

Name: Clarence William Turner.

**Rank: WX7291 Lieutenant 2/2nd Independent
Company A Platoon Number 3 Section.**

After landing on Portugeses Timor we settled into an area west of Dili and close to the aerodrome which was approximately one mile west of Dili, capital of Timor. I then took a working party into Dili to unload our stores and supplies which had to be transported to the camp and the aerodrome. Headquarters had been established in the hangers at the drome. It was here that I had my first real contact with the Timorese who were very anxious to be friendly and also very helpful. Not knowing their language and them not knowing ours it was difficult all round but they were quick and eager to learn. I found them a very helpful race of people and although they had very little they were always happy to share the little they had.

When the company began to disperse out of the Dili area into the mountains, my section was left at the aerodrome for sometime. This period was used in reconnaissance of the town, nearby villages and the surrounding area, including slightly into the mountains. Around 8.00 o'clock one night I received several reports of lights being sighted on the beach area to the west towards the mouth of the Comoro River. I took a patrol out to investigate but was unable to confirm a positive report. While there, we had a day off to relax in the town of Dili and it was here we had our first taste of hostilities as two Jap fighter planes dived in from about 10000 feet and opened fire on the main area of the town and left immediately to the north. No casualties. Shortly after that we rejoined the Platoon Commander, Captain Baldwin and Lieutenant Dexter's Number 1 section at Salt

Lake Flats (commonly known as Cactus Flats). Lieutenant McKenzie with Number 2 section took over my section's duties at the aerodrome. My section and I, along with Number 1 section, went on with further reconnaissance work into the mountains and getting to know the area in general for about three weeks.

Captain Baldwin A Platoon Commander, then moved us further west higher into the mountains to an area known to us as Three Spurs Camp. After a short period getting to know this area, it was there on the morning of the 20th February 1942 that we had heard the news that the Japs had landed at the mouth of the Comoro River, west of Dili and marched to the drome. Number 2 section had left their mark well and truly on the Japs and had withdrawn to the mountains after blowing up the runways of the aerodrome. Also we found out that a lot of Lieutenant Campbell's men had been ambushed on their way to Dili on a truck. They were taken off the truck, shot and bayoneted. Keith Hayes managed to survive this slaughter. Instead of this being as intended, a day of relaxation for the Section, it was to be the real start of our war and survival on Timor. It was stated that a very large force had landed and gone into action at the Drome undercover of shelling from the sea. So it seemed we were in for a torrid time. Luckily most of Lieutenant McKenzie's men had managed to get out of Dili after putting up a great battle and worked their way back to join us at Three Spurs Camp. Also a small Dutch force, who were stationed in and around Dili, had moved south through the Aileu area towards the south coast.

At this point A Platoon remained in the Ermera area, B Platoon were north of us in the Liquica area and I believe C Platoon were slightly east of us in the Maubisse area. It was soon reported that the Japanese had sent out three patrols, believed to be consisting of about 100 men. One group moved west along the north coast towards B Platoon,

another towards Ermera and the third, south to Aileu. As the Japs approached these areas it wasn't long before we were in action again and our forces set many successful ambushes. B platoon to the north of us were attacked and they caused many casualties amongst the Japs before having to withdraw. Number 2 section, A Platoon were approximately two to three miles along the ridge ahead of my section which gave them a line of withdrawal. Number 1 section, under the command of Lieutenant Dexter, were further south east towards the small town of Ermera. At this stage Lieutenant Turton with his section of sappers blew up the bridge over the Glano River short of Ermera to block the Jap advance. I think it was on the second day after B Platoon was attacked, that the Japs moved south along our ridge and were ambushed by Number 2 section. I sent a small patrol under Corporal Palmer, five in all I think, to make contact with Number 2 section and report back to me. After some time the firing ceased and I had no further word from Number 2 section or my patrol. We held our position until late evening and when the Japs appeared along the ridge in front of us, we opened fire on them for approximately twenty minutes, I then withdrew my men down the valley towards Number 1 section at Ermera. We arrived at a native village about 8pm (2000 hours) and they gave us some food and a place to sleep. Next morning they gave us the news that the Japs were in Ermera and very close to us. The Timorese kept us hidden until that night. Then they got us out and took us to another village. We arrived about midnight, and after giving us what food they had (pretty terrible but we were really grateful) they gave us a place to rest until daylight. They told us there were some of our people at Hatolia, so we left there and arrived at Hatolia at 0900 hours. We found Number 2 section were already there along with some food, which the Dutch had stashed. Tinned mutton and biscuits never tasted so good. It was here the next day that we heard we were to proceed and rendezvous at Calaco which was only a day's travel away, but a hell of a long climb to reach. The news there

was that the Japs had returned to Dili having lost many men in all areas. It was gratifying that we had caused them plenty of trouble. On reaching Calaco, I found that about a half of our force was already there and were under the command of our second in charge, Bernard Callanan. I reported to him and he advised me that we needed food to feed the men, I was given the job of getting meat as I had been a butcher in civilian life. With Corporal Hillman and three Timor ponies we set off down the mountain to find a buffalo. We found five Buffalo in a wallow and I selected a nice half grown one, shot and bled it and within five minutes a native had appeared to claim it. He was a bit upset, but when I said our men were starving and offered to pay him 12 patacas (\$1.80 our money at the time), he soon calmed down and accepted. I just can't remember how I achieved the act of skinning, cutting and the work of getting it completed and transported on the Timor ponies back up the mountain. It was manna from heaven for those hungry men and we were also able to purchase rice from the native villages. This was only the beginning and over the months to come I killed many buffalo, pigs and goats to help with our food supplies. I also shot and dressed three Malaysian Steers later in the same area while I was there. Although these were wonderful food, they were too rich and upset the men who were not used to that sort of food.

Around this time, we were all moved to new areas to establish our situation. Headquarters (HQ) was set up in Bobonaro. B Platoon was moved back east of Dili to the Manatuto area where they began to observe and ambush the Japs each time they moved out of the Dili area. C Platoon covered the central area of Maubisse and Aileu, while A Platoon covered the western border area with Number 1 section north, Number 2 section south, and Number 3 section central. Things then became fairly quiet for some time.

It was at this time that some members of the 2/ 40 Battalion from the west end of Timor began to arrive and join up with us, this unit had previously surrendered after heavy fighting. As more arrived, a further platoon was formed and extra men were being attached to the existing platoons. I also heard at this time that Corporal Palmer and the boys with him who had gone over the border into West Timor, were okay and on their way back. Exact numbers were not then known, but approximately one hundred men joined us from the 2/40 Battalion.

It was at this time I was called to headquarters and given orders to move east through Mape, Hata - uda to Ainaro to establish contact with the administrators of these areas and find out the possibilities of food supplies, horses etc. I was also to gain a general picture and to report on these areas for future reference if and when needed. These areas proved to be very good and were later to become most helpful. After a short period at Ainaro I was ordered north to Hatabalico (the highest peak on Timor some 7000 feet above sea level and very cold). Here we were to patrol north to keep contact with C Platoon at Maubisse under Captain Boyland. Also we maintained an observation post over Let-foho from a saddle in the Mount Koblac ranges. It was at this point that Corporal Bob Palmer with his patrol managed to rejoin us and there was great rejoicing to have them back with us.

The next move was a terrible trek over Mount Koblac and down between Atsabe and Let-foho around the south of Maubisse valley and back to Bobonaro as a withdrawal point for both 1 and 2 sections of A Platoon. Soon after our arrival Jap planes bombed Hata-uda and followed up the next day to bomb Bobonaro. Luckily they missed their target of the administrator's home. The administrator and his family were unhurt as most of the damage was in the open area between the 'Posto', shopping centre and housing area where my section were at the time. Soon after this, word passed around about the big push by

the Japs to once and for all get rid of these annoying Australian Commando's who were causing them such havoc each time they moved from the safety of Dili.

It appeared that they had landed two forces on the south coast, one to the west of our positions and one to the east of us. Also two forces moved out from the north coast, one east of Dili and one west from the border of East Timor. These were large forces and this soon developed into an all-out push. Clashes began and skirmishes were happening as their numbers were overwhelming our forces. I heard that they were only a day from my position and in anticipation of Number 1 section pulling back through me, I stood all my men in positions around Bobonaro. They had been in place for some time without anything happening, so I sent most of the section back to camp to get themselves something to eat. I took Alf Hillman and Charlie Waller to 'recco' the ridge and the general area where we expected Number 1 section to appear. We saw quite a large group in the distance, but the light was not good enough to identify them. We were approximately a chain apart as we approached the top of the ridge when we were confronted by 3 Japs. They called for us to surrender , but we opened fire immediately - Alf Hillman with a Thompson Sub-Machine gun, myself and Charlie Waller with rifles. It was very quick and short so I called to the others to get out and as I did, Alf was hit. Also Charlie went down and didn't move. We had about 50 yards to get over a further ridge and down the mountain to cover. We had no hope of getting Charlie out and on checking, Alf had had a bullet go through the muscle of the upper arm. I used his field bandage to bind his wound. Alf and I then moved back to get the rest of my men despite having had no word or sight of Number 1 or Number 2 sections. We moved back towards Atsabie leaving the Bobonaro area . We saw a further Japanese patrol on the ridge to our left towards Maurobo. It was at Atsabie that reports of other attacks

started to give us a picture of what was happening around us and we also heard of the natives having attacked Smash Hodgson and of the mess they had made of him. Also at this stage, food supplies were again a big problem. Number 2 and Number 3 sections combined to set up an ambush on a large Japanese force south of the Maubisse valley. This resulted in great success and we felt that around 100 Japs were killed or badly wounded. This action has been documented elsewhere. I then moved my section back over Mount Koblac and down to Hatbalico once more.

At this stage the Jap troops were suddenly recalled and things became very quiet for awhile. I was then ordered back through Bobonaro, Marpe, Hat-uda and out east to the Same area to investigate food supplies and withdrawal possibilities. Here the natives gave us a wonderful reception and brought us gifts of food of all sorts. The administrator gave me a beautiful white stallion to use and he was a treasure to ride. My creado (Astromo) thought he was just 'It' being in charge of this horse. I had also gathered a team of Timor ponies to transport supplies. I am unable to remember the name of the chap who I had in charge of them (he was Timorese). As other troops came into this area and the Betano area I managed to kill the Malayan cattle and distributed the meat around the area. While here at Same we were given two good houses to live in (a real luxury) and I had some signallers with me. I can't remember just who they were but to say a signal was coming through at the time and just received when we heard aircraft approaching. We took cover along the brick foundations just as two planes appeared out of the valley and opened fire on us and made a return strafing run on us and disappeared. Luckily there were no casualties, but it was damn frightening at the time. When the message was deciphered it was; two Beau fighters will be attacking Aileu at 1100 hours. Report results at your earliest. That information was forwarded, no apology received. At this time the Timorese I had

looking after the transport ponies disappeared one night along with seven or eight horses. This was the only time I found anything against the Timorese. Other than that incident I had the highest regard for these wonderful people and I believe we could never have survived without their help and loyalty.

My next move was down to Betano and I operated in that area with no further contact with the Japs. The final move was to the coast ready to be picked up by a destroyer at night. The destroyer answered our signal at sea soon after we lit signal fires around 2000 hours. It was a wonderful relief to think that at last we were going home. But to leave those brave, happy creados who had been our eyes, ears and pals for so long was heart-breaking and something we will never forget. I was very proud to be part of a wonderful unit, our 2/2nd Independent Company.