

PRIVATE MERVYN LINDSAY (DOC) WHEATLEY (WX13365)
– 1912-2006

PRIVATE NO 8 SECTION, C PLATOON

<https://doublereds.org.au/history/men-of-the-22/wx/mervyn-lindsay-wheatley-r718/>

BIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES

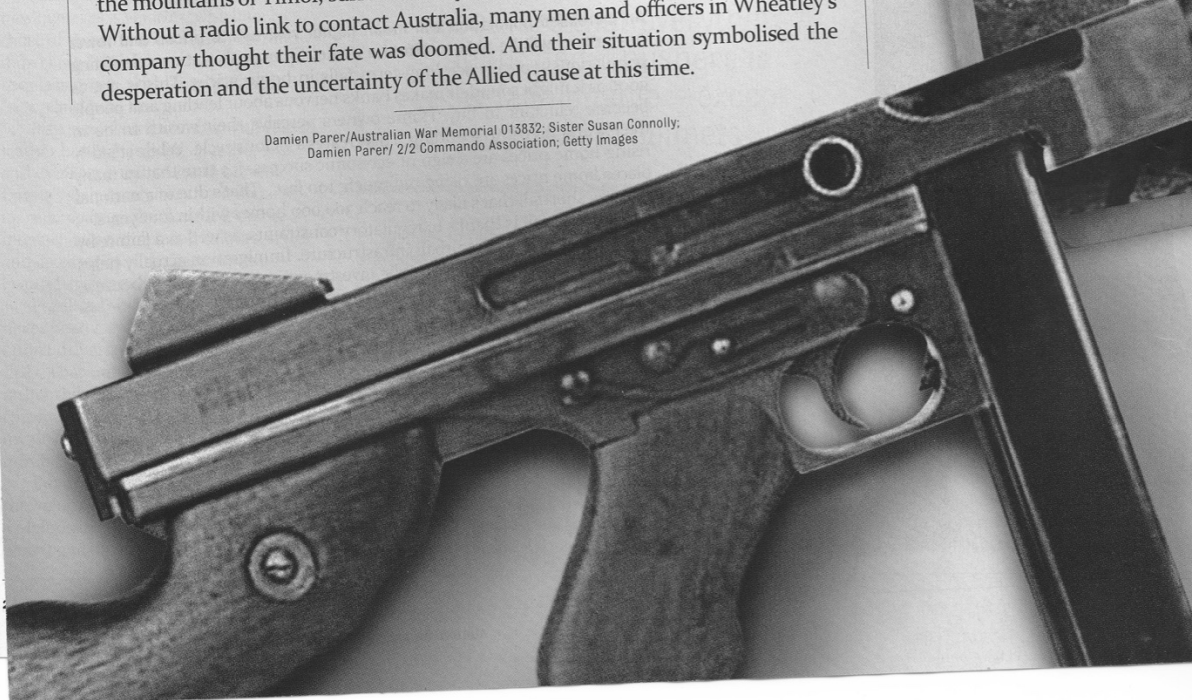


Deadly Force

Surrounded by the Japanese in Timor in 1942, a small band of Australian soldiers were determined to fight back any way they could. *Paul Cleary* recounts the day five untested diggers decided to go commando

PRIVATE MERVYN "DOC" WHEATLEY, 28, A SHEARER, HORSE BREAKER AND professional kangaroo shooter from the vast Pilbara region of Western Australia, was frustrated and angry and, more than anything else, he was still grieving the loss of his mates. The Japanese had murdered 15 men from his platoon in cold blood on the first day of their invasion of Portuguese Timor, but what made matters worse for Wheatley was that his officers seemed reluctant to fight back. At that time Wheatley's company of 270 men was the only unit in the Australian Army's 8th Division of more than 22,000 men not captured by the Japanese. After this highly mechanised war machine had swept unstopably through Asia, Wheatley's unit was trapped in the mountains of Timor, surrounded by thousands of seasoned Japanese troops. Without a radio link to contact Australia, many men and officers in Wheatley's company thought their fate was doomed. And their situation symbolised the desperation and the uncertainty of the Allied cause at this time.

Damien Parer/Australian War Memorial 013832; Sister Susan Connolly; Damien Parer/ 2/2 Commando Association; Getty Images





Accidental guerrillas
 Stan Sadler (top, on the left)
 Australian soldiers with
 Timorese allies (centre)
 and sniper Mervyn Wheatley

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It was April 1942, more than a month since the Japanese troops had landed in Timor and Wheatley's platoon had watched them work their way unchallenged into the coffee-growing highlands southwest of Dili, encroaching on the territory his company occupied. Wheatley knew instinctively that if his company didn't take the offensive, then the Timorese villagers who were feeding and sheltering them might decide they were not really worth protecting any more. So when an officer asked for volunteers to "have a crack", Wheatley was the first to put up his hand. Volunteering ran in the family – Wheatley was one of five brothers who were to serve in Australian forces during this war.

The lean and sinewy bushman was one of the platoon's snipers, and he was a natural with a rifle. As one of 10 children, Wheatley had begun working on outback stations at the age of 13. After becoming accomplished in all facets of station work, he roamed the Pilbara shooting kangaroos for their skins. Wheatley teamed up with his good mate, Private Stan Sadler, 24, a wheat farmer from Wongan Hills, WA, who was one of the platoon's Thompson (Tommy) submachine gunners. It was as haphazard and poorly planned as this: two lowly ranked privates wandering off to have a few shots at a Japanese regiment that had conquered everything in its path, from China to Hong Kong, the Dutch East Indies and now Portuguese Timor.

They set off with the aid of Timorese guides in the direction of the Japanese, passing the plantation centre of Vila Maria, which struck Wheatley as a "pretty place". There they met the head of the company's signals section, Lt John Rose, 22, from Mudgee, NSW, who was living in a colonial house surrounded by rose gardens. From this vantage point Rose and two other

signallers, Don Murray and Ron Sprigg, watched the Japanese trucks go past every day. When Wheatley suggested that Rose join him, he and his men agreed, even though as signallers they had undergone even less training in fighting a guerrilla war than other men in the company. Rose's men thought he was a little crazy, but still they followed this officer armed only with a pistol close to the clutches of the enemy.

The party of five headed for an expected truck movement along a windy, hairpin-bend road linking the centres of Ermera and Hato-Lia, leaving behind their Timorese aides, who were to wait with their heavy gear. Upon reaching the road, Rose showed that he had little idea of how to stage a roadside ambush. He chose a location that the men feared would get them all killed as they would have to cross the road to make their getaway. Sadler told the senior officer bluntly that it was a "suicide spot". Wheatley agreed, so Rose told him to choose another position.

Wheatley moved them to the other side of the road and then climbed up to a position with a commanding view. Wheatley thought it was a nice spot as he was able to rest his rifle's 66cm barrel on a log and get clear shots at the road. The position also enabled Wheatley to cover the retreat of his four mates below, who hid themselves in scrub and 2m-tall coffee trees.

And so this gang of five previously untested soldiers began a nervous wait before their first enemy encounter. Signaller Murray, 20, a radio technician from Perth, was so nervous that after about an hour his bowels began to rumble, so he walked some distance away to relieve himself. Just as he was in the throes, a truck loaded with about 15 Japanese troops arrived on the scene. Murray managed to rejoin his mates just before the first shots were fired. The riflemen opened up, stopping the truck and prompting the Japanese soldiers on the back to leap off. Sadler couldn't get a clear aim with his Tommy gun so



High-risk delivery: Australian troops in Timor meet a covert supply drop late in 1942



Special forces: The men of 2/2 Independent Company at Larrimah in December 1942, after returning from duty in Timor

he stepped out onto the road and fired a long burst at the soldiers who were jumping off the truck and had begun to return fire. Sadler's powerful gun kicked to the right as he fired the long burst but it silenced the enemy fire for a moment. Sadler was "terrified" as he met the enemy at a range of 5-6 metres. The Japanese, with their "hands covering their faces, were more terrified". When Sadler went to continue firing he discovered that he only had one bullet left in his magazine; he had been so frightened that he had fired 19 bullets in that long burst, instead of three- to four-round bursts as he'd been trained.

Moments later a second truck laden with more troops was seen approaching. Rose waved his arm in the air, to signal the retreat, though the job was only half done. Rose's men fired some shots at the second truck and then bolted down a track towards a small stream before ascending a steep slope to make their getaway. One of the men fell over as he splashed through the water, and in his panic to escape Sadler dropped a magazine and then lost the track. He tried to climb straight up, but the steep slope made his exit impossible. The surviving Japanese returned a burst of fire from a light machine gun as Sadler found the track and he ran up the slope, crouched low, and then came upon Wheatley, who was still firing. The surviving enemy soldiers ran around wildly as they tried to find cover, while others continued to return fire; at this moment it seemed that some of them might survive their terrifying encounter with an unseen opponent.

Wheatley was not going anywhere. He calmly told Sadler to keep going – he would catch him later. Wheatley had the situation in hand as he picked off the remaining Japanese from his high vantage point after loading each round with the rifle's bolt action. He had placed five five-round cartridges in a neat row on the ground beside him so that he could reload his rifle without having to look down. The Japanese, who probably couldn't see Wheatley, were running "this way and that" as he shot them methodically, soon bringing about an end to the return fire. He used his scope on two Japanese soldiers who "thought they'd got away"; one who had run up the road and another who was hiding in some scrub. One wounded soldier was screaming his lungs out. So Wheatley fired a second shot at him to end his suffering. Before leaving he put a bullet in the engine block of each truck. And then there was silence.

Wheatley picked up his remaining cartridges, stood up and casually walked up the hill in the direction of his mates. As he left the ambush scene littered with enemy dead Wheatley felt no sorrow for his victims. In fact he felt "very happy" with how he had performed in his first enemy encounter, and with what he had accomplished – he had "repaid" the Japanese for the massacre of his mates. He walked over the hill and found the rest of the party waiting for him. This was to be the only ambush from which Wheatley was able to walk away.

Not only had Wheatley avenged his mates, he had also defined a very effective form of hit and run attack by small bands of men that

One wounded soldier was screaming his lungs out. So Wheatley fired a second shot at him to end his suffering. Before leaving he put a bullet in the engine block of each truck. And then there was silence

would prove a model for his company of so-called guerrilla fighters. Shortly after this ambush, Wheatley conducted an even more daring roadside attack, and the men of his company began carrying out disciplined attacks on Japanese soldiers across the mountains of Portuguese Timor. All of this took place months before the Australians met the Japanese on the Kokoda Track. At the time, when Japan had conquered Asia

and had come within striking distance of Australia, the guerrilla warfare prosecuted by the 2/2 Australian Independent Company amounted to the only offensive action taken by Allied land forces against the Japanese in all of the Asia-Pacific region. At this bleak moment, when all other Allied resistance in Asia had ceased to exist, this small group of Australians showed that the all-conquering Japanese could be matched and beaten.

Extract from *The Men Who Came Out of the Ground – A gripping account of Australia's first commando campaign: Timor 1942* by Paul Cleary (Hachette, \$35)

Mervyn Lindsay Wheatley as a rifleman 2/2nd Australian Independent Company, Timor 1941-1942, interviewed by Brad Manera

Accession Number	502787
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Date made	4-5 February 2002
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Conflict	Second World War, 1939-1945
Copyright	Item copyright: © Australian War Memorial  This item is licensed under CC BY-NC
Copying Provisions	Copyright restrictions apply: Only personal, non-commercial, research and study use permitted. Permission of copyright holder required for any commercial use and/or reproduction.

Description

Wheatley speaks of his family background; enlistment in the AIF; selection for 2/2nd Australian Independent Company; deployment to Koepang, Timor; 'Doc' as his nickname; how being a kangaroo shooter before the war helped him develop his skill as a sniper; guerrilla operations against the Japanese and dependence on the local Timorese for survival; the loyalty of the 'creados'; comparisons between their help and that given the Australians by the natives in New Guinea; discord between the East and West Timorese, each offering varying degrees of assistance to the Australians; his experience of a Japanese ambush; becoming separated from his group during a patrol in the Maubisse area and the use of booby traps against the enemy; his comparison between the tactics of the Japanese in New Guinea and those used on Timor; being nicknamed 'Doc' for helping casualties in his unit in New Guinea; his apprehension and fear of patrolling in the jungles of Timor; witnessing the torture and execution of a fellow soldier by the Japanese; his view of the Japanese soldier; target practice to maintain rifle skills; eventual evacuation from Timor; regret at having to leave his weapons and 'creado' behind.

A transcript of this recording may be available. For further information please contact the Sound section.

 Listen to Mervyn Lindsay Wheatley as a rifleman 2/2nd Australian Independent Company, Timor 1941-1942, interviewed by Brad Manera



<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C991610>



AUSTRALIAN ARMY COMBAT SUPPORT SERIES – 2

ONE SHOT KILLS

A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN ARMY SNIPING

Glenn Wahlert and Russell Linwood



PROTECTING ARMY HERITAGE
PROMOTING ARMY HISTORY

British/Australian World War II sniper rifle

Enfield Pattern 1914 [Rifle No. 3 Mk. I* W (T)]



A Pattern 1914 Enfield No. 3 Mk. I* (T) sniper rifle with a Pattern 1918 telescopic sight (AWM REL06068.001).

The shortcomings of the SMLE as a sniper rifle were well known by the time the Second World War erupted and alternatives were quickly sought. One of these was the .303 Enfield Pattern 1914 (P14), later designated Rifle No. 3 Mk. I*. An earlier version of the P14 (based on the P13) had been successfully trialled by the British Army prior to the First World War. However, Britain's entry into the war, competing demands on its domestic industry and technical difficulties with the specialised ammunition meant that no full-scale production facility was established. Instead, Britain placed orders with three companies in the United States. Winchester was the principal supplier, using a variant of its M1917 and concepts from the P13, producing the P14 in .303 calibre. A distinguishing brass circular plate was affixed to the right side of the butt given the differences in calibre when the US Army deployed to France in 1917 with the M1917.

Compared to the SMLE, the P14 included a stronger Mauser-style action, a heavier profile barrel, longer sighting radius with a folding aperture backsight, a one-piece stock, a five-round internal magazine, and was simpler to manufacture. The new rifle proved extremely accurate and, by the end of the war, sniper variants were being produced for the British Army.

The shortage of sniper rifles in Australia at the outbreak of the Second World War saw the P14 rifle given a new lease of life. A number were stripped and rebuilt as sniper variants by the Small Arms Factory at Lithgow. These were fitted with a locally produced Pattern 1918, three-power, overbore, high claw-mount telescope and designated the Rifle Enfield No. 3 Mk. I* W (T), 'W' for Winchester, and 'T' for telescope. The P14 served as an important stop-gap measure while another sniper rifle could be developed and produced, which did not occur until late in the war. In the early years of the war, one British officer was very impressed with the Australian snipers who were using the P14, remarking that 'these kangaroo shooters' in the Army were 'really remarkable shots ... In Timor one of these ... was credited with 47 Japanese killed, but with characteristic modesty claimed only 25 certainties, remarking: "In my game you can't count a 'roo unless you see him drop and know exactly where to go and skin him".'

It is unclear whether the *Afrika Korps* employed marksmen or snipers although the German force at Tobruk certainly possessed a number of sniper rifles. During the Western Desert campaign it took the German Army some time to adjust to the highly mobile nature of the warfare and develop its sniper techniques, tactics and procedures. However, as the campaign bogged down into static warfare during the siege of Tobruk in 1941, the Germans were able to fall back on First World War sniper practices. This included moving out into no man's land under cover of darkness to locate and attack high priority targets such as mortar and machine-gun crews, artillery observers, officers and enemy snipers. Unlike in the First World War, German snipers usually operated in pairs and there were examples of snipers engaging targets at long range to harass and force their enemy to ground; some of these engagements were out to 1100 metres.

The commando sniper

When Japan entered the Second World War as an Axis Power in December 1941, the majority of Australia's military forces were deployed overseas. After the fall of Singapore and the ignominious surrender of the 8th Australian Division on 15 February 1942, all that remained to protect the Australian mainland were several partially trained and equipped divisions, an under-strength Royal Australian Air Force with largely obsolete aircraft, and a Royal Australian Navy with less than half a dozen battleworthy warships in the Asia-Pacific region.

In 1942 the Australian government recalled I Australian Corps from the Middle East, expanded the Militia and appealed to the United States for assistance in defending Australia from Japanese invasion. All these actions would take time to realise: the militia required substantial manpower, equipment and training; the divisions returning from the Middle East would need to be retrained and prepared for warfare in a vastly different environment; the United States would need time to establish its forces in Australia before being able to launch an offensive; Australian industry and manpower had to be placed on a war footing and the population prepared for attacks on Australia's territories and even the mainland; and the Australian government and senior military officers needed to work out how to run a war at both the strategic and operational levels.

The situation in early 1942 was indeed dire and there were few viable military options open to the Australian government. Military units were initially deployed piecemeal across several islands to the north in the form of a screen and in the optimistic hope that they could defend key strategic installations such as airfields and report on Japanese military movements. This deployment included reinforced battalion groups such as Lark Force at Rabaul, Sparrow Force in Timor and Gull Force on Ambon. Lark and Gull Forces were quickly defeated by a much larger Japanese force. But in Timor the 2/2nd Independent Company, and later the 2/4th Independent Company, successfully waged a guerrilla war against the Japanese until the Australians were forced to withdraw in early 1943.



The Australian commandos in World War II emphasised firepower and, consequently, held a larger number of sub-machine guns than a normal infantry company. The two main types of sub-machine gun employed were the Thomson Gun (top) and the Owen Machine Carbine. The Thomson or 'Tommy gun' was manufactured in the United States and fired a .45 inch round. The Owen was designed and manufactured in Australia with a 9 mm version introduced into service from late 1942. The Owen was more robust, reliable and cost effective compared to the Thomson and remained the main Australian Army sub-machine gun until replaced by the F1 during the Vietnam War (AHU images).

The independent companies were Australia's first Special Forces and were raised after Australia received British advice that possessing a special force of men trained in 'raids, demolitions, sabotage, subversion and organising civil resistance' may prove beneficial. The first unit, the 1st Independent Company, was raised in early 1941 at a special training camp established for this purpose at Wilson's Promontory in Victoria. Officially referred to euphemistically as the 7th Infantry Training Centre, it was better known as the Guerrilla Warfare School. Four independent companies were raised before war erupted with Japan and, while there remained some confusion as to the precise role of the commandos, they were quickly deployed. The 8th Australian Division also called for volunteers to raise an independent company in Malaya after the Japanese invasion on 8 December.

The size, role and equipment of the independent companies varied according to their role. Generally they had a strength of around 273 all ranks and consisted of a headquarters, commanded by a major, and three platoons each with a captain in charge. Each platoon

consisted of three sections of 16 men commanded by a lieutenant; the section could be further broken down into two patrols. While there was a standard allocation of weapons to a section, a typical composition was four sub-machine guns (Thomson initially then the Owen gun), one Bren gun, one SMLE Mk. III (usually with an EY grenade launcher attachment), one No. 4 Mk. I (the British Army version of the SMLE), one P14 sniper rifle and two .38 pistols (carried as secondary weapons by the sniper and Bren gunner).

The company usually had integrated mortar, medical, engineering, transport, quartermaster and signals detachments that could sub-divide to support each of the platoons. The independent companies emphasised firepower and, consequently, held a larger number of sub-machine guns and Bren guns than a normal infantry company. Each section also contained two snipers armed with either a heavy barrel SMLE or a P14 equipped with a telescopic sight. The individual sniper appears to have had some discretion as to the type of rifle he used, with some actually deploying with their own sporting rifle. Even some of the officers carried unusual weapons. In the 2/2nd Independent Company the engineer officer, Lieutenant Turton, also carried a sniper rifle. In one instance Turton shot a surprised Japanese soldier from the hip at a distance of just a few metres, with the company's historian noting that '... this is hardly the use laid down in the manuals for a sniper rifle with telescopic sights'.



Well-known film and documentary maker Damien Parer visited the commandos on Timor in 1942. This photograph taken by him shows a 2/2nd Independent Company sniper armed with a P14 rifle equipped with a P18 scope. While in Timor, Parer also filmed a documentary titled *Men of Timor* which contained several images of Australian Army snipers in action (AWM 013827).

Some of the earliest documentary evidence available today of the use of a telescope-equipped sniper rifle in the Australian Army during the Second World War comes from Timor in early 1942. Both the 2/2nd and, later, the 2/4th Independent Companies used their P14 sniper rifles to good effect in an unrelenting guerrilla war against a much larger and experienced Japanese force. Living off the land in harsh conditions, the commandos killed an estimated 1500 enemy for the loss of 40 men. The 2/2nd Independent Company's history records that the 'first Japanese to be killed was a richly dressed gentleman who was foolish enough to ride a horse whilst the remainder walked, and he was quickly followed by two other officers who made themselves obvious.' It goes on to indicate that these Japanese officers were killed by one of the company's snipers, an ex-Kangaroo shooter, probably Private Doug Weatley, who had 47 confirmed kills while serving in Timor.

While the actions of the independent companies on Timor had limited long-term effect, they forced the Imperial Japanese Army to divert reinforcements that could have been effectively employed in New Guinea. Timor was also important from another perspective. The independent companies proved that sniping in a jungle environment was not only practicable but also a valuable force multiplier. As a commando force, the ability of the sniper to hit a high-value enemy target unseen and from a distance, was invaluable and had a marked detrimental effect on Japanese morale.

The independent company snipers gained an early reputation for their accuracy, tracking and detection skills. Many were professional hunters in civilian life, or award-winning sporting shooters. Author Martin Pegler quotes a British captain who witnessed a 2/2nd Independent Company sniper in action in Timor:

Shore commented that the kangaroo hunters were remarkably good shots, used to the .303 rifle and seldom missing a target. In fact, in Shore's opinion, the Australians provided the most remarkable snipers of the whole war. In proof he quoted the instance of one kangaroo hunter on Timor who would not bother to put the scope on his rifle for shots under 300 yards and who was credited with 47 kills, and another who shot 12 advancing Japanese with 12 shots in fifteen minutes.

During operations at Kaiapit, New Guinea, in September 1943, the 2/6th Independent Company had a strength of 191 men including eight snipers. According to the company's officer commanding, Major Gordon King, the unit's snipers contributed significantly to the 'approximately 300 enemy killed over the two-days of battle'. One of the snipers, Private Wally Roach, was credited with several kills at 300–400 metres range with a scoped P14 rifle during this battle.

In October of the same year, the 2/2nd Commando Squadron, the unit name having been changed from independent company earlier that month, was operating in the Ramu Valley, New Guinea. On 25 October a patrol from the 2/2nd, under the command of Lieutenant Doig, was reconnoitring new territory when they recognised signs of recent Japanese activity in a small village. Part of the patrol went forward to investigate when, according to the *Official History*, suddenly 'everything including the kitchen sink flew through the air' and Doig was 'forced to withdraw rapidly (and how)'. Part of the section providing fire support contained one of the unit's snipers, Trooper Craig, who 'killed about six Japanese with his sniper's rifle'.

M.L. (Doc) WHEATLEY

Doc has written plenty but it is full of
'self heroics' & some of his claims of victims
not all that credible.

But there are many passages of value

M.L. WHEATLEY

a/c of Landing much as all other

Became the second truck driver - used to drive alternately with
Bob Chambers Morning & Afternoon.

Sections on leave to Del daily. Picked up my truck at 11 AM
Money came & truck game started

Gambling game & how Bob Chambers came to take the Morning shift

Possible was the story of the morning that went to Del.

On DP to Del with Van Duden for 2 who (not secured by Bob Campbell)

The blowing up of the Camp

The story of the Dive has never better told elsewhere

Leach's notes (but on the high side!!)

Japanese took 4000 sea women into Del (Henderson wanted to have a go)

Embark with horse (?) black horse & 2000 !!

The story of the Timorese war. I think Doc has got it wrong this
were both Portuguese Timorese.

The Marbassa but does in some way dovetail with Black & Argent.

The movement with St Denny is a helpful story

The retreat to Betano & then the Kalen River

Aug 14/44 pages

WAR 10. DEC.

M L WHEATLEY
W.X. 13365

I was a private in the 2nd Independent Company that sailed to Timor after the Japanese came into the War. I will endeavour to write an account of my version and experience of the year that I spent in Portuguese Timor.

We sailed from Kupang to Dili on the Dutch ship Serabaya with Dutch officers and their Javanese troops to garrison East Timor. We landed at the beach next to the airstrip and camped in the hangers or buildings on the drome. We stayed there for a couple of weeks while the Dutch took over most of the town. I was in 8 Section of C. Platoon, and from there I went on a couple of reconnaissance trips, which was of great value to me later on in the campaign. I was one of the first ones to catch malaria and about one third of us Australians went down with it. Our Dr Dunkley knew nothing about tropical diseases and we had no quinine, which was considered to be the best prevention and cure of malaria.

So it was decided by headquarters that we get up into the hills away from the mosquitos, which proved to be a blessing for us. C. Platoon plus the Major made a camp up the road a few miles from Tibar, which is about four miles from Dili. The other two platoons shifted out to east and south, anywhere up into the hills to get away from the mosquitos. One section of A Platoon stayed to look after the aerodrome and the strip which the Sappers mined and got ready to blow up if and when it may be necessary to do so. Our 2IC (Capt. Callinan) stayed in Dili with the top brass of the Dutch and Javanese troops. Now we of C. Platoon had to get our stores from Dili each day especially bread and greens. The greens were bought at the bazaar run by the Timorese. Now we had two official drivers of which one had got accidentally killed. I was asked to drive the vehicle we had for the job. Sid and Bob Chambers used to drive the truck alternately, one morning trip and one afternoon trip each day.

The days went by and most of us at Three Spurs Camp got their health back. I went on recon, patrols and I got to know the country around the camp. We only heard a lot of rumours about what was happening elsewhere. One thing was certain and that is that we were going to be relieved by 600 Portuguese troops that were coming to garrison on their own colony. One day Capt. Callinan and Lt. Turton asked me to go with them to see about a site to put some stores and explosives and ammo. This was in the Ermera area and later I drove the truck with stores to be left in the protection of a village Headman recommended by the Portuguese close to the Galano Bridge.

The weeks had been going along while we were waiting for the Portos and most of the sections were getting a trip down to Dili once a week in the truck which used to take a section each day. With the drivers and the QM (Quarter Master) could be about nine to twelve men on the truck. They would have the day in Dili until the truck picked them up on the afternoon trip.

2

Most of the boys were low on money and finally some money came and we had a pay day. Jack Sheehan started a two up game and Napier and I gave him a hand because the game was a great success, with Jack quite a big winner. He always had enough money to set the centre. After the day had gone we played dice in the tent. Two of 7 Section Lt. Campbell and Cpl. Dook were among the night players. About 9pm Bob Chalmers came in and offered to take the morning trip as it was my turn so I accepted and said I would take the afternoon trip. About 11pm three loud explosions came from Dili area. We thought it had to be canon fire and I reckoned it had to be the Nips, but the Major and the other officers decided that it was the Portos 600 troops and the canon fire was only a salute as the Portos had a canon mounted at the wharf. The Sigs could not get in touch with Dili as the fog that comes down from the higher hills prevented them from using their lamps and the 108 wirelasses were not strong enough.

It was after midnight before I got to bed. The truck left quite early in the morning. I got up to make sure that Chalmers was OK to make the trip and watched Pinochio our Don R ride off in front of the truck taking 7 Section to Dili. Lt Campbell and Dooky stayed in camp. The first we knew of the Japanese landing was one of our Dili boys got through to us and told us that the Japs came close in to the wharf and fired three shells straight into the Administration headquarters. I can imagine the reactions of the inmates. Our 2IC was there and I understand it was an every man for himself situation. Up in our camp (Three Spurs) we wondered what had happened to the truck full of troops and our D.R.

Lt Campbell gathered up enough troops to make a patrol down the road to find out what happened to his section. Surprisingly I don't remember hearing much rifle and gun fire, but we walked right down to the main track at Tibar and along through cactus flat and could not find any sign of them. So Lt. Campbell decided that we go back, when we got to the foot of Bo Hak, the start of mountainous country. Lt. Campbell asked me to go up the mount and O.Pip Dili. Stan Sadler went with me and he (Campbell) said he would relieve us in twenty four hours. Well Stan and I had a lonely time up there. We had no food and no more clothes than shorts and shirt. We had been there for twenty four hours and the only people we saw were some Timorese that were making up into the hills from Tibar and managed to buy ten eggs from them. I only had two patakas in my pocket and I gave them one. Stan and I put a hole in each end of the eggs and sucked five each. After waiting another twelve hours I decided we were not going to be relieved, so we had better make for camp. I started off along a ridge in the direction of the camp and then on to a gully with the camp on the other side. We had no sooner stopped and up went the camp. The initial blast sat us both on our asses, and then smaller bangs like grenades and ammunition. We thought that the Japs must have blown it up. There were still some explosions going on when we decided that we better get out of there and then Stan slipped and his rifle went sailing down the gully out of our sight. As it would have taken a lot of effort to get it back Stan said to hell with it. I set a round about course to come out at the place where the stores were left. That meant crossing the Comoro River and following a tributary towards the Galano. Nightfall caught us still a fair way to go so I found a side entrance off the creek where we could make a fire to try to keep warm. We heard another explosion before we came out of the creek and saw what remained of the second supply dump. There must have been about 100

Timorese running around with shorts and shirts, most of which were partly burnt. So that was the result of the second explosion.

Up to now, we never had much to do with the Timorese and I was a bit apprehensive, but I decided to approach them and they seemed friendly when I tried to explain to them that we were hungry. They offered us some eggs which I accepted and gave them my last pataka. They told us that Australian soldiers had blown up the building that housed the stores and gone further inland. After sucking the eggs, we followed the road until we came to the Galano Bridge and found that one section had been blown up. It had been raining most of the time and the river was running very fast and there were a few Timorese on the other side. When I got them to understand that we wanted to get across, they got down into the water and made a chain so we could get across the gap, for which we were very thankful. It was quite dark when we carried on up the road. After two or so miles the moon came out throwing shadows across the road and from one shadow came a voice "Who goes there?" I called out "It's me Doc" and a voice said "OK Doc come on". It was Smash Hodson with his Tommy gun at the ready. The sappers were camped just off the road with no lights and they gave us a tin of dog each, which was the first real food that we had for the three days except for the eggs we had sucked. Lt. Gerry Green told us that our lot had gone on to Hatolia, so next morning we got going again and finally caught up with our platoon. It was quite a while before I caught up with Lt. Campbell and when I asked him why he had not relieved or recalled us from the O.Pip, he said he had forgotten about us. That was not good enough. From my point of view, the lot of them had panicked and the blowing up of our stores proved that I was right. Stan and I were happy to rejoin our section and we settled down to a few patrols, living off food bought from the Timorese. As money was short, Jack Sheehan loaned the company what money he had. I had already borrowed £10.00 from him, which I paid back when we got back to Australia.

About this time we had a visitor, the Australian Consul David Ross. He brought out a surrender note, the Japanese had escorted him out to Liquica, and he had come from there. There was a lot of talk about a possible surrender and a few of us, Jack Sheehan among them, were going to make a raft shaped like a boat out of the large bamboo that grew very high near the coast with a square mat sail and paddles. We reckoned we could make close to fifty miles off the coast with an offshore wind in one night if a surrender was on. The Major called some officers from other platoons and after a discussion we were told to parade. The Major told us that we were not going to surrender, we came here to fight and that was what we were going to do. I think we gave a cheer if my memory is right. Jack Sheehan and I escorted the Consul David Ross to Boybow. We stayed the night and left him close to Liquica. On the return trip we had to empty our boots of blood that had run down our legs from leech bites.

We had lost all contact with Australia for 59 days and we had to get a solid food supply. I think Cpt. Callinan arranged through the Portuguese to get food from the Timorese in exchange for an IOU. This was called a Surat and when we got in touch with Australia and received bags of two shilling pieces we repaid them in silver. From then on we had a lot to do with Timorese and found them to be friendly and

4

very helpful. About this time the Japs made a bad mistake. They took about 40 Timorese girls from around Liquica into Dili. A lot of headmen from those villages came to us and asked for grenades for each man in their village and rifle for each headman. They said they would go into Dili and kill Japanese. I thought it would have been a good idea, but Major Spence said no, because it was against the International Law. Anyway, from then on the Timorese were on our side and became so helpful that they let their young boys come to us as servants or creados as the Timorese called them.

The Japs had stayed around the coast, but now they started to move inland. They liked bombing and strafing the villages, so C Platoon moved out towards Aileu. this area had no real villages, but along the ridges were small clusters of huts and the Timorese always gave us shelter (be it ever so humble). The Platoon was split up to cover as much country as possible to keep an eye on Jap movements. After several weeks word came through to us that B Platoon had had a crack at the Japs and if any of us wanted to have a crack, they could do so. I was pleased to hear this and got an OK from our Capt. Boyland. So I asked for volunteers. The only one that offered to come with me was rearmed Stan Sadler, the only one that trusted me, or so it seemed.

We made our way down towards Ermera and ran into Lt. Rose with half a section. I asked him what he was doing and he told me that he was observing how many Japs were using the road. He had been there for two days and that two trucks had gone up the road loaded with Japs. He said they had gone up the road the day before and had come back in the afternoon. So I said Stan and I would have a crack at them if they came back. Lt. Rose offered to 'join forces' is the way he put it, so I said that was OK with me. They had been living very well with Timorese who were looking after a deserted Porto's house. After a good feed off good crockery we made our way up the road to a place that 'Rosy' said would do. I didn't think too much of the position because the road ran along the side of a small gully and the attack would be below the road. When I pointed this out to 'Rosy' he said, well you find a place to cover us, which I did.

The road was built in Timorese fashion. A wall of stones on the low side of the slope, the height depended on how steep was the slope, then filled with earth and rubble until the space was level with the stone wall. This wall varied from 4 to 6 feet, a nice place to shoot from, but a hell of a position if the Japs started throwing grenades. About half an hour later the trucks came back. About 8 to 10 Japs in the back of each truck and some in with the drivers. Rosy's boys and Stan Sadler opened the show, with a good burst of fire stopping the two trucks. I started picking off the Japs as they were jumping out of the trucks. Rosy and the boys got going, all of them except Stan, who came up to me. I told him to get down over the back as I only had a couple more to knock off. I had a sniper rifle with a telescope which up to now I had not used as they were sitting ducks. Two Japs had run back up the road and tried to hide behind a bush at the side of the road. When I put the scope on them, the bush looked as open as a picket fence. I bowled them over and put a bullet into the engines of each truck and walked back to where the other fellows had gathered. That was the only time that I walked away from an ambush.

5

The Japs retaliated next day by burning down all the buildings where the Timorese gave us that good feed. And I got a good name for being a good shot. We had to spread out some more, one reason was the food supply, and the need to keep watch on the Jap movements. No. 8 Section went down the Comoro River and we stayed at a village named He. The head man made us welcome and gave us two huts to live in and from that village a twelve year old boy attached himself to me and called me Tuan Doc. He stayed with me until we were taken off the island. He proved his loyalty so many times. I wished he could have come home with me. He was called Montelo and I felt so bad about leaving him on the beach to watch us going out of his life for ever. Back to my story . . . we had a fairly good time while we were at He, daily patrols and some night watches. Word had come through from HQ that all troops intending to have a crack at the Japs had to have an NCO with them. I knew of a good place to ambush from, and Jack Sheehan and Andy Smeton both armed with Tommy Guns said they would come with me. We asked Bill Taylor our Cpl. and he said OK and we would bring a Bren gun.

The place was at the foot of Bo Hak Mountain, just below a fairly large village about three hundred yards up a steep slope from the road. This is the place where Stan Sadler and I were left to O.Pip when the Japs landed. We got to the village just before dark. A Timorese woman seemed to be the head of the village as she ordered some of the other women to get us a meal, which was thankfully received by us. We explained to her through our creados that we intended to ambush the Japs down on the road. She seemed to think that it was a good idea. Leaving our creados at the village I picked the way down the steep slope to a garden about 15 ft up from the road that led down to Tibar. The garden had a wall of rocks with a sheer drop to the road. The wall was about 3 ft high - an ideal place for the Bren gun, so we left Cpl Taylor there and I led Jack and Andy down the road about fifty yards where there was a large tree on the high side of the road. The tree had large fins that came out from the trunk, making it very wide at the base so Jack and Andy, who was left-handed, had an ideal concealment and place to use their Tommy Guns with a fifty round drum magazine. They were to stay hidden until Cpl Taylor started firing and then blast the Japs until they got rid of their fifty bullets each and then get going back to village He. Cpl. Taylor and I would keep the Japs busy to give them 5 minutes start. The Timorese woman had told us that some trucks came up the road about 8 o'clock most mornings. I went back to where we had left Scotty (Cpl. Taylor). We spent the night without much sleep as one of us had to be on guard. When morning broke the mist was quite thick and we were glad to see the sun shine through. Scotty had a wrist watch and sure enough just after 8 am we heard trucks coming up the road. Scotty had spare magazines ready and I laid out some spare rounds, as the sniper rifle only held 5 rounds and has to be reloaded one at a time. The nose of the first truck came through the overhang of trees that grew along the road. Scotty opened fire and I heard Andy and Jack firing. Scotty's shattered the windscreen just as another truck pushed its way into view and that copped a burst of the Bren. Meanwhile I was picking off the ones that jumped out of the trucks. Both trucks were full of troops. Scotty's Bren stopped and he started cursing, then Andy and Jack stopped firing. It was strangely quiet except for me firing whenever I had a target. Scotty had changed the post on the Bren and finished his second magazine which held 28 rounds each. Then, from somewhere I could not see, mortar bombs started landing on the track at the back of us - the track I had planned for our

6
getaway. We decided to get out, the only way was to go down to the creek and run up that. After 50 metres we ran into our two creados who must have come down from the village to be close to us. Montelo took my rifle and Scotty's boy took the Bren and away they went back to the village. He. They must have climbed out of the creek because we lost sight of them. When we got back to camp there they were with the Bren and my rifle looking proud as peacocks. Jack and Andy told us that there were 7 trucks. From Scotty and my position we had not been able to see how many there were. Scotty wrote a report on the ambush (which I did not see) and about six weeks later he was sent back to an ACTU and became a Lt. in Australia. We were shifted from this position to keep a watch on Maubesse. So we finished up in Mendello. Not long after we were there Timorese from the west end of the island and from around Hato Bullico went to war with Timorese in Mendello. That was a bad time for us. Word came through for us not to get involved in any way. It was a very one-sided war. The invaders came over the hills in hundreds, armed with spears, bows and arrows and machetes, with large feathers dipped in rooster blood stuck in their hair. They were much too strong for the Mendello Timorese and it was sheer murder, from our point of view.

We were told that around 1,500 were killed in the first two days. It was a terrible thing to see the invaders going back to Maubesse with a dozen or more heads hanging from bamboos carried by a man at each end, the heads hanging like coconuts. They also took the women and children plus what animals they had. We and our Creados were left alone and we dare not interfere. Jim Smailes and I were sent back to HQ to let them know what was happening. I think HQ was at Ainaro at that time. Anyway the track lead down to Maubesse and then climbed to the saddle where the road divided one way to Same and the other to Ainaro. That was an awful trip. On the way down to Maubesse we could see Timorese coming into Maubesse like us, some with women and children tied together and some with heads on spears. On our right as we passed through the village was the main part of the buildings and there must have been at least 200 Timorese with red feathers in their hair and one fellow with a lot of bright colours on his clothes. I heard later that he was the King. Whether that was correct I could not say. I led the way and we marched right past them with heads facing front, but my eyes did a lot of swivelling. I was glad to get past them without any trouble, you can bet. I was nervous and how nervous you will never know. About this time George Boyland, our Captain was replaced. Lt. McKenzie took his place as Platoon Commander. It must have been a couple of weeks before the invading Timorese went back to their area and we had to live with the smell of rotting bodies. Food was very short and we shifted to an empty bunch of huts, as there were plenty of empty huts now. To make matters worse, the Japs decided to come out and occupied Maubesse and Lt. McKenzie decided to put an O.Pip on it. So Scotty Taylor who was still with us at this stage, with six of us to do the O.Pipping. We got in touch with some emmafweweeks (men wild) Timorese that lived in the hills and never paid taxes. We bribed them to build a shelter just behind a good lookout position on a hill overlooking Maubesse. I feel sure that these same Timorese gave us away to the Japs. In our party there was Cpl. Taylor, Privates Smeton, Thomas, Elders, Stan Sadler and I'm not sure if Charlie Sadler was with us or not, and of course myself. We took turns of going up to the look out. We were living very frugally at this time and we were expecting some of the Timorese to bring us some food the next day. Andy Smeton, who had no time

7

for the Timorese offered to take my place on the O.Pip the next day. I said it suited me. So next morning Andy and George Thomas went up to the lookout. We used to go just before dawn and come back after dark. Cpl. Taylor, Stan Sadler and maybe Charlie went down to a small waterfall to have a shower. This left Elder and myself in the camp. Soon after they had gone all hell seemed to break loose, firstly, several bursts of machine gun came from the lookout and seconds later right next to us. Elder just took off. Montelo and myself were in the hut and the bullets were cutting the kunei roof to bits over our heads. I grabbed my rifle and crouching low made for the small landslide at the end of the little ridge, that our hut was on. I had previously looked at this place in case we had to get out in a hurry. I just took off over the edge and landed about twenty feet down onto the loose shale, landing on my feet and bum. I slid to the bottom of the landslide and left quite a lot of skin off my bum on the slide. How I got away without being hit I'll never know. I found the track back to camp and started along it. I'd only gone a couple of hundred yards when I came onto Montelo, being held by two Timorese. They let him go as soon as they saw me and ran off. Montelo and I carried on to camp. Just before we made it a guard was waiting on the track. I told him what had happened and he said Lt. McKenzie had sent him out when they heard shooting. I had no idea what had happened to the rest of our party.

When I reached camp I was surprised to see two strangers. They turned out to be Damien Parra and the other chap, I think, was named Champion. Damien was a photographer and Champion a reporter for Associated Papers. I was the first to make camp. the ones to make it next were Scotty, Stan and maybe Charlie. Elder came in three days later and we never saw Andy Smeton and George Thomas again. Cpt. McKenzie took a patrol out next day (Damien Parra accompanied them), but found no sign of Andy or George or Japs. Parra and Champion stayed with us for two days. He took a snap of us all together and the camp. We got word from HQ that the Japs were going to make a move from Maubesse towards Same and our Section lead by Lt. Burrridge moved across to the saddle between Same and Maubesse. There were some abandoned huts from which we could get a good view of Maubesse and we could see most of the road as it wound up to the Saddle. We saw the Japs start off from Maubesse and the column must have been half a mile long. Fifty troops and then 4 or 5 ponies (Timor horses) then another 50 troops, 5 ponies and so on. It took at least two hours to climb up to where we were waiting. The long wait was bad on the nerves and two of our fellows cleared off before we attacked. Burrridge said he would shoot them when he next saw them. But nothing was done about it. I had taken over the Bren gun for this attack and also a small pony that was used to carry the gun and magazines. My creado Montelo was in charge of the pony and he had taken it into one of the huts to keep it out of sight. Well we opened up on the Japs and the first fifty Japs went down like nine pins. I got rid of two mags on them and a third mag on the next fifty. Lt. Burrridge called time to get out. As we were packing up some Japs opened up on us with a woodpecker gun. The Bren had to be loaded on the pony so I was last to get away, except for Blueie Sargent. I sent Montelo off with the gun and pony, along the road to Same and Blue and I made off down a gully and drew the fire from the Japs. The bullets were slipping past our ears like hornets, from the woodpecker. From my experience, I found them to be rotten marksmen (thank goodness). The gully we were running in was dry and the kunei grass was about five feet high. Next thing

3/

I knew I had stepped off into space and landed about 6 feet down to the bottom of what would have been a small waterfall when it rained. I had twisted my ankle and I continued to hobble along to the bottom of the valley. Then we had to climb up to the road that came around to the Same saddle. That was a hell of a climb as my foot and ankle was already twice the size of the other one. We still had a mile to go to get to the saddle. Some help from Blue and I made it. About half an hour later along came Montelo with the pony and Bren and one of the other young creados that he had picked up on the way. The loyalty and ability of these young boys was terrific. There was a bunch of our mates waiting at the saddle and one of them had a pony big enough for me to ride and that was how I got down to Same and Dr Dunkley. He said that I had the largest foot and ankle he had ever seen.

I stayed with Dr Dunkley that night with his mobile hospital. Next morning we were on the move, going further east, a small cavalcade of about six ponies. A plane came over and strafed us and dropped a couple of bombs, but apart from killing one pony did us no harm. We were in thick bamboo country and we managed to hide fairly well. I can't recall where the Japs finished up, but I was out of action for a week. I can't recall any real action that our section was in. I know we went up Mt Bulico for a short time (a bloody cold place). Then we resumed our O.Piping on the Jap movements until the 2/4th Independent Corp came over to relieve us. I can remember when word came through that we were to go home and we were to make our way back to Betano and try not to make it too obvious that we were retreating. We tried to keep it secret but the Japs came out in force to stop us getting away.

It took us a couple of days to move in close to the beach. Then word came through that the Japs were on the beach where we were to leave from. We were told to circle around them and come out on the beach about three miles further on. I remember picking our way through scrub and stones during the night. There were a couple of skirmishes somewhere behind us, but we were not involved in them. We had not eaten that day and someone came around with a pot of rice and put a spoonful in our hands which was thankfully received. We waited on the beach while the Sigs were talking to the ship that we could not see. Then we were told to pile our weapons on the beach, which I was very reluctant to do as I had real affection for that sniper rifle. Then some boats came ashore to take us off. Saying goodbye to Montelo was awful, I couldn't find any words to say to him. All I did was to give him a hug and ruffle his hair and say "Thanks kid" and as the boats pulled away I felt like crying as he stood there watching us going out of his life. We had told all the creados that the 2/4th troops would be glad to have them. So I hope that is what happened to them. We boarded the Tjerk Hides, a Dutch destroyer, and sailed for home at about 38 knots per hour. By daylight we were well on our way and I was glad to see Australia as there were quite a few times I thought I'd never make it.

This is not a complete coverage, but it covers most of the main events. If it had not been for the help from the Timorese and especially the young creados, not many of us would have got out alive.

Doc Wheatley

Obituaries

Snake 'Doc' a real charmer

MERVYN WHEATLEY

BORN: October 28, 1912

DIED: January 22, 2006

WHEN Merv "Doc" Wheatley was bitten by a snake in the Pilbara, he kept calm, treated the wound and drove himself to Roy Hill Station.

When he drove back, as he told his daughter Glenis years later, he noticed the road bore tyre marks from where he had obviously swerved. He reflected that maybe he hadn't been as in control as he thought.

However, his mind had remained clear and his steadfast resolve served him well for the rest of his years, especially as a sniper in World War II.

The fifth of 10 children, Mr Wheatley served for 12 months in the 2nd/2nd Commandos in what is now East Timor before serving in New Guinea. His six brothers also signed up.

Mr Wheatley was part of eight section and, with 19 other soldiers, regularly ambushed the Japanese force making its way across the island.

Granddaughter Sheree Hart said she had heard that fellow soldiers credited Mr Wheatley's excellent shooting with their ability to escape enemy troops. Newspaper reports at the time said he killed about 37.

Like most Australian soldiers, Mr Wheatley had a "creado", a Timorese "friend" who helped him survive in the jungle. He was devastated when he had to farewell his helper, Montelo.

He wrote: "He proved his loyalty so many times ... saying goodbye to Montelo was awful. I couldn't find any words to say to him.

"All I did was give him a hug and ruffle his hair and say, 'Thanks kid'.



Mervyn Wheatley

And as the boats pulled away, I felt like crying as he stood there watching us going out of his life."

Mr Wheatley was born in Kronkup, near Albany, to Thomas and Clarabel Wheatley in 1912.

He left school at 13 and worked on farms and dairies throughout the South-West, doing whatever he could to make money. The knockabout lifestyle took him throughout the South-West and to the mines in Kalgoorlie and Wiluna.

Later, he took up roo shooting in his old tin lizzie in the harsh Pilbara region.

His East Timor lieutenant, John Burridge, said Mr Wheatley's days as a roo shooter served him well in the war.

"He was a good soldier ... and a very good shot," he said.

Mr Wheatley and fellow soldiers trained in Foster, Victoria, and in Katherine, in the Northern Territory,

where he earned his nickname. The troops were being taught to treat snakebite and Mr Wheatleyspoke up, saying, "That's not how it's done. I'll show you how".

The boys labelled him "Doc" and it stuck for life.

After the war, Mr Wheatley returned to Australia and rekindled his romance with Olive Beckett.

They married in March 1947 and Mr Wheatley built their home on 19ha of virgin bush in the Byford hills.

He turned their property into a successful market garden and orchard renowned for the quality of its produce, especially tomatoes. His work earned him another nickname, "Top Price Merv".

The couple's daughters, Glenis and Meryl, lived on the property for most of their young lives.

In 1964, the family sold up and moved to Cloverdale and Mr Wheatley tried his hand at roo shooting again.

He also bought a large tractor-driven water tank and worked on the standard-gauge railway.

Making small fibreglass boats was next for the jack-of-all-trades, who never took his car to a mechanic to be serviced, preferring to do it himself.

When Mr Wheatley joined the drainage business, he earned the new moniker of "Manhole Merv".

After retiring, Mr Wheatley helped his brother, Harry, with odd jobs at the Belmont Squash Courts and Peninsula Caravan Park. In later life, he spent many hours in his veggie garden.

Glenis said her father was an exceptionally proud man, who was determined to succeed in everything he did.

"He was very much loved and respected by all his family," she said.

— RYAN EMERY

VALE WILLIAM Paton 'Pat' MOODIE

b. 22 December 1912, Benalla, d. 17 May 2005, Shepparton, age 92.

Pat grew up at 'Sunnyside', Waggarandall, between Benalla and Yarrawonga, the oldest of four children of Douglas and Hilda Moodie. His name 'Pat' came from his mother's maiden name Paton, from Tallangatta. Pat's wife Maisie and brother Hugh predeceased him and he is survived by his sisters Mary Belcher and Ruth Morris, son Keith and grand daughter Emily.

Pat attended Yundool and Youarang Primary Schools, Benalla High School and Wangaratta Technical School.

He enlisted V23057 in the Citizen Military Forces on 28th December 1939, transferred to CNIF full time duty on 16th October 1941, then Australian Imperial Force VX 112950 on 28th September 1942. He was discharged 2nd January 1946, trooper. Pat served with the 2/2 Commando Squadron in New Guinea and New Britain.

On 17th May 1944 while on six weeks leave, Pat married Florence May 'Maisie' Mortimer. After the war he and Maisie farmed at Lake Rowan. They adopted their son Keith in 1949 and moved to their farm at Pine Lodge. With irrigation there, they ran dairy cows then later beef cattle. Maisie keenly pursued her gardening and dog breeding interests. In 1976 Pat and Maisie moved into Gloucester Crescent, Shepparton, where Maisie's garden became a showpiece. Pat did a lot of garden work and lawn mowing for people around Shepparton. For many years Pat drove his old green ute around Shepparton, then later he travelled on foot. He made

many friends and enjoyed a lot of long chats during his lawn mowing years. Many have commented on his wry little smile and the twinkle in his eye. He and Maisie enjoyed playing cards with friends and relatives, particularly '500.'

Pat loved a chat, and he would regularly phone up friends and relatives to keep in touch. Always spot on in his knowledge of cricket and football, he knew a lot about television personalities and politicians. He was a small, good humoured man who managed his life with strength and fortitude. Maisie died in 1996 following a minor car accident, and Pat lived quietly at home until he died in hospital at Shepparton in May 2005, aged 92.

Elizabeth Dellar

VALE! MERVYN LINDSAY (DOC) WHEATLEY WX 13365

Doc was born in the small town of Kronkup in the Albany district. He was the fifth in line of Thomas and Clarabel Wheatley's ten children. He left school at the age of 13 and commenced his working life on farms and dairies throughout the southwest, doing anything that would earn him some money. He continued in this manner, going wherever the work took him. He worked in the mines in Kalgoorlie and Wiluna and later went roo, shooting in his old tin lizzie, travelling right throughout the Pilbara Region right up until WWII.

Doc became a member of 8 Section C Platoon in the 2nd Independent Company later known as 2i2nd Commando Squadron. It was formed in Foster in Victoria in 1941. He was an

excellent soldier and a very good rifle shot - doubtless due to his experience in shooting kangaroos. He served throughout the war mainly in Timor and New Guinea. Doc lived life to the full in every way and, at age 93, he was the last member of the original 8 Section to leave this world.

Doc was a life member of our Association and was a very loyal and interested member despite his advancing years. He was particularly generous with donations to Association finance year after year.

After the war, Doc rekindled a romance with Olive Beckett, and they married in March 1947. Doc single handedly built a home for his family on 48 acres of virgin bush in the Byford hills, which over the next 16 years he turned into a successful market garden and orchard. He was renowned for the quality of his produce, especially his tomatoes and earned the name Top Price Merv.

In late 1964, Doc sold up and moved to Cloverdale. He did a short stint of roo shooting again, then set himself up with a large tractor driven water tank and worked on the standard gauge railway for the next few years. He then tried his hand at making small fibreglass boats and after that he worked for several years in the drainage business laying pipes and building manholes and was commonly known as Manhole Merv.

After reaching retirement, Doc frequently went bush to go gold prospecting and in between times, helped his brother Harry doing odd jobs at the Belmont Squash Courts and Peninsula Caravan Park. He then settled into full retirement and was happy to focus his attention on his own home vegie garden.

Doc's funeral was at Karrakatta on 31 st January. It was well attended and included 10 life members of the Association. They were Ray Parry, Keith and Val Hayes, Jack and Delys Carey, John Burrridge, Dick Darrington, Bob Smyth, Colin Hodson and Helen Poynton's daughter Julie Ann and Cyril Ayris, author of our forthcoming book. All present at the funeral were invited for refreshments at the Hollywood Bowling Club, which again, was very well attended.

This farewell tribute to Doc Wheatley was largely provided by his daughter Glenis Austin and her daughter Sheree Hart. Doc's cheery nature and his goodwill will be surely missed by our members and the Association extends sympathy and best wishes to all of Doc's family.

VALE TONY BRADFELD ADAMS

18 September 1918 - 4 march 2006

"What a real hero he was. May God reward him, as he deserves! He had all the great primary virtues of loyalty, courage, kindness, patience, endurance, modesty and integrity. His devotion to duty was tested as though he were a Christian martyr."

Canon Morris, founder of the Anglican Church grammar school, wrote those words in 1950 about my grandfather JB Adams.

But they apply equally to his son, my father Tony. He was a real hero to us in the family and a true friend to so many - friends he made and kept through 43 years in the ANZ bank, his war years in the middle east and new guinea, his service to legacy and to this parish of

of my brown-eyed sweetheart.

"Is she a Catholic?" Fitzzy asked.

"She is," I replied. "Two of her aunts are Roman Catholic nuns."

"Harry, I hope you won't mind if I tell you a story." Fitzzy looked very serious and kept his voice low. "I married a Catholic. I can tell you from experience, things can get very messy if you don't sort out the whole religion thing before you get married. A month after Maria and I had our second child I found her crying when I got home from work. She didn't want to, but finally I convinced her to tell me what had upset her. Her priest had visited. He hadn't let up about me becoming a Catholic. He wanted to meet with us the next day, a Saturday. I told Maria it wasn't something she should cry over." Something changed in Fitzzy's manner. He clenched his teeth before continuing. "That's when the real story came out. The priest had told Maria that, according to the church, we're not married. Because of this, our children, having been born out of wedlock, were bastards. He told her it was essential they work together to get me to convert to Catholicism." Fitzzy was a big tough man, but pain and anger were etched across his face. "I told my wife I'd meet the priest the next day. That night I had trouble sleeping. By the Saturday, I'd decided to play it cool. I love my wife and didn't want her to be any more upset than she already was. I decided, when the priest arrived I'd let him and Maria converse without me saying much. I hoped there would be no repeat of the word *bastard*."

The pleasant rhythm of the train was cementing my mate's story into my mind. Outside, deep red earth was slipping into our past.

"The next day," Fitzzy continued, "I watched the priest walk up the road to the house and open our gate. His smile was so bloody condescending I couldn't stand it. I went outside to meet him. I swear I hadn't intended to hit him. I thought I wouldn't let him get to me, but I smacked him in the mouth before I realised what I was doing." Fitzzy shook his head. "I must have caught him a good one—he sat on the path with a vacant look on his face."

92

and if he ever upset my wife again I'd put him in hospital. No charges were laid. The priest has never been back to our house and my wife has never been back to that church. Maria and I had a long discussion. We agreed, the church was not the highest authority on the subject of our children being bastards. The state and federal governments, and the laws of the land, decreed our children had been born in wedlock. Maria knew we were husband and wife, but it took a long time to convince her we had nothing to fear from any priest or church."

Fitzzy was a fair-dinkum Aussie bloke. Before we said goodbye, I thanked him for telling me his story.

While I had been marking time in Queensland, my six brothers and one sister were either overseas, returning to Australia or heading out again. Les was an officer/ship's captain with the army's Water Transport. He sailed between Australia and New Guinea. My oldest sister Daphne was heading to New Guinea. Gordon was in the air force stationed in Port Moresby, Merv was still in Timor with the 2/2 Independent Company, Eric had just returned from the Middle East, and Norm was with the Armoured Division.

Norm and I both felt we were wasting valuable time with reformed or newly formed units. Young Aub was on his way to Bougainville where the Japanese nearly got him with a hand grenade, bringing the total casualties sustained by seven brothers to five wounded. Shot, bombed and injured by a hand grenade, but still alive, we seven Wheatley boys felt the little leprechauns of old Ireland were lookin' after us pretty well.

My brother Merv 'Doc' Wheatley proved himself to be one of the best riflemen ever to serve in the Australian armed forces. His official army record states he killed forty-seven enemy soldiers using only a single shot rifle, but Merv has never been interested in the numbers. According to the records, his courageous group of commandos were not officer material; they were just bloody great soldiers! The Japanese were taking everything they wanted until they ran into the mighty Independent Company which numbered

93

refused to surrender; they were the first of our fighters to tell the Japanese forces to 'get stuffed'.



Merv 'Doc' Wheatley (1942)

94

a fellow commando hiding in the hills of Timor. Together they set off to make life difficult for the 'Nips', as they called the Japanese soldiers. Along the way they met up with several other commandos. Since every man was eager to do a little squaring up with the enemy, they decided to join forces to ambush a Nip truck or two.

Doc, being the sniper, picked a spot above the ambush site and approximately 150 yards from where the action would take place. His job was to keep the Nips busy for five minutes. Five minutes would ensure the commandos, now lying in wait by the side of the road, would be able to escape back into the jungle after they had done their job. The rifle would need to be reloaded after every shot. Doc carefully laid out fifteen bullets.

When two trucks carrying Japanese soldiers came around the bend all hell broke loose. Some of the survivors fell or jumped out of the trucks in an attempt to escape. The commandos took only minutes to complete their job, then it was time to retreat into the thick rain forest.

Sniper rifles are fitted with a telescope—Merv would not miss his targets. Eleven shots made sure eleven Nips would never see Australia. Still watching for anything or anyone that moved, Doc put a bullet into each of the vehicle engines. One of the wounded soldiers made an attempt to get up. Doc made sure he didn't. The sound of other trucks moving closer warned Doc of additional dangers. He looked at his watch; five minutes was up. He fired his last shot toward the sound of the approaching vehicles just as mortar bombs exploded close to him. His survival and jungle instincts were well honed; he merged into his surroundings to make a silent escape. He felt very lucky to still be in one piece.

Some days later Merv met up with his commando mates at a well-hidden camp a long way from the ambush site. They told him how thankful they had been to hear his carefully spaced rifle shots; while he was watching their backs they knew no Japanese would be on their tail from any of the vehicles following the first two trucks.

95

twelve Japanese soldiers taken out within fifteen minutes. Doc told me it was eleven Nips and two truck engines.

Once when Doc and I were having a few beers he told me another of his stories. The commandos were independent fighters, but they still depended on the help of people with local knowledge. After a while many of them had a Timorese male buddy working with them. In a constant life-and-death struggle these relationships developed into committed friendships.

When the 2/2 Independent Company pulled out of Timor they departed from an isolated beach in rubber dinghies. The boys who had played an integral role in the commandos' knowledge and understanding of the area also went onto the beach. Saying goodbye was one of the most emotional experiences they would ever have, knowing that if the Japanese caught any of them they would be tortured and killed.

Doc's own buddy had been extraordinarily loyal and had risked his own life many times. Doc was not able to hold back tears as he watched his mate watching him from the beach. Those Timorese boys stayed until the commandos were no longer visible.

Merv 'Doc' Wheatley died on 22 January 2006 without receiving so much as a bottle top in the way of special recognition for his contribution to Australia's freedom.

If it hadn't been for the extraordinary bravery of the men of the 2/2 Independent Company, and others like them, Australia could have been invaded. Merv's unit forced thousands of Japanese to remain in Timor. In doing so, they set a new level of resistance for Australia's commando fighters.

Chapter 6

In 1944 my military medical classification was changed due to my eye problems. This meant I was no longer eligible for overseas duty. Perth was experiencing a serious housing shortage, so in November of that same year the army manpowered me out to Brisbane & Wunderlich, the tile and brick manufacturers.

Before building elevator-loaders were invented, tilers carried tiles, concrete and other building materials up ladders onto the roof on their shoulders, a job called *bumping*. My level of fitness and strength made me an ideal workman.

One of the older blokes with a work vehicle picked us up from designated stops early each morning. My pick-up point was within walking distance of home. A gang of four or five could fix a roof on a standard house in a day. When we finished a job we'd be driven back to the pick-up point.

Builders are a weird mob! On my first day the head foreman, Charlie Cavanaugh, showed up to give me a few pointers. He suggested I carry five tiles until I got the hang of it. Later that day, I was comfortably bumping ten. Sam Simpson, our leading hand, and the team of tilers soon settled into the usual banter and ragging. It wasn't until the sixth day that I saw Charlie Cavanaugh again. When he drove up I lifted five tiles onto my shoulder.

"When can I lift more than five tiles?" I asked innocently.

"Jesus Christ! Don't tell me you bastards have let him carry half a load for a week?" (Charlie's language was a little more colourful.)

I picked up ten tiles before passing a slower tiler walking toward the ladder. Everyone—including Charlie—laughed. As it turned out, not many people had put one over him. That happy episode inspired me to become a better than average bumper. Unfortunately, it didn't encourage anyone to teach me anything about the sheeting in or laying of tiles. I was destined to spend