they would move forward under the Command of 1 Canadian Corps. The 20th were not disturbed until the 4 September and then were called forward to assist. From Iesi the tanks were loaded onto transporters and taken north to Fano. A few days earlier Fano had been in Enemy hands, but now streams of traffic were pressing forward to support the battle. Italian refugees who had found more peaceful lodgings and hiding places while the battle flowed past their homes were now returning in force to claim them.

On the 7 September the rains came, the rivers rose, airfields were bogged and planes grounded. The Poles and the Canadians had broken through the Gothic line but because of the weather the Enemy had a chance to stabilize on the Coriano ridge and had brought the 8th Army to a halt. On the 12th the 20th Regiment would head off north-west to join up with 6 Brigade at Gradara. A Squadron was attached to 25 Battalion, C to the 24th with B in reserve but later would be whipped into action to support the Greek Brigade. While in reserve and as usual, the men of B Squadron would look for the nearest beach and explore the village of Gradara and its romantic castle.

September 14: B Squadron would assist the Greeks and 22 Battalion to take the villages of Monticelli and Monaldini and then return to re-join their Regiment at Gradara. There had been very little heavy fire in this attack, with no casualties, but it had been a good exercise in tank tactics with close support from the infantry.

While the Canadians advanced slowly north-west behind a wall of shell fire, the 20th Regiment would rest for a few days and enjoy the swimming. There had been talk of a New Zealand Army rugby team to tour the United Kingdom and so competitions for places in the Regiments team were keen. Whenever there was a stop for a few days, a field would be cleared and out would come the rugby balls.

September 18: The Squadrons moved again, this time to a very noisy and dusty laager near Riccione. 100 per cent camouflage was demanded. The area was ringed by batteries of 25-pounders and medium guns which kept banging away at the Enemy lines continually. Destroyers lay off the coast behind a smoke screen and they too were shelling Enemy positions.

Note: Two Military Medals for Bravery were awarded to members of B Squadron during this stop. Both were won on the same day during the Squadrons advance to Campoli on 1 June.

September 21: Since the battle had begun on the 25 August the Eighth Army had only advanced 30 miles in 26 days. The German paratroopers were determined as any paratroopers could be and had inflicted over 14,000 casualties on the British Troops and Allies. One village had changed hands 10 times with attacks and counter attacks.

During the night of the 21st, Germans would retreat back across the many channels of the wide sprawling river of, Marecchia. This river ran into the sea at Rimini. North of Rimini was the flat, endless and featureless Po valley. A German Officer, Field-Marshal Kesselring had some misgivings about this withdrawal, as he feared the dangers of having to fight in open country and believed that his Army was now in for a huge defeat. His orders by telephone to General Vietinghoff would betray his concern, 'I have

a horrible feeling that the whole show is going to crack, every man that can be scraped up, even clerks must go into the front line'.

September 22: The New Zealand Division moved forward to the front line, with 5 Brigade crashing through the Canadian's Marecchia bridgehead. On the 23rd, 6 Brigade would pass through them and attack towards Rio Fontanaccia, while 4 Brigade would move up from the rear with its plan of keeping the front, straight and tidy.

September 23-25: The 20th Regiment were back in battle again and it is time now to once again pick up the story of the Squadrons part in the next attack towards the river of Fontanaccia.

A Squadron and the 25 Battalion group, crossed the Marecchia to the left of 6 Brigade heading north through the Maori Battalions positions to Brancona. Here they would consolidate in some houses about 200 yards from the Fontanaccia River and spend a very confused and worrying night. The infantry were being troubled by snipers who were all around the place and an attack to dislodge the Kiwi's from the houses was expected. Artillery concentrations eventually quietened the Enemy. Next morning the tanks would attempt to probe forward towards the river but the Enemy paratroopers maintained an aggressive defence. Infantry and the remaining tanks would withdraw at about 7 pm to clear the ground for the barrage which would open that nights attack: C Squadron made an uneventful move up Route 16 passing through 21 Battalion late in the morning, but had to wait until a river was bridged and did not catch up with the Battalion again until late afternoon. Under a heavy screen of artillery fire with the Enemies guns and mortars hitting back 10 and 11 Troops went forward to assist B and D Companies. Trooper Bob Peebles describes this action...

We were right up with D Company just in front of the casa. The Jerries opened up on the infantry, who went to ground and then we saw the ugly snout of the Tiger poke its nose around a corner. We didn't stand a chance. I am not sure but I think there was only one shot fired by the Tiger. Our tank went up in flames straight away. I shall never forget the agony of dragging myself from that burning tank with a busted leg while Jerry used me as a target. Troopers Burgess, Forde and I were the only ones who got out of that tank, but Burgess was killed immediately. Later that night there was a tank moving around the area and I was scared that it would run me over as I wasn't able to move...

With Germans all around him, Peebles 'played possum' until he was evacuated next night by the infantry.

At dawn on the 24th, 24 Battalion would push up too and over the river, but the Enemies machine gunners found the intrusion most unwelcome. Snipers began to look for targets and soon his guns and mortars began to take a hand to wipe out the salient. Under cover from the tanks, the infantry would withdraw back across the river and prepare for the Brigade assault that night.

During the past 36 hours the German Division had beaten off 27 attacks, with heavy losses on both sides. The fight by the New Zealand Division had been stubborn, the defence dogged, the attack determined.

That evening the heavy artillery barrage began at twenty minutes to eight and at eight, 24 and 25 Battalions each with a Troop of tanks from 20 Regiment, once again moved back up to the river.

B Squadron, previously in reserve, re-joined the infantry in behind Fontanaccia and then on the 25th, the first group moved up at 1 am. Batteries of searchlights behind the Kiwi lines threw their beams on the clouds above the Enemy positions to light the way. Once across the river and amongst the vineyards the visibility was limited to about ten yards and the Troops had to then move in single file. Second-Lieutenant Overton of 8 Troop describes the move forward and the morning's alarms...

Nearing our objective 8 Troop branched further left and 5 Troop carried on. When about a quarter of a mile from the Casa where we were to take up our position, we heard the clank of tracks and the sound of tank motors not far ahead of us on the same road. We stopped and debated whether they sounded like Sherman's the Canadians had or whether they were Enemy ones. We decided they weren't Sherman's and

that they were Enemy ones moving towards us on the same road. Luckily the Jerry ones decided to stop. We pulled into the yard behind the Casa and spent the rest of the night. Next morning soon after daybreak a shufti plane of ours came over and we noticed a stream of tracer shooting up at it. Climbing up into the house I spotted 4 Jerry tanks about 400 yards away blazing away with their machine-guns. I reported their position to the Arty and within 5 minutes they had changed their minds and then moved off out of sight. We were unable to see them from the ground as there was too much cover...

At about 7 am Lieutenant Cross of 5 Troop spotted 3 Enemy tanks, one a Tiger, moving in an area to the south-west, probably with the intention of attacking the Kiwi positions. The tanks were immediately called on to lay on an SOS task and the Troop went into action from positions behind farm buildings and haystacks. During the morning Cross's tank was hit and set on fire. He had parked it behind a hay stack and when he left it to join an Infantry Commander observing from the top of a farmhouse, someone in the crew decided it was time to boil the billy. He rotated the turret so he could get at the rations and evidently the movement gave away the tank's position...

I heard a 'crack' (says Cross) and thinking the gunner had fired the Browning, hopped back into the tank. As I clambered up, the crew piled out pretty damn quick to find out where we had been hit. An 88 had gone through the turret about half-way up. No one was hurt and no apparent damage except for the hole. Within 20 seconds a second shot hit the edge of the haystack and then our hull, setting both stack and tank on fire. This second shot messed up the inside so there was no chance of saving the tank. While the smoke was billowing up, Cab Rank, (A group of 3-6 fast planes - usually Kitty hawks), apparently under the impression that the smoke was from Arty to show them the locality of Tigers, came down at us and went for my other two tanks. After the leaders bombs had landed and missed luckily, I grabbed a Very pistol and fired red signals at the others as they dived. This had the desired effect as the next two pulled out of their dives without dropping their bombs and after circling us for a few minutes, went off to the correct area, which also smoking from Arty smoke shells, about a mile away. We were thankful...

The Tiger, that had got Cross's tank was about 1200 yards away, tucked in behind a house and behind a heavy screen of vines. The crew heard it trundle away. For the rest of the day the other crews kept very still.

September 26-October 20: The Kiwi Battalions and 20 Regiment continued with their advance forward. A Squadron had the heaviest casualties for the day. It had lost 6 killed and 1 injured, to one unfortunate shell. B Squadron probably did the most shooting. It had adopted the principle of 'beating up on anything that looked suspicious' firing all of their guns as soon as the Enemy moved. Their will to stay alive, now that they had Jerry on the back foot, was very strong.

The sound of demolitions to the north and the reports of Italian refugees indicated that the Enemy near the coast was withdrawing over the Uso into Bellaria. Taking advantage of the now fine weather, the Allies fighter-bombers sought targets ahead of the infantry in Bellaria as the Enemy rear guards fell back. Two of these targets were Tiger tanks on 6 Brigades front and although not hit they were reported to have been 'scared off very effectively'.

During these three weeks, the battle would continue north, with the 20th's tanks giving support to not only its own Kiwi Divisions infantry but also to the Greek Battalions, Royal Canadian dragoons and the Cumberland Force's.

After many a skirmish over rivers and streams and with the capture of Casa's and villages along the way the Regiment would eventually find themselves facing the Savio River.

October 21: First thing in the morning, the 21st infantry patrols checked the track running down towards the river. They found them clear and then called up the tanks. A and B Squadrons took up positions close to the riverbank while behind them the sappers and the bulldozers cleared away demolitions. Fourth Brigades main job for the day was to extend the Division's front north, handing over its positions facing the

Savio to 6 Brigade. Eighteenth Regiment, supported by 22 Battalion and the Divisional Cavalry had what it describes as, *'an acrimonious little battle'* with paratroopers. 20 Regiment would see no fighting that day. It handed over its positions to 24 Battalion and 19 Regiment tanks in the afternoon and then went back to form a gun line along the road near Botteghina.

The gun lines job was to support a Canadian attack across the river at night. All day a Canadian company had held a precarious bridgehead on the west bank, north of Cesena and at night, in a full set piece attack they extended and strengthened their hold. To the north of 6 Brigades front, 71 tanks from the 20th and 18th Regiments would fire away about 9,000 rounds in an hour and a half to simulate another crossing. If not deceived, the Enemy must at least have been disconcerted:

'It was a magnificent sight, the two Regiments along the one road line,' says one eye witness. *'We levelled guns, and then fired a barrage with all our HE going up by one turn of the hand wheel to almost maximum elevation. Then each Squadron concentrated as near as possible on some prominent object on Jerry's side of the river, e.g., crossroads, groups of houses. We sent away all our APHE and AP. I have often wondered what Jerry thought of that bombardment..'*

October 22: In the afternoon after an uneventful day the Kiwis would be relieved by the Canadians. They then would make their way south to their next rest area at, Fabriano.

CONCLUSION FOR THE ADVANCE TO THE SAVIO RIVER

It could be said in all truth that the Enemy was withdrawing and that the ground won had meant little, but it had to be won against panzer grenadiers and paratroopers making what their records describe as *'a fighting withdrawal behind the Savio'*. As usual, they stayed until they had to go. Few prisoners were taken. It had been no country for tanks. Because of the recent rains they had to keep largely to the roads. On the maps they looked firm, straight and broad, but on the ground they were seldom better than narrow lanes. Quite often while driving their wheels would be touching the drains on either side.

Co-operation between tanks, engineers and infantry was a good feature of this operation. One of the simplest ways used to improve this co-operation was for the tanks to carry the infantry's lunch ration. At least this worked up until lunch time.

As usual, the Sappers were invaluable, they worked hard and willingly at any task they were required to do, often under heavy fire. Bulldozer and bridge laying crews were always on close call and were usually in operation within about a quarter of an hour.

Unlike the battles before Florence, little was seen of the Tiger tanks. Well camouflaged and well sited, they preferred to wait in hiding until the 20th's tanks came forward to them, rather than to sally out in the open. While the Enemy used his tanks as anti-tank guns, the Kiwis were inclined to use theirs as reconnaissance vehicles. In this country of hedges and thickly leafed grape-vines, the tanks most useful role was best used in close-support with the infantry, guided by them to consolidate an objective.

The recovery section, once again came in for a large share of the praise dished out by the Squadron Commanders. At any hour of the day or night they could be called out to extricate tanks and sometimes field guns that had been stranded in ditches or bogged in muddy fields.

But, hardest worked of all was the reconnaissance Troop. As *'maid of all work'* which entailed, reconnoitring, message running, delivering supplies and water, the Troop was required to cover the whole front, taking it's tanks over country in which the heavier Sherman tanks would have sunk up to their belly's.

The Troop's tanks and crews were often under strain for long hours and had thoroughly earned a rest. But so too, had the whole of the Regiment.

The 20th Regiments casualties during this advance were the highest of any of the Regiments in 4 Brigade. Two officers and 15 men had been killed with 3 officers and 34 men wounded. The New Zealand Division as a whole had suffered just over 1,100 casualties, of whom 228 had been killed.

ONCE AGAIN THE BRUNT OF THE LOSSES HAD BEEN BORN BY THE INFANTRY

WINTER ON THE SENIO

November: The weather was still very wet and cold but the men were pleased to be away from the noise of gunfire again, after nearly 6 weeks of it.

The recent battles had shown that the N.Z. Division badly needed more infantry. Most of its fighting since arriving in Italy, nearly a year before, had been done by only 2 Infantry Brigades, instead of the normal 3. Infantry Brigades and reliefs had been difficult to arrange and the casualties had been heavy.

So now, finally, the Brigades were increased to 4 Battalions each instead of 3 with 22 Motor Battalion and Divisional Cavalry becoming infantry as well. The Divisions defensive armament of anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns were reduced and arrangements would be made at a later date for a large replacement scheme, in which some ten thousand long-service officers and men would be sent home.

The people of Fabriano and the surrounding mountain villages and towns had by now overcome their early shyness. The New Zealanders shared with them their cigarettes, chocolate and food, respected their poultry and possessions and played with their children. Poppa liked the Kiwi's to share his vino, Momma would find him a warm place by the fire and the children would dance and sing. In all, some pleasant evenings were spent, '*nattering with the Ities*'. It was also foot-ball weather again. That first nip in the air that makes the New Zealand schoolboy start searching for his foot-ball boots, thrown mud-caked into a washhouse corner at the end of last season, had reinfected the Division with rugby fever. On fields of varying sizes and varying depths of mud, Squadron played Squadron, Regiment played Battalion and Brigade played Brigade. And if you were not keen on rugby then there were other avenues of entertainment to pursue. There were the Divisional boxing champs, which were held in the Opera House at Matelica. There were concert parties, the Cinema, the YMCA, some dancing with the '*signorina's*' who were usually chaperoned. And as usual there was leave, with official and unofficial trips to Rome, Florence, Riccione and individually planned tours to the south to renew acquaintances made in earlier rest areas.

The local wine was tried, of course. The connoisseur would discuss it learnedly and at length, pointing out how it varied in taste, colour and bouquet from that of other districts in which the Regiment had been quartered. Not all of the soldiers were connoisseurs though and to the less discriminating throat it was all just, '*plonk*, or '*purple death*'. Routine orders had reported that two soldiers had been poisoned through drinking wine brought from a local hawker and had given a general warning against the dangers of drinking an Italian anti-fly solution, by mistake. And so, '*no*' not all of the soldiers were connoisseurs.

There was also some work to do. Fourth brigade had been issued with some new Sherman's armed with a 17-pounder gun. The 20th were issued with two of them and so some instruction was given in how to use this new anti-Tiger weapon. Maintenance work on the other tanks helped fill in time as well with most being painted over a period of time.

Conferences between Officers and NCOs would continue and on the 20 November the Regiment were given a warning to prepare for another move.

November 26: During the past 5 weeks the Enemy had been pushed back from the Savio River and were now twenty miles north at the, Lamone River. The N.Z. Division moved up to this line and relieved 4 British Division. Because of the very wet weather, the Eighth Army planned to rest and re-group its formations in turn. And so for the next two weeks the Army planned to give an, '*all-out effort*' to capture Ravenna, by using three fresh Divisions. Two Divisions from 1 Canadian Corps and the Kiwi's and at the same time, Fifth Army would have a crack at Bologna.

The Lamone was the usually muddy river, a bit wider than some, waist deep, and getting deeper with the rain. Across the river the Enemy lay concealed in the usual rows of vines or manned machine-gun posts in houses and used the steeples and tall buildings of Faenza to spot for his guns and mortars. At night there were the usual patrols to the river to find out where it could be crossed and to see what the Hun was doing on his stopbank. Strong swimmers from some of the Battalions had had some hazardous nights trying to find crossing places. The Enemy was nervy, watchful and quick to open fire.

December 1-14: The month opened with the 20th Regiment on 24 hours' notice to move forward to take part in the Eighth Army's '*all-out effort*' but the weather was holding the attack up. Tanks could not move off the roads, aircraft could not take off from sodden airfields or fly in the rain and even the infantry weapons became clogged in the mud.

During a night attack on the 3rd, 46 British Division crossed the Lamone and after some reshuffling of units 5 Brigade crossed near them on the 10th. A and C Squadron's from the 20th Regiment had moved up to the gun-line on the 3rd and then on the 13th, would advance across the river to assist 18 Regiment and the 25th Battalion.

Over the past two weeks, the Regiments tanks shooting from the gun-line had been very successful, pleasing even the forward infantry, men not always easy to please. The Sherman's guns were especially severe on Enemy mortars and when the weather was fine, in co-operation with an air OP (operation). During this period the tanks fired a total of 8,763 rounds.

December 14-15: During the night 5 Brigade would advance from its bridgehead and make an all-out effort to take, Faenza. The attack was a '*set-piece job*'. The battlefield was lit up by artificial moonlight; there was a barrage by 420 guns, with three Battalions up and fighter bombers and the cab-rank on call to break up any counter-attacks next day. The Enemy was reported to have been surprised by this attack and had not expected such a heavy barrage. By late in the afternoon he had had enough and when Divisional Cavalry patrols crossed the Lamone and into Faenza on the morning of the 16th, they found only snipers and rear-guard Spandau posts.

December 16-19: The advance continued, with B Squadron moving up to assist the Ghurkhas and 24 Battalion.

A German Panzer-Grenadier Regiment, who had been resting after fighting around Bologna, was rushed forward to form a line north-west of Faenza with orders to carry out an aggressive defence. It was this bridgehead on the Senio River that 5 Brigade faced on the night of the 19th. To shift them the Brigade fired 100,000 shells and eventually, the outposts withdrew across the river leaving behind surprisingly very few dead and only 180 prisoners. The attack had cleared a troublesome bridgehead and won about 3,000 yards of ground, but patrols at dawn showed that the Enemy were still determined to keep the positions he still held east of the river and was in no mood to be trifled with.

(He had no intention of retreating from his line on the Senio, and in fact he was to remain there, secure, until the Eighth Army final offensive in April 1945)

There still remained small pockets of Enemy resistance south of the Senio and during the next few days 20 Regiment would assist in many small skirmishes to help ferret the Hun out of his den. These are covered briefly:

December 20: During the early hours the tanks moved forward and by 7 am. were up with the infantry companies. A Squadron had lost its bulldozer on the way forward and had been held up with demolitions but was now with 25 Battalion. Being closest to the river, C Squadron and 26 Battalion had the liveliest time. During the night a bazooka party tried to knock out one of their tanks, but infantry spotters gave warning of the Enemies approach and were driven off. Two prisoners were taken, and one source said, *'they were deserters with some valuable information about Enemy dispositions'*.

December 21: A Nebelwerfer concentration had shaken up Tactical HQ the night before and so during the day B Squadron retaliated by shooting and destroying a building and a tower, both suspected of being used as OPs. (Observation posts)

The Commander of C's new 17-pounder tank was fatally wounded after coming forward to assist 10 Troop. He died 17 days later in hospital.

December 22-24: A Squadron was withdrawn with B moving up too take its place. They would continue harassing the Enemy. In return they had to endure shelling and mortaring. C, Squadron now nearest the stopbank shot at Enemy houses across the river while the infantry reconnoitred hither and thither looking for gaps in a mine field along the stopbank.

During this period the two Kiwi Regiments would fire over 2000 shells in support. But, however, their fire was not enough to drive the Enemy from his deep defences.

A sharp little action on Christmas Eve brought a *'heavy stonk'* down on the tanks, but with no casualties. Everyone agreed that the battle could wait a few hours while good health was toasted with the *'odd glasses'* of vermouth and next Xmas predictions discussed.

December 25-31: Crews in the front line, postponed their Christmas dinner for a few days, but would still eat like Kings. With a provident eye for *'game on the hoof'* the crews had sent back to the cooks in B Echelon, pigs and poultry and then had them returned by Jeep-train, cooked, garnished, done to a turn and ready to eat. Some-times, a same-day service. One of the tanks which had been damaged was taken back for repairs. It was found to have in its turret, sufficient supplies of poultry and pork to last several days. Stray hens were at first thought to be setting off trip flares laid around front line houses to give warning of approaching Enemy patrols. By Xmas few had survived to share the blame. Christmas mail and parcels kept the men in high spirits, and the year ended full of hope.

On New Year's Eve A and B Squadrons were ordered forward to assist the infantry who were going to test an Enemy infantry screen to the north-east. A stream of tracer bullets and coloured flares going up along the Enemies front showed that the Germans were welcoming in the New Year with a light heart.

A New Year's party was broken up by infantry with tank support in Casa Galunua and nine prisoners taken, but the Vino-factory garrison near the Villa Pasolini was more determined. A Vino-factory is always a major objective, but the attackers were beaten off. Perhaps theirs was a better party?

The heaviest fighting took place around a group of houses known as the, Palazzo. A Platoon from D Company rushed in and took the buildings, but then found them-selves surrounded by a triangle of Germans who were dug in around the houses. Mortars crashed all around and bazooka rockets began to come through the walls. The Platoon's position became very critical. They wirelessed back for help and Bill French's tank Troop received orders to assist. He continues:

The CO of 24 Battalion asked if we would have a crack at getting them out. I said I would give it a go but would need an infantry screen. The request was made because the country was of the typical close Italian type with grapevines, hedgerows, trees, etc. They provided good cover for any Hun bazooka.

The Platoon Commander and I did a quick recce and decided the best plan was to move down the road for a distance of about 300 yards, then turn hard right and move in line abreast to within 150 yards of the Enemy who by this time were in one of the houses. When in position we would open up with everything we had

and saturate the area of the house, including the house if necessary. This was to continue for about 15 minutes, after which we would shift to the left of the house and carry on with the same procedure while the Platoon in the other buildings made a dash for it. The Platoon was informed by radio to get well under cover and stand by. During the initial stages I had contact with them on the 38 set; however, when the fireworks started I lost contact.

Everything went according to plan for once and they eventually made it back to Company HQ. The night had been clear with considerable moon, which contributed greatly to the success of the show because it enabled us to direct our fire reasonably well. This was most important when it came to covering the Platoons dash from the houses. From memory we expended within the Troop something like 100, 75 millimetre rounds, 60 boxes of Browning and ruined 2 Browning barrels...

For his work in organising stretcher parties and help in evacuating the wounded in the past attacks, the Regiments Chaplain, Padre Gunn, won a well-deserved MBE. To evacuate the wounded he had crossed a minefield in an RAP carrier and had stayed with them under continuous mortar and shell fire for over two hours while dressing wounds. *'It is the desire of every Officer and man in the Regiment that his services be recognised,'* states the citation to his award. Always cheerful and always in the thick of the fray, Padre Gunn had a reputation in the Regiment for his apparent genius in picking as his *'Casa'* the most conspicuous and most shelled house in the district.

1945

January: During the next few days and nights, 20 Regiment tanks would continue with their *'harassing fire tasks'* and then on the 7th they would concentrate on a counter-mortar role for another 6 days. During this period the tanks would fire 1,266 rounds against no fewer than 25 different targets. Nebelwerfers, mortars, self-propelled guns, transport, a Church at Felisio, suspected of being used as an OP and Enemy working parties, all to the satisfaction of the infantry and the counter-mortar Officer at Brigade HQ.

For the remainder of January and a few days into February, the Tank Squadrons would inter-change positions with each other and perform more of a static role, watching for and keeping German patrols at bay. This period gave the men some time to reflect on the past and to dream of and perhaps predict the day of wars end.

After almost a year in Italy, the men had grown used to the sight of refugees, and as the Army moved slowly but surely north the locals would flock back into their villages as soon as they had been recaptured. They could be seen straggling out of the hills, pushing hand-barrows or riding on horse or donkey-drawn farm carts, all piled high with mattresses, furniture and firewood: The last perhaps the most precious. Irritable, black-whiskered men snarled angrily at every stoppage by the belaboured spindle-legged donkeys with their strange cries, urging them on to impossible tasks. Grey-haired, wrinkled old women struggled doggedly with rickety hand-carts while sturdy girls carried colossal loads on their heads or pushed vigorously behind overladen carts as their tiny children, rosy cheeked from the whipping wind, snuggled down in their mattress's or watched the commotion wide-eyed.

February: The Regiments tour of duty ended on the 9th when B Squadron, after some noisy nights in the front line, was relieved by a Squadron from 18 Armoured Regiment. A, who had been manning the gun-line and C, who had been in reserve, were also relieved by 18 Regiment and by the 11th all of the 20th were gathered back in Forli.

CONCLUSION FOR THE MOVE NORTH TO THE SENIO RIVER

During its seventy-three days in the front line, the 20th Regiment, from its gun-lines, had fired 18,254 rounds of 75-millimetre shells, an average of 250 a day. The tanks Browning's are recorded to have fired 100,000 rounds, both from the tanks and from ground mounts, *'much to the delight of our infantry friends'* said the CO. The crews coming out of the line may have had no stories of tank battles or of Tigers routed to entertain their Italian friends, but all could take pride in the satisfaction that they had done all that had been asked of them and had done it well.

THE LAST LAP

In Forli, the Regiment were not really far enough away from the line to regard the war with that air of detachment that usually settles over a rest area. Some of their tanks and crew were placed on standby at five of the bridges over the river, Senio. Their orders were to defend them at all cost against saboteurs or Enemy forces. Fortunately the Hun had more pressing things to occupy him.

There were big changes made internally, long service Officers due for relief were whisked away as others replaced them and some of the thirty-niners (men who had arrived in Egypt in 1939), were replaced as well. From the 21 February B Squadron (much envied) were away in Fabriano and had been attached to 9 Infantry Brigade which had just been newly formed.

March: One of C Squadrons Troops took part in an Eighth Army demonstration of the effectiveness of *'grousers'*, steel extensions fitted to the tank's tracks to make them wider and prevent them sinking so far in the mud. Each tank, ten in all, plus a German Panther were fitted with different types, and naturally Headquarters Squadron operated a totalisator on the result. The race was over about one mile, through a mud patch into which water had been pumped for days and then over three canals. The mud patch quickly claimed the tanks without grousers, the Panther, a hot favourite, locked itself in reverse gear and had to be towed out by a tractor and the remainder were left stuck hard and fast in a canal. It was decided to call it a *'no race'* after which, the tote was kept busy refunding the investments.

The Regiment was back into training again and until the end of the month. They would practice advancing with attacking infantry with overall support from the Armoured Divisions. Spring rains spoiled some of the exercises, but by now the ground was hard enough for tanks to move across country.

The Troops who a few weeks earlier had come back out of the line grey and weary and covered with mud were now fit and keen. Spring was the time for big offensives and no one in the New Zealand Division doubted that that time had now come.

April 1-8: The Regiments night move had been secret with signs blacked out and badges and titles hidden away. At Villa Franca, their new area the Regiments vehicles were *'frozen'* and camouflaged and no one was to leave the area. For the first time that year the crew's bivvied in the open.

One of the first jobs to do was to fit the tanks with chevron rubber tracks in place of the steel ones. They were told the reason for this was, *'to facilitate the pursuit of the beaten foe'*. The following quotation is from a C Squadron correspondent, who adds the cynical comment that the tank crews had heard *'that particular line of bull before'*.

On the 3 April, A Squadron moved up to the river and before dawn opened fire on Enemy sniper posts and dugouts. This sortie again giving them the honour of being first into action. Wooden supports and sandbags scattered around after the shooting confirmed the accuracy of the crew's gunnery.

By the 5 April all preparations at Tactical HQ was complete and the Eighth Army were now in position to 'Hunt the Hun' away from their winter front on the Senio.

20 Regiments dispositions for the coming attack were: A Squadron would support 24 Battalion, B the 25th and C the 26th. The Regiment would come under 6 Brigades command and be placed on the left of the Divisions 4,500-yard front. 5 Brigade would be to the right and 9 Brigade in the rear as a reserve. Available to the Divisions sector alone were, sixteen hundred and forty aircraft, 800 tanks and some 350 guns.

"D - DAY"

April 9: At about two pm, the first waves of Fortresses and Liberators arrived, their wings flashing in the sunlight. Hundreds of small fragmentation bombs rained down on the Enemies side of the river. The rumble of the explosions and the drone of hundreds of aircraft engines drowned the front with sound for over an hour. Then at about twenty minutes past three the guns took over the bombardment for about half an hour, their shells sketching the line of the river in a ragged scarf of yellow smoke. Suddenly the sky became black with fighter-bombers and the air screamed as they darted and dived into the pall of smoke and dust. Then back came the guns again and more fighters and at twenty past seven the smoke line on the river leapt into flame as the flame throwers arched their slim jets across to the Enemy positions on the far bank. The flames died as suddenly as they had sprung to life and a thick pall of black smoke rose over the river. It was now twenty-two minutes past seven, the last hour of daylight. The big guns once again opened their barrage, the infantry launched their kapok bridges and then in no time the Army were across the Senio.

One C Squadron crew member of the 20th Regiment describes this attack...

At 1.50 the first of the Forts appeared flying in from the south-east along a beam with the ground Troops burning yellow markers and the heavy AA firing warning bursts ahead to mark the position of the forward Troops. In they came flying in formations of three groups of nine and the roar of the 25-pounders fragmentation bombs echoed like thunder over the plain. Later, with the last of their bombs unloaded and with the Enemy positions hidden by clouds of brown dust rising high in the air, the last of the bombers turned for home. Down came the masking trees and the arty began their 140,000 round, 4 hour preliminary softening up barrage. The tank crews climbed into their turrets and began their task of pounding a hundred-yard length of stopbank with 400 shells per tank. Soon, in spite of having motors running, the inside of the turret became almost unbearable with burnt powder fumes. 10 seconds between shots isn't very long when a fresh supply of shells has to be kept up and the empty cases slung overboard. Soon the guns began to slam back and forward as the oil in their recoil systems heated and the crew were glad of quarter hour spells every hour while the fighter bombers bombed and strafed suspected Enemy strong points along the stopbank.

By dark the tank's task was finished and they moved, their guns hot enough to fry eggs on, to a Squadron concentration area where the crews, somewhat tired, refuelled and re-armoured. Sleep was impossible, the crescendo of the guns seemed to grow louder and the air to vibrate so that the men felt crushed and tired. Still the guns roared and the night was as bright as day with the glare of the flamethrowers 'doing over the bank' as a final preliminary to the infantry putting in the bridgehead. The tank crews crouched over primus's cooking up their M and V stew and shouting remarks to each other above the roar of the guns.

About midnight the barrage died down and reports began to come back telling how the infantry were well across against practically no resistance, which was hardly surprising after the fury of the preliminary...

April 10-30: By am. On the 10th all tanks were across the river and after manoeuvring through a mine field had re-joined the infantry. The Enemies stop bank, honeycombed with deep dugouts, tunnels and machine gun posts had taken a terrific pounding. One man's diary recalls: 'Not a square yard had escaped the pounding of the bombing and shelling and everything burnable had been charred by the flame throwers. A few prisoners, pale, dirty, unshaven and dazed, were being escorted to the rear by nonchalant Kiwi Infantrymen'.

The tanks moved forward leisurely, meeting no opposition except for occasional mortar fire. Moving up the road with their 'hemstitching' or sewing up the flank, the Troops stopped at a house which had not been badly damaged. Behind the house were Ted mortar pits with the aiming sticks still in place and the names of the targets scribbled in German on them. A local man was at the water pump with a German Army jackboot in his hands and was busy washing the mangled remains of a foot out of it. 'Buona scarpa', he said, as he stood in a puddle of blood stained water. 'Bloody Dago' said one of the boys, as he was interrupted by a Trooper on wireless watch. The forward Troops reported running into heavy opposition so the boys piled into their tanks and set off up the road. They went through what had once been a village, passed two abandoned field guns whose horses had been killed by RAF strafing, over canal bridges still intact until they saw one of their tanks firing 75 millimetre shells into a house. It was really all over before they got there, the 'heavy opposition' proved to be nothing more than a platoon of demoralised Teds, lost and bewildered, only too glad to chuck it in after a token resistance.

Over the next three weeks the Army would encounter similar resistance as they progressed further north. Village after village would be recaptured, Enemy river lines would be attacked with heavy bombardment and then taken by the infantry and tanks and many prisoners would be taken: Most of them very young and dog tired.

By the end of the month, Germany officially surrendered its occupation of Italy to the allied forces, and 20 Regiment, would now find themselves facing another threat in the City of Trieste.

CONCLUSION FOR THE BATTLES FOR THE SENIO RIVER AND ONWARDS

The Salerno, Massa Lombarda, Mendicina, Scolo Correcchio, the Sillaro, the Reno, the Po, Padua on the Adige, Venice and then Trieste are just some of the names of towns and rivers that the triumphant New Zealanders, along with their Allies, battled for and won during that long haul to the Yugoslavia border. Squadron headquarters had stopped for the night in twenty different places in twenty three days and that included the night when they didn't stop at all.

From the point of view of the tank crews at least, it had been one of the most successful periods of the Regiments history. The Enemy had been well and truly beaten and although some of the tanks had some sharp skirmishes north of the Po River in the last days of April, the days of the big battles and 'set-piece' attacks were over. The experience gained in the earlier battles in Italy and the training with the infantry before the final offensive had given the tank crews and their infantry platoons the close personal contact essential for smooth co-operation on the battlefield. They worked together splendidly and morale was high. Each platoon had a tank attached to it, each tank's gunner was linked direct with the platoon wireless set and the infantry got the tank fire when and where they wanted it. Each Troop worked as a team and every man in a crew felt that he was on top of his job.

Throughout the long advance ammunition and fuel never failed to come up from the rear echelons and the amount used by the tanks was tremendous. Their Browning machine-guns shot away 117,000 rounds. One gunner claims to have fired 10'000 rounds alone on the day his Troop crossed the Santerno. The 'seventy-fives' fired 8,123 rounds of high-explosive, 103 of smoke and 42 of armour-piercing shells: In addition, the 17-pounder and the 105-millimetre Sherman's added their quotas to this total. No fewer than 27,310 gallons of petrol and 12,820 gallons of diesel fuel were used by the Regiment during the battle.

Fitters and mechanics win few laurels in Regimental history, but without them to keep the tanks tracks in order and their engines running sweetly, the swift advances of the last few weeks would not have been possible. During this period the Regiment had covered 85 miles and had crossed eight rivers without the loss of a single tank through mechanical defect. In fact, when the Regiment reached Trieste it still had with it a few tanks with which it had been issued at Maadi over two years before.

The Regiments casualties in this final offensive were surprisingly few. One Officer and 7 men killed, with 3 Officers and 17 men wounded. Its losses in tanks were also light. Two Sherman's were knocked out with 3 damaged and also, 1 Stuart was knocked out and 3 damaged.

"THIS IS YUGOSLAVIA"

'Tukay je Jugoslavia' proclaimed the slogans on the walls of Trieste and Monfalcone, *'This is Yugoslavia'*. The claim embraced all of the Italian territory east of the Isonzo, proclaiming that it, Yugoslavia, by right of conquest now controlled this area and adding the warning, a threat, or perhaps a bluff, that the Yugoslav Army *'would not be responsible for anything that might happen'* if the New Zealand Division were not withdrawn at once behind the Isonzo. This was how Marshall Tito proposed to keep the agreement made earlier with Field-Marshal Alexander at Belgrade.

'The New Zealander's' said General Freyberg, were going to stay and so for the next six weeks, *'the Jugs'* were the New Zealand Divisions main preoccupation.

The Kiwi is not notably a diplomat, but common sense, a rough tact, cheerful friendliness and an impression of quiet strength helped to smooth over many a difficult situation in the weeks to come.

For the first two weeks of May, 20 Regiment were on three hours' notice. Two Troops in turn patrolled the three mile stretch of road from Monfalcone too Ronchi, *'Just to remind Tito that the Troops were on the job'*. As for the men themselves, there was VE day to celebrate with lots of swimming, picnics, parties and Squadron open air dances. *'Tito's chaps'* would appear, uninvited, and had to be firmly persuaded to look elsewhere for entertainment. Quite often they would cause trouble later by accosting guests on their way home.

Leave parties left frequently for three days in Venice or on *'swanning'* trips to Udine or across the Alps to Austria: Journeys which, with unofficial extensions, often covered several hundred miles. In spite of the *'Jugs'*, the men were in a holiday mood and determined to enjoy themselves before other battles or other fronts claimed their attention.

May 20: A watchful military eye had been kept on the Yugoslavs in Trieste and Venezia Giulia and it was decided that things looked no better so armour was ordered up into forward positions with the policy of *'peaceful infiltration'* of the Jugs positions.

May 21-31: Once again, the 20th Regiment were on the move and over the next few days along with 6 Brigade and their Allies they would slowly but surely tighten up their grip on Trieste and surrounding areas.

During this period 6th Reinforcements of the Hawea draft left the Regiment on the first stage of their journey home. As always, they were suitably farewelled.

On the evening of the 31st the Regiment would move into Trieste with 6 Brigade to relieve 19 Regiment and 9 Brigade. Infantry companies and tank Troops manned strategic positions guarding vital points in the city, while RHQ and the reconnaissance Troop patrolled the docks and the railway yards.

June 1-11: During this period there were constant reports of '*incident's*' of Yugoslav Troops looting warehouses and factories and of demonstrations and arrests. On the evening of the 8th a big demonstration by Yugoslav Troops and local Communists threatened trouble, but '*blocking*' tactics by Allied Troops in the town confined it skilfully to parades and processions through the streets and at no time did the situation get out of hand.

After some high-level diplomatic exchanges the Yugoslavs were at last brought to reason and on the 11th began to withdraw from Trieste. No incidents were reported and apart from the inevitable processions and parades the city's streets were orderly. The withdrawal was frenziedly celebrated next day by the Italians. The big square was packed with cheering people and from every window fluttered the Italian flag.

June 12-30: Reports that armed Slovenian peasants proposed to stage a counter-demonstration caused all leave to be stopped and kept the Troops at their posts. Trouble threatened later in the day when Partisans and local Communists tore down or set fire to Italian flags, but Allied provosts with their usual efficiency quelled all disturbances and the 20th Regiment Troop's services were not required.

Among the list of vital points the Troops were called on to guard after the Yugoslavs departure were the docks, broadcasting and power stations and a brewery, which units were charged with safeguarding '*for future military use*' and to prevent looting.

It was time once again for the men to enjoy themselves in earnest. Leave was generous with only half of the men on standby at one time. There was lots of good food to consume and good wine to drink and there was time also to reflect on the future. The Division boiled with rumours, would it go home or would it find further battlefields in Burma or the Pacific?

On the 24th the Partisan forces in Venezia Giulia, were paraded and thanked for their past services. Their arms were then collected and the organisation disbanded.

In a form of direct protest not unknown in New Zealand, the watersiders and public services of Trieste went on strike. On the 25th a party of 50 men from 20 Regiment took their places loading and unloading ships and all leave was cancelled. The strike only lasted a day.

On the 30 June, B Squadron relieved A Squadron in Trieste and a Troop of tanks was stationed at the entrance to the docks to check the entry of all personnel and vehicles. This was to be the Regiments last official duty and a week later B Squadron would hand over to 18 Regiment and re-join the rest of the Regiment in the Villa Opicina barracks.



ABOVE: PANZERKAMPFWAGEN V PANTHER AUSF. A (SD.KFZ. 171)

THIS PANTHER AUSF. A OF I./PZ.RGT.26 WAS KNOCKED OUT BY CONCENTRATED FIRE FROM SHERMANS OF 20TH NZ ARMoured REGIMENT AT A CROSSROADS IN PALAZZO GUERRINO, NEAR SESTO IMOLESE, ITALY ON 13 APRIL 1945.

IT IS SHOWN BEING INSPECTED BY BRITISH TROOPS ON THE 16TH APRIL. THE VEHICLE HAS PROTECTIVE COVERS OVER THE LOUVRES ON THE REAR PLATE AND EXTRA SPACED ARMOUR ON THE TURRET ROOF. THE PANTHER HAD DISABLED A FIREFLY AND SHOT AT A SHERMAN IB (105 MM) BEFORE BEING KNOCKED OUT. PREVIOUS TO FEBRUARY 1945 I./PZ.RGT.26

BELOW: SHERMAN IIIS OF 8 TROOP, B SQUADRON, 20TH ARMoured REGIMENT OUTSIDE THEIR BILLETs ON THE VIA CICERONE IN TRIESTE IN MAY 1945. THE TANKS ARE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: NO. 14 (CORPORAL RITCHIE), 13 (SERGEANT JARMAN) AND 12 (LIEUTENANT TURNER). BY THE LATTER STAGE OF THE WAR THE AERIAL RECOGNITION SYMBOL WAS MORE COMMONLY FOUND ON THE TURRET ROOF AS IT WAS EASILY OBSCURED BY THE CLUTTER OF GEAR STOWED ON THE ENGINE DECKs.



July: The month's occasions for the 20th were to be more domestic and social rather than military. A memorial service by Padre Gunn for those of the Regiment who lost their lives in Italy will be long remembered by all those who took part. A printed order of service containing the names of the Regiments dead was sent to their next of kin.

On the 22nd the New Zealand Division began to move back to a concentration area near Lake Trasimene leaving the 20th behind as a rear party.

August: This was to be a social month for the 20th and the daily record of events reads like a debutante's diary. Dance's, launch and yacht trips, cricket and tennis matches, visits to the opera and visits exchanged with the Royal Navy. Its rear party duties of handing in tanks and equipment and cleaning up took some of this time as well.

On the 31st, the rear party left Trieste to a fond farewell message from, *La Voce Libera...*

'A rivederci, New Zealand Brothers, we love you and you know it, and for this reason we are happy that you return to your healthy country and leave this old patient we call Europe'...

September: The move back, over 500 miles, took the Regiment through towns and villages it had known in other days and other circumstances. At Bastia they re-joined up with the balance of the NZ Division, tents were put up and a unit ERS was appointed.

This was not a happy time in the New Zealand Divisions history. Among the men there was a general feeling of restlessness at the apparent slowness of repatriation and at delays in Government decisions on the composition of the force to go to Japan. Most men were bored, and many were 'broke' and official efforts to amuse and entertain were often uncooperatively received. Eventually, by the middle of the month it was announced that single men of the 13th, 14th and 15th Reinforcements would form the New Zealand component of the occupation force for Japan and the earlier reinforcements would return home in turn as shipping became available.

October: The 20th Regiment moved from Bastia to winter quarters at Arno camp, near Florence. At regular intervals, parties left by lorry on the long overland journey to Calais and Folk stone for leave in the United Kingdom. Those who couldn't afford to go got jobs helping to run the staging camps that were dotted across France as overnight halts for the leave convoys.

November-December: In mid-November General Freyberg took the salute at the last parade of 4 Armoured Brigade. Padre Spence conducted his last service to the 20 Regiment. Snow fell on the hills around Florence and leave parties from England began to return. The time had come to make an end. On 2 December 1945, 20 New Zealand Armoured Regiment was officially disbanded.

It is now time to end too, a narrative that has taken the 20th through six long years of war. In various capacities and with varied skills, men served the trade of war in countries thousands of miles from their homes. They suffered hardships and cruel losses, shared victories and defeats, and those who survived returned to their homes happy to bring this interlude in their lives to an end.

Note: We finish with words from Lieutenant-General Freyberg, later to become the Governor General for New Zealand...

I feel it has been an honour and a pleasure to have been associated with this fine Infantry Battalion. It is of interest to note that this Battalion turned out many first-class officers.

Men of the calibre of Jim Burrows, Fountaine, and Fairbrother and of course Charlie Upham: This was undoubtedly due to the inspiration of their original leader, Major-General Sir Howard Kippenger, who served the Battalion with distinction.

The Battalion has also the distinction of winning three VC's. Charlie Upham, VC in Crete, Bar at Ruweisat and Hinton, VC at Kalamata, Greece.

This is the story of a very fine and brave unit and I hope it will be widely read by many people, not only in New Zealand but also in the 'Old Country'

**SUMMARY OF CASUALTIES FOR THE 20TH BATTALION AND THEN
ARMoured REGIMENT FOR WORLD WAR TWO.
1939-1945**

	KILLED, OR DIED OF WOUNDS	WOUNDED	PRISONERS OF WAR	TOTAL CASUALTIES
Greece	24	45	80	149
Crete	80	129	88	297
Libya, 1941	59	126	363	548
Egypt, 1942	69	117	207	393
Italy	85	163	7	255
Died on active service	19	0	0	19
Totals	336	580	745	1661

HONOURS AND AWARDS

Award / Honour Received	Receiver of Award	Total Awards
Bar to the Victoria Cross	Captain C. H. Upham. VC.	One
Victoria Cross	2 Lt C. H. Upham. Sgt J D Hinton	Two
Distinguished Service Order		Six
Member of the Order of the British Empire		Four
Military Cross		Nine
Distinguished Conduct Medal		Four
Military Medal		Thirteen
British Empire Medal		One
Greek Military Cross		One
Soviet Medal for Valour		One



Their Name Liveth for Evermore

20th BATTALION AND ARMOURED REGIMENT

WW2 Roll of Honour:

Surname	Initials	Rank	Date of Death	Notes
A'COURT	N. F. D.	Private [Ordinance, attached]	27 04 1941	Killed in Action
ADAMS	H. M. W.	Private	08 11 1943	Killed or died as a POW
AITCHESON	M. A.	Trooper	16 12 1943	Died of Wounds
AITCHISON	A	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
AITCHESON	R. J. D.	Trooper	15 12 1943	Killed in Action
AITKEN	J. E.	Private	02 06 1941	Died of Wounds
AKUIRA	W. R.	Corporal	31 05 1943	Killed or died as a POW
ALCOCK	W. L.	Private	02 10 1941	Killed or died as a POW
ALDERTON	P. J.	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
ALLAN	G. A.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
ALLOWAY	A. H.	Private	15 07 1942	Died of Wounds
ANDERSON	W.	Private	06 12 1941	Died of Wounds
ANDREWS	R.	Private	26 11 1941	Killed in Action
ARMSTRONG	I. D.	Corporal	11 12 1941	Died of Wounds
ATKINS	A. B.	Private	25 05 1941	Killed in Action
AYTO	W.	Captain	27 04 1941	Died of Wounds
BAKER	R. M.	Private	22 05 1941	Died of Wounds
BALL	A. L.	Trooper	30 03 1944	Killed in Action
BALL	F. T.	Lance Corporal	27 04 1941	Killed in Action
BARRAR	J. N.	Private	26 06	Killed in Action
BASSETT	J. M.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
BAXTER	T. W.	Private	29 09 1942	Killed or died as a POW
BECKETT	F. E.	Trooper	15 12 1943	Killed in Action
BEECHEY	L.	Private	28 06 1942	Killed in Action
BELL	T. W.	Trooper	25 04 1944	Died of Wounds
BENNETT	W. J. A.	Trooper	16 12 1943	Killed in Action
BERTRAND	B. L.	Trooper	07 06 1944	Killed in Action
BILLSBOROUGH	A. E.	Private	29 08 1944	Killed or died as a POW
BISHOP	W. W.	Private	25 11 1941	Killed in Action

BLACK	D. L.	Sergeant	26 09 1944	Killed in Action
BLAY	R. M.	Private	30 05 1941	Died of Wounds
BLUNDEN	G. H.	Private	25 05 1941	Killed in Action
BLUNDEN	J. R.	Corporal	07 01 1945	Died of Wounds
BONIFACE	J. G. T.	Sergeant	27 05 1944	Killed or died on active service
BORRIE	D.	Private	02 12 1941	Died of Wounds
BOYCE	E. E. E.	Lance Corporal	23 05 1941	Died of Wounds
BOYD	G. T.	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
BOYD	P. H. A.	Private	23 05 1941	Killed in Action
BRADLEY	R. A.	Corporal	23 09 1944	Died of Wounds
BRASSEY	L. W.	Lance Corporal	23 03 1944	Died of Wounds
BREMER	A. R.	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
BRENTON	L. G.	Corporal	16 03 1944	Killed in Action
BRISTED	F. G.	Private	21 05 1941	Killed or died on active service
BROOKS	P. H.	Lieutenant	16 03 1944	Killed in Action
BROWN	W. A.	Corporal	30 03 1944	Killed in Action
BROWN-PRYDE	R. B.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
BROWNE	E. S.	Sergeant	28 06 1942	Killed in Action
BRYANT	A. H. A.	Private	27 04 1941	Killed in Action
BUCHANAN	H. H.	Private	27 04 1941	Killed in Action
BURGESS	G. G.	Trooper	23 09 1944	Killed in Action
BURKE	B. J.	Private	02 06 1941	Died of Wounds
BURLAND	J. D.	2nd Lieutenant	23 09 1944	Killed in Action
BURNETT	W. A.	Private	30 11 1941	Died of Wounds
BURNS	A. L.	L. Sergeant	18 07 1942	Killed or died as a POW
BURNS	J. D.	Private	25 05 1941	Killed in Action
CAMPBELL	A. R. J.	Private	17 07 1942	Died of Wounds
CANNING	P. F.	Private	04 06 1941	Killed or died as a POW
CARMICHAEL	J. D.	Trooper	29 12 1943	Killed in Action
CARR	G. J.	Private	25 05 1941	Died of Wounds
CARSON	L. I.	Lieutenant	15 12 1943	Killed in Action
CHAPMAN	W. T. McL.	Private	15 07 1942	Died of Wounds
CHATTERTON	H. O.	Trooper	03 08 1944	Killed in Action
CHETTLEBURGH	J. D. A.	Private	15 07 1942	Died of Wounds
CHIRNSIDE	W. O.	Private	30 11 1941	Died of Wounds
CHRISTIE	L. E.	Private	29 10 1941	Killed or died on active service
CLARK	D. C.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
CLARK	M. C.	Corporal	25 10 1944	Died of Wounds
CLARKE	W.	Private	07 05 1941	Died of Wounds
COATSWORTH	F. J. C.	Private	10 08 1942	Killed or died as a POW
COFFEY	S. J.	Trooper	26 09 1944	Died of Wounds
COOPER	H. R.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
COOTE	B. T. P.	Private	03 12 1941	Killed in Action

COPPIN	D. C.	Trooper	23 09 1944	Killed in Action
COWMAN	J.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
CRAIG	W. N. C.	Sergeant	23 09 1944	Killed in Action
CRAWFORD	D.	Corporal	04 07 1944	Killed or died on active service
CREAGH	C.	Private	01 07 1942	Died of Wounds
CUNNINGHAM	H. T.	Private	27 04 1941	Killed in Action
DALTON	G. T.	Sergeant	17 12 1943	Died of Wounds, POW
DALY	T. P.	Private	11 07 1942	Killed in Action
DARLING	J. T.	Private	05 12 1941	Killed in Action
DASLER	A. R. J.	Trooper	19 03 1944	Killed in Action
DAVIS	J. A.	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
DAWSON	C. M.	Trooper	29 12 1943	Killed in Action
DAWSON	T. E.	Lieutenant	19 04 1941	Died of Wounds
DEVENNEY	G. M. F.	Private	27 05 1944	Killed or died as a POW
DICK	L. G.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
DOIG	R. W.	Corporal	28 06 1942	Died of Wounds
DONNELLY	H. P.	Sergeant	23 05 1941	Died of Wounds
DOVE	W. E.	Private	22 05 1941	Died of Wounds
DREWERY	R. E.	Private	24 05 1941	Died of Wounds
DROGEMULLER	B. F.	Corporal	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
DRUMMOND	T. M.	Sergeant [Ordinance, attached]	27 04 1941	Killed in action
DUNCAN	A.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
DUNN	M. J.	Private	18 11 1942	Killed or died on active service
EALAM	E. W.	Private	22 05 1941	Died of Wounds
EASON	W. E.	Private	09 12 1941	Killed or died as a POW
EASTERBROOK	J. R.	Trooper	26 09 1944	Killed in Action
ERRIDGE	J. A.	Private	26 11 1941	Killed in Action
FINLAY	W. J.	Private	14 07 1942	Killed in Action
FORBES	H.	Private	02 06 1942	Killed or died as a POW
FOSTER	C. C.	Private	26 11 1941	Killed in Action
FOWLER	G.	Private	27 04 1941	Killed in Action
FOWLER	L. J.	Trooper	25 03 1944	Killed in Action
FRASER	A. D.	Private	22 05 1941	Died of Wounds
FRASER	C. H.	Private	19 07 1942	Killed or died on active service
FRATER	T. I.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
FREW	W.	Private	30 04 1940	Killed or died on active service
FRIEND	J. L.	Private	25 05 1941	Died of Wounds
GALBRAITH	A. S.	Lieutenant	12 07 1942	Killed in Action
GALE	J. W. H.	Private	05 12 1941	Killed in Action
GALVIN	I. R.	Trooper	28 03 1944	Killed in Action
GARDINER	N. C.	Private	24 05 1941	Died of Wounds
GARTHWAITE	A. R. J.	Trooper	28 07 1944	Killed in Action
GEORGE	W. L.	Sergeant	26 05 1941	Killed or died as a POW

GILCHRIST	H.	Corporal	25 05 1941	Killed in Action
GILES	L. C.	Private	25 05 1941	Killed in Action
GILLAN	J. C.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
GILLIGAN	W. F.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
GILMORE	I. W.	Trooper	23 09 1944	Died of Wounds
GILMOUR	W. L. M.	Captain [NZMC, attached]	01 12 1941	Killed in Action
GLOVER	T. R.	Private	28 06 1942	Killed in Action
GOULD	H. A.	Private	08 07 1942	Died of Wounds
GRACIA	C. F.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
GRAFFIN	H. V.	Trooper	30 03 1944	Killed in Action
GRAFFIN	J. McC.	Trooper	15 12 1943	Killed in Action
GRAHAM	R. J.	Private	16 07 1942	Died of Wounds
GRAY	A. C.	Warrant Officer II	13 07 1942	Killed in Action
GRAY	M. H.	Private	19 07 1942	Died of Wounds
GRAY	R. M.	Trooper	14 08 1944	Killed or died on active service
GREEN	S. J.	2nd Lieutenant	25 05 1941	Killed in Action
GROGAN	P. J. J.	Corporal	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
GROOBY	H. L.	Warrant Officer II	01 12 1941	Killed in Action
GROUFSKY	J. T.	Sergeant	16 12 1943	Died of Wounds
HAMILTON	J.	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
HAMPTON	J. M.	Trooper	31 07 1944	Killed in Action
HARAWIRA	W.	Private	17 07 1942	Killed in Action
HARNEISS	G. B.	Private	20 07 1942	Died of Wounds
HARVEY	C.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
HARVEY	E. G.	Private	25 05 1941	Killed in Action
HARGRAVES	D. L.	Trooper	23 09 1944	Killed in Action
HARRISON	S. P.	Corporal	28 07 1944	Killed in Action
HART	G. F.	Captain	03 06 1944	Died of Wounds
HAYWARD	J. R.	L. Sergeant	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
HAZLETT	J. S.	Lieutenant	19 03 1944	Killed in Action
HEATH	R. H.	Private	07 02 1942	Killed or died on active service
HENDERSON	J. W.	Corporal	26 10 1942	Killed or died as a POW
HENDERSON	R. J.	Trooper	26 09 1944	Killed in Action
HERBERT	L. C.	Lance Corporal	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
HERBISON	T. B.	Trooper	16 12 1943	Died of Wounds
HERD	G. A.	Private	28 06 1942	Killed in Action
HILL-RENNIE	M. C.	Private	22 11 1941	Killed in Action
HISLOP	D. W.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
HOARE	J. H.	Private	26 11 1941	Killed in Action
HOFFMAN	A. J.	Private	25 05 1941	Died of Wounds
HOGG	G. L.	Private	26 11 1941	Killed in Action
HOLDER	H. H.	Private	16 07 1942	Died of Wounds
HOLT	A.	Lance Corporal	26 06 1942	Died of Wounds

HOMANN	G. S. S.	Private	15 07 1942	Died of Wounds
HONEYFIELD	E. R.	Trooper	24 05 1944	Killed or died on active service
HOPKINS	D. H.	Private	01 10 1941	Killed or died on active service
HORN	W. L. C.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
HUGHES	M.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
INGLIS	G. McC.	Trooper	26 09 1944	Killed in Action
JACK	W. H.	Private	13 11 1940	Killed or died on active service
JACKSON	J. A.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
JACKSON	W. H.	Private	27 04 1941	Killed in Action
JENKINS	C. K.	Lance Corporal	06 12 1941	Died of Wounds
JENKINS	N. L.	2nd Lieutenant	14 04 1945	Died of Wounds
JOINER	G. W.	Private	28 06 1942	Killed in Action
JONES	K. J.	Trooper	16 12 1943	Killed in Action
JONES	S. B.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
JORDAN	J. A.	Lance Corporal	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
KELLY	F. P.	Private	15 04 1941	Killed in Action
KENNEDY	J. S.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
KENNINGTON	E. J.	Trooper	19 10 1944	Killed in Action
KEVERN	J.	Trooper	03 08 1944	Killed in Action
KIDD	C. W.	Lance Corporal	24 12 1943	Killed in Action
KIDD	J. R.	Private	18 04 1941	Died of Wounds
KNEEBONE	E. L.	Trooper	18 12 1943	Died of Wounds, POW
LANE	C. G. P.	Trooper	03 08 1944	Killed in Action
LANG	I.	Sergeant	30 11 1941	Died of Wounds
LAWSON	S.	Corporal	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
LECKIE	G.	Private	01 12 1941	Killed in Action
LEITCH	T.	Trooper	16 11 1944	Killed or died on active service
LESTER	F. E.	Private	11 07 1942	Died of Wounds
LIVINGSTONE	J.	Lance Corporal	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
LOVELOCK	N. J.	Corporal	25 03 1944	Killed in Action
LOW	G. H.	Private	01 12 1941	Killed in Action
LOW	N. D.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
LOWE	O.	Private	19 09 1940	Killed or died on active service
LYNCH	A. M.	Private	24 05 1941	Killed in Action
MACKIE	E.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
MACKIE	L. M.	Corporal	24 05 1941	Died of Wounds
MAGINNESS	E. D.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
MALLOCH	F. G.	Corporal	22 05 1941	Died of Wounds
MANN	R. C.	Trooper	23 09 1944	Killed in Action
MANSELL	J. C.	Lance Corporal	06 11 1943	Killed or died on active service
MARK	B.	Sergeant	07 07 1941	Killed or died as a POW
MARKHAM	T. F.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
MARTIN	W.	Private	21 05 1941	Killed in Action

MASSIE	W. E. J.	Private	01 12 1941	Killed in Action
MATHESON	M. G.	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
MATHIAS	F. A.	Trooper	03 08 1944	Killed in Action
McARTHUR	A. B.	Private	29 08 1944	Killed or died as a POW
McBAIN	I. D.	Sergeant	09 12 1941	Killed or died as a POW
McBRIDE	D. D.	Private	22 05 1941	Died of Wounds
McCALLUM	A. R.	Corporal	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
McCARTEN	T. E. J.	Private	10 12 1941	Died of Wounds
McCARTHY	L. J.	Trooper	24 04 1945	Killed in Action
McCAULEY	E. F.	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
McCRYSTAL	L. C.	Private	29 05 1941	Killed in Action
McDONAGH	C. W.	Private	24 05 1941	Died of Wounds
McDONALD	R.	Private	08 06 1941	Died of Wounds
McDOWELL	R. A. R.	Private	24 11 1941	Killed in Action
McEWAN	H.	Private	02 06 1941	Killed in Action
McEWEN	C. S.	Private	18 05 1941	Killed in Action
McGRATH	P. MacD.	Private	06 12 1941	Died of Wounds
McKAY	I. M.	Private	30 11 1941	Died of Wounds
McKERCHAR	F. J.	Lieutenant	17 12 1943	Killed in Action
McKERCHAR	W. R.	Private	02 06 1941	Killed in Action
McLAREN	F. B.	2nd Lieutenant	.	Killed in Action
McLAREN	R. B.	Private	12 07 1942	Died of Wounds
MERCER	L. J. D.	Trooper	15 12 1943	Killed in Action
MIDDLETON	T. H.	Trooper	19 03 1944	Killed in Action
MILLER	J. S.	Private	[Date unknown]	Killed or died as a POW
MILLS	G.	2nd Lieutenant	11 12 1941	Died of Wounds
MITCHELL	R. W.	Private	24 05 1941	Died of Wounds
MOLONEY	D. A. R.	Lieutenant	15 07 1942	Died of Wounds
MONOPOLI	M.	Private	16 04 1945	Killed or died as a POW
MONTEATH	A. P.	Private	27 06 1942	Killed in Action
MOORE	W. T.	Private	11 07 1942	Died of Wounds
MORGAN	J.	Private	23 05 1941	Killed in Action
MORGAN	J. M. de B.	Private	11 06 1941	Died of Wounds
MORGAN	R. C.	Trooper	18 12 1944	Died of Wounds
MORRIS	A. F.	Sergeant	15 03 1944	Killed in Action
MORRISON	F. W.	Private	26 11 1941	Killed in Action
MORRISON	W. D.	Private	07 12 1941	Died of Wounds
MUIRHEAD	W.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
MURRAY	D. E.	Lieutenant	16 12 1943	Killed in Action
MURRAY	D. M.	Private	26 05 1941	Died of Wounds
MUSSON	S. A.	Sergeant	25 05 1941	Died of Wounds
NEWTON	G. H. I.	Trooper	24 12 1943	Killed in Action
NICHOLLS	A. G.	Trooper	28 07 1944	Killed in Action

NISBETT	G. O.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
NOLAN	D. R.	Private	09 07 1942	Killed or died as a POW
NORDBYE	C. T.	Corporal	26 09 1944	Killed in Action
O'BRIEN	B.	Private	26 06 1942	Killed in Action
O'BRIEN	J. V.	Private	27 06 1942	Killed in Action
O'BRIEN	T. E.	Private	25 05 1941	Killed in Action
O'CALLAGHAN	M. G.	Lieutenant	25 05 1941	Killed in Action
O'LOUGHLIN	J. H.	Lance Corporal	02 07 1942	Died of Wounds
O'MALLEY	J. C.	Private	25 11 1941	Killed in Action
O'RORKE	F.	Lieutenant	28 04 1941	Killed in Action
ORLOWSKI	W. J.	Private	26 09 1940	Killed or died on active service
PARK	J. E.	Trooper	31 05	Killed in Action
PARK	R. E.	Private	24 09 1944	Killed or died as a POW
PARKER	C. L.	Private	24 11 1941	Killed in Action
PARSONS	R. D.	Private	13 12 1941	Killed in Action
PATERSON	D. B. G.	Private	05 07 1942	Killed in Action
PATTERSON	P. C.	Private	25 05 1941	Died of Wounds
PERROTT	N. M.	Corporal	02 06 1941	Killed in Action
PETRIE	A.	Trooper	09 02 1944	Killed in Action
PHILLIPS	J. M.	2nd Lieutenant	30 09 1944	Killed in Action
PHIPPS	E. W.	Trooper	14 09 1945	Killed or died on active service
PIERCE	R. C.	Trooper	02 08 1944	Killed in Action
PILBROW	D. T. R.	Trooper	16 12 1943	Killed in Action
POPE	D. R.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
POTTS	J. O.	Private	17 08 1942	Killed or died as a POW
PRATT	K. L.	Corporal	08 09 1944	Killed or died as a POW
PRENDERGAST	R.	Private	25 05 1941	Killed in Action
PRETTEJOHNS	E. W.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
PRINGLE	F. E.	Trooper	11 04 1945	Killed in Action
PRINGLE	S. D.	Trooper	10 04 1945	Killed in Action
RAEBURN	E. C.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
RANKIN	R.	Private	02 06 1941	Died of Wounds
RAXWORTHY	H. J.	Private	09 07 1942	Killed in Action
REID	N. H.	Private	17 08 1942	Killed or died as a POW
REID	S. C.	Private	02 06 1941	Killed in Action
RENALL	H. L.	2nd Lieutenant	19 03 1944	Died of Wounds
RICE	M. C. MBE	Captain	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
RHODES	V. J.	Trooper	18 12 1943	Died of Wounds
ROBERTS	D. G.	Private	18 04 1941	Killed in Action
ROBERTS	F. J.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
ROBERTSON	A. J.	Private	26 11 1942	Killed or died as a POW
ROBERTSON	E. C.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
ROBERTSON	J. E.	Private	15 07 1942	Died of Wounds

ROBINSON	H. S.	Trooper	30 03 1944	Died of Wounds
ROBINSON	J. E.	Private	16 04 1945	Killed or died as a POW
RODERIQUE	I. B.	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
ROLLO	D. R.	Private	02 06 1941	Died of Wounds
ROSS	A. L.	Private	07 06 1942	Killed or died as a POW
ROSS	A. McC.	Private	25 05 1941	Killed in Action
ROSS	K. B.	Corporal	03 12 1941	Died of Wounds
RUTHERFORD	G. H.	Private	03 07 1942	Killed in Action
RYAN	S. J. P.	Private	16 12 1941	Died of Wounds
SAVAGE	T. M.	Lance Corporal	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
SCHERP	H.	Private	30 11 1941	Died of Wounds
SCOLTOCK	H. J.	Lieutenant	22 05 1941	Died of Wounds
SCOTT	F. T.	Sergeant	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
SCOTT	P. G.	Lance Corporal	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
SHAND	E. A.	Lieutenant	15 07 1942	Died of Wounds
SHAW	D.	Private	02 06 1941	Killed in Action
SHERLOCK	A. R.	Corporal	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
SHIELDS	J.	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
SKINNER	K. A.	Corporal	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
SIDDELLS	L. F.	Private	12 07 1942	Died of Wounds
SILKE	M.	L. Sergeant	18 09 1942	Killed or died as a POW
SIM	F. S.	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
SIM	G. H.	Private	02 06 1941	Died of Wounds
SIMMONDS	L. V.	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
SINCLAIR	W. R.	Trooper	16 12 1943	Died of Wounds
SKILTON	J. J.	Lance Corporal	23 05 1941	Died of Wounds
SLOAN	F. B.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
SMALE	V. E.	Trooper	15 12 1944	Killed in Action
SMITH	I. D.	Lieutenant	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
SMITH	N. B.	L. Sergeant	25 05 1941	Died of Wounds
SOPER	A. V.	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
SORICH	G.	Lance Corporal	19 03 1944	Killed in Action
SOUTHON	R.	Private	07 07 1941	Killed or died on active service
STEVENS	L. C.	Trooper	11 04 1945	Killed in Action
STOKES	E. G.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
SUTHERLAND	E.	Corporal	14 07 1942	Killed in Action
SUTHERLAND	F.	Lance Corporal	16 06 1943	Killed or died as a POW
SUTHERLAND	F. J.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
SWAIN	E. W.	Private	27 04 1941	Killed in Action
TALBOT	G. L.	Corporal	15 12 1943	Killed in Action
TAYLOR	L. G.	Trooper	13 04 1945	Killed in Action
TAYLOR	S. G.	Private	15 07 1942	Died of Wounds
THOMPSON	J.	Private	27 04 1941	Killed in Action

THOMPSON	J. H.	Sergeant	02 11 1943	Killed or died on active service
THOMPSON	J. M.	Lance Corporal	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
THOMSON	C. I. A.	Private	27 04 1941	Killed in Action
THOMSON	L. J.	Lieutenant	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
TODD	T. A.	Private	18 04 1941	Killed in Action
TOLLISON	R. J.	Trooper	16 03 1944	Killed in Action
TOMLINSON	A. W.	Private	19 05 1941	Died of Wounds
UNDERHAY	S. W.	Private	25 05 1941	Killed in Action
URES	O. W.	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
VAUGHAN	J. U.	Lance Corporal	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
WALFORD	R. F.	Lieutenant	16 12 1943	Killed in Action
WALKER	B. E. J.	Private	22 05 1941	Died of Wounds
WALLACE	C. L.	Private	01 12 1941	Killed in Action
WALLIS	J. H.	Sergeant	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
WALSH	J. P.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
WALTON	I. M.	Lieutenant	17 12 1943	Died of Wounds, POW
WARD	E. L.	Private	18 04 1941	Killed in Action
WARD	J. C.	Trooper	29 03 1944	Killed in Action
WARD	W. B.	Corporal	28 06 1942	Killed in Action
WATSON	R. W.	Private	25 05 1941	Killed in Action
WATSON	W. F.	Sergeant	30 03 1944	Killed in Action
WELLS	A. E.	Private	27 04 1941	Killed in Action
WELLS	D. R.	Private	17 08 1942	Killed or died as a POW
WESTON	W.	Private	15 07 1942	Killed in Action
WHEELER	G. W.	lance Corporal	27 04 1941	Killed in Action
WHITE	A.	Private	15 07 1942	Died of Wounds
WHITE	S.	Signalman [Divisional Signals, attached]	16 09 1944	Killed in Action
WHITTEKER	D. N.	Private	26 05 1941	Died of Wounds
WILHELM	V. H.	Lance Corporal	11 04 1945	Killed in Action
WILKINS	J. L.	Private	13 01 1942	Killed or died as a POW
WILLIAMS	G. D.	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
WILSON	C. MC [Gk]	Major	21 05 1941	Killed in Action
WILSON	J. C.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
WILSON	M. J.	Sergeant	27 11 1941	Died of Wounds
WILSON	S. S. F.	Lance Corporal	26 11 1941	Killed in Action
WINTER	C. L.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action
WINTER	G. D.	Private	16 07 1942	Died of Wounds
WINTERS	T. C. H.	Private	26 06	Killed in Action
WRIGHT	W. N.	Sergeant	22 04 1945	Killed in Action
WOOD	H. V. G.	Private	22 05 1941	Died of Wounds
WOODROW	W. J.	Private	27 11 1941	Killed in Action
YERRINGTON	W. H.	Private	22 05 1941	Killed in Action

ONCE AGAIN CIVVIES LIFE

A LETTER FROM RON SHAW'S FATHER TO OUR SOLDIER AFTER THE END OF THE WAR

10. August. 1946

Dear Bill,

You will get a surprised to get these few lines, but the reason is, Jack Shaw was at my place last night and said he had seen you in Auckland, and that you were anxious to get Ron's address, so I told him I would drop you a note and let you know. How are you getting on anyway, it seems ages since I saw you, I hope you are in the pink and that you have got settled down to Civvy life and doing well. We have had Mum very sick with the flu, followed on with bronchitis and pleurisy, but I am pleased to say she has got over it and is picking up well, and Olive and I are both O.K. We had a letter from Ron today and he seems to be doing alright, he is trapping rabbits and opossums and has been doing very well. He has bought himself a Model A. Ford and he goes up to the Sutherlands for the weekends, as he is batching while he is rabbiting. Andy and his Folk are all very well, and I think theirs is Ron's second home, as they seem to be a fine family and have certainly been very kind to the "Old Horse". Well did you get down to see the Englishmen League Team in action. They seem to be a good team, but I think they were disappointed at losing the Test Match. They were given a great reception and spread at the Maori Pa at Ngaruawahia, and have been talking about it ever since, as they said they had never seen so much food before. There was roast-ducks, turkeys and geese. Trifles, jellies, fruit salad etc., and they certainly did full justice to it by all accounts. Well Bill, I don't seem to have much more to tell you, so will call it a day, hoping this finds you and all your folks in the best of health as it leaves us at present, so will say cheerio from,

Yours Sincerely, J. Shaw Snr: 261 Huntly South

PS Ron's Address: R. J. Shaw. C/o H. Drummond Five Rivers Southland



ABOVE: BACK HOME WITH FRIENDS IN DARGAVILLE

LEFT TO RIGHT: MOLLY SLOANE, TREVOR DANK'S, JANE LOWE, JIM CLUNE, AND OUR SOLDIER IN FRONT



28. Former members of 20 Battalion and Armoured Regiment return to Burnham camp for a laying-up ceremony of the unit's flag.

SOME OF OUR SOLDIER'S COMRADES FROM HIS HOME TOWN OF KAIHU

Brothers Missing

Two soldier brothers of Dargaville,
who were reported missing as from
December 26, 1941.



L/Cpl. W. J. Foy



Pte. H. R. Foy

Prince of Wales Cup

This team was selected from Maoris all over the North and set out in an endeavour to wrest the coveted Prince of Wales Cup from the East Coast (Gisborne) Maori team. Mr. L. Parore, who managed the Northern team, said Panapa was one of the stars that day,



This photograph of Pte. "Mick" Panapa was taken in Cairo after his return from Crete.

playing like an All Black. The Press also referred to the remarkable play of the visitors, who threw the ball about in splendid fashion. The Coast team won narrowly and the spectators loudly applauded Panapa for his wonderful display of half-back play.

A back of the fast and nippy type, Panapa played at half-back in most of his big games, but was equally at home at five-eighths. In was in the former position that he filled a berth in the North Auckland side against the Springboks at Whangarei in 1937,

Rugby Officials' Tribute

"Rugby football has suffered a sad loss. I knew 'Mick' very well and he always played the 'game.' He turned on bright, nippy football under any conditions. He was unorthodox to a degree, with the capacity to turn the spectacular to advantage, and was a definite crowd puller. He was a player you went specially to see, for he was very clever on attack and would stop a train on defence."—Mr. R. G. Murdoch, chairman of the Management Committee of the Northern Wairoa Rugby Union.

"On the football field and off it 'Mick' was most modest, and in his bearing always gentlemanly. He was a credit to his club, his home town, and to his country. He died fighting."—Mr. P. V. Bourke, secretary of the Northern Wairoa Rugby Union.

"He never tried to 'beat me' and never once did he question any of my decisions. I refereed a large number of the games in which 'Mick' played, and although he tackled hard, his play was always clean. He was a tricky player and a fine footballer."—Mr. L. F. Houghton, prominent North Auckland Rugby referee.

Died For His Country

"Greater love hath no man than this that he will lay down his life for his friends—both Pakeha and Maori."

—Mr. L. W. Parore, prominent selector of North Auckland Maori teams, speaking on behalf of the Ngati-Whatua tribe (Maunganui to Tamaki).

"Moe mai i runga o Ripia i to moengaroa! (Sleep therein in the soil of Libya an everlasting sleep).—Sorrowing members of the Ngati-Whatua tribe.



Many of Pte. Panapa's old football mates of the Kaihu Club are photographed with him in this picture taken in Cairo recently. From left to right: Standing: Tai Nathan (wounded in Libya) Wai Nathan, Pua Watene, W. Howearth (invalided home). Front row: —, M. Panapa (killed) in action), —.



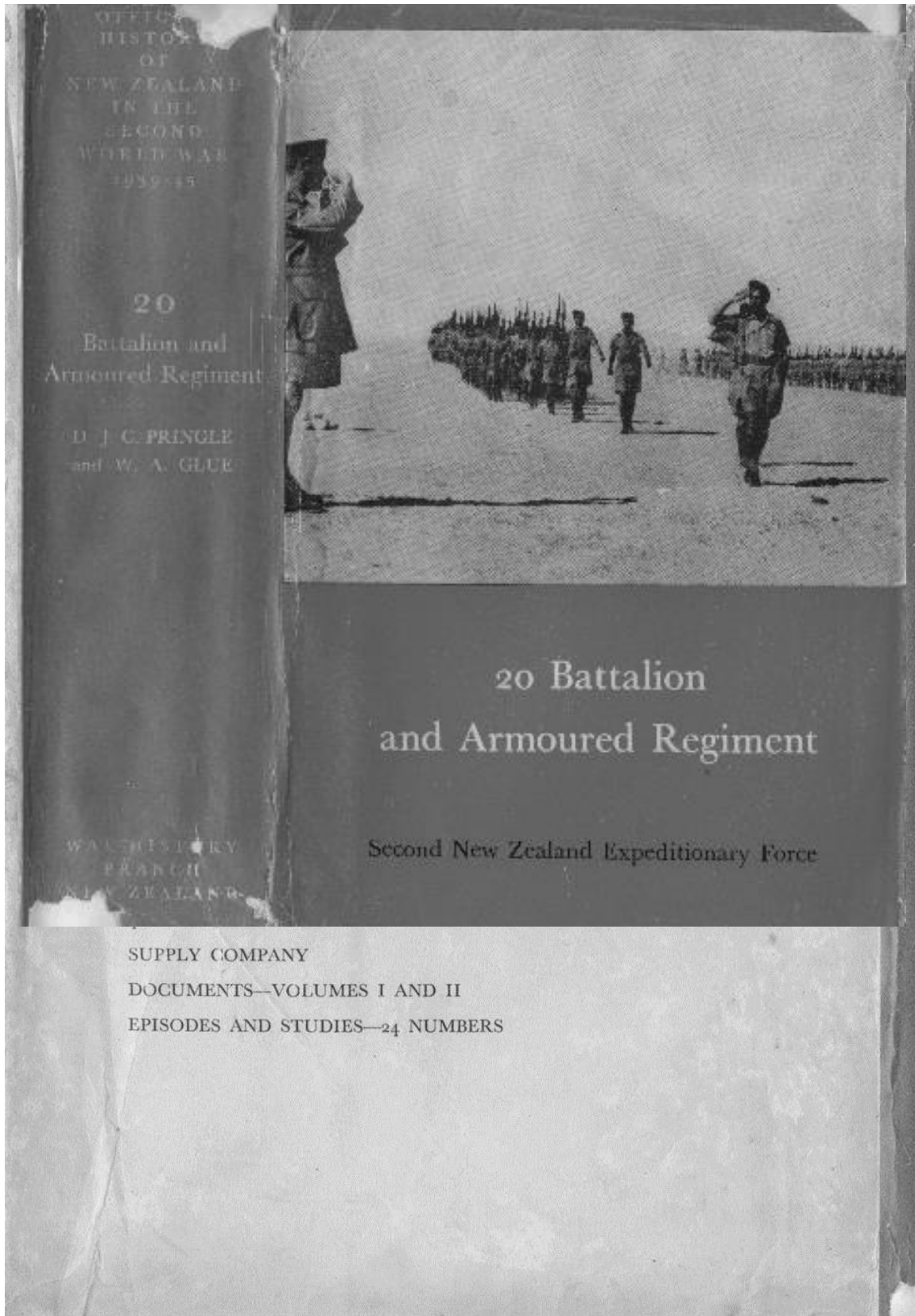
TIOPIRA PANIORA

A keen supporter of the Kaihu Football Club, who has been wounded in Libya.



IEHU TE RORE

Played for Kaihu on a number of occasions, and is now serving overseas.



OFFICE
HISTORY
OF
NEW ZEALAND
IN THE
SECOND
WORLD WAR
1939-45

20
Battalion and
Armoured Regiment

D. J. C. PRINGLE
and W. A. GLUE

WAR HISTORY
BRANCH
NEW ZEALAND

20 Battalion
and Armoured Regiment

Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force

SUPPLY COMPANY
DOCUMENTS—VOLUMES I AND II
EPISODES AND STUDIES—24 NUMBERS

MINISTRY FOR CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Megan Hutching
Ministry for Culture and Heritage
P. O. Box 5364
Wellington.

Dear Megan,

Please find enclosed the documentation of my Fathers letters that he wrote to his family during the Second World War and history of his Battalion, **"The Twentieth"**. I have yet to add photos and maps and update with more information that I have. However I am sure by reading what I have already written you will get an idea of what one of our New Zealand soldiers endured.

Unfortunately my Dad is not with us to help with your research but I am sure he would be very pleased indeed to think that someone like yourself and your Ministry are putting together a book on the "Battle for Crete".

The Twentieth Battalion before becoming an Armoured Battalion was almost completely wiped out three times, with the Battle for Crete being one of those times. They arrived on the Island with very few stores, armoury and clothing, but through sheer guts and determination they almost staved off a colossal air and paratroops assault by the Germans.

My Dad always had some misgivings about them pulling back from Maleme aerodrome. He felt that if they had been allowed to continue with their assault they would have taken back the airfield and consequently it may have altered the outcome of the battle.

I think he personally felt quite guilty about that for the rest of his life. Getting beaten was very demoralizing for a Kiwi soldier.

Dad was one of the best target shooters in his Battalion and being stationed on Hill 107 during the German Paratrooper assault obviously made the Paratroopers very easy targets as they floated down. When he was asked how many did he shoot, he would never say, but he did say it was just like shooting Pukeko's. (a very slow flying New Zealand swamp bird).

He never showed any malice towards the Germans and when asked what they were like he would simply say, *"if we had swapped uniforms you would not see any difference"*.

Dad, alongside his companions, made the long retreat back to Sfarkia but on the way he contracted a bad case of dysentery from drinking bad water. Because he was so weak, his very good friend Ron Shaw had to carry him off the beach to the waiting ships who in turn ferried them back to Alexandria in Egypt. When he came out of hospital in Egypt and with full battle dress on, he only weighed five and a half stone.

His simple explanation of the battle in Crete was summarized in one small sentence in a letter to his sister. *"I have seen enough of this side of the world and I wish we could hurry up and win this war so I can get away home to hell out of it"*.

Dad was later wounded in Northern Egypt with a shot through his upper thigh in the battle at Bir el Chleta but after recuperation he eventually ended up in Italy many months later driving the water delivery truck for his Battalion.

On returning home he received a rehabilitation loan and brought a small dairy farm at Maropiu north of Dargaville where he stayed for the rest of his life.

THE AFTERMATH OF WAR FOR MY DAD AND HIS FAMILY...

I believe the horrors of the war had a profound effect on the rest of his life and also on his new family of two sons and wife. My Dad had a brilliant mind, but I am sure he always felt cheated for the four and half years the war took out of his life, a period in which he could have perhaps taken on a chosen profession and reached his full potential. He should never have been a farmer.

As my brother and I grew up and succeeded in our different interests I could always sense a feeling of envy or perhaps it was regret coming from him. I am sure it was a lot more than just his nature and personality.

Growing up as a child I remember him waking us all at nights with his screams and yells and my mother used to say how he would quite often sleep on the hard floor. There would be long periods of silence when he would put his nose in a book and not talk for days on end. He used to go on drinking binges and would sing and laugh all weekend but afterwards we would again have those long periods of silence.

It did not make for good relationships and although my Mother who had also been affected by the war with the loss of a brother and fiancé, put up with it for a long time, it eventually took its toll and she moved out. She never married again.

It was not until I visited Greece, Crete and the Middle East in 1993 and started my research in 1995 did I fully understand the full implications of the effect that the War had played on our lives, even though it had been so far away.

I hope all this has been of some help to you and I look forward to reading your new book when it is finished.

Please keep in touch,

Yours Sincerely,

Roger Mold.

8 Rutherford Drive

Waikanae Beach

Kapiti

Sept. 2000.

P.S. My Dads Great Grandparents were immigrants from Germany.



HIS GRANDDAUGHTER JOHANNA THOMAS – MOLD WITH HIM AT KAIHU.

PAST MILITARY MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY

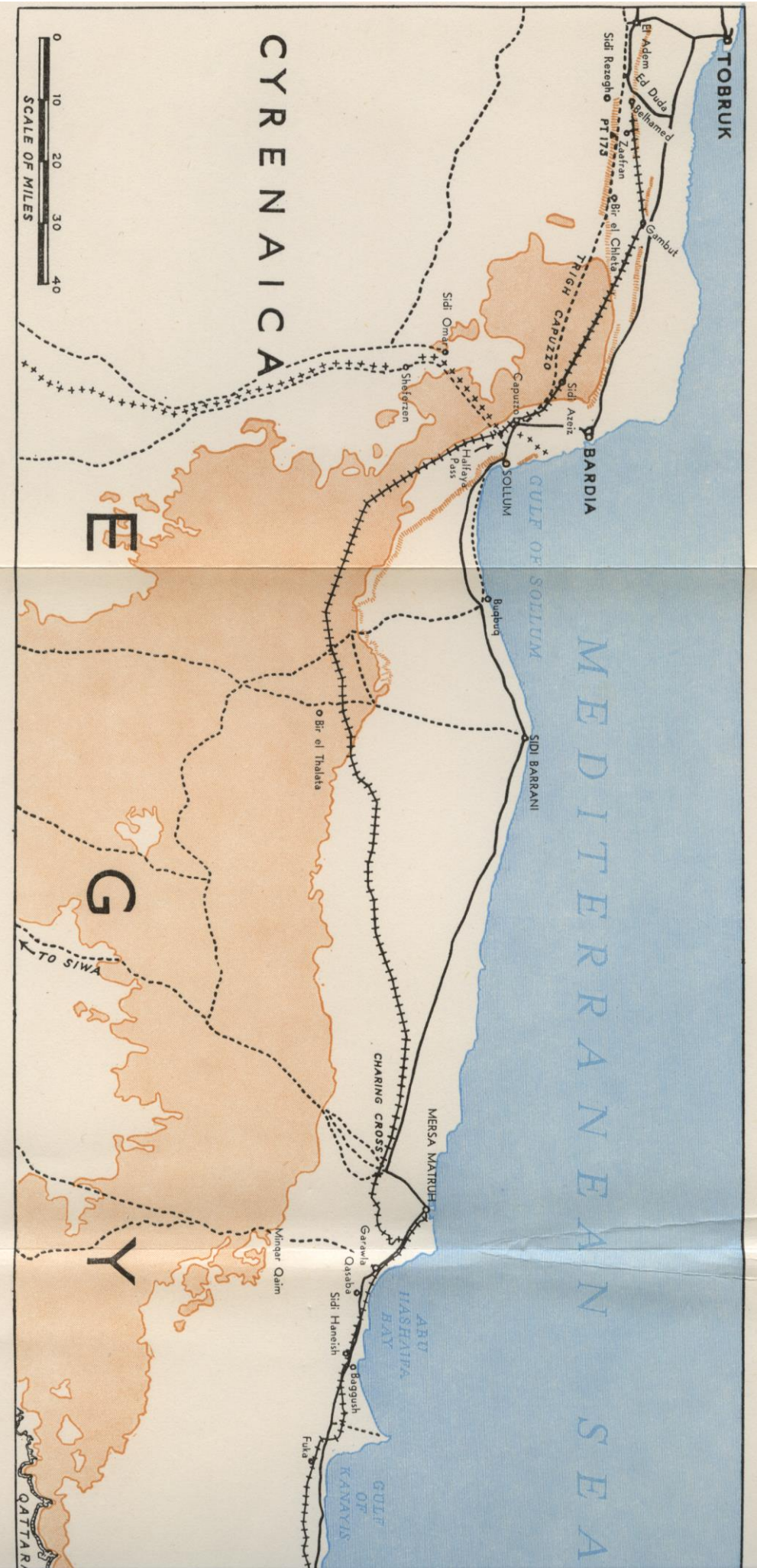
ON MY FATHER'S SIDE

FIRST NAMES	SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP	MILITARY POSITION HELD
Thomas Gascoyne 1879-1881	Mold	Great-Grandfather	Royal Artillery-stationed at Dover Castle and Rock of Gibraltar. Armed Constabulary-Waikato Service No 1589 folio 165 St Johns Barracks
Arthur.	Mold	Great-Uncle	Boar War. 7th Contingent 21 Company. Orange free state, Transvaal, 2 yrs. Service No 4087
William Edward	Mold	Great-Uncle	World War 1. Fifth Auckland Infantry Battalion. Killed in Caterpillar Valley, Somme, France. Service No 12/2393
Thomas Gascoyne Service No 6/1632	Mold	Great-Uncle	World War 1. 3rd Canterbury Infantry.
George Samuel.	Webb	Great-Uncle	World War 1. 12th R.F. Canterbury Infantry 1st Battalion. NZ Rifle E. Coy. Rifleman. Service No 11141
William Edward	Mold	Father	World War 2. Infantry then Armoured 20th Battalion B Company. Service No 14756
Harold	Mold	Uncle	World War 2. Infantry
Jack.	Mold	Uncle	World War 2. Infantry. 21 Battalion. Service No 448248
Alex	Wells	Uncle	World War 2. Armoured
Karl	Webb	Great-Uncle	World War 2. Infantry
William	Webb	2nd Cousin	World War 2. RAF.
Nugget	Thompson	2nd Cousin	World War 2.
Leu	Thompson	2nd Cousin	World War 2.
Collin	Thompson	2nd Cousin	World War 2.
Arthur Geoffrey	Mold	Great Cousin	World War 2. Field Regiment
John Hugh	Pullen	Uncle by marriage	World War 2. Had a bad ear so worked on building railway line in Egypt Ear got worse so was sent home.
Earnest	Chambers	Uncle by marriage	World War 2.

ON MY MOTHER'S SIDE

FIRST NAMES	SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP	MILITARY POSITION HELD
William Frederic	Snowden	Great Grandfather	2 nd Lieutenant-Commander. English Royal Navy
Frederic Hugh Service No 30303	Snowden	Grandfather	World War 1. Lance Corporal. Otago Infantry Regiment. F. Company 20th Reinforcements. 2nd draft sailed Athenic 30-12-1916
William Hugh Service No 63342	Snowden	Uncle	World War 2. Infantry 21st Battalion D Company. Killed and buried at El Alamein. Egypt.
Thomas	Daulton / Doulton	Great, Great Grandfather	Based in Cape town before being transferred to Auckland 16-6-1849 from Glasgow. 7th Detachment of the Imperial 27 Footman. Member Royal NZ Fencibles
Thomas Miles	Daulton	Great Uncle	Boar War. Sent home wounded with Nurse. Died later from abscess on the brain aged 21. 3-3-1903
Trooper William Charles. 11/1788	Daulton	Great Uncle	Wellington Mounted Rifles N.Z.E.F. Died of wounds in Egypt 23-12-1916. Buried Kantara War Memorial Cemetery on the Suez Canal. Plot No A.194
RFN Royal Frederick. 18630	Daulton	Great Uncle	4th Battalion 3rd N.Z. Rifle Brigade. Killed in action in France. 12-9-1918. Age 31. Native of Manutuke Gisborne N.Z. Buried in the Village of Metz-En-Couture. Communal Cemetery British Extension-France. Plot No IV.D.17.
Bill	Lord	Second Cousin	World War 2
Mary	Daulton	Second Cousin	American Forces. N.Z.

FOLLOWING ARE NZ DIVISIONAL PHOTOS WITH THE TWENTIETH FEATURING OFTEN...

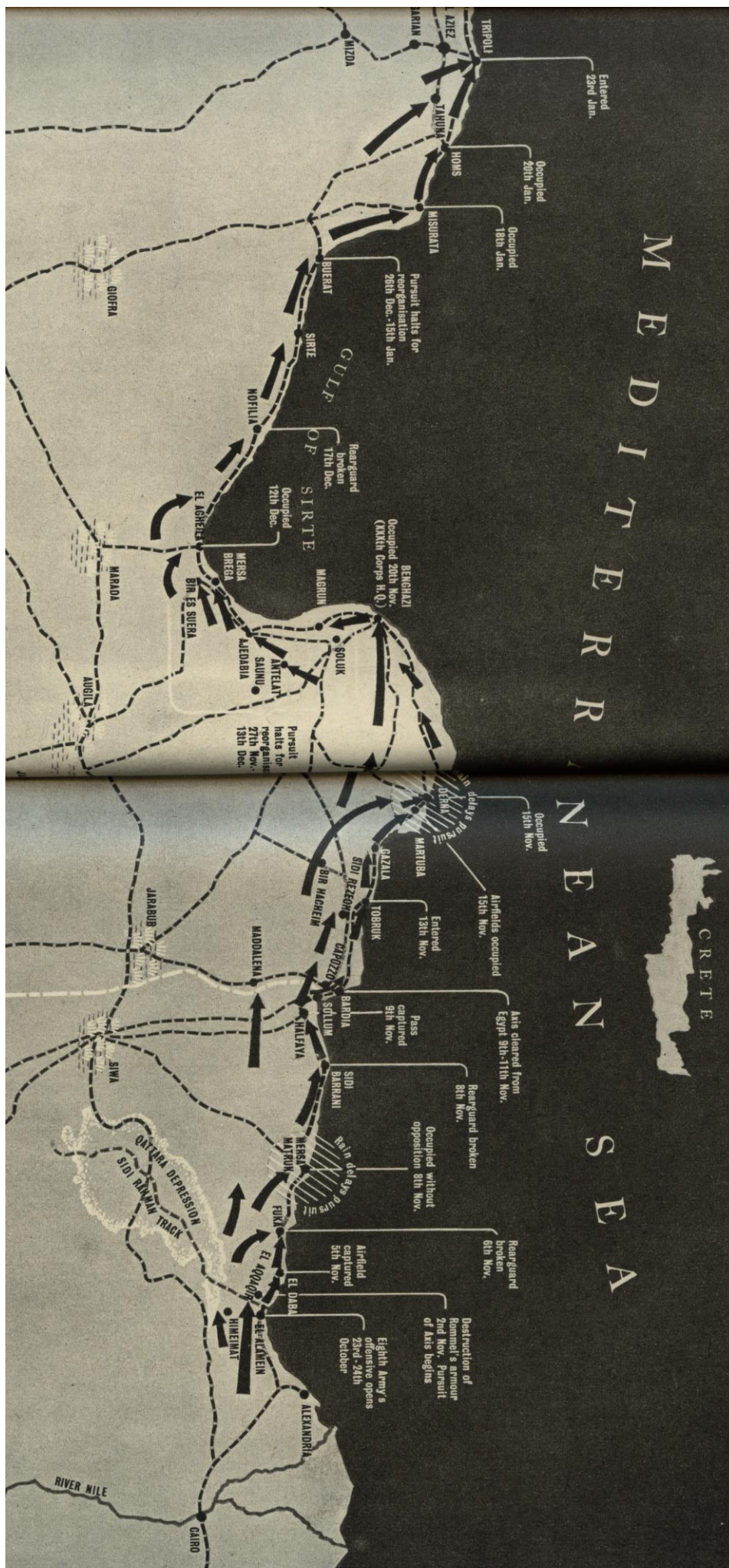


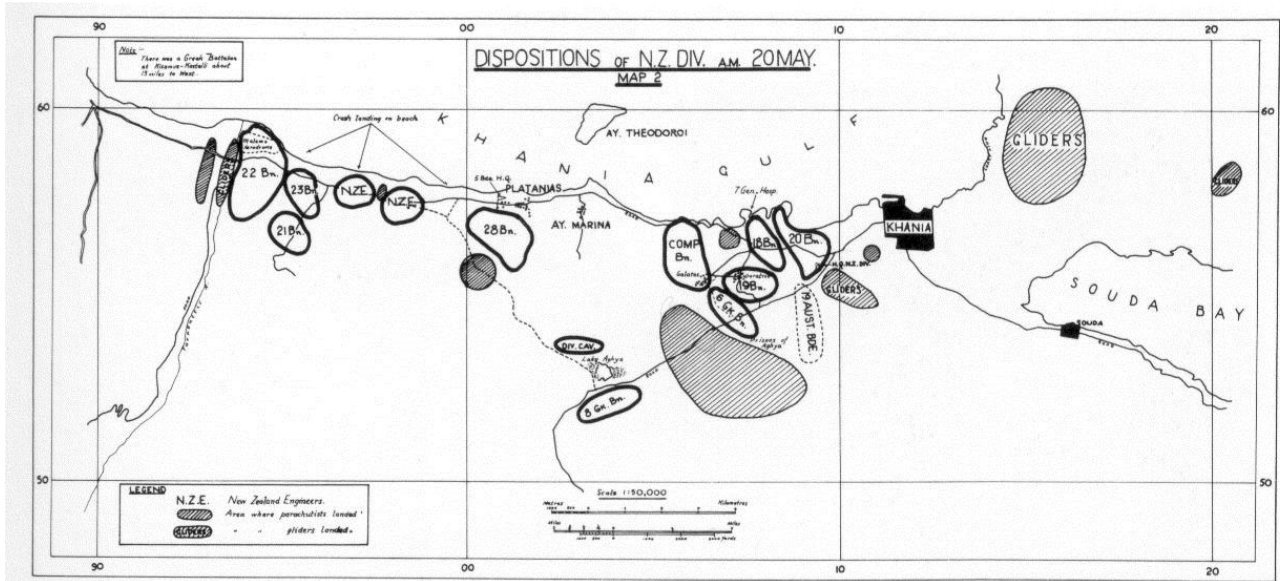


Axis transport destroyed by our bombers during their retreat from Alamein. This photo was taken near Mersa Matruh.



The pursuit. The 8th Army advancing, seen from the top of Halfaya Pass.





DISPOSITIONS OF THE NEW ZEALAND DIVISION, 20 MAY, 1941



Minqar Qaim. Not much time to dig in here. A No 3 Platoon gun in action in a hastily scooped out gun-pit.



No 11 Platoon in action at Menastir. W. P. Gibson, T. E. Doyle, and M. Homer (with binoculars), are the men in this gun team.



22 One of the many bridges built by the New Zealand Engineers, this one over the Adige River



23 New Zealand tanks roll into the crowded piazza at Monfalcone



MAORIS HURDLE WIRE ON MANŒUVRES



Centre : A DUGOUT NEAR THE SEA
Bottom : OFF DUTY UNDERGROUND

Centre : ACK ACK GUNNERS JOIN THE DIVISION
Bottom : BATHING PARADE





20 Regiment officers at Maadi, March 1945
Back row: Walter Dougall, Jack Austad, Nigel Overton, Guy Baker. *Centre:* Rac FAMILTON, Allan Hadfield, Pat Barton, John Howorth. *Front row:* Alf Pedder, Barney Clapham, Merv Cross, Robin Coote.





Maori Battalion defeats Divisional Signals in the New Zealand Rugby championship final in Tripoli. L. E. Vaughan, captain of the Signals team, is in the centre

General Freyberg inspects the Regiment at Maadi, 4 March, 1942





Flat land north of the Sangro River cut up by vehicles of 2 NZ Division



THE END