

In Memory of the New Zealand Men and Women who gave their lives in the 1939-1945 War against the Nazi Regime and the Japanese Campaigns' in the Pacific Area.



The Navy

The Merchant Navy

The Army

The Air Force

The Medical Staff

And the People who Supported the Fighting Forces



Lest we forget

## *The Start of my Army Experience*

*By Harry Spencer No 21981 Divisional Cavalry Regiment.*

*I was about 18 years old when some of my friends joined the mounted rifles, not to be a brave soldier, but to be presented with a rifle, so that we could go deer stalking and pig hunting, we were all volunteers and had to go to camp once a year. To us it was a paid holiday even if some of the Officers took it too seriously, (in our opinion). Most of us were country boys and there were very few academics, so we didn't have to aspire to great heights to qualify, it helped if you could ride a horse and know how to groom it. We had to learn how to do drill and salute the odd Officer, (some seemed to love that), but mainly we had a pretty good time while in camp. One chap who was appointed Provost Sergeant, (Rusty Ball) made the mistake of putting his tent up in the middle of the mens lines, it was knocked down many times and eventually he gave up and lived at home, we couldn't go out at night with him there. Rusty was eventually given a commission when he went to the War, and became a very clever Intelligence Officer. Rusty also did many other things, and was a great entertainer. Before the War he took his dog Laddie to Australia and made a living with him in the area round Ballarat. Laddie was the first Army Mascot and was given the Rank of Lieutenant, he led the parades dressed in his Officers uniform. Rusty was only a Sergeant and when he went home to Blenheim on final leave he had a third class pass and Laddie had a first class pass, i still have a copy of them that Rusty sent me after the War. Another thing that Rusty did was pay for a little Greek girl (whose Parents were killed in an air raid) to be educated and looked after until he was able to get her home. Rusty never married so couldn't adopt her, but eventually managed to get her home, and they lived in Australia where she married an Ossie and they had a Daughter who won a Sydney Beauty Contest. Just before he died i happened to be in Australia and didn't have time to go and see him, but was able to tell him over the 'phone that the chaps who lowered his tent was Joss Rutland and me and his remark was Joss yes but you i dont believe i would have killed you both, i am glad i told him.*

*Another thing that happened in my Tatorial days was when we were parading through Blenheim, i had a lovely borrowed Arab stallion horse, and was given the privilege of carrying the lance and Guidion in front of the Parade, and all was well until an aeroplane attacked us and the troops fired blanks at it and my horse took off, i heaved the lance and Guidion into a hedge and proceeded to try and control my steel mouthed mount, i was never given that honor again.*

*We had a good permanent Sergeant Major and when we had rifle practice he had a habit of going for a walk and leaving the ammunition box with most of the cartridges still in it, that was where we got most of our ammo for pig hunting. As Jock said we were better shots than the chaps that practiced on the range.*

*Before the War i worked on the South Island main trunk railway, and the day War was declared sixteen of us went to Blenheim and enlisted, and had to have a medical examination, i was the only one that failed and was given a V badge to say i had volunteered, but that was not good enough for me. I had to go and catch up with my friends/*

## MY WARTIME EXPERIENCE

*After Christmas 1939 the second echelon went into camp and as i had been in the mounted rifles was posted to the Divisional Cavalry was sent to Papakura Military Camp. I was used to Army bull so found training not too bad. What a great bunch of men i encountered. Our unit was C Squadron. Headquarters, A and B, were already in Egypt. I was posted to No.1 Troop and was fortunate to be with one of the best Officers in the army, Lt Ian Bonifant, when the bren guu carriers arrived I was given a job driving one, it suited me fine, I was Bonnie's driver and it started a great friendship. After we had been in camp a short time a signals sergeant came up from Trentham and called for volunteers for radio training, he didn't get many so picked the rest of his team ,and i was one. We were taken taken to Trentham by train and spent ten days on that course. I had a friend who worked in the Post Office, Jim Evans, who came from Wellington, he was good on morse code and was good at the job, I am afraid the job didn't appeal to me very much, but i persevered with it. While we were inTrentham Jim took me to his home and I met his mother and Sister and we became friends.Jim was boarded out of the army and didn't go overseas with us and we could have done with his knowledge.My uncle Syd owned a dairy farm at Ohinewai, not far from Papakura, and one . day he arrived at the camp in his new Buick 8 Special, to see if he could take me home on leave. Our Major was a bit of a snob, and when he saw that car and Uncle dressed in a suit ,he couldn't give me a leave pass quick enough, I had some very enjoyable stays at the farm. Ossie Cheeseman was a musician of some note and played at the camp on occasions, Allan Risk, my best army mate, and I were always welcome at at his parent's place in Auckland,that was good entertainment. Three of us were always welcome at the Auckland Club, Bert Murdock,Jeoff King and myself, Berts girlfriend was secretary,and very well respected. Shortly after our return from Trentham we entrained again for Wellington, on final leave, some of us returned to Marlborough and Mrs Waters lent me Stan's pickup truck, a friend and i were able to go pig hunting and deer stalking, with some success,i also was able to arrange the sale of Dad's farm for him, as his health was not the best, i didn't see Dad again, he died whle i was in the desert .They shifted to Blenheim, after I sailed in 1941. Back to camp and then on to the good ship Aquitania, a 45000 ton liner,the biggest ship most of us had ever seen. Our convoy sailed on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1940, a great line up of ships, the Empresses of Britain, Canada, Japan, the Aquatania, joined by the Andies which left from Lyttleton. We were escorted by*

*HMS Ramillies and three days later met up with the Queen Mary and the Mauritania who were carrying Australian troops, and headed For Freemantle(Western Australia), our ship was too big to enter the harbour and we had to anchor in the stream, the next day a tanker Captain kindly ferried us ashore where we met the locals who looked after us very well. There were a few sore heads aboard when we sailed, but things soon settled down and we did our usual chores. I was always interested in mechanics and a ships Officer took me down to see the steering compartment, while we were down there the steering jammed and two propellers lifted out of the water, an earthquake had nothing on what it was like down there, the Officer bolted and left me on my own, and I soon did a hasty evacuation,I didn't venture down there again. They told me that if the Mauritania hadn't sped up she would have been cut in half. We were now in the Indian ocean, and one day we seemed to be sailing in the wrong direction,as it happened we were,the war news was not good and we were heading for England via the Cape of Good Hope, on arrival at the Naval Base at Simonstown our ship was too big to tie up to a wharf, and we only had one day ashore, at least some of the chaps had leave,Once again I was one of the unlucky ones, a few of us had to stay on duty, my task was to guard the big gun which was set in the stern of the ship. However in some ways I was lucky as a British Naval Officer came aboard to inspect the gun, he and I had quite an interesting conversation, and he told me a lot about South Africa that stood me in good stead, later in life. Some of the troops played up a bit while they were ashore, and we were not allowed to land but a friendly boat owner took us for a cruise and we had full use of the ships lounge and bar ,all for nothing very pleasant After four days we again set sail and once again I was given an unusual job, another chap and myself were detailed to guard a soldier who had contracted some disease while ashore,and it was extremely contagious. Our job was to keep anyone from touching him, we had a table between him and us, and if his friends brought him any fruit, they gave it to one of us and we put it on the table where he could get it without anyone touching him, he died and was buried at sea, my first experience of anything lik that. Our next stop was Freetown, on the Gold Coast of Africa, there seemed to be hundreds of ships anchored there and was it hot. As it left Freetown the convoy was joined by the aircraft-carrier Hermes, and sometime later by H.M.S. Hood and many other cruisers. All of a sudden the war seemed closer, we sailed through flotsam that had been caused by submarine activity and a burning tanker was no help to our nerves ,anyone who said that he didn't have a touch of fear was a liar, but we had confidence in our escorts. With relief on*

*the 17<sup>th</sup> of June, our convoy arrived at Greenock (Scotland) the day France capitulated. We entrained again and our first stop was Edinborough, for a snack, then York where we had another meal. In the early hours of the next morning we arrived at Ashvale station. Had a bit of a wait, and then marched to Mytchett Woods, where we were camped in bell tents, among pine trees, that housed squirrels and wood pigeons, very homely, the next night they dropped a stick of bombs through the camp, the only damage was a hole in the top of the cooks tent. The next day we were taken for a route march to get us among the population, and we were marching up a street when a lady asked my mate Allan Risk where he came from and his answer was that the stork brought him, he was a bit of a wag. A few days later some worn out tanks and Bren-carriers arrived and we had a visit from the King, Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden. Tommy Bradford asked the Major how he would answer the King if he spoke to him, the Major's reply was, you would be the last the King would speak to. We were all lined up in a paddock where the tanks were and the V.I.P's arrived, When the King stepped out of the car, Tommy was right there and he was about the same size as the King, so His Majesty went over and shook hands with Tom, and the conversation turned to horses, they were both knowledgeable on that subject, and the King ran out of time and just walked round the rest of us and didn't shake hands with any of us. After the war Tom used to come and see me about once a year, and always dined out on that story. Trucks and motor-bikes arrived and again volunteers were called for, I learned not to volunteer for anything in the army, and while the troops were heading for a manoeuvre, the Major and two or three of us watched the trucks and motor-bikes take off, one bike rider bumped into a picket fence and crashed. The bike was not damaged and the Major told me to take over and catch the convoy, I asked him where they had gone and he didn't know, and said catch them up. I took off and found a truck that had broken down, Captain Squeak as we called him sat on the parcel carrier of my bike and said catch the convoy, I remember going through Fleet at about seventy miles per hour and catching the lead vehicle, and stopping the convoy, Squeak got off and said he would never ride with me ever again, and he didn't. The army in their wisdom sent an Officer and a couple of Sergeants from the British Royal tank corps, to instruct us on the use of our vehicles. The Officer, Major Woods, was posted to our troop and he was a fine character, but soon found out that most of us had more experience with machinery than they did, but we enjoyed P.J. as we christened him. He was with us until we left England. About two years later, while I was patrolling in a Bren-carrier in North Africa, he spotted me and came over and had a yarn, he reckoned his stay*

*with us was the most fun he had in his army career, we enjoyed his company too. At this time I had gone back as 'Bonnys' driver, as I said I was silly enough without persevering with the dit daa racket, so he said I was back as his driver, that suited me fine. As the chances of an invasion became more likely, we were shifted to the Maidstone area, and the weather was not very good, we were camped with our vehicles, in a pine forest where quite a few chaps got the flu. We had a good bivvy fitted on to the side of our tank, (something P.J. had taught us), Allan and I ran a temporary hospital for the minor flu cases, we both managed to get it ourselves, and were sent to a hospital that was set up in Lord Rothmeres Manor House, there were twelve of us in the main bedroom and we had plenty of room, and an Irish Doctor, we were there for a week and granted a weeks sick leave. We were well treated, even if the doctor did threaten to wipe the floor with us. Allan and I were owing three days leave and kidded the Major to let us have the ten days altogether, he agreed and we took off for Durham where I had people I knew, while we were on Euston station, a man alighted from a train and invited us to have a drink with him, and he asked us if we knew a chap in New Zealand named Bill Masefield, as it happened I knew Bill well, I was privileged to be in the Masefield's company quite a lot, he was New Zealand's, best rifle shot. and this chaps name was Milne, he captained the Bisley rifle team out to N.Z. in 1937. as he said it was amazing meeting someone that knew Bill as well as I did.*

*Allan and myself then boarded a train for York where we had to change trains to Durham, as it happened we managed to get mixed up with some hard case British soldiers, and when we arrived at York we must have dozed off, because the next time we arrived at a station it was Edenborough. We thought we had better have a look at their town so booked into the local Y.M.C.A. and were surprised at the reception that was given us. We wore our N.Z. hats and were easily recognized and the hospitality that was bestowed on us was indescribable. The locals were almost fighting for the privilege of escorting us through the Castle. The people were aazed that we had come so far to help them in their time of need. The Scottish drink of whiskey and chasers was new to us and it was a little while before we were able to handle it, but it was a pleasant experiment, and we were good pupils.*

*At this stage we had to have an address before we could have leave, and a free rail pass. A lady (Mrs Cross) had invited me to stay with her if I had a leave, Her son used to stay at our place in N.Z. so she was keen to meet me, we headed for Inverness and found a most beautiful city, the English they spoke was what we called perfect. Once again we were lavished with kindness, not many kiwis had ventured that*

*far north. We were keen to get to Conon Bridge to see Mrs Cross, so didn't accept any invitations to stay. When we arrived at Conon Bridge we had picked up another Div Cav chap (Ron McLean) who was on his own and lonely, so he and Allan looked round the town while I visited Arden Cottage. Mrs Cross was more than pleased to meet me, and her son in law and I were dispatched to find the others. Three days later we managed to get away, Sandy the daughter, took us to the local hall and introduced us to the residents, including the president of the Scottish petroleum board, Scotty had control of all the petrol in Scotland, and a car, so we were taken round by a very hospitable member of the community. Our Prime Minister Peter Fraser, came from Conon Bridge and the Crosses knew him well. All good things have to come to an end, and our leave pass was running out, so back to camp. By this time winter was approaching and we were shifted to a village called Westwell. a delightful spot which boasted an old Norman Church, a store a blacksmith shop, and more importantly, a pub, called' The Wheel Inn, The sign was a wheel, painted Red, and after some time and many enjoyable sessions, I think it was our Major Arthur Nicoll who suggested that one spoke be painted green,(our colors). The Whitbread Brewery owners complied and every year it was repainted by an order in the Bill of Sale. I was fortunate to be able to revisit the Inn five times after the war, and there was always a very friendly welcome. Someone had an artist paint a picture of the Inn and it was collected by one of our Prime Ministers,(Jack Marshall) and he told me that it was one of the best functions he had attended. Incidentally the painting now resides at the Waiouru War Museum. Numbers one and two troops were detailed to keep a twenty four hour guard on the vehicles, and we lived in an old house not far from the Inn , very convenient, I will say that we had two Sergeants Bill Sutherland and Sandy Gibson, who mothered us very well. They ran a good ship even if they were a bit playful at times. An attack was expected at any time but we were prepared for anything that might happen ,I am sure we thought we could defeat the German Army on our own, we sure had a lot to learn. One day while we were on the coast on a maneuver, we went for a swim in the sea and a German Messersmit pilot decided to strafe us, not a nice thing to do, and we learned a good lesson, nobody was hurt , it was our first experience of anything like that. The battle of Britian was in full swing and we were treated to some terrific aerobatics, those pilots sure did a great job. About the eleventh of November we were shifted back to the Farnham area, We were stationed on a farm, called Swanthorpe Farm, it was run by a very nice lady, whose husband apparently had something to do with the British government. Our Officers and Headquarters, were stationed in the big house, and we peasants billeted in Nissen Huts, fairly comfortable, they were heated by a cunning pot belly stove that had a waste oil and water mixture*

dripping on to a hot plate, very effective. Another thing was the electric power plant, a gas engine that drove a generator, Bert Murdock, an ex power board employee, was trusted with it's running, which was only at nights, We had a social evening and a dance, one night , and Bert had to go away some where and I was given the job of looking after the confounded thing, all was well until late in the evening, and after I had consumed a few beers I went to the shed to see if everything was O K and the belt that drove the generator looked too dangerous to go near, so I turned the engine off. In the morning all the batteries were flat, and I wa never given the job of relieving Bert again. One of our chaps Kieth Tippet, bought a Baby Austin car for a few pounds, and petrol was impossible to buy but we managed to milk a little out of our vehicles, enough to get us to the local Inn on odd occasions, but one night, in the dark, we ran out of road and Tip spun the wheel a bit sharp and the thing fell over, nobody hurt, but the hood and windscreen were no more. It still went though, and when we left England Tip sold the battery to a local lad, and tossed the car in as discount. Also on the farm there was work to be done, like threshing the wheat that was in stacks and barns, so Lofty King, Keith Thompson, and Myself volunteered to help, much better than doing rifle drill on a cold frosty morning. Their system was to us pretty antiquated, they came out and had to get steam up in the traction engine each morning, because they only threshed one stack a day, we could have easily done two. Swanthorpe was a lovely place to camp in, and our final good function was Christmas dinner ,the cooks put on an excellent meal, and the Army even turned on a rum ration. That was the last function we had in England, we started to pack up for another shift, we were not told where it was, but we soon found out, we were off to Egypt. I had acquired a very bad cold, and was part of an advance party to go to Newport, on an unheated train and when we arrived I was a sick boy, and put on a stretcher and carried on to the wharf. The ship we were to board was the Dutchess of Bedford, and a N.Z. Doctor came down and said he would look after me, he had me carried on board and he was true to his word, I was unconscious for ten days and when I came to we were sailing for Capetown. Pneumonia was my problem. A few weeks later we arrived at the Cape and were given leave, I was too weak to go ashore and my friend Allan stayed with me, we walked up to a Sailors Rest Canteen and it took all afternoon to drink a bottle of beer. The next day I had to go and see the Doctor, and Bert Murdock persuaded Allan to go ashore as he had to visit the Doc and would look after me. After we had visited the Medic, Bert said we could try and have a little walk, and we went down to the wharf and a Negro sailor who was driving a Buick car asked us if we wanted a ride into town, we excepted and he took us to a hotel where we were welcomed by th patrons, and treated handsomely. Our Negro friend was



not allowed in the hotel so it was good of him to do what he did. We were the *only New Zealanders to go to that hotel as it was a bit out of the City. I was getting a bit tired and remember being taken into a lovely home where there were three lovely looking girls, but all I wanted to do was relax onto the couch, and go to sleep, and I did. We were driven home some what later and I didn't go ashore again.*

*We weighed anchor the next day, and our Convoy headed north to Durban where we took on more stores, A day or two later we were off again and eventually arrived at Port Tewfik, (Egypt). On the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 1941 the Regiment was reunited and we were able to meet up with our old mates, there was the odd party and while we were greeted with being called Cooks Tourists, it was great to be together again. The Army forgot that I had been pretty sick and I was kept busy delivering armored cars, ready for our trip to Greece, My first trip through Cairo was hair-raising, I was following the vehicle ahead when the visor fell down and all I had to look through was a little slit until I managed to get it unstuck. Cairo traffic has to be seen to be believed, but I don't think I killed anyone.*

*Ten days in Egypt and we were on our way to Greece, I travelled with the vehicles on a ship called the Anglo Canadian, that they called a liberty ship. We had travelled in more comfortable accommodation, but there was a war on. About half way across the Mediteranian we were met by dive bombing aircraft, 'Stukas', it was the first time we had been bombed at sea, and it was not very nice. However we had bren-guns on tripods, and managed to keep them from sinking us. On arrival at Piraeus, the port of Athens, we started to unload almost straight away, I was given a job down in the hold, making sure the wharfies connected the shackles correctly, they were not very reliable, and I had to keep a loaded pistol trained on them, Never thought I would meet up with anything like that. We only had one mishap, and that was when an armored car was nearly on the top of the hold and the rope broke and it fell back into the hold, onto the Orderly Room truck, which was made to look pretty sick, but the armored car was not damaged. Once ashore we put our armored vehicles on to trains, as it was a long trip that saved a lot of wear. The locals gave us a great welcome although we could not fraternize with them, we were in too much of a hurry. We managed to sample some of their drinks, and they were not used to our beer drinking Kiwis. There was koniak, zibib, and mavrodaphney, a very palatable wine, we were warned but who wanted to listen, we arrived at Katerini on the 4<sup>th</sup> April and that evening we got the news that number one and number two troops were to go forward and meet up with the British Armored Division, at Edhessa, we left next morning and I must say that I had a funny feeling in my stomach, we were on our way to meet the enemy and I still reckon that I was scared. We took off next morning and met up with Brig Charrington. Our task was to escort*

*British engineers into Yugo Slavia, to do demolition work, they had no fast vehicles, and our armored cars filled the gap. We split up and our troop went up the road toward Bitolj where there was a bridge to be destroyed, our troop leader sent Corporal King forward and Sgt Sutherlands car up another road, all was well for a while, until we were recalled to the bridge, only to find that the German army had arrived. Darcy ordered lofty to come back, but he went further forward, we managed to get the engineers truck turned round so they could retreat back to Greece. On the way back we stopped and set two wooden bridges on fire, thought we were doing a great job, the Germans watched us from surrounding hills and only fired small arm bullets at us. All our cars were hit, but we had no casualties. After we had set the second bridge on fire we took off back to Greece only to find that a patrol of Germans had cut us off at a culvert, Lofty Kings car was in the lead and he attacked, with both guns firing, our two cars helped him and the enemy retreated, they had about thirty vehicles against us, but no tanks, thank goodness. And we managed to get back to the armored brigade. Via the Veria Pass, we drove that at night, and I took over driving at about eleven o'clock. The boys lifted me out of the seat at about eight in the morning, completely exhausted. The road was full of refugees with all sort of transport, and the drop over the side was several hundred feet. Also a complete blackout, (rough.) Darcy discovered that there was only one nut still holding his wheel on, I was not in that car, but as I was troop mechanic I shifted over to see what I could do. Brig Charrington was woken up and came over and ordered us to destroy the car, the time was about three AM and we had other ideas, Bill Sutherland, and our new crew put a cover over the car, as we could show no lights, while I found some spare parts, with Bill holding a light and handing me spanners, we had a new half axle and brake drum fitted by seven o'clock. The others had left and I was now with a different crew. Pat Gratton, driver, Shorty Ward, gunner, and Bill Sutherland, commander. We travelled with a British workshops unit, as we had to get a welding job done on the steering, it was never done because we were bombed, all the way, during daylight hours. We had to destroy our faithful vehicle, once we arrived at Athens. The other troop had a very interesting time, they were cut off, and managed to get back via Algeria, after finding enough petrol in dumps that the enemy hadn't found. We didn't see them again in Greece. The four of us took our guns out of the car and boarded a train that was going to Coronth, we were bombed most of the way, but managed to make it there, we had to cross a plain and the Luftwaffer strafed us all the way. We were short of food and Shorty had spotted a dump, so he and I dumped our gas masks and went back and filled the bags with tinned sausages, we offered to take some Poms over and get more, but they wouldn't risk it, so they went hungry. We crossed the Canal that night, and next morning we managed to find a*

truck that was going to Argos, and hitched a ride. When we arrived at the Argos aerodrome, we were unfortunate enough to be in the way of German planes that shot up the Hurricanes that were parked on the tarmac, I was told later that they had the wrong fuel and couldn't get airborne. Our truck was destroyed and Shorty and Pat hid under it and Pat was killed and Shorty badly wounded. Bill and I had taken off and were not hit, a British Officer called out to me and I dragged Shorty away and he attended to Pat, Pat was dead, so I fixed Shorty's wounds with his and my field dressings, and it wasn't long before a truck came along and we put Shorty on it. Bill thought it would be wise if I took Shorty to a hospital, and he stayed and kept a contact with the unit we were traveling with, and I would go to the beach and find them. That was a horrible mistake as it turned out. When we arrived at the Hospital at Argos, things were only middling, the Doctor, and there was only one, had practically nothing, an old midwife and some girls who made beds and tore up sheets for bandages. And a boy of seventeen years of age. Jimmy Clisvious was his name, and he turned out to be a terrific help to me. The Doctor took me on as theater sister and performed three amputations, without anesthetic, we couldn't talk to one another, so he showed me what to do, and I did my best. One chap was a Jew, (Tobius Tattenborm), I remember his name because I had to read a letter to get some information, and I didn't like what I read, and intended to do something about it at a later date. That didn't eventuate, perhaps as well. The other patients, one was British and the other was a Greek. The Doctors' nerve went on him and he cleared out and locked himself in his house. It wasn't funny, there was I left with a hospital to run, without any medical knowledge, or nearly, as Billy Mc Isaac had taught me how to fix broken legs. And I had to do three, a Scotch Officer and one of his men, and a Greek. The three amputees all died, and the Greek custom was that I was to attend their funeral, to get a break I decided to do just that. And as I had acquired a motor bike, which I kept under lock and key, I went to a Greek Orthodox church service, for the first time. When I arrived there, a British Major was handy, with a truck and driver, so I kidded him to come to the service with me, a wise move, as his driver looked after my bike. We were presented with a candle each, and followed the procession around, quite an experience. The only thing we couldn't understand was that they left the Jew outside the church, but buried him. I gave the Major their pay books because I wasn't sure if I would manage to get out of Greece. Back to the hospital and found plenty to do. About midnight the girls made me up a bed on a stretcher and I had my first sleep, until round one o'clock, three journalists came in, one an (American) named White had a bit of a wound and wanted a Doctor, and wouldn't shut up, there was none so I got out of bed and took an American Journalist named (St John) down to the beach, to try and find a Doctor. He was a tall chap and rode on the back of my

*motorbike which had only a parcel-carrier, for him to sit on, we had to go through, N.Z. And Aussie guards to get to the beach, and without a password I found if you swore at them they let you through, it worked . This was at night without lights, my poor passenger wasn't really impressed, and I am sure he didn't enjoy the experience. However we found two Aussie Doctors, and one was very helpful, and promised to send me an ambulance the next day, they were too busy to come back with us, I forget what happened to our American friend, but I know he survived, because I read an article in a Readers Digest, later in life. Next day two ambulances arrived and we managed to clean the Hospital out of all the walking wounded, they hadn't been gone very long and the Germans decided to bomb us, they didn't hit the Hospital but there was a broken down ambulance handy with a gas bottle sticking out the back,they set it on fire, and when the gas bottle exploded it was worse than the bombs, blew all the windows out. We had only a few patients left and Jimmy and I decided to take them down stairs, and put them in a cellar. A Greek Orthodox Priest arrived from somewhere, and helped us. I forgot to tell you about a friend I had made, he was an English military policeman, he was on point duty in the town and used to come and tell me the news , and sometimes share a tin of baked beans that I had stored in the shed where I kept the bike, He was ordered out and was good enough to come and tell me that the Enemy would be in the town within the next half hour or so. I was with the chaps in the cellar and didn't know that the staff we had, including Jimmy, had left and I wasn't able to thank them and say goodbye. I had a talk with Shorty and he didn't want me to leave him, but the last thing I wanted to be was a prisoner of war, I felt awful about it but I decided that I would only be with Shorty about five minutes when the Huns arrived, I said goodbye to the chaps I had looked after and with a heavy heart walked up the steps from the cellar, only to see a truck with an Officer in it that had the same badges as Scotty, the chap that I had fixed his broken leg. I stopped him and when he asked me who my patient was, he said he was his best friend. He came back with me and told me to go, and that he would look after them. He said he knew where there was a Doctor handy, so I hopped on to my bike and headed for the wharf. /On arrival ,there was a warship loading troops so after destroying my faithful steed, I managed to talk my way into being let aboard. I must have looked awful as I was at the end of my tether and a sailor gave me a lovely cup of cocoa. That ship was the Calcutta, an anti aircraft destroyer, and I was aboard. We sailed shortly afterwards and it wasn't long before the aircraft attacked us, I was laying on the deck beneath one of the guns, a three point seven anti aircraft gun, where a big sailor was pushing shells up a chute to the gun, he had the misfortune to get his finger jammed in the chute and cut off, Harry being Harry, took his place and five hours later and three hundred shells, through our gun ,we arrived at*

*Crete, the date was the twenty 26th of April, the day after A.N.Z.A.C Day. I will never forget it.*

*On our arrival at Crete, I met up with one of our boys, and asked him how our chaps were faring and his reply was that I was the forth, not good news,. He told me to follow a path until I found them, I did just that and ,sitting by a lovely stream was two friends Ossie Kitchen and Joff Kay, as I approached them Ossie turned round and said good day, have you got a tooth brush, I had, and we all cleaned our teeth. We laughed about that many times at a later date. As time wore on the chaps started to arrive, and it was great to see them again. Bad news for me was to be told that two of my great friends, Allan Risk, and Lofty King, had been killed after they left us behind when we arrived back from Yugo Slavia. We found out that we had been the first Imperial force to meet the Germans, and Lofty was the first Military Medal winner in that campaign. Crete was a lovely Island and we had quite a good spell for a while, although food was short, but there was plenty of oranges, that we borrowed. After we had been in Crete for a few days, I was told that I was wanted at a tent Hospital, near Chania, it was a long walk, and I had no idea what was wrong, another chap came with me, and imagine my surprise when I was taken to see Shorty, the Doctor asked me if I had put the dressings on Shorty and when I told him that we had nothing to change them with he told me that Shorty was lucky as maggots had kept the wounds clean. They had, removed his arm and cleaned him up, he looked almost young. Shorty was over forty, and was a soldier in the first world war. He reckoned that a week in Greece was worse than the three years he spent in France, I think that it was his age. We only met once again twenty four years later, in Hamilton, and we had a lot to discuss. He told me that he was taken to Turkey and they looked after him until he was taken to Egypt, and sent home in a hospital ship. His experience was a great help to us in Greece. I remember the tin of Riverhead Gold tobacco that Shorty had, and how it helped to sooth our nerves, during the Greek campaign.*

*Gradually our friends arrived in Crete by devious means, some of our chaps and two Maoris' rowed a small boat all the way, and Snow Nicholas and some others were lent a boat, by a Greek couple who wanted their Son to get away. They were picked up and towed by a friends motor boat for the last part of their journey. All of these men had no intention of being taken prisoner, and their courage was indescribable. The distance they travelled was approximately 150 miles, and aircraft were looking for anything that was afloat. All was lovely on the Island and we were getting plenty of exercise, we had practically no vehicles and had to walk everywhere, so we were pretty fit. A funny incident happened when we were camped by a reservoir, and in the center of the dam was a hut that housed the controls that was manned by a very enterprising Cretian, who started a wine shop as a sideline. Friend Corporal Nicholas*

*was detailed to take a party to collect some firewood, and somehow they fell into the trap of sampling some of the local vintage. Toward evening Snow was the only one that had any wood and that was only one stick, one man was missing and I was sent to find him. His name was Brian Snodgrass, and Brian always enjoyed a drink, I found him easily enough, he was in the hut with the Cretian, waving a loaded pistol around, and fairly shickered, when I arrived he thought I should join them, and told the barman to fill a glass up for me, he did, and I didn't mind, only that the pistol was pointing at me quite a bit, I wasn't happy about that so I took the pistol off Brian and tipped the bullets out and put them in my pocket, and gave the gun back to Brian. The Cretian was happy and so was I, in fact we all were. We arrived back to the Unit and poor Snow was put on a charge. The next morning after we had a few broken biscuits, made up like porridge, Arthur Collins and myself were sent up to relieve Paddy Flynn and Joff Kay who were manning a Bren gun on the summit of a nearby hill, and that was the morning that Hitler decided to attack Crete, 20<sup>th</sup> May. Snow and his crew were being charged by Major Russell and Captain Bonnifant, who had only arrived on Crete the day before after some harassing experiences. German Parachutists started landing a little far away for our fire to be effective, but we had a magnificent view of proceedings. Our unit (Div Cav), was shifted to Galatas, as the enemy had gained possession of the prison (Aghya) which was in the valley below Galatas. My job there was a runner, we had very little means of communication, and manpower was the most reliable. I never forgot taking a message to Major Russell, early one morning and he asked me if I had had any breakfast, I said no, and he shared the little he had with me that was the sort of chap he was. He was the Son of Major General Russell of Gallipoli fame. Unfortunately he was killed in the desert at a later date. He was a fine soldier. And was killed by stepping on a mine, most unfortunate. The unit missed him. Our chaps settled into slit trenches near Pink Hill, by the road that led to the prison, and were in the way of the parachutists who tried to take Galatas, and we had some interesting battles, but managed to hold our positions. I was sent with a message, to our headquarters, which was at the end of a drain that gave me some protection, and stopped and had a short talk to a sergeant I knew "Jack Van Asch" and then carried on to Headquarters, I had just arrived when all hell was let loose, Aircraft bombed hell out of us, and the Major said to get into his slit trench with him until things quietened down, I was keen to get back to our troop and when I passed where Jack and I had been talking, he had been killed. As I arrived near our trench I found Watty Weir, who had acquired a German machine gun (a Spandau) and for some reason his assistant had left him, so I stayed and gave him some assistance, until his mate returned. Watty was hiding behind a big olive tree and we found out later that it was hollow, so there was very little*

protection, you have to be lucky. The Germans retreated and things came back to normal. Snow Nicholas also had acquired a Spandau and was on our left, with a German tin hat on and we reckoned he looked more like the Huns than they did, He did a mighty good job and it helped no end to the German retreat We were quite disappointed when we had to vacate our position, the unit on our flank had been overrun, and we would have been cut off. We arrived back in time to help with a bayonet charge on forty-second street, only not many of us had bayonets, and the only thing to do was shoot. The Maoris' were mixed up with this attack and I think the Germans were really frightened. It gave us a chance to get away and we headed for a walk of something like forty miles over the mountain, to Sfakia. At this stage, we were all tired out, and how we made that trip I will never know, I think it was fear. There is a good road over there now and I have driven over it several times, On two occasions with a friend, the late Dudley Bell, who thought the same as I did, it was one of the hardest things we ever had to do. The Cretans are a lovely people and they always give the N.Z/ERS a warm welcome. The Germans lost many young men, and their beautifully kept Cemetery is massive, the British cemetery is well looked after and some of my good friends are at rest there. What a waste of good lives war causes. And what for? After we arrived at Sfakia they called for volunteers to go back up a hill and fight a rear-guard and all of our gang went, better than doing nothing. As it happened we had nothing to do as the enemy were as tired as us. Ian Bonnifant had to go and see General Freyberg, who had his headquarters in a cave, at the bottom of the hill we were on, he got me to go with him, and there was a lovely stream not far away, so I bathed my aching feet in it while he was busy. When Ian returned he told me that we had to pull out, so I suggested that I went up and told the chaps while he bathed his feet, that were bleeding, as his boots were almost without soles he told me that he had never asked anyone to carry his gear, that was Ian, I convinced him that I could manage that, if he looked after my rifle and kit bag. I think that it was the only argument I ever won with him. That evening we arrived at the beach and were given a drink of tea each. While we were waiting Bonny said that we were going to all have a shave, I had a safety razor and we all used it, boy it was blunt when the last bloke used it, but we did feel clean. Before we were lightered out to a mine laying ship called the Abdeil. She was fast and I believe was capable of doing forty Knots, I think we must have done that, a high wall of water followed us.

Most of us slept for a good part of the journey, and as we neared Alexandra we were given a bottle of beer each. A friend, Ernie Read and myself thought we would drink Cairo dry of beer when we arrived, and all we could manage was a bottle between us, and gave the other one to a chap that needed it more than we did. After a short time some of us were sent to a tank workshop, to a course on tanks, the idea being that we

come back to N.Z. And train crews so that we could have our own tank corps. While I was there I managed to get hepatitis and was in hospital for six weeks, almost a good rest. The last day of my stay I received a letter from my old troop leader "Darcy Cole" saying that a place was open in his troop, things were warming up for the next desert battle. When I showed it to the Doctor he had other ideas, I wasn't fit enough, and I was to go to Con Depot at Ismalia, on the Suez Canal. The Ities were bombing Ismalia nearly every night and I thought I would be better up the Blue, I lost the argument and was dispatched to the Canal. Twelve of us were sent on to Chevalier Island to look after a camp where the Hospital patients were sent every night, so as to dodge the bombing.

Our job was to put on a light meal, and arrange entertainment for the patients, and keep the camp tidy. We played two up as long as the O.C/ camp wasn't looking and that was very popular, until one evening he came and said he would like to know how it was played. I decided to run it while Ossie James explained it to him. On routine orders, next morning it was made legal with a limit of twenty piesters, impossible, but he was covered. We were on the Island for seven weeks and had a great holiday, another friend and I swam out every day to King Farouk's yacht that was anchored in Lake Timsa, Gordon knew the cartakers and we became very friendly and they used to pass lemonade down to us, on to a raft that was tied alongside, we were not allowed aboard. The lake was so salty that it was almost impossible to sink in it. But we became very fit. On our return to Maadi camp we were posted to Compensate Training Depot where all the drill was different and as I was in the front row I did something wrong and was being slated up by a mighty unpopular W.O.I, and I told our own W.O. That it was the last parade I was going on, he had other ideas but got me a job as orderly room clerk I was in that position three days, when I had to go to headquarters tent and met up with that W.O. And told him what I thought of him and walked out after I had told him he had that job because he would be useless up the blue. When I told Sandy, our own S.M. He politely told me I was in the cart. That night he came and asked me if I would like a job up the desert, yes please, and the next morning I joined eight others and picked up nine armored cars, the same as we had in Greece, but without turrets. We had to deliver them to some British unit, a drive of about three hundred miles. On our arrival we were met by a British W.O. And sent out on different jobs in pairs, I was the odd man out and the W.O. Asked me if I could navigate and I said what with, as the only compass in the car was a sun compass and that was on top of the roof. He gave me a shot with his prismatic compass and told me to pick up some soldiers after I had travelled five miles, The first men I saw were the chaps I had to collect. They were three Londoners, Corporal Ken Lee, Bill Benham, and Fred Belch, Ken was among the finest soldiers I met in the war, He was a



remarkable navigator and they asked me to stay with them as they had no one to drive the Marmon Harrington over the tough country that we had to work in. These chaps were engineers ,and a lot of our work was finding wells and testing them. It was easy to miss a well, especially when you only had a sun compass, Ken was like a black tracker, we did distance and then searched, I don't remember missing one. We were attached to what they called Jock Columns, Brigadier Jock Campbell instigated them, and they were reasonably successful, no armor, only guns, 3/7s and 25 pounders ,and a few Bofer A.A. Guns, and Infantry on trucks. Our O.C. was a Major Catt, not bad , but made a few mistakes, I think we finished up good friends. The Poms had no idea of rationing, we received rations every day, but if you were on a three day job you got none. A lot of our work went three days, so we had to do a bit of scrounging. One day just as we were heading out on a new job, we came across a German ration truck, the driver was attending to his passenger who had been wounded, so we took them prisoner. We went back to a dressing station, and they wouldn't take the driver, so we took him with us, he was with us for three days and was a good cook, we had plenty of rations, including hermetically sealed bread, something we had never seen before, it kept fresh for weeks. Most of the tinned meat was horse meat, but better than nothing. Christal, was the chaps name, and he always slept between Ken and I, if he wanted to get up in the night he would wake one of us up, he was only nineteen and a farmers son, and not interested in war. We had no radio or recognition flags, so couldn't communicate with anyone. When we arrived back to our unit they sent four big military policemen to take our prisoner, we all had to laugh, it looked so silly. Another job we were landed with was blowing German tanks, after a tank battle, tanks were scattered over quite a distance, and the method they used was a plug of Aminal placed in the breech of the big gun, with the fuse hanging over the side of the turret, I would drop one chap at a tank, then on to the next one and so on, until there was only me, and I would set the next tank and then drive back and pick up the gang and the exercise would be repeated, if there were any more tanks. Ken wouldn't let us blow the tanks, because if the enemy heard the explosions, they were quick on recovery and would be there pretty fast. When we had set them all I would drive alongside the set tanks and Ken would light the fuses, with a special match. We would blow as many as possible, until the Gerry woke up to what was going on. We had some lucky escapes, but our car was faster than most of their vehicles, and we escaped. Another entertaining day we arrived at fort Mechili and Ken asked me to check ,through the glasses to see if I thought anyone was in residence, I couldn't see anything so we drove up, and the Bersergali Regiment had vacated it when they saw us. They left their candles still alight, and there was a Generals uniform left behind. Ken put it on and as he said, it would be the only time that he would wear a Generals

uniform. Later that day we contacted the 7th Armored Div and they weren't amused when they saw an Itie General in our armored car. Fortunately they all knew our vehicle, it was the only one in that area. Another memory was Christmas dinner, all we had was a muscle bound fowl, we had swapped some second hand tea, with a Bedouin for it. and boy was it tough, we had no tea either. The place was Agedabia and Major Catt called us over to his truck, and suggested that we try and get through to Benghazi, as we had the only armored vehicle in the column. He also suggested that we join him in a cup of tea, while we were drinking it, a message came through that the Ninety-th light, a German armored division, that we had done many battles with, were between us and Benghazi, so our little journey was off, thank God. I was with the Jock columns for three months. At this stage we were relieved by another British Division. And headed back to Cairo, some of the chaps I was with hadn't been out of the desert for eighteen months, and were looking forward to the high lights of Cairo.

After a fairly long drive back to Cairo we arrived at the Citadel, which was the headquarters of the Jock Columns, I was put on guard the first night, and after cleaning a few things up the next day, I found I was on guard the next night. A real base waller of a Pom Sergeant Major and I didn't see eye on that subject, and I used his phone and rang Bonny. He was there within an hour, in a staff car, much to the surprise of the W O. the only thing Bonny went crook about was my battle dress, I had swapped Ken for his English one, as ours were better material, I had to go strait to the quarter-masters store in Maadi, and get a new one. The next morning I went to our Squadron headquarters tent and Captain Alex Achison, who I was with in Crete, said, just the chap I need, go and collect bren-carrier number so and so from the vehicle park, my reply was that I didn't know that they had a vehicle park, so he showed me where it was, and I collected the carrier. I was detailed to pick up another soldier, and head toward King Farouks Palace, the passenger and I stopped at another depot and they handed us a rifle and bayonet each, this hard case private took our rifles and put them in the back of the carrier and kept the bayonets handy. We picked up a couple of high ranking Officers and took off to the Palace, Only then it was that I found out that King Farouk had decided to take off to Italy, and the British Army had other ideas, I was told that they had artillery guns ranged on the Palace. Anyway the King changed his mind, and we went back to camp, my mate said that if the students played up, I was to go through the first jewelers window and he would do the rest. Nothing happened, just as well. A short time later we were on the move again, up to Syria, as occupation troops, an interesting journey through the Holy land, our destination was a village called Djedeide a population of about fifteen hundred souls, the first night we slept among some big tents that hadn't been erected, and in the morning

*given patrol jobs for a short time until some of us were sent back to Amiriya to take possession of some American General Stewart tanks, Amariya was occupied by some Australian troos and when we arrived we had a little get together and some British military policemen decided to take their arm bands off, as one of them said we are not on duty when Aussies and Kiwis get together.*

*Around two am an Officer arrived in and told us that our tanks had been put on transporters, and they were ready to take off. We boarded the transporters, in a very happy mood, I admit , on arrival near El Alamein after unloading the tanks we had three chaps showing us how to start the aeroplane motors, it was impossible to get a look in on this action and I decided to cook some sausages for breakfast, when I yelled out come and get it there was a rush and I was lucky to get some for myself. While we were having breakfast our Officer "Miles Adams" told me to lead another column after we had crossed the railway line, and I replied that I didn't have a tank, he said you have one somewhere, and when I found it I didn't know how to start it but after fooling around for a while it started and we were under way. We crossed the rail and I took the lead of another column, for some reason I didn't feel very well, and was sick in my beret, we had to stop every hour for a maintenance check, and I was naughty and went to sleep, the noise of the other tanks taking off woke me up and instead of leading I was following. Night time came and we stopped somewhere in the desert, my radio knowledge came to the fore and I managed to get the B.B/C. News. We took off early next morning and arrived with the Regiment a bit after midday, Bonny wanted us to go out on patrol immediately but we talked him into letting us have two hours to let the radio operators T and A their sets ,which they had never seen before, and the gunners to get the grease out of their guns. The drivers were the only ones that had any experience, but the situation was desperate, and we were needed. History told of the exploits of the Div Cav antics under great leadership for the following few days, and how they managed to get out of trouble by sheer cheek. From our point of view things were not the best, our troop had two tanks blown up on a minefield, our tank had only one track blown and Jims had two, we had a lot of cunning gear stored aboard and as I was troop mechanic I thought it was possible to save our tank. Sgt Jack Riddell "my commander" said he would help me , our new troop leader wasn't keen on letting us do it and insisted on us having a radio operator stay and keep contact, Joff Kay volunteered and all was going well until the Jerry saw what was going on and decided to give us a bit of hurry up, we hid behind the tank and Jack decided to have a brew up, he climbed onto the tank to get a tin of coffee and milk that had come in a parcel from home, he jumped down and made the brew witch was good. Things quietened down and some British Engineers arrived to clear the mines, between Jacks feet marks was a mine so we were lucky we weren't blown to pieces, we finished the job with a spare wheel off a carrier that had a spare wheel on the side, and drove back to the Squadron Headquarters where we were put in another tank and were not allowed to take it back to get it fixed properly. A few days later we were on patrol when a bomb landed about twenty yards in front of our tank ,I was in the drivers seat and our gunner fell down behind me, he had blood all over his chest so I tore his shirt*

open and there was no wounds, he said it was his head , and then the penny dropped, Jack had stopped a piece of shrapnel and half his head was missing. Some stretcher bearers came over and I had the task of lifting my old friend down on to the stretcher. Our new Officer asked our radio operator "Derick Tatton' and myself if we could take the tank back to Headquarters, we said yes and he said that he couldn't, he was very new. I admit Tat and I smoked many cigarettes on the way back. When we arrived back I was put in another tank and sent on another mission and Tat was told to clean the tank out, he told me afterward that it was the hardest job he ever had to do, and I quite believed him, Jack was a special person. We didn't even get to his burial, we were too busy. Padre Harry Taylor conducted the service.

Around this time a breath of fresh air arrived , General Montgomery was in future to be our 8th army commander. It was when we were in what they called a box, and our job was to coach the enemy tanks through a gap until our guns could destroy them, the ruse worked perfectly and many tanks were destroyed. This was what we knew as the battle of Alam Halfa where we will never forget the plague of flies and basket bombs. It was about that time that we received news that one of our most respected Officers "John Russell" was killed, he was the son of Sir Andrew Russell of Gallipoli fame, John was a fine soldier, and a man, I am privileged to be friendly with his Son John who never knew his father. After we had completed these exercises we all felt that the tide was turned, and we were taken out of the firing line and were camped near a lovely beach where we could swim in reasonable safety, we still had our tanks and we treated them as home, General Montgomery came and addressed us and he filled us with confidence. Half of us at different times were granted four days leave at a time and it was great to be able to relax for a while so we had another stay with our Greek friend. I was a naughty boy and had bought a W.O.2 Badge and could go with my sergeant mates to the sergeants mess, but one evening the mess president came over and said that he knew every W,O. In Div Cav and I wasn't one, my reply was that he shouldn't say too much and he backed off, He said later that it was the way I said it that he thought I was on special duties. He never forgot the incident, he brought it up on the ship that we went to Italy on, and at times that we met after the war. It was highly illegal to do something like that ,I later got stripes and gave the Crown to my friend Bruce Jones when he was promoted to W.O.2. And I was orderly corporal and on duty when his promotion came through on routine orders The battle of El Alamein was in the offering and our unit was dispatched to El Hammam that was the 19<sup>th</sup>, October, General Freyberg decided that he wanted to be up front and had the big gun taken out of a General Stuart "American" tank, this allowed room to be made for a radio set, Corps and Division to be manned in reasonable comfort, The Generals driver was a chap named George Nicholls, a good choice as George was a character and he and Tiny were the best of friends, although George was only a Sergeant. The Gen needed someone like George, in fact it was funny to see them together pasting up and down and talking in the evenings when things hadn't been going very well, George never told us what they were discussing. When Freyberg came out here as Govenner General,

*the second day after he arrived here he went up to Palmerston North and saw George and gave him a framed photo of himself, with a capstone which read something like this, To my old friend and Comrade Sgt George Nicholls , from Bernard Freyberg. His radio operator" Watti McEwan also received one, but his was posted. Our troop, number one from C Squadron Divisional Cavalry was detailed to act as a protective troop for the Headquarters tank, not a job we wanted but it turned out to be very entertaining The General came and gave us a talk about what our position entailed, and mentioned that saluting was not on the menu because there would be Officers round most of the time and we might suffer with st visits dance. But if a high ranking Officer came, at least stand up.*

*On the 23 rd of October we were sent as far forward as was reasonably safe, and listened to the noise of shells passing overhead for three hours or more, It was hard to describe how it affected you, personally I felt quite numb. After a few hours the Infantry started to march through where we were stationed and our old troop leader "Bonny" passed close to us and we wanted to know how his flat feet were standing up to walking, he was quite rude and called us cheeky bastards. He had been promoted to Colonel of the 25 th Infantry Battalion, he told me afterward that he was nervous, he didn't know the men and they didn't know him, and when his old troop spoke to him as we did they thought that he couldn't be too bad . He proved himself as an exceptional leader, and he and I remained good friends until he died, even though he was a Brigadier and I was only a Corporal. On the 24 th the General and the G 1 arrived at about 1 am and we proceeded through the cleared minefields led by our Sergeant "Bruce Jones" who turned out to be a terrific navigator, our troop leader Darcy Cole and I had been together in Yugo Slavia before the Greek campaign so we knew each other pretty well. We got through the minefields quite safely and of course it had to rain , the enemy had got away on the good going and our Div Headquarters became stuck in the boggy sand,our tanks spent the rest of the day pulling the trucks out of the bog. Darcy told me to V two tanks together and a lance corporal came and laid a bedroll between the tanks, he introduced himself as Laurie and he turned out to be a chap I knew well later in life, I had visions of sleeping in sheets that night, but had to take one of our chaps to a dressing station and get a wound fixed, I didn't arrive back until late and rolled my bedroll out and climbed into it, about three a,m a squeaky voice wanted to know the time, it was the General, he had slept between Les Worsley and myself we reckoned he would rather we stopped a piece of stray shrapnel than for it to hit him, Gerry had pulled back and we followed as soon as possible. At our next stop the Gen decided to have our tanks loaded on to transporters to save wear and tear, when I went to put my tank on to the transporter the starter motor burned out and Gen came over and asked me if I could ride a motor bike to go back to workshops and get a replacement starter. The answer was yes, and he went away and acquired a bike while I took the starter off the tank. Workshops were seventy odd miles back and the going not very good, when I arrived the boys made me a cup of tea while someone found a new starter, and I took off back through the Desert because the road was cluttered up with traffic. On my arrival the Gen came over and asked me which way I had*

come and when I told him he said that he thought the Desert was full of Germans, but I didn't see any and he seemed quite pleased, so was I. The convoy was about to take off and I was lucky that they hadn't gone or I would have had to ride that bike about three hundred miles, someone gave me a much needed brandy and to this day I don't know who, it might have been the boss. It was lovely sleeping on the transporter as I reckoned I had earned a rest. A humorous event happened when we were on our way across Cyrenaica ,we came across a porcelain bath and two drums of water we weren't in a hurry so our troop all had a bath, the Gen had been back to Cairo so he didn't indulge, it was lovely, I still have a photo of Paddy in the bath.

Another incident was when the army was held up by a well marked minefield there were hundreds of vehicles scattered around and when we arrived at the lead of the column the Gen asked Bruce if he had a bayonet ,he did. and Tiny started probing the sand and came up with several pieces of tin, its a dummy field He remarked and we drove through, our tank followed Bruce's and I made sure that my tracks followed the leading tank very closely I had been blown up by a mine once and that was enough. The Gen had a Stimson aircraft at his disposal and he took off back to a conference, while he was away we joined up with Div Cav and started on a left hook to bypass Agheila , this was a very secret move and I nearly blew it , my friend Sgt Snow Nicholas was on the last shift as guard so I kidded him to light my primus and make a brew,it was still dark and Snow lit his primus in his tank as we could show no lights, he pumped mine up and a flame shot out and set a fire going inside Snows tank,I had lost the washer off the filler cap in the dark when I filled it up with high octane petrol. Snow was a calm soldier and started a fire extinguisher that was in the tank and then sat on top of the turret until he was sure that the fire was out, he then came over and woke me up to tell me that I was a bloody fifth columnist and a few other things, He was a bit short of hair but as he said afterwards that we still got our cup of tea. We remained very good friends for the rest of Snows life, He passed way about twelve months ago, and I am trying to finish a book of photos that he had started, and became too ill to finish. We were great friends The General wouldn't have been very pleased with Harry if that tank had gone up in smoke, it was owing to Snow being so calm under stress that saved the day. Tac Headquarters travelled with Div Cavalry round a route that was called Chrystals Rift a left hook round Agheila where the Hun was entrenched the Cav boys had a few interesting skirmishes before we eventually stopped and camped at a place called Nofillia , that was where we eventually had Christmas. The army did us proud with a delightful Xmas dinner and even some beer, something we hadn't seen for some time,and it certainly did something for the moral. A quiet time was had by by our group for some days, Gen was away at some conference. He joined us again for the push toward Tripoly and it was on the 15rh Jan that we had a bad day, Bruces brother Ken was killed in an action where we with Cav ' and our Officer who was with the Gen, was badly wounded when a shell landed almost under their tank, He had to go back to hospital, and our Sergeant, Bruce took over command of the troop. The German rearguard left overnight and the next day we set a cracking

*pace , push on said the Gen and we did , We always travelled in desert formation Bruce's tank in the lead, followed by the General, one tank on the left usually two or three chains apart and our tank on the right. This day unbeknown to us we had travelled faster than the army, and had passed several broken down tanks, mostly Italian, and Bruce and the Gen ran into three tanks that had stopped and were brewing up a cup of tea, we didn't see what was happening and carried on a short distance and I spotted another M13 Itie tank coming back to its mates, their gun was swinging on to us and I pushed our gun onto their turret and stopped their gun swinging onto us, we were only about thirty yards away and traveling fairly fast so it was over in seconds,I hopped out and started pulling the prisoners out of an open door on their tank, and Paddy went crook later because I wasn't armed, anyway it saved the day and we were pleased we didn't lose the Gen and General Wier who was traveling with us that day. Some years later I was marching with Brig Weir on an A.N.Z.A.C. Parade at Maraekakaho and he said where have I met you before and I answered, remember the day we got those tanks, his reply, were you with that bloody outfit? and started talking about things I had forgotten about years before. He travelled with us quite often, he was in charge of the Artillery, and good at it. All this happened a bit before Sedada, a friend of mine Sgt Dave Jamieson was following us in a land rover and he was trusted with the prisoners, we reckoned that he got all the loot. Once again we took off and arrived at a wadi where the enemy were cleaning their guns, so we got the two bosses back out of the danger area, only to run into our Sherman tanks of the Greys who were our Divs support Regiment, It was a pretty sight. A tank battle started almost immediately and our General was sitting in the turret of his tank looking through his binoculars and thoroughly enjoying the view. My commander Paddy had a bed roll on the front of our tank which contained a new battle dress which Paddy had acquired by devious means, and a shell landed a bit short and a piece of shrapnel went through Paddy's bed roll so he got out of the tank and took it off and discovered a big hole in his battle dress, he had a good vocabulary and with much waving of arms told the Germans what he thought of them, this was in the middle of a fairly heavy barrage. We laughed about it afterwards. Paddy was a real character but a good soldier and friend, we had a lot of time together, many years later I saw him crippled up with Arthritis, I felt like crying he was so strong. That day I was stabbed in the back by our Governor General Ferguson's umbrella saying, stand aside I want to talk to Paddy. He was a well known character. We travelled with Div Cavalry, that day and the boss kept his old saying "push on" going most of the day, this trek was probably the roughest country that we had encountered but we managed to get to Beni Ulid after leaving Cav we went further south with the rest of the Division. At this stage Tripoly was in sight and what a relief because the Gen had pushed most of us and himself to the limit. Our vehicles were in need of a lot of maintenance and we needed a good break. We were camped at Castel Benito, just out of Tripoly right next to a British aerodrome . Threceived a call from the Gen to rescue them, two staff cars had gone out , I think, looking for a place to put the Div while they were able*

*to do maintenance, and have a well earned rest, we had two crews handy, so Bruce's and our tanks took off and found the Boss and Jack Griffiths standing in a slit trench, if I remember Jack had a tommy gun, and when we drove up Tiny wanted to go with Bruce and Bruce said no, so he didn't come with us, there were only two armored cars and we smartly chased them away. The G1's car had been shot up and his driver killed and he was missing, but turned up later from a nearby house. The Gen's driver "Alex Norris" turned his car round and managed to get his crew back out of danger, his car was a left hand drive and there was a hole in the windscreen where a right hand drive steering wheel would have been, so they were lucky. Alex was awarded the Military Medal for that episode and rightly so.*

*Tripoly wasn't very exciting but we had plenty to do, working on our tanks, and unloading ships, there was also three enormous vats of wine and we managed to acquire plenty of it, we called it purple death, and it was well named. While working on the ships we managed to acquire some goodies, like tinned fruit and there was some innocent looking boxes of sweets, but in the middle was a bottle of rum, apparently they were for American tank crews, very acceptable. The General went back to Cairo for a conference and when he came back he lectured the Div on the subject of how the boys managed to acquire goodies from the ships. That evening he was opening tins of fruit and saying eat up boys, he must of known that they weren't on ration, but he loved opening tins. We had little parties and had the pleasure of entertaining some of the air force chaps with the aid of purple death, I don't think they would be safe to fly with next day, but when we visited them they had better grog. That break was wonderful for moral and I think we were looking forward to the next encounter with the enemy.*

*During our stay in Tripoly a Victory Parade was organized and it was almost a pleasure for us to be in the lead of the Division, with the General's tank in first place. It was a great sight to see Winston Churchill taking the salute from the reviewing stand, our troop then took up a place by the stand and the Gen joined the V.I.P's, we certainly had a good seat. The date was the 4<sup>TH</sup> February 1943. This was a great collection of leaders, Prime Minister Churchill, C.I.G.S., Sir Alan Brooke, General's Alexander, Montgomery, Freyberg, & Others. At this stage other troops of the British Army had chased the enemy as far as Medenine, where there was another battle which was repulsed and which we had no part. An Officer (Rusty Thomas) was posted to our troop to replace Darcy, but Bruce carried on as navigator and nothing changed. We all knew Rusty and he fitted in to the troop pretty well.*

*It was the 2nd of March when we left Tripoly and three days later arrived at Medenine in time to help repulse Rommel's attack, in which he lost 52 tanks and that finished Rommel's career, in the Desert. He flew home never to return. Our tanks were transported about 200 miles to the Tebaga Gap which was strongly defended by the Germans. Our troop was stationed at hill 201 and that was where I received the only wound I was destined to receive, a lone plane's rear gunner put a row of explosives up our tank turret where Les Worsley was manning the Browning A A gun, Les fell down and I was working on him when Paddy Flynn*



tore up and said Les is O K its you, a small piece of shrapnel had hit the lobe of my ear and the blood was pouring out of it, i didn't feel anything and thought it was a big joke. Les carried that shrapnel all his life. Our army attacked that afternoon and the next morning the Gen wanted to see the British tank Commander and took the whole troop along, while he was talking to Lt Colonel Kellett who was inside his tank having a shave a lone German plane came over and dropped a bomb behind our tank and a piece of shrapnel passed us all and the General and killed the Colonel. That is one reason that i am a fatalist. That battle i will never forget, the Sherman tanks supporting the Infantry in a reasonably confined space was a sight to behold.

The battle of the Tabaga gap was over and we pushed on toward Gabies where the terrain was more fertile than anything we had seen for some time although the Hun still had to be chased out and that was not easy. We eventually arrived at a place called El Djem and our vehicles were in need of a good overhaul, it was while a mechanic named Jack Heywood and myself were working on my tank that the Gen came over and said that we were not in a hurry and to grab a land rover and go and have a look at the ruins of the Amphitheater, (one of the old wonders of the World), it was only about five miles away. Jack acquired a rover and five of us took off to see something that was centuries old, we found the old ruins alright and also some wine in the village, after sampling some of the local brew we were in the mood to play, and Jack threw us to the lions or what they did in those days, it was good fun. On the way home we met the British army coming up the road and an Officer with a red band round his hat, pulled out of the column a few chains ahead of us and put us into a ditch, Jack called him a Pommy bastard, and we had almost got the rover out when he arrived back and asked Jack if he had called him a Pommy bastard, Jack was a wrestler and as strong as a bull he didn't back down, so he said yes you put us into the ditch, well I have come back to tell you that I was the third in the family and that my Mother and Farther were married before the first one arrived. That chap was General Horrocks ( the Corps Commander), he spoke to us on several occasions at a later date but never mentioned that episode.

Our next move was toward Enfidaville and there was another battle looming the Gen decided to take only one tank forward to have a closer look at the terrain, so he went in Bruce's tank, they stopped at the forward infantry and conferred with the O.C. And then Gen decided that he would like a closer look, at this stage they were in full view of Takrouna ( a hill that had commanded a view over miles of territory) and Gen told Bruce to pull over behind a house that had a sloping roof on which he could climb and get a better view with the aid of his binoculars. The enemy had seen this move and shelled them for a while, he then told Bruce to contact Brigadier General Weir (the artillery commander) by radio and tell him that he wanted him up there, while they were waiting he told Fred Brayfield, (the radio operator) to pick some peas that were in a nearby garden, Fred wasn't keen as they were still being shelled, but he did it," Fred was my driver in Italy at a later date, and was killed at Forli" after I came home. Bruce told us when they returned that the Gen was sitting on the front of the tank shelling and eating peas

when they passed through the Infantry lines and the boys were calling out "Hi Tiny" and he waved back. Another incident happened when Bruce and I went for a reconnaissance and met up with some Gooms, the biggest men we had ever met, they had walked up from Chad, a long and hot venture. Bruce wanted to look at something else and I went back to our troop alone when a high ranking German Officer came out of some scrub and surrendered to me, I immediately took his lugar (revolver) off him and stuck it in my belt alongside my thirty eight pistol, I wasn't dressed very well, a pair of shorts, a beret, and a pair of boots. He spoke English very well and kept quoting the Geneva Convention, to the fact that he couldn't be disarmed by anyone of a lower rank than him. His mood changed when we walked up to General Freyberg's tank, the Gen was talking to another Officer and when we turned up he turned round and I waved him a salute and handed him the lugar, which he kept. I never found out who that German was but our Gen gave him a good dressing down, because they had used all their ammunition and then surrendered, killing some of our men in the process. That was the last time I saw our leader until we were back in Cairo. He was posted to another temporary command and Brig Kippenberger took over command, Kip hated tanks and we were sent back to Div Cav and did nothing until one day they wanted two tanks and Bruce's and ours answered the call, Our Minister of Defence (Fred Jones) wanted to go up and have a look at the front, so they put him in our tank for protection, I was the driver and they put him in a seat behind me and we had a good old yarn on our way up, He had come over to tell us that some of the long serving men were to go home for a leave. That was good news.

The war in North Africa was over and we had to leave our faithful tanks behind and ride in trucks for the long journey back to Egypt. We had a short stay at Bengazzi and a funny thing happened the Div was given two bottles of beer per man (Canadian dow) which was in boxes of four dozen packed in wood wool. Our troop leader was commissioned to collect it on behalf of the Division, and being an enterprising type he collected some extra grog for the 5<sup>th</sup> RMT which didn't exist, there was only a 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. Our troop was detailed to mount a roving guard and about 2am in the morning Rusty must have felt lonely and lit a fire with the wood wool, Major Van Slyke was tearing round in his underpants calling out, put out that fire, call out the guard, Rusty was the guard and had lit the fire. We christened him Florence Nightingale after that, and it stuck for years after the War, when we were all together. On arrival back in Maadi we were treated pretty well and were given leave which was very acceptable. There was a surprise one day when Bonny called out names of troops to return to N.Z on leave, mine was not on the list and neither was my very good friend Snow Nicholas, who had had a fairly rugged time and needed a rest, we called him Whaki Snow after that.

While we were on leave three of us travelled by train to Luxor to have a look at the valley of Kings and Queens, rather fascinating but very hot, it took quite a lot of beer to keep us going. Our Dragoman (guide) suggested that we hold 20 piesters up as the train stopped at the station, so that the guard would lock a compartment for us, it worked but we had to climb in through the window, we reckoned that about two hundred people travelled on the roofs of the carriages, just as well there

were no tunnels . On arriving back to Maadi my life changed, I lost my job as troop mechanic and was promoted to the rank of lance corporal,temporary corporal , acting sergeant all at the same time, and sent on a course to study the new Staghound armored cars. They were very modern machines and sported a thirty seven millimeter gun and two Browning point 300 machine guns ,two of us were detailed to put them through tests, Jimmy Barron and myself, and we found that they had a few faults, mainly that they had two motors connected up with automatic gearboxes which had fluid flywheels that stopped the wheels turning when they got stuck. Jim and I had both been in Europe with armored cars and knew the conditions. Another problem was the reverse pall, whenever there was a great strain while in reverse gear it blew the side out of the gearbox. We both condemned them for our use in Italy and we were correct, I was landed with one and would rather had a jeep. We embarked on the 17<sup>th</sup> September and as Les Worsley had problems walking I elected to go with the marching party, on the ship called the Letita (later renamed the Captain Cook), we had an uneventful voyage really, until one Sunday evening Padre Taylor held a service, and on the way up to the hall we were invited into a cabin where two Warrant Officers were in residence and they had a bottle of something nice for us to try, one of those chaps was the mess President when I was in the Sergeant's mess in Cairo with an illegal W.O. badge on and he called me a bastard in front of the Padre. Robbie was a good bloke and he said it was the way I answered him that he thought I was on special duties. At a later date he asked me to act as marker when they had the Color Party on parade, he said that I knew what to do and he had forgotten. I had only taken one parade in my whole career, so I think I was forgiven. Robbie was one of 40 of we N.C.O's from the Division that went to Italy, we were all pretty experienced so I suppose it helped us as we had a large number of reinforcements.

On our arrival at Taranto we were greeted by a mighty storm,most of the barrage balloons were knocked down by lightning and our pup tents had a tendency to leak especially if your friends ran a finger down them. Lightning also split a large tree in half a short distance away,but we survived. About the 1<sup>st</sup> of November all of our vehicles had arrived and we took off for pastures new ,on the way we had to pass through many vineyards some of which had been booby trapped , Bert Jarman had done a mines course and soon cleared the vines of mines , much to the pleasure of the locals who fed us on lovely grapes.

We eventually arrived at Lucera not far from the Sangro river which the Enemy had ideas of holding for the winter, and our troop was detailed to patrol up the river and one day a different looking aeroplane belly landed on our side of the river, we collected the crew and I sent a message to our Major (Nick Wilder) and he said to hold it with our lives, it was a Messersmit 210 and that was the first one they had seen. Nick sent a raw recruit out in a jeep to collect the prisoners and in his excitement he rolled the jeep and broke one of the prisoners arms, they had landed without even a bruise. Many years later a machine gunner was telling me about how they had shot at a strange looking plane as it passed a hill where they were stationed and reckoned they had hit it, I produced a photo of the plane and Charley Hucker said it was like the one they had shot at so I think thew must have

*hit it. Another day our troop had to contact the British who were near the mouth of the river and we couldn't get our cars over some of the road that had been bombed so we left the rest of the troop, and five of us walked seven miles until we found a Pom with a jeep and he took us to his C.O. who told him to take us back, The Jermans were on the other side of the river and had a few pot shots at us and the poor driver went back on his own at a terrific pace .I hope he made it.*

*Where we left our Staghounds and the rest of the crew, there were three houses and all had wine barrels in them that had been booby trapped, but Bert soon fixed that and the boys had a good party with the owners ,as we arrived back an Italian grabbed me and led me out onto the riverside and in pidgin English showed me where all the enemy gun emplacements were,I plotted them and when we arrived back at camp our troop leader (Jim Cooke) took them to Nick who was more than pleased and as the attack was going in the next morning organized the anti tank to blast hell out of those positions. He told me after the war that I would never know how many lives I saved by listening to that chap, the sergeant that was left in charge had been to Duntroon (Officers training School) and couldn't be ranked lower than a sergeant, and had had very little war experience, it appeared the Italian had tried to get him to do what I did. The Sangro was in flood and we had trouble getting our vehicles over and we managed to get our cars across and then got stuck in a plowed paddock, and waited for a couple of hours before a truck with a winch pulled us on to dry land. At this time only two tanks (Sherman's) managed to get across and we found them a bit further up the hill. The Officer in charge (Strat Morrin) had been a sergeant in our unit and I knew him well,the other tank, which was the first to cross the river that morning was commanded by a sergeant(Dudley Bell) who I told that we were sent up to protect them, he never forgave me and after the war we became very good friends, we travelled together on several occasions , and had two trips back to Crete together. I saw him two days before he died and he brought the subject up again.*

*Our troop was once again detailed to Patrol forward , and that was where I would have liked a jeep(Les Worsley) my gunner and I had to walk on patrol as we couldn't get the cars off the road without getting stuck. One day we met up with an Italian who spoke English reasonably well and he seemed to be on our side,so I took a chance on him and he took us to a friend of his who had a little farm, in that area, only my crew went to the farm every evening and we were made very welcome and given a meal and a drink of the best of wine, we left at 9 o'clock if the chaps didn't arrive with any information, but mostly they did, and it was stuff we couldn't get ourselves, Nicks only complaint was that i didn't send it sooner but as I told him the enemy could direction find you in a few minutes and I wasn't prepared to give our position away, The chap that helped us was an American gangster, I was never sure until a few years ago as I would never let the boys swap names, for obvious reasons. Fred (my driver) was the one that gave us all fictitious names, and they all ended with O. One day two troops (Jim Logan's ) and ours were working on the road to Lanciano and we were stopped by an anti tank gun, so Les and I went for a bit of a walk among trees and spotted an 88mm gun that had us covered,it was out of range of our guns , so Jim took his troop to*

*get help from some British Sherman's who were handy, but they refused to come to our aid. We were about level with Castelfrentano, a town still occupied by the enemy and Jim came back fuming. We were then recalled and Les wanted to try our big gun out so I told him to have a go and when he did the others did the same, they were firing toward Castelfrentano and as we retreated we heard German armored vehicles coming out to where we had been. Our infantry attacked the town and took it ,and Les always reckoned that he was the one that shifted the enemy armor out of the town. Just out of Castelfrentano was a brick kiln with a big chimney and a short road running toward Orsogna (which was in enemy hands),this was called the mad mile and was under continuous fire, and an entertaining experience to travel on .*

*One day we had just crossed it and I saw two of my old friends Sandy Gibson and Bill Sutherland standing by a Sherman tank and suggested that they make a brew and they did . That was the last time we were together in Italy. On our return our troop was sent back about 15 miles to guard a beautiful stone bridge that had been saved from destruction by a brave Indian who pulled the lighted fuse out seconds before it reached the charge that would have destroyed the bridge. There were 5 Indian graves there , I don't know weather the brave one was killed . That bridge was essential to carry our vehicles over that river. There was a curfew ordered after 6pm and nobody was allowed to cross it without being escorted, we soon got to know the natives and one chap used to visit the village and have a few wines, he was a regular customer and was always grateful for the way he was treated, some of our boys used to visit the Village and they told me there was always a liter of wine put on the table for them and they never found out who paid for it.*

*That job was a lovely break although there was plenty to do. One evening Jim called me over to his Staghound and said that Colonel Bonnifant wanted to talk to me , the talk was all in code and Bonny indicated that I had to be ready to go home to N.Z. at 6am the next morning . I told him to forget it and his answer was, you will do as you are bloody well told Spencer, and that wasn't in code. You would not have met a better gang of chaps that we had in that troop, that night they took up a collection and presented it to me, I didn't want to take it but they insisted, My old crew were later killed at Forli and many years later a party of us stopped there for lunch and we were told that all the graves were shifted to Casino and they weren't. Our courier (Sandra),was so disappointed that if she could have she would have taken the bus back so I could have visited their graves.*

*All the forty of us that were taken to Italy were still alive except one that was killed when a truck went over a bridge that had been interfered with , and crashed into the river bed. It was Christmas time and we were taken to Advance Base for about a week, what a place,. Our W.O.I (Burt Worthy) said that no way were we to be split up so we three Corporals were promoted to Sergeants (unofficially) much to the dismay of the base wallah's who were running the camp. We were pleased to get aboard the ship called the Cosiesko ,(a Polish ship) and dirty with awful food, but we survived the voyage and arrived back at Maadi. One of our gang was laid low with pneumonia, and put in the N.Z. Hospital where we were able to visit him at any time,when we knew that we were due to embark on our*

*voyage home, two of us went to the hospital to see if they would let Allan come with us , but they refused and we had to leave him behind. Allan left on another ship which was sunk in the Indian ocean, and he was on a raft for ten days before they were rescued, he took over rationing of the food and only allowed the other chaps enough rations to keep them alive, and it paid dividends. While we were visiting the hospital another one of our Officers was a patient, (Ian Van Asch) his tank had been hit and his hands were not working, another friend (Tiny Kerse) was typing letters home for him so I brought the letter home to give to his Mother, and she said don't lie to me, do you think he will ever use his hands again, that is not Ian's handwriting, Tiny had tried to imitate Ian's signature. He recovered and ran the Muller station in Marlborough, after the war.*

*I have strayed away a little so here goes on our trip home, we boarded the Debrishire (a refrigeration ship) that was coming out to Australia to collect meat, we spent time helping the cooks, running the entertainment and otherwise playing jokes on one another. We anchored off Aden for 10 days waiting for a convoy, we weren't allowed ashore and spent our time watching the natives load 2000 tons of salt on to our ship. The ship had ten cabins and they were occupied by the Governor of New Calidonia and his wife and two children, and some Australian war brides. We had a happy trip home and one day while we were in the Indian Ocean a Catilina sea plane flew round us and a chap stood in a doorway and told us all the latest news, that plane came out from South Africa. We saw nothing else until we arrived at Port Lincoln in South Australia. On the wharf was the only N.Z.er in the town, he was a parson and was aboard as fast as they would let him. Port Lincoln's main industry was a freezing works and we went ashore about 2pm and headed for the local pub, there was a beer shortage and by the time the works closed their quoter for the day had all gone, the Aussies were a bit put out for a while until they realized who we were and joined us in drinking wine. The manager of General Motors had to go north the next day and he took Bert Murdock and I with him, and while we were on the way we had a marvelous view of the sailing ship Pamier under full sail going up Spencer Bight. The people in the town were really pleased to see us and their hospitality was first class, with mutton dinners and puddings that we hadn't had for years. After unloading the salt we had on board we sailed to Sydney where we left our good ship and her Captain who spent more of his time with us on the trip than he did with his cabin mates , he had retired and come back for war service, he was a fine man.*

*The next voyage was on the old Wahine, and we were well treated even though the Tasman was mighty rough. On our way over there was a submarine warning and the passengers were fairly nervous, but it didn't worry us much as we had struck worse things many times. We arrived in Wellington early one evening and had to have a medical test before we were allowed ashore, surprise, one VAD that was called out to help was Irene Evans, my old friend Jim's sister (Jim was the one that didn't get away with us), she rang Jim up and he came down and took Bert Murdock and myself to another friend's place, Sam McKay was a Policeman and his wife was my sister's best friend. We had a great evening and the Govt gave us a free telegram to send to our people, I hadn't bothered until Irene found out .*

and sent it , she said I would kill my Mother if I walked in on her after being away so long, she was probably right.

When we arrived in Blenheim the next evening they had a reception gathering, some of them who never had any intention of going to the war, and made fine speeches of welcome bored me, I would rather have gone strait home. A few of my family and some new neighbors had a gathering at home and it was great. The only thing was that the Air Force were flying Harvards round at night, and it was then that I realized that my nerves were shattered and I couldn't stay in Blenheim.

My parents had shifted into Blenheim after I sailed for Overseas, Dad died while I was in the Desert. The Army gave us three months leave and a free rail pass and vouchers for thirty gallons of petrol so three of us, Bert Murdock , Dan Osullivan, and Myself took off for Wellington where we had an enjoyable stay for a few weeks. Anyway we had fun and if anyone suggested work we left their town,I was able to visit some of my friends wives and parents,and found out how much they were missed. After three months of doing nothing I went home to Mums place, there was an awful frost so I didn't rise too early,that day about 10 am one of Mums brothers called and said that they wanted a useful bloke at the linen factory and suggested that I could fill that gap, I stayed there for a few weeks and was given various jobs, but had to make a move and as I said I was offered a job back with the public works department, so decided to take up cabinet making as I thought it would not be noisy, Rehab in their wisdom decided that I was to go to Hastings and work in Duncans Furniture factory. I had never been to Hastings before and was pleased to be able to catch up with some of my army friends, Len Trew was the first one I met and his family treated me like a son. Lens army number was one behind mine. I started work at Duncan's and a few weeks later managed to get private board with a family named Osborne who absolutely ruined me , and I stayed with them until I got married and left Hastings,to go farming'

About this time my honorable discharge from the army arrived and that terminated my association with the forces, or nearly. This story would not be complete without reference to the remarkable people I had the privilege of being closely associated with during the war. This list is only a few of the great people that i was involved with .

*General Freyberg.*

*Brigadier Ian Bonnifant .*

*Brigadier Hugh Robinson .*

*Lt Colonel Nicoll .*

*Doctor John Moore .*

*W.O.1 (Uncle) Bert Worthy.*

*Sergeant Snow Nicolas.*

*Corporal Jeff (Lofty) King.*

*Padre Harry Taylor(a special friend).*

*Brigadier Steve Weir (C.R.A.).*

*Lt Colonel Jim Sutherland .*

*Lt Colonel Nick Wilder.*

*Sgt Major Garth Secombe.*

*W.O.2 Bruce Jones.*

*Sergeant Jack Riddell.*

*Trooper Allan Risk. (my best army friend)*

*A trooper, Gunner, or private received 7 shillings & six pence a day, less\*/ 4&6 pence a day (deferred payment)). Extra duty pay was a shilling a day extra, (mechanic or the likes).*

*A Corporal received 9 shillings a day less 4&6 Deferred Payment.*

*A Sergeant received 10 shillings a day less 4&6 Deferred Payment Officers & Warrant Officers received more, but I am not sure how much.*

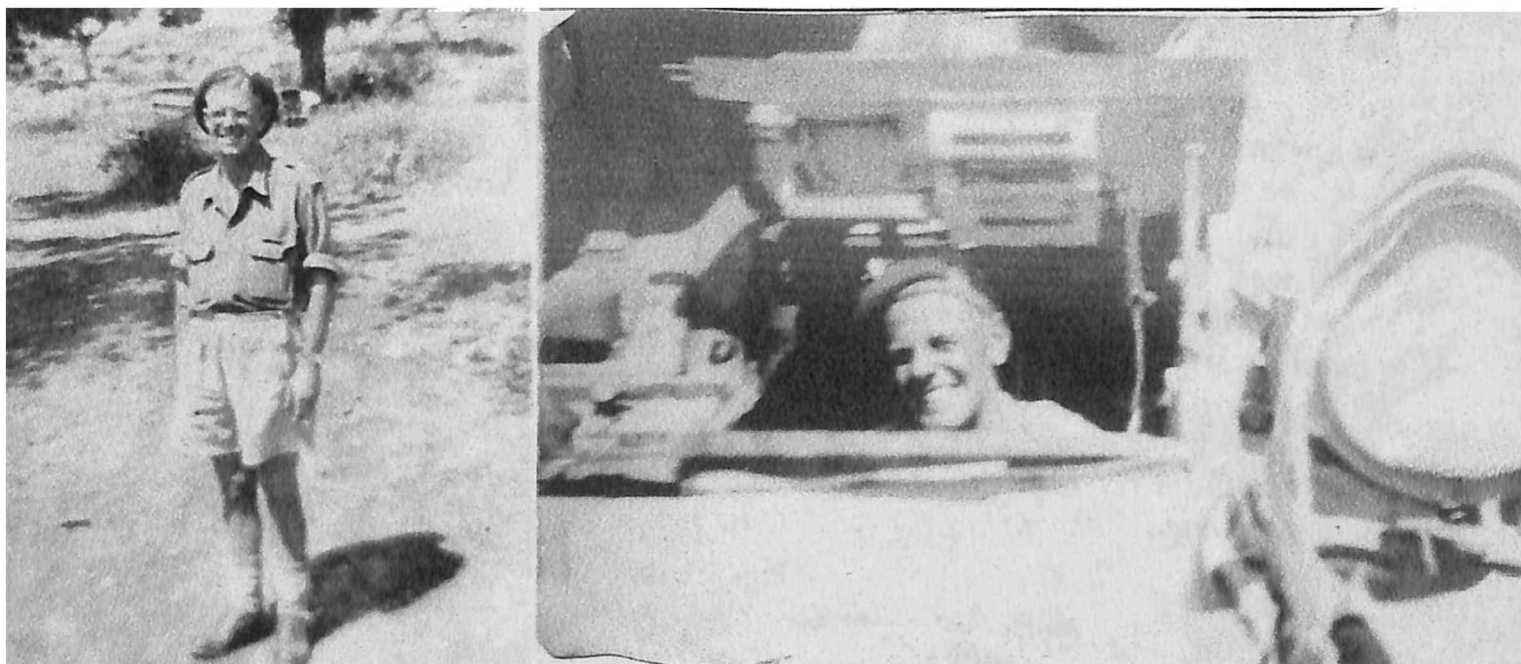
*Not much for doing what we were asked to do.*

*This is all for now, Regards to all, hope you enjoy reading this story.*

*Harry Spencer.*

*Since writing this story I have been inundated with requests for it, but to date have refused to have it printed in book form. I do not profess to be an Author and apologize for any errors. Maybe it is me that is senile and not the computer. I welcome any criticism that is thrown at me.*

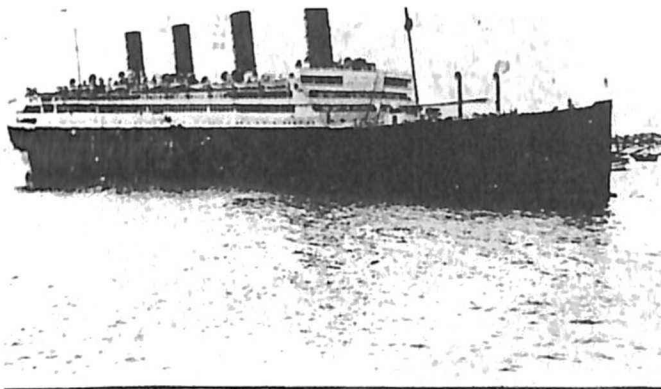
*Harry*



*Pad re Harry Taylor*

*He took this photo of the Author at Elalamien ,*





**Aquitania our first troopship**



**My first tank in England.**



**Nissan Hut Swanthorpe Officers had the big house.**



**The area we served in while stationed in England.**



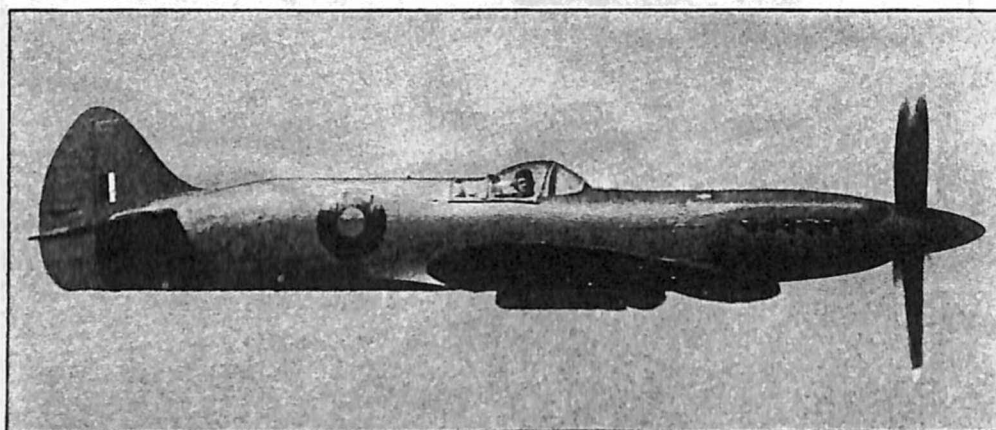
**The Wheel Inn Westwell, Ken**

*This type of aircraft and their Pilots helped to save England from the Hun invasion, in 1940.*

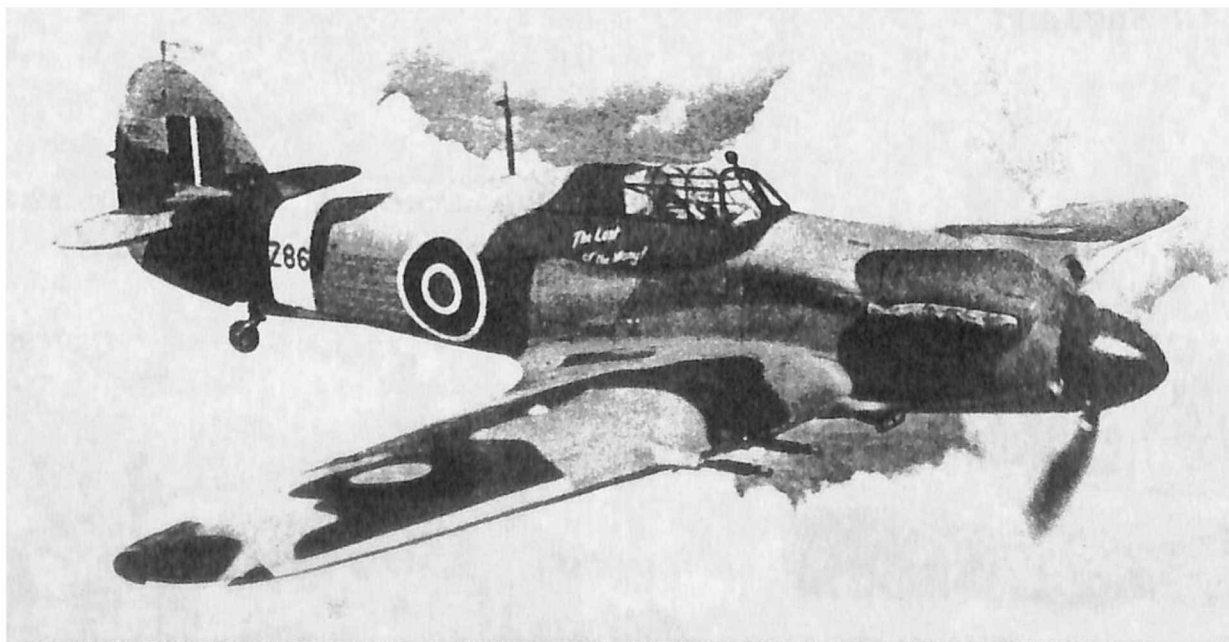
*The Navy also had a large part in play in its Defence.*



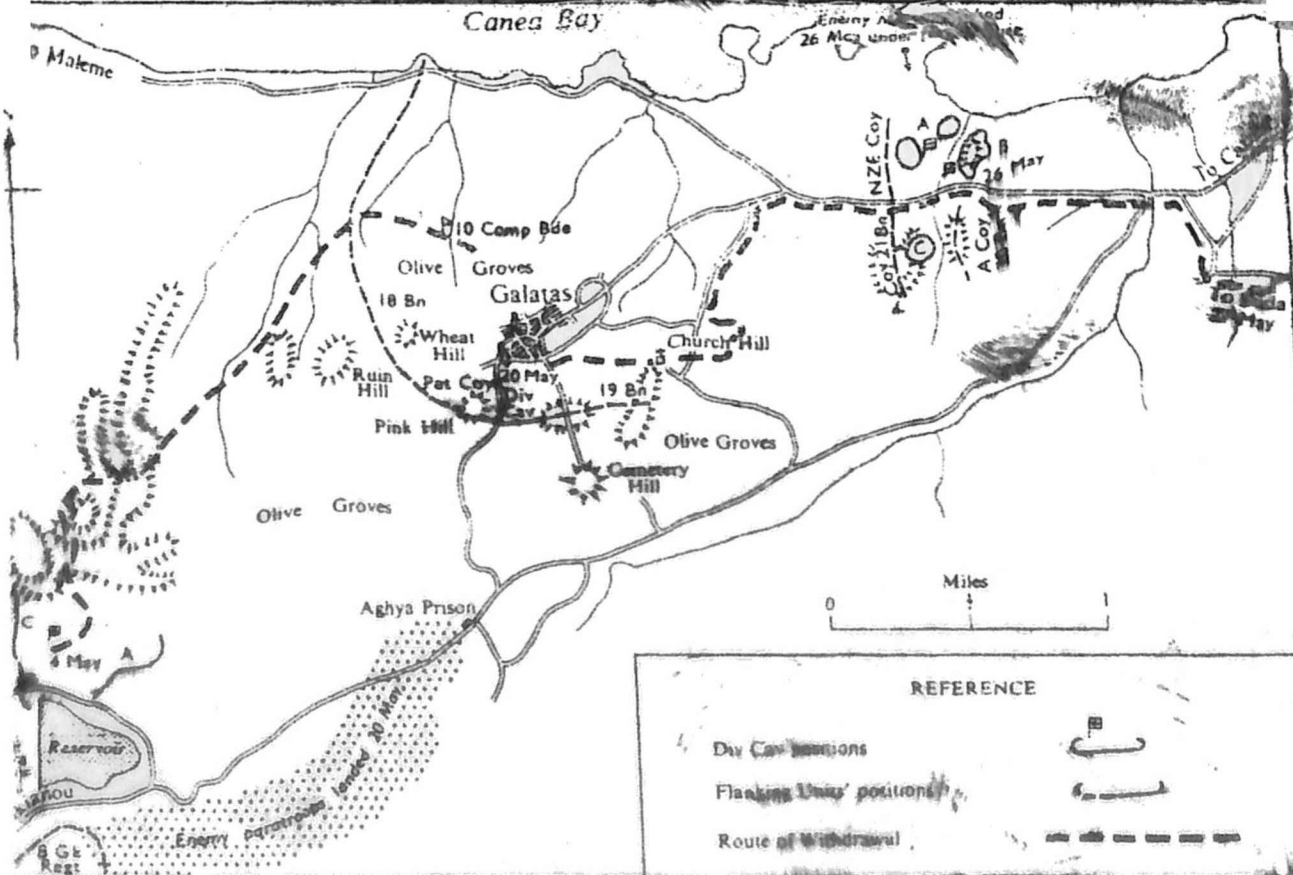
A Spitfire PR.19 showing its five-bladed propeller and the Griffon engine installation

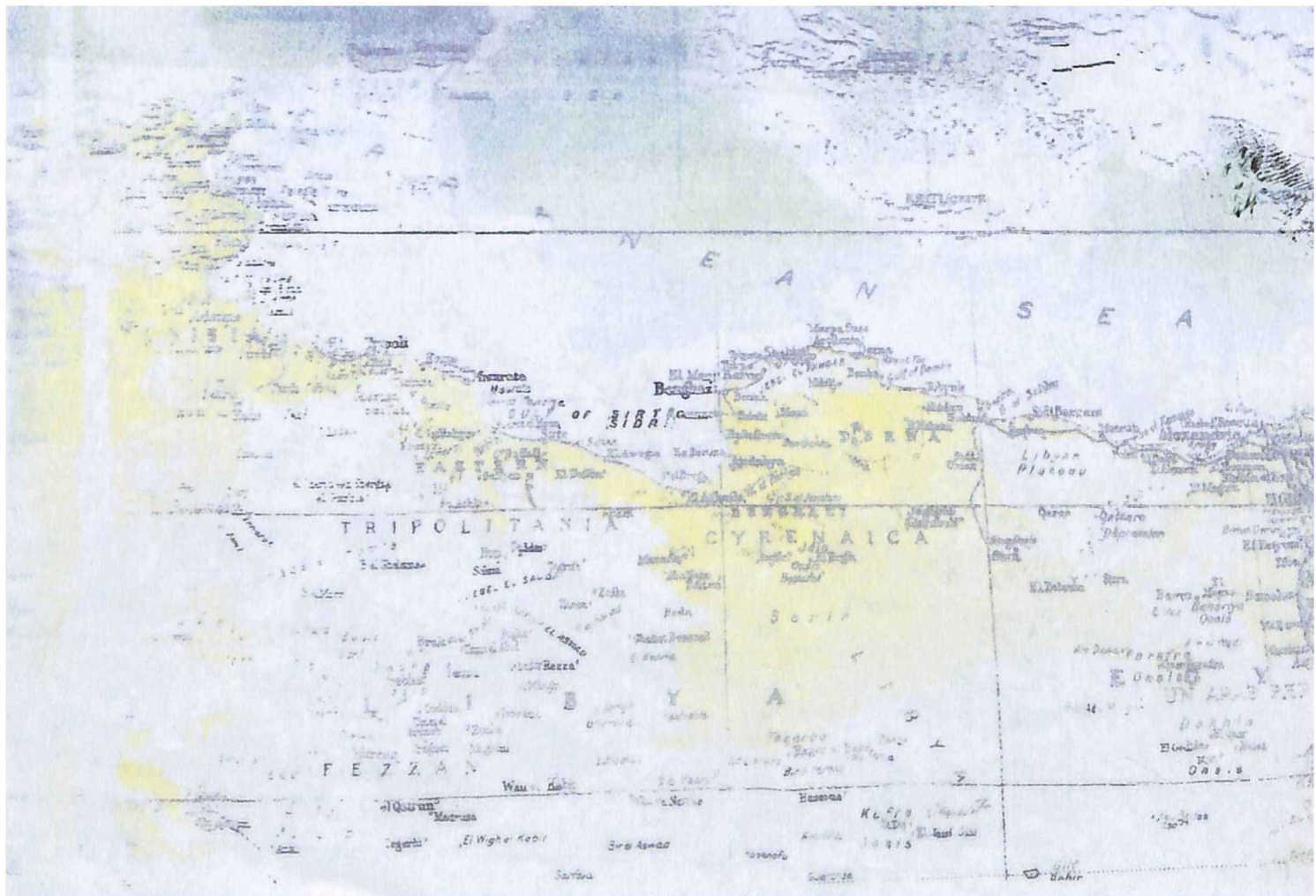
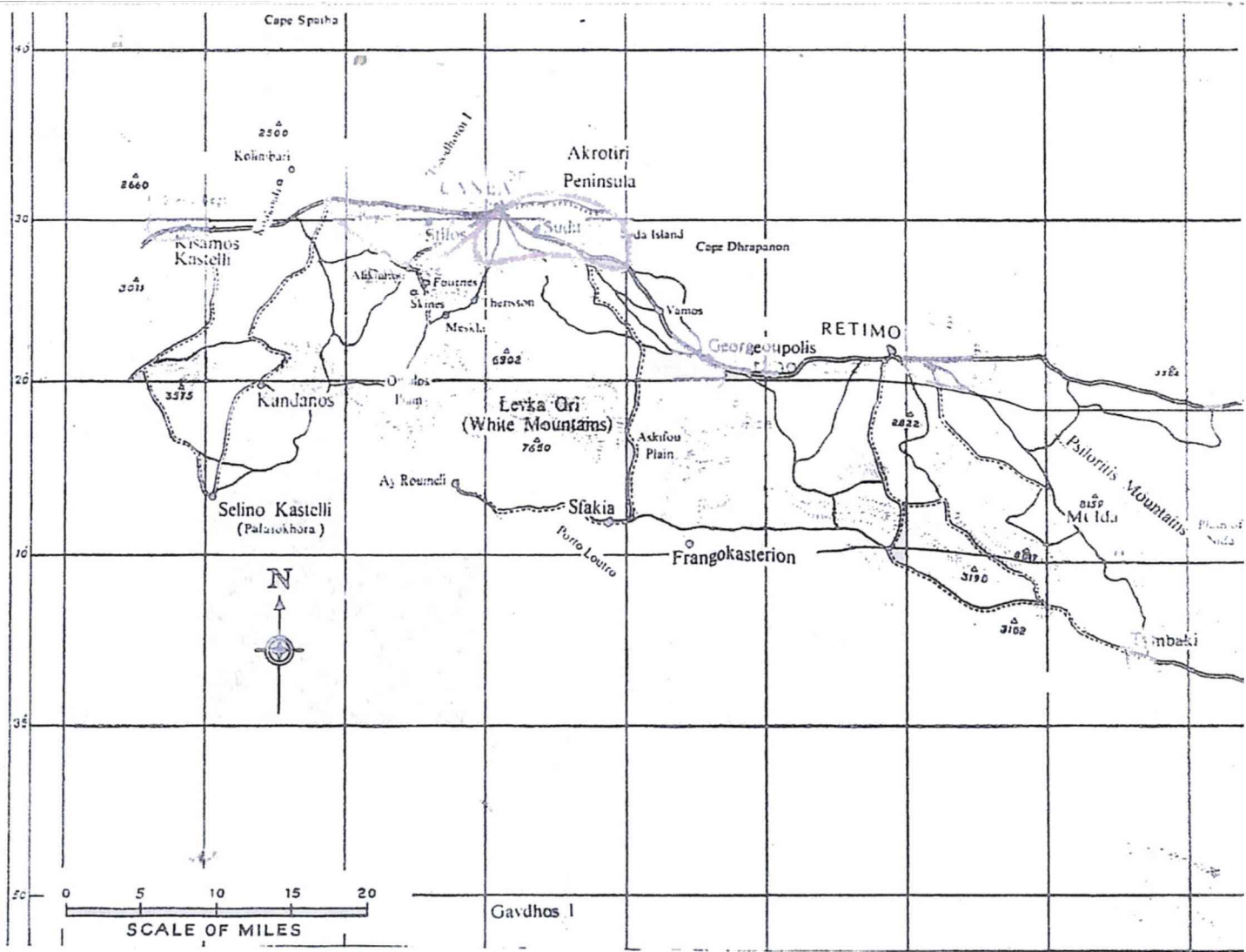


A Spitfire PR.19 of the RAF Battle of Britain Memorial Flight after the Second World War



The last production Hurricane, a HC bomber, flown by chief test pilot P W S Bulman. The aircraft was later registered as G-AMAT







*This was the area that we worked in when I was with the Jock Columns.*



*Harry Fred Bill Ken  
Spencer Belch Benham Lee.*

*One of twelve bren carriers that we unloaded off the rail at Daba and used to patrol north of the Qattara Depression when we arrived back from Syria, and before the battle of El Alamein to great advantage.*



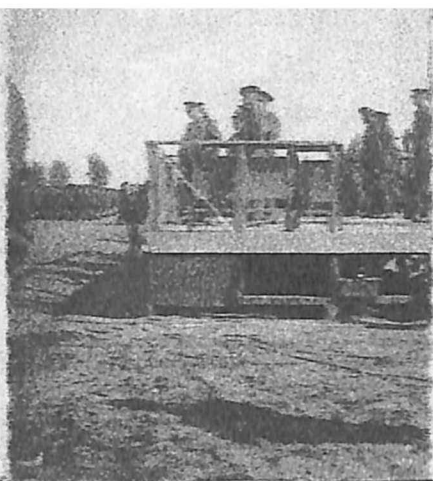
*General Frieberg's Tactical Headquarters tank (rear) and the three protective tanks (right). While he discussed tactics with Brigadier Weir.*



*No one Troop of C Squadron Divisional Cavalry was trusted with the job of protective Troop from El Alamein to Tunis.*



*Close view of the General's tank.*



*Victory parade at Tripoly*



*The Regiments Bren Carriers pass the saluting base at Tripoly February 1943*



*Rained just after the breakthrough.*

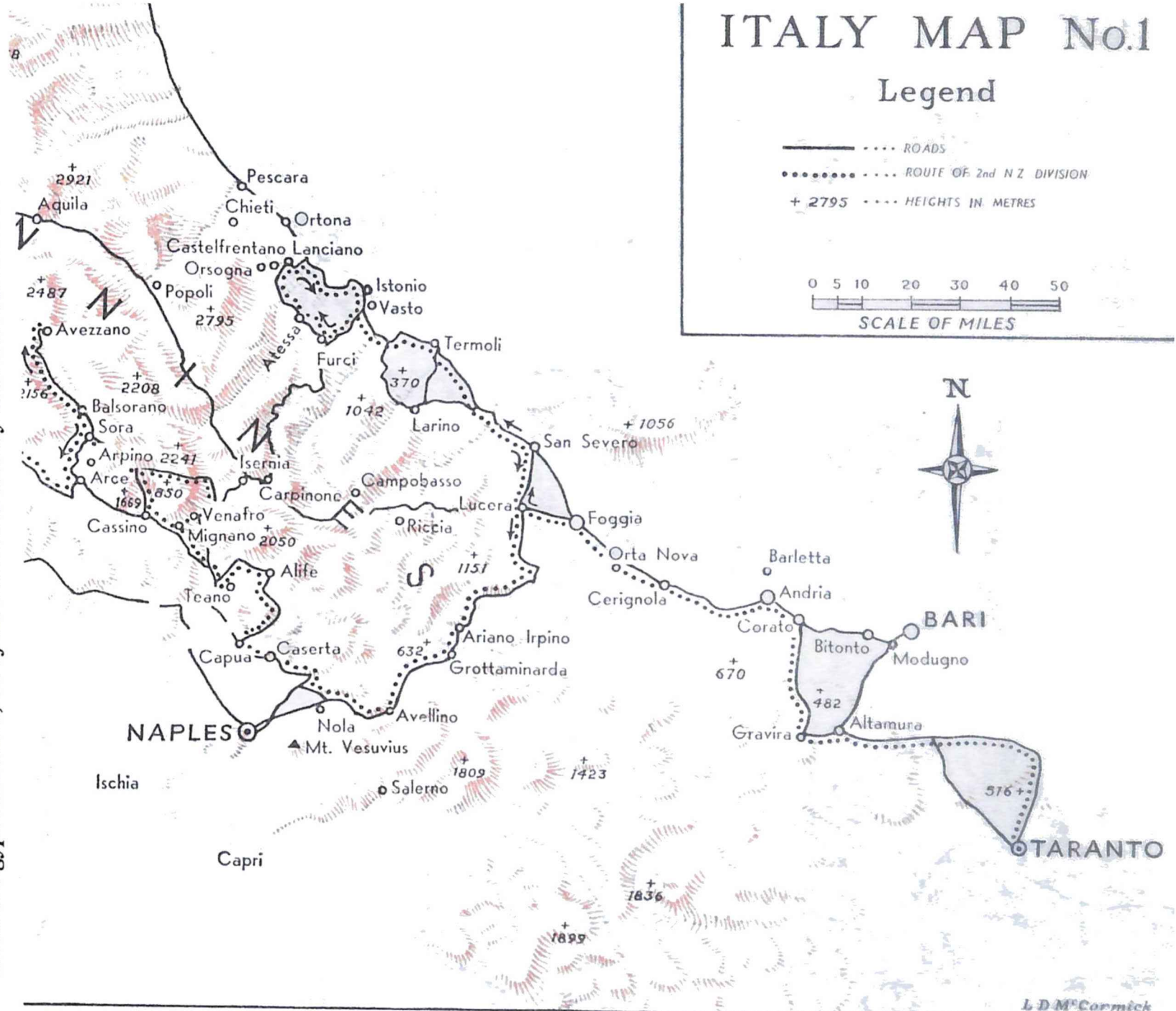


*How we cooked our meals.*

*I was our view of  
Takrouna which was  
the last hill to be taken  
in our area. General  
Freyberg was with us  
at this position and it  
was the last time we  
saw him until we  
were back in Egypt*



*Back to Egypt and leave, 40 of us were sent to Italy and the rest came home..*





*The Staghound Armored Cars that we used in Italy*



*A Messersmit 210 that our Troop captured on the Sangro riverbed.*

*Commanding Officers While I was with Divisional Cavalry.*

*C J Pierce*



*H C Carruth*



*A J Nichol*



*J H Sutherland*



*I L Bonnifant*



*N P Wilser*





*This Shield was made by Harry Andrel, and presented to the Div Cav after the War' All the Mounted Rifles Badges are depicted on on the Shield, also the names of all the Patrons, with the exception of Ken Yealands , (the present Patron). Harry died in Greece, while on a trip back to the Country he loved, and was buried there*



2 N Z DIV CAV REGT ASSN					
PATRONS					
J H SUTHERLAND	1949-69	H V SPENCER	1979-81	J L McLEOD	1991-1993
R B McQUEEN	1969-71	F G CONWAY	1981-83	L W JESSON	1993-1995
R R LIVINGSTONE	1971-73	R W SCOTT	1983-85	O F EUSTACE	1995-1997
D R THOMAS	1973-75	J P WILKINSON	1985-87		
J W WARDELL	1975-77	G THORRINGTON	1987-89		
J G CLEMENTS	1977-79	E A BISHELL	1989-91		

*The Colors were always kept in the care of the Scottish Regiment, and are left in the care of the Cathedral in Christchurch. They are always paraded at our Reunionns under Scottish Guards.*



REGIMENTAL COLOURS—N.Z. SCOTTISH REGIMENT These Colours were paid for largely by public donation including a considerable donation by N.Z. Divisional Cavalry Regiment Association. They carry the Battle Honours of the 2nd Divisional Cavalry Regiment won during World War 2. These Honours are MOUNT OLYMPUS—CRETE—TOBRUK—ALAMEIN—TEBAGA GAP—ENFIDAVILLE—THE SANGRO—CASSINO—ADVANCE TO FLORENCE—BOLOGNA



*Our latest Div Cav Mascot "Alexandra" Stephens  
Daughter of Mrs Shona and Major Sholta Stevens  
Also featured is proud Grandfather Bob Scott who  
is our very capable Dominion Secretary assisted by  
his lovely wife Betty who I am sure does most of the  
computer work, and keeps the Rolls in perfect order.  
Thanks to you both.*