

LIEUTENANT DONALD KENTON TURTON (WX8440) – 1918-2004

OFFICER COMMANDING, ENGINEERS SECTION

<https://doublereds.org.au/history/men-of-the-22/wx/donald-kenton-turton-r678/>

BIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES



At midnight the order came to be ready to entrain at six o'clock the next morning, the Company was paraded there in the warm darkness between the huts. Major Spence told them that the Company was moving, and that all we had been training and working for during the previous months was now ours. There was a cheer from everybody and the packing up was commenced immediately. Now the strain on the Q. staff was great indeed; to pack all those stores and keep a check on the contents of each case was a task of days, not hours, **Lieutenant Turton** took his sappers down to the magazine to collect the gelignite, gun cotton, ammonal, and the precious four tons of plastic high explosive.

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By the end of January we had moved the bulk of the stores from Dili to Three Spurs, and affairs on the aerodrome were organized; so I was moved from Dili up to Three Spurs, leaving only one

section of Baldwin's platoon under Lieutenant Dexter on the aerodrome. There were also the sappers under **Lieutenant Turton**, and they were preparing the aerodrome for demolition.

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The days at Three Spurs were all of construction. Under **Turton's** direction, a flying fox was built to raise stores from the road up on to the spurs; huts were made, the area improved, and our map of the area grew.

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The outline scheme was that **Lieutenant Turton** and myself should go forward and set up an observation post as close to Dili as possible, and by continuous observation determine the best approaches, times, and other details for a raid on the aerodrome. A week later one section officer, with a reliable N.C.O. from each platoon, should come forward and rendezvous with us at a spot thought to be reasonably safe. Then the details of the raid would be issued, and the officers and N.C.O.s given opportunities to satisfy themselves as to their portion of the job. At the same time the necessary troops would be brought forward. The basic troops were to be sappers, and it was proposed to allot one per plane, and his job was to hang a ten-pound charge of gelignite on the hub of the propeller. It was thought that this was the easiest and surest way to do the greatest damage. We had special mechanisms for the easy firing of the charges.

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Turton and I set off quite well equipped to organize the raid; we each had a horse and a saddle, and I co-opted a rather elderly native who could speak a little Malay. In fact, by now my own Malay was just a little better and more fluent than his, so I could always throw the blame on to him if I could not make him understand. Just out from Ermera we met Senhor Pereira, the owner of the Vila Maria coffee plantation, and with him was Father Carlos. It was the first time that I had met Pereira, but **Turton** knew him quite well. He was a most entertaining person to talk to; he had a wealth of descriptive gestures with his hands and arms, and his facial expressions were a language of their own. He did a great deal for the Australians. His house was always at our disposal, and because of this he was eventually a refugee in the hills with his wife and ten children.

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We carried out a quick patrol down the road, and found that all was quiet; we were convinced that our guide had been very scared, and had transferred the details of the previous enemy drives for our benefit. We returned to our bunks and awaited the morning. One disconcerting aspect of our stay at Railaco was that there were no natives coming in whom we could question; we were particularly anxious to get information from them as the next mile or more lay along the road, and this was sure to be watched if the enemy were in the area. After a meal we pushed off. At the river below Railaco my horse stumbled and I went over; its head into the water. It was only a few feet deep at the spot, but I was annoyed and **Turton** was very much amused. In fact he never allowed me to forget that debacle.

Eventually we struck the saddle at Nasuta, and from there could see down on to Dili harbour; here we could take to the native tracks we had mapped out previously, which Turton knew well. Early in the afternoon we came to a village, and were given a great reception. Both of us had been very pleased with our welcomes along the track since leaving Railaco, particularly as it indicated that the food problem was not impossible even in this area. We stayed for a while, and then went on, keeping to the top of the ridge, and passed above Three Spurs. There was a temptation to go down and have a look at the old camp, but we decided to push on that night as we hoped to have a closer look at Dili itself.

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The day was spent in the preparation of a map of the area and marking in the new Japanese structures and works; for this we had a copy of the map prepared during our occupation of Dili, which Turton had carefully preserved. The rough outlines of a plan for our raid were prepared, and we decided to attempt to get an observation post on the opposite side of the river, closer to the aerodrome. The natives were not very enthusiastic about this, and pointed out the proximity of the Japanese above us at Lau-Lora, and below us working on the bridge, but they agreed to supply us with a guide for that night. More difficult to obtain was a native who would take a message back to Hatu Lia for passing on to company headquarters informing them of our whereabouts and intentions.

In the evening we moved down to the village, and any lingering doubts about the loyalty of these natives were dispelled when all the women of the village were presented to us; there were the old chief's wife, sister, sister-in-law, and various other relations. They were all well dressed in the native fashion, with a plentiful supply of crucifixes and rosaries. We were made very comfortable and an excellent meal was set before us. The commencement of the meal was delayed by my questioning of the Dutch native soldier who had escaped from the Japanese three days earlier, and of a Chinese shopkeeper who was scared to live in Dili, but was in the habit of going in once or twice a week with some fruit, fowls and eggs. Both of them were mines of information, and very willing to yield it. The only common language we had was Malay and Turton knew nothing of it, so it was left to me, and never have I struggled so hard with a language. The incentive was there with a vengeance. I spent most of the next day thumbing my vocabulary, and most of the night twisting and turning sentences, and racking my brains for alternatives. I do not think that we missed a single item of information which they had to give us, but it certainly took some effort. It was exasperating for poor Don Turton as we talked and jabbered, twisted and turned ideas; and eventually he would ask what the talk over the previous twenty minutes had been about, and be told that there was a Japanese sentry outside the house at the intersection of two streets, but I was not yet certain which two streets.

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After a while I could produce this formula without the slightest hesitation and, as it preceded every query, Turton would wince as the old jumble of words commenced once again.

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Then we crossed over, and with native scouts armed with spears ahead of us, we moved a short distance along the old road to Aileu, then up into the hills. This old road followed the eastern

bank of the Comoro, and had been abandoned because it had been found impossible to protect it from the frequent floods. After a steep climb we reached a spot very close to where we thought we could establish our post, so we dismissed the natives and prepared to wait for dawn. As dawn approached we were on the move, looking for a suitable spot, and Turton found an excellent place. There was a depression on a spur, and from this ran a scrubby gully overlooking Dili and the aerodrome. In a tree near the head of this gully we rigged up a seat and an arm rest, and the post was soon in operation. The approach to the place was well concealed as, once in the depression, observation from higher or lower along the spur was not possible, and we prepared a little tunnel leading to our post through the undergrowth, so that if the enemy should come to the depression our post would not necessarily be discovered.

From our post we had a good view of the planes being warmed up in the morning, and as the two reconnaissance planes swept in to land we could see the pilots clearly; the planes passed below us. During the day we improved our map; we plotted in the headquarters of the troops at the aerodrome, and we kept a close record of all movements in order to discover any routine that might exist.

We had arranged for the natives; to bring us food in the evening after dark, and again before dawn in the morning. As they did not know where our post was, Turton went back and met them where they had left us the previous night. They all came armed with spears and bows and arrows. We did not waste much time in demolishing the food; it was good and we were hungry. After the natives had gone we settled down for the night. With only two of us, we did not have a sentry, but we both slept with our weapons cocked beside us, and we depended upon awakening if there should be anything untoward. If natives had attacked us it was doubtful if we would have awakened, but it was obviously impossible for two of us to maintain an observation post by day and be sentries by night; also, some risks had to be taken.

On the following days we remained there, with little excitement, and the Japanese gradually relaxed their vigilance on the aerodrome. First they stopped the morning and afternoon reconnaissance flights, though they still continued to warm up the engines. Then this was discontinued, and all day the six planes stood out there with canvas covers over the cockpits and propellers. After a day or so these six were replaced by nine from elsewhere, the ground crews being brought out from Dili in a truck to service the new planes, and then were taken back. This was most significant to us, as it indicated that our task would be even easier than we had anticipated.

Our plan was growing; from our post we could see the ground laid out before us, and we studied it for hours. We marked the position of every clump of bushes and small depression. We could not agree about one detail of our plan - which of us was to collect the large Japanese flag that was left at the mast at night; as we altered the method of advance, first it would be Turton's job, then a further alteration would bring it into my sphere and he would accuse me of making the alteration just to rob him of the flag. He wanted to wear the flag as a sarong when his trousers had worn out, which they had almost done by that time.

The natives continued. to bring food to us, and each night they took away our water bottles, and brought them back filled in the morning. I had a few quinine tablets, and we took one of these occasionally. One morning I accidentally dropped a tablet into my water bottle. One

water bottle for drinking and washing purposes for two men is not much, but the quinine in the other was the greatest deterrent possible from drinking. It took days to get the taste of quinine out of that bottle.

One day we brought over the Chinese and the soldier, and by actual sightings we filled in some more details on our map, and we also gave the Chinese a few more queries to check up when he was next in Dili. The Chinese pointed out to us a brown patch not far from us where he said six Australians had been shot and their bodies burnt on the morning of the twenty-first of February. He told us the six had been marched out by twelve Japanese soldiers and shot. Their bodies were stripped and the trunks covered with earth, then timber was cut and lit to burn the exposed portions of the bodies. His explanation of this was that the Japanese dead were entirely burnt, and of course went straight to heaven, but our dead would be rather at a disadvantage without a trunk when they entered the next world. Turton and I decided to go down to inspect the spot in an attempt to identify the bodies and secure the identity discs.

The following night we prepared for the expedition. We were sitting out on a small mound, having a break from our post, and waiting for darkness to fall, when we saw a truck come out on the road along which we proposed to move. It passed the spot of the murders, and continued around past the end of our spur, and then back up along the road which lay between us and the river, the friendly natives and retreat. It was followed by another truck, and another, until we counted six in all. We did some very rapid thinking. The Japanese were now between us and retreat, and above us at Lau-Lora were more enemy. There was a track along this spur which passed within a hundred yards of our post and led to Lau-Lora, and this was known to the enemy, as we had found cigarette packages and empty food containers which they had dropped there. This track had in fact been used for the encircling movement after the original landing. If the Japanese came down on us from Lau-Lora whilst we were cut off on the west we would have to go down to the aerodrome, and then find a way out through Dili. We decided to lie low and watch developments.

The trucks stopped below us, and there were lights moving and much shouting. The trucks went back to Dili, but the shouting continued. We kept watch that night, hour on and hour off. As the hours went by the noise subsided and died away. At dawn we made a careful reconnaissance, and re-occupied our post. We anxiously awaited the natives, and eventually they appeared. We learnt from them that the previous day it had rained heavily in the mountains, and this had caused the river to flood and flow into the old paddy fields and on to the new airstrip. The enemy movement the previous night had been a working party attempting to divert the flow. They also brought us news that four Australians had arrived at the other side of the river.

So that evening we crossed back over the river and met the arrivals; these were Lieutenants Mackintosh and Campbell, each with a corporal. The night was spent pleasantly swapping stories; but **Turton** and I were anxious to hear all about the south coast and its possibilities. Also, we had a long talk to the old chief and I gave him - a couple of quinine tablets, for which he was very thankful as he was in the midst of an attack of malaria and certainly looked very ill. Two tablets would not cure him, but he had great faith in them and that was the most important point. We learnt that he himself had killed a Japanese soldier who had come to his

village seeking a woman, and altogether his village had accounted for five Japanese who had ventured a little too far.

While we were at breakfast there was a scurry, and very excitedly the chief's brother asked us to move out as there were suspicious movements on the other side of the river, and it would be very bad for them if Australians were found in their village. We moved out, but it turned out to be false alarm, so we came back and finished the meal. We then climbed up to the top of the spur to spend the day in giving a general outline of the plan to the new arrivals. We had hardly reached the top when we saw a party of about fifty or sixty Japanese climbing the spur on the opposite side of the river. This was rather upsetting as I had intended that the two new officers and myself should return to our observation post that night, in order to give them a closer look at the ground. We watched a party of eight or ten Japanese detach themselves from the main body and move to a position immediately alongside our post. Whether they saw signs of our occupation or not we could not tell, but this was unlikely as we had been most careful in cleaning up; but if we had been in occupation at the time we would certainly have had to open fire at them, and then the whole area would have been closed to us. It was a narrow escape.

Shortly afterwards Dexter arrived. He had been misled by a native and had been travelling until midnight, when, realizing that the native had little real knowledge of where they were, he had decided to rest until dawn. He, his corporal and his two little native boys had come from a place called Same, down by the south coast. We were very interested in his descriptions of the country down there. His two natives were marvellous lads, one aged about ten and the other a little older; their names were Mau Luli and Motor Car, the latter being an amusing corruption of his native name. They remained with him through very dark times, and displayed courage and loyalty which were almost unbelievable.

I outlined the plan, and then Turton set off to return to Railaco, where he was to collect his sappers and the other troops, and there he would commence rehearsing them in their parts. We spent this day fixing details, but I decided not to cross back over the river, as I thought there was too great a risk of alarming the enemy and thus making the raid more difficult, which at the time had all the appearances of being foolproof. We knew the ground from earlier map-making work and from the careful observation over the last week; while from the Dutch soldier and the Chinese we knew now where their sentries were posted, and where and when their patrols moved, and, best of all, that the enemy was supremely confident and careless. We fixed the date for the last night in March, and we wondered if the Japanese sense of humour would appreciate the situation on the first of April.

That afternoon we saw again a portion of the Japanese fleet go past; it was travelling from east to west, passing between Kambing Island and Dili, but this time there were twenty-two ships, including five aircraft carriers. We had no doubts about their identity on this occasion, but our own private war was progressing satisfactorily, so we were not unduly depressed.

The following day I received a message from **Turton** to say that the troops were not coming forward, and the whole party had been ordered to report back to headquarters. I had sent off a message to headquarters every day, and although we knew that one message had not been delivered and that others had probably taken three or four days to arrive at their destination, I had been daily expecting a reply, but this was the only one to reach me. I debated whether it

was worthwhile to carry out a small raid with the personnel available, but decided that it would be spoiling the chance of a much bigger haul. Later, I regretted that decision.

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The next day we were in Atsabe, which **Turton** knew, but it was strange to me. It was a pretty town and well cared for. There were a considerable number of troops in the town as it held a portion of headquarters and the hospital. Captain Dunkley, as ever, was dealing with the difficulties which beset him, and working like a Trojan.

Early the next morning **Turton**, Dexter and I set off, and arrived at Bobonaro about midday. There I reported to Major Spence, saw Baldwin again after six weeks, and was presented to Senhor Sousa Santos, his wife and daughter. After I had enjoyed a glorious hot bath and change into some borrowed clothes that were not as odorous as mine, especially indoors, we sat down to a perfect meal served on hand-painted Chinese crockery, and waited upon by a native wearing a white jacket with gold buttons. Coffee was served on the verandah.

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Later that same day Dexter returned to his section, and the following day **Turton** and I set off for Hatu-Lia once again. Boyland was ill, and I was going to command the platoon in his absence. **Turton** was to collect his sappers, and I hoped to use him and his men.

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TURTON and I arrived at Atsabe in the afternoon, and the Doctor made us comfortable. We stayed that night and the next day. Boyland was there and I got from him the details of his dispositions. On the following morning we set out for Hatu-Lia.

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Reports indicated that the Japanese in Dili had been reinforced, and were once more moving out along the road to the west. As a hard-hitting patrol north of the road would confuse them, I attached to Cardy two Bren gunners and some Tommy gunners from Boyland's platoon, and in the morning they were gone. I decided to go down the road and meet the enemy if they were coming in our direction. So the following morning **Turton** and I set off, and Cole and Burrige were to follow on behind us.

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It was some time before Cole and Burrige arrived, and then we went on a reconnaissance, and found quite a good position covering the road and the track leading up from the valley. Their sections moved into position that night. It was also decided that **Turton** and his sappers would carry out a raid the following night on the Japanese clustered around the bridge.

Early the following morning **Turton** moved off, keeping to the top of the ridge overlooking the road, so that he could establish an observation post from which to plan his raid.

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Meanwhile, **Turton** and the remainder of his sappers were further along the spur studying Japanese activity around the bridge, and being very perplexed about this inexplicable firing

below and to their left. Hearing some noise behind him, **Turton** looked round and saw a Japanese soldier less than twenty yards away and approaching his position. The Japanese apparently had no idea that there were Australians about, but he came so close that **Turton** was forced to use his sniper's rifle on him. He shot him at three yards range from the hip. This is hardly the use laid down in the manuals for a sniper's rifle with telescopic sights, but **Turton** said it was very effective. Immediately there was confusion, mostly supplied by the Japanese. **Turton**, standing on a small mound, shot a few more Japanese at ranges varying from fifteen to thirty yards, and the enemy never realized just where he was. There was one Japanese hiding behind a log who was keeping up a continuous series of cries which were answered by the other enemy troops. **Turton** was very keen to stop the yelling, but he could not get a shot at the loquacious one, although he was less than twenty yards away. After a lot of thought he had to give up the effort as he was being outflanked. The moment he moved away he remembered the grenade in his pouch, and was most annoyed about forgetting it; but war produces queer mental aberrations.

The sappers had been waiting a little behind him on the side of a scour. When **Turton** shot his first Japanese they found themselves in the centre of a crowd of Japanese who appeared from everywhere. So they settled in behind some spindly bushes at the bottom of the scour to watch developments. And there they stayed for the succeeding twelve hours, with an enemy company headquarters set up within view of them. They could do nothing about it because the sides of the scour were so steep that an attempt to scale would have made them the easiest of targets, so easy that even the Japanese could not have missed them. During the day they had many anxious moments, such as when two Japanese soldiers stood on the edge of the scour, and apparently looked right into the bushes behind which they were partially concealed. When the Japanese moved, the Australians had to shout out, "Australia, Australia," to avoid being slaughtered by the natives who came up with spears, thinking they were wounded Japanese.

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After a couple of days **Turton** and I set off for Ermera to organize a raid on the enemy. We went down through Vila Maria and over to a deserted Portuguese house called "Mantassie", a small deserted dairy farm not far from Vila Maria. Here we asked the native caretaker for some food, and as night was approaching we said we would like to sleep in the house that night. He produced some rice and a mattress which had been hidden in the ceiling. We enjoyed the luxury of a mattress and used an old native mat as a blanket.

In the morning I contacted Cole's section, and we climbed up and had a good look at Ermera. We could see the Japanese moving around, and I was particularly interested in a paddock in which there were thirty or forty horses. Soon we saw some troops set up a mortar in the village square and fire off some bombs in our direction, to points which they thought we might be using as observation posts. It was slightly amusing to watch those marionettes loading the mortar, and then hear the bombs bursting hundreds of yards to our right. We had learnt not to use the highest peak, or the most obvious spot.

On returning to the house the natives told us that they had a small pig that they would kill and cook for us, but they had no fat, and would we mind if it were cooked in butter, as there was plenty of that since the Portuguese owner had departed. We said we would be pleased to have

the pig cooked in butter, and that we would be further pleased to have butter in and on our rice, too. That butter was really too much for my digestive organs, and I was distinctly uncomfortable afterwards.

In the house there was a pile of gramophone records that I admired very much. There was the complete opera of Pagliacci in English, and at least a hundred other similar recordings. I wished the gramophone itself had been available.

While I was admiring the records, **Turton**, looking out through one of the front windows, saw natives running across the open ground between us and Vila Maria. This attracted his attention immediately because a native running was a sign of something untoward. His doubts, and my interest in the records, were dispelled by a burst of machine gun fire from the hill above the house. Collecting our belongings, we went up to contact Cole, and found that he knew little more than we did. As they were now liable to be caught in a small area with the enemy above, and below them a road along which he could move motor transport, I took the section across the road on to the high ground between Vila Maria and Hatu-Lia. **Turton** returned with me to bring his sappers back into that area also, and that night we slept back in our hut above Vila Maria.

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While here we heard of Signaller Gerry Maley, who had been wounded above Hatu-Lia when the Japanese had first entered that town. He had remained at the telephone there until the enemy were very close to the town; he had then established an observation post overlooking the town, from which he had seen some troops approaching and, thinking they were Australians, had signalled them. Not receiving a reply, he had become suspicious and took cover behind a tree, but a burst from a machine gun shattered his thigh. The other two with him had been unable to move him further than to a native village, and now the Japanese had heard of his hiding place and were searching for him. At this time there was a small post overlooking Hatu-Lia, but the Japanese were between the post and Maley's hiding place, and while a patrol was being arranged to go in to get him, Dunkley and **Turton** set off from Atsabe, and after a really marvellous piece of work in dodging Japanese patrols succeeded in rescuing the wounded man and bringing him back to Atsabe.

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I was not observed in my movements and eventually reached our outpost at Rotai that had been the object of the morning's shelling. There I had some food and then pushed on to Atsabe, where I saw **Turton**. He thought I had been captured, and was relieved to see me.

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The threat and eventual Japanese occupation of Lete-Foho had resulted in the whole of the Australians down in the south-west being placed under Major Spence's command by the brigadier, and arrangements were being made for the formation of another platoon to be placed under the command of **Turton**. These troops were specially selected by Major Chisholm, and were now on their way to Mape where they were to be given a three-day cadre course arranged by their new platoon commander.

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That night I slept at the *posto*, and the following afternoon I left for Bobonaro. After a night's rest there, I set off for Atsabe to watch that area until we could get **Turton's** new platoon into position. I was becoming an "if" man; so often was I thinking "If the Japs will only give us time to do something or other we shall be able to deal with them." In most cases the Japanese satisfied my wishes. Now I wanted time to get **Turton** into position, and Laidlaw up on the east of Dili. The enemy had the power to call the tune, but if he delayed for too long we would worry him considerably.

I arrived back at Atsabe, and **Turton** went off to Mape to train his platoon in three days.

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The days following were ones of organization and rearrangement. Laidlaw was moving up to east of Dili, Boyland was settling into an area above Maubisse, and **Turton** was training his platoon.

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It was the twentieth of May. I was very fortunate to take over when everything was in good condition. **Turton** and his platoon were now in position, ...

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While these moves and reorganizations were being prepared, the annoying of the Japanese had not ceased, and the pinpricking raids continued. **Turton** had now moved his headquarters forward to Rotai, and had his platoon around Ermera. With the enemy behind continuously manned defences in Dili and not moving out from Ermera it was difficult to harass him; the convoys from Dili to Ermera were protected by patrols which moved through the hills above the road. The offensive spirit of all was reflected in the continuous complaints from **Turton** that Dexter and Boyland, in their efforts to harass the enemy, were intruding on his area, and, in his threats of reprisals if the practice continued.

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In the afternoon **Turton** arrived, and we discussed the general plans for the defence. The enemy were not to be allowed to have it all their own way, and Dexter was not to be left to fight on his own; should the enemy attack Cailaco they would find their own rear and flanks attacked by **Turton** and Rose.

The following morning we all set out to examine **Turton's** section positions, and see how best they could support Dexter.

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Our plan for the campaign had to be bold to deal with this. The drives out from Dili were to be handled by Laidlaw and Boyland; each with his platoon was opposed to a column consisting of six to seven hundred troops. As many as could be collected in Ainaro were placed under McKenzie, who happened to be there on a special task, and they were to watch any drive up from the south coast, but it was hoped that the R.A.A.F. attack on the convoy had disorganized

this. Dexter, with the support of **Turton**, was to deal with the drive through Memo and Maliana. Although it was known that the enemy had overrun the Dutch positions, it was decided to ignore this drive, mainly because I had no one to oppose it, but also I reasoned that, due to the difficult country between us and them, it was unlikely that this column would be able to link up with the others or to push on too far.

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I considered the main worry to be the drive through Maliana and Bobonaro, and both Dexter's and **Turton's** platoons were positioned to delay any move towards Atsabe; once there the enemy was within striking distance of Ainaro and he would then be able to penetrate inside our line, which was being contracted. We were still able to cover the approaches, but should the enemy occupy Ainaro we would be forced to evacuate the whole western area because it was the key.

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I moved company headquarters out from Bobonaro during the night of the eleventh to twelfth of August, and for the succeeding two days we adopted a method of leap-frogging. Each morning the company sergeant-major would go ahead to a general area that I indicated and there set up camp. Then throughout the day the wireless set would be on the air. About seven or eight o'clock at night the signallers would hand over control of the network to **Turton's** station, which was centrally placed. Then the signallers and I would make a dash for the new position and set up the station to receive and answer any messages which **Turton's** station had to pass on. We did not move very far in these hops as I was not in a hurry. I wanted to reach the spurs of Ramelau Range, which came to within four or five miles of Bobonaro, and there I would be on the flank of the Japanese drive to Atsabe, and in a good position to control **Turton** and Dexter and at the same time maintain contact with Boyland and Laidlaw.

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Dexter and **Turton** were forced back and took up positions covering the tracks from Atsabe to Ainaro, but the net around the force was being drawn close now as the Japanese continued on past Aileu to Maubisse, and Laidlaw was forced further south.

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The trap could be closed on us by the continued southward movement of the column opposite Laidlaw, and its movements towards Turiscai and Mindelo were being watched carefully. Laidlaw's platoon was swinging out to the east, a position from which it could sit on the flank of the Japanese drive, and come in on its flank and rear should it continue southward. **Turton's** platoon was moved over to strengthen Boyland, who was astride the junction of the tracks from Ainaro and Same to Maubisse.

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We knew him as "Krupps" because of his activities in altering rifle's to suit his requirements. While **Turton** had been staying with him their experiments with captured Japanese ammunition and their attempts to make explosive bullets had caused some alarms. After one such

experiment there was a frantic telephone call from Bobonaro ten miles away wanting to know if Atsabe had been bombed!

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Ayris, All the Bull's men:

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The sappers, under **Lt Don Turton** and Sgt Gerry Green were meanwhile busily engaged preparing the airstrip and administration buildings for demolition in case the enemy arrived and the Australians had to withdraw. The aerodrome was between the road and the beach on a rectangular block, close to the waterfront. Demolishing the whole airfield was of course, impossible – the best they could aim for was to make it unusable for as long as possible by blowing a series of craters along the runway. The charges were carefully laid so that they were protected from water and close attention was paid to the firing method – the aerodrome had to be kept open until the last possible moment.

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On 13 February some Zeros launched another attack on the town – just as Lts Don Turton and Archie Campbell were enjoying a cold, open air shower. Both men grabbed their rifles, fled naked into a slit trench and opened some ineffectual fire on the rapidly disappearing aircraft. The story spread later that they had come close to winning DSOs – DSO meaning “dicks shot off”.

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On 19 February 1942, the day before the landing, Lts Don Turton and Archie Campbell had gone into Dili from Three Spurs and Railaco, carrying a dispatch. Turton's sappers and No. 9 Section had been on leave in the town and were due to return to base. The troops had enjoyed themselves to the extent that several were experiencing difficulty standing up. The result was that those who were sober had to help carry some of the packs and weapons belonging to the drink-affected, the ten kilometres back to Three Spurs.

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Leaving the group, Aitken, King and Mau Lare began a wide sweep to the east. At nightfall they arrived at the Railaco river crossing where they found Smash Hodgson and his engineers who were planning to blow the road to Ermera, thus forcing the Japanese to march there instead of riding in the backs of trucks. Aitken's news that the Japanese were already there prompted the slow-drawling Smash to announce that he would think on the problem overnight. He conceded, however, that it did appear they would now have to get out of the area before their escape route was cut off. Smash explained that meanwhile he was putting the finishing touches to a request from **Lt Turton** for an explanation of a number of unauthorised night explosions in his area. Smash's long-pondered reply was to the effect that the combination of straying Japanese, and his men's steady diet of maize, had led to more night explosions than he had men to investigate. The Ermera road was not blown.

.....

They remained shadows, but sometimes the enemy's sheer weight of numbers caught them out – which is what happened to Sig Gerry Maley when he was wounded in a gun battle near Hatu-Lia.

When the Japanese began their advance they were being watched from an OP on a spur, overlooking the village, by Maley and his two signaller mates D.A. (Taffy) Davis and B. (Rip) McMahon. Using party line telephone and Lucas lamp signals, the three men were reporting the enemy's troop movements to Cpl Harry Wray in Cailaco, on the other side of the valley.

.....

Word of Maley's plight had reached the 2/2nd via the first messenger, but there appears to have been a delay in deciding what should be done. Lt Campbell, who was directly involved, said that he had got word to Major Spence that Maley was wounded and in need of help, but he said it was the MO, Capt Dunkley, who volunteered to handle a rescue.

.....

Campbell said that Dunkley – never a man to take no for an answer or an order – had promptly set off from Ainaro to get on with the rescue. (Dunkley had established a hospital at Ainaro). He made his way to Atsabe where he contacted Lt Turton and a number of sappers, including Smash Hodgson. The doctor was happy to let Turton plan the rescue.

Campbell wrote:

Smash told this writer many months later that the cool, calm and collected manner in which Turton and Dunkley set about going after Maley, who for all they knew was still in a Japanese occupied village, made his blood run cold. Smash said that if he had been asked by Turton to accompany him on the venture he would have done so, but he was just as pleased not to be asked.

Fortune was smiling on the two-man rescue party. When it left Atsabe that afternoon, the first Timorese they met were from the village where Maley was being sheltered. When Dunkley explained that they were looking for a wounded *Australie* the villagers readily agreed to lead them in.

On their way they came across a party of Japanese soldiers frolicking in a waterhole. "Let's do them over," suggested Dunkley. Turton said later that he was able to talk the doctor out of the idea, but only after he had convinced him that such action would jeopardise the attempt to rescue Maley.

They arrived late at night when the village was asleep. It was the darkest night either of them could remember; they were amazed that even their Timorese guides were able to find the way. Dunkley and Turton were sure there would be a Japanese guard but, if there was one, he was either asleep or guarding another part of the village.

Carefully the two officers and their guides slipped ghostlike through the village, using every patch of shadow to reach the *oomah* where Maley was being kept. Silently they stepped inside. Dunkley and Turton moved quickly over the earthen floor to where Maley was lying still

covered with rags. He was barely conscious, his stubbled face deathly white. When he saw the two officers he managed a weak grin.

He would say later: "I didn't quite realise what was going on. I heard some typical Australian obscenity then all of a sudden, there was the doctor and **Don Turton**."

Dunkley explained in a low whisper that they were going to get him out but that first, he would have to set his leg. Maley nodded. Dunkley administered morphine and went to work while the Timorese quickly made another stretcher to replace the one that had been destroyed when the Japanese arrived. **Turton** kept anxious guard at the hut's entrance, hoping and praying that the enemy stayed asleep. A stretcher party of Timorese was silently mustered to carry the injured man away.

Dunkley finished his work on Maley's leg and ordered him to be lifted gently onto the stretcher. The stretcher bearers effortlessly lifted the wounded man and, after receiving the go-ahead from **Turton**, stepped outside into the darkness.

The whole rescue was, of course, hair-brained in the extreme. It needed only one Japanese soldier to leave his *oomah*, for the rescue party to become embroiled in a confrontation from which there could be no escape. A barking dog, a cry of pain from Maley, a disturbed chicken any one of a number of unforeseen events would have meant disaster. The loss of Dunkley would have been an enormous setback for the 2/2nd which was entirely dependent on him for the treatment of casualties. But the dogs slept, the chickens scratched contentedly, and the Japanese snored – dreaming perhaps of happier times.

The strange procession passed through the village, every man walking as though on broken glass. Reaching the edge of the settlement they increased their speed until they were half trotting, then they were in full flight with Maley gritting his teeth with every jolt.

Colin Doig mentions in his account of the rescue that neither Dunkley nor **Turton** were known for their diplomacy when dealing with the Timorese. Dunkley, he says, could be particularly impatient. Both officers now urged on the stretcher bearers, anxious to put as much distance as possible between themselves and the enemy-occupied village. It was fortunate perhaps that the ever-willing Timorese were unable to understand the imprecations being directed at them.

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Turton's decision to take part in the rescue was said to be typical of the man – Sgt Gerry Green recalled him planning an attack on Japanese ships anchored off Dili. "He wanted to lead a party out in native canoes and attach limpet mines to the ships' hulls," he said. "None of us was over regretful when permission for the raid was refused."

.....

The 2/2nd decided it was time to strike a serious blow against the enemy – the more audacious the better. After lengthy discussion it was agreed that a raid on the Dili airfield would be a good way of making their presence felt. The more the idea was discussed the more it appealed: they knew the area, the target was big and therefore hard to defend, and the prize was a plum – an entire squadron of Japanese aircraft just waiting to be blown up.

The first stage of the plan called for Callinan and Lt Don Turton (the explosives expert) to establish an OP as close as possible to the airfield. From there they would take note of troop and aircraft movements, the strength and efficiency of the airfield guards, the undergrowth or depressions that could be used as cover in their approach – anything that could be turned to the advantage of the saboteurs. When they had gathered all the information they needed they would plan the attack.

Stage two, which would start a week later, called for an officer and two NCOs, to join Callinan and Turton for a briefing on how the raid would be carried out.

The final stage would involve a party of mainly sappers, who would creep up on the airfield and hang “necklace charges” from the aeroplanes’ propellers. After detonating the explosives the Australians would beat a hasty retreat to Hatu-Lia. The necklace charges, to be made under the supervision of Spr Wilf March, would be of high percentage gelignite, sewn into hessian “sausages”, each connected with a single piece of cortex instant detonating fuse for simultaneous explosions.

While Callinan and Turton were preparing for the raid, more crudely printed demands of surrender arrived, as did an almost continuous stream of rumours of Japanese troop movements out of Dili.

Callinan and Turton left for their mission mounted on Timor ponies, well equipped and with an elderly Timorese guide who could speak a little Malay.

Moving cautiously the three-man party entered the Glano River valley where three laughing children gave them a cucumber to eat. When they arrived at what was left of the Glano bridge they found an *oomah* near the river bank, which was home to a poor Timorese family. They were understandably wary of the Australians but agreed to give them a meal of fried bananas and rice, followed by mugs of coffee.

The three men were about to leave for the village of Railaco, the former 2/2nd headquarters, when a Timorese man arrived on horseback at full gallop, obviously excited. In a mixture of Malay and sign language he conveyed the unwelcome news that the Japanese were in Railaco. He was spreading the word as a warning to people to stay away.

Callinan decided to investigate. Leaving Turton at the oomah, but taking his guide and the Timorese family’s young boy, he followed a small track to a bluff overlooking the village.

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Next morning, after an early breakfast, Callinan and Turton crossed the Glano river and climbed the Nasuta Saddle. The view must have brought smiles to their faces – in the distance was Dili and its harbour; to the west was the airfield. Studying their map, they saw the tracks they had identified before the Japanese landing.

Leaving their vantage point they pushed on, helped by two new guides who had volunteered to join them. The party passed through small mountain villages where they were greeted enthusiastically and given food and water. Staying with the top of the ridge where they would not be seen, they followed a track that ran above familiar Three Spurs, before heading for a village that clung to a ridge, barely three kilometres from the airfield.

They arrived late in the day. If the view from Nasuta Saddle had brought smiles to their faces, the one from their new vantage point must have produced broad grins. Spread below them, like a contour model, was the Dili airfield. Six Zeros were parked in line, their wing tips almost touching. The two Australians shifted their gaze. They could see military vehicles moving to and from the airfield; they even recognised one of their old trucks.

The sky had barely begun to brighten the following morning when the stillness was shattered by the sound of aircraft engines, first spluttering then bellowing with full-throated roars. Callinan and **Turton** scrambled into better positions in time to see two Zeros take off and climb steeply, their wings catching the early sun.

The aerodrome was already buzzing with activity; a new strip was being cleared across what had been paddy fields on the south side of the road. From their OP the Australians could see bulldozers and heavy rollers clearing and levelling the ground. They could even recognise soldiers and labourers going about their work. They had been watching for an hour when the two Zeros swept back from the west and landed on the new strip with the delicacy of dragonflies.

Callinan and **Turton** spent the day carefully marking every track, building and geographical feature onto the map they had brought from Hatu-Lia. By evening they had plotted every installation the enemy had built, every dip in the ground that could be used as cover, every bush or tree or stand of tall grass.

Next, they planned the raid, marking the approaches they would take, the route to the Zeros and, of course, the escape. Callinan decided they could get another perspective if they found a position on the opposite side of the river; perhaps they could even improve the plan.

As soon as it was dark the two officers left their productive, though uncomfortable lookout post, and slipped quietly down the hill to a village where they knew the people were friendly. A meal was prepared for them, but first they were taken to a Dutch-Timorese soldier the villagers were sheltering. He had escaped three days earlier after convincing the Japanese he was a simple Timorese who had no interest in the war. At first he had been held in prison, but when his captors formed the opinion that he was harmless, they put him to work as a houseboy for the Japanese Consul. He had bided his time, eventually escaping by climbing through his bedroom window in the middle of the night. He had kept his eyes and ears open and was able to pass on more valuable information which was added to the map. The map now showed the positions of barracks, weapon pits, sentry points, fuel dumps, officers' quarters, kitchens, mess rooms, administrative buildings and transport areas.

Callinan and **Turton** left the village just before midnight when the only sound came from the cicadas or their own soft footfalls. They were led by Timorese, armed with spears, who picked their way unerringly along tracks that climbed and plunged through the darkened landscape, always clinging to the eastern bank of the Comoro River.

They grabbed an hour's sleep then pressed on. Dawn had barely broken when **Turton** signalled to Callinan and dropped to the ground. Callinan slid up to him on his belly – and smiled with relief. They were in a slight depression on a spur; directly below them was the Dili airfield with the six Zeros still parked wing tip-to wing tip. They could see the pilots and ground crews.

The two men backed slowly away and took stock of their position. It was near perfect. There was a nasty-looking gully running down towards the coast and at the head of the gully, a tree which would make an excellent lookout. Once in the depression, they would be almost invisible from every direction, including above.

They built a tunnel through the undergrowth to the lookout. It was so well concealed they felt confident that even if a Japanese patrol came past, it would be unlikely to find them. When the tunnel was finished, they made the lookout as comfortable as possible. A seat was fashioned out of timber and dead grass, and they made an armrest to lean on while keeping the airfield under observation.

There was even “room service” – to avoid revealing their hideaway’s position, they had arranged to meet the villagers at a pre-arranged place each morning and evening to collect their supplies and swap empty water bottles for full ones.

The new OP was a big success. Over the ensuing days the two men watched the Zeros taking off and landing; they logged their flight patterns and they marked every sentry point on the airfield. They noticed that the Japanese were becoming less vigilant and less active. Reconnaissance flights ceased – the Zeros engines were warmed up but the planes remained on the ground with covers over their engines. They watched ground crews being taken to the airfield in trucks in the morning and returning to Dili in the evening.

There was one thing on which the two men could not agree – who would have the honour of whipping the Japanese flag from the flagpole? In *Independent Company*, Callinan wrote:

..... As we altered the method of advance, first it would be Turton’s job, then a further alteration would bring it into my sphere and he would accuse me of making the alteration just to rob him of the flag. He wanted to wear the flag as a sarong when his trousers had worn out, which they had almost done by that time.

They were about to return to the village on their final day when a Timorese who had brought them some food, drew their attention to a patch of brown grass down in the valley. That, he said, was where the Japanese had shot six Australians. They had stripped them of their clothes and belongings, buried their bodies up to their waists then cut timber and burnt them. The Chinese explained that there was a religious reason for this macabre act of savagery. He said that the Japanese burnt their dead whole, believing that by so doing, their spirits went straight to heaven. They had burnt only half the Australians’ bodies to ensure that their spirits remained here on earth.

When they returned to the village they found Lts Mackintosh and Campbell and two corporals who had arrived from Hatu-Lia to be briefed on the raid. Stage two was under way.

Next morning they all climbed the spur to the OP so that Callinan could give the new arrivals a general outline of his plan of attack. They had no sooner reached the top before they saw fifty or sixty Japanese soldiers climbing the ridge on the opposite side of the valley. The Australians flattened themselves on the ground and watched as a group of eight or ten broke away from the main party and headed straight for the lookout. Incredibly, they appeared not to see it – but it had been a close thing.

The Australians returned to the village the following day to find Lt Dexter there with a corporal and two Timorese boys who had travelled with them as guides. Callinan described the planned raid to Dexter and next morning, **Turton** returned to Railaco to collect the sappers and other troops who would carry out the attack.

The date for the raid was fixed for the last night of March – it was hoped that the Japanese would connect it with April Fool’s Day. By the following morning everything was ready to go. All Callinan had to do was wait for the task force to arrive and make sure the men understood what to do.

But seldom do plans go astray more often than in time of war. The “task force” when it arrived, comprised just one soldier, carrying a message from Spence – the raid was to be abandoned. The party was to return to headquarters.

.....

Cleary, *The men who came out of the ground*:

.....

By July 1941, the First Australian Independent Company (AIC) marched out of Wilsons Promontory just as the recruits for the second company were filing in. The recruits for the second company, drawn mainly from Western Australia, arrived on 11 July after travelling across the country on a troop train. Most of the new trainees had enlisted in the army just two months before in response to a big recruitment drive launched at the time. The men in the second company came from the farms, outback stations, and mining towns of the vast state of Western Australia, while a small minority came from the capital, Perth. They were, after all, training to become bush soldiers, and a significant number were descendants of the original white settlers of the state. It was to be a cultural clash as rugged and often foul-mouthed bushmen and miners met officers from the eastern-states establishment. Bernard Callinan, Rolf Baldwin, and David Dexter all stayed on to instruct and train with the second unit. They were joined by several Western Australians who had undergone officer training at Bonegilla, most notably Lieutenant Gerry McKenzie, 26, a butcher from Busselton, WA, and **Don Turton**, 23, a clerk from Fremantle.

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The engineers corps, which was responsible for demolition rather than construction, was led by **Don Turton**, whose familiarity with explosives began at a young age; his father had run a business supplying gelignite to the mining industry.

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When Williamson met up with his platoon commander **Captain Don Turton** two days later, **Turton** was very surprised to see him. **Turton’s** engineers platoon had waged bets on whether Williamson, as the last man to leave the airfield, would be able to get out alive. **Turton** had laid a sizeable bet on Williamson’s not making it back.

.....

Callinan ordered D Platoon to join the fray. Its commander was **Don Turton**, a fair-haired fearless leader who was always on the lookout for opportunities to take the offensive. Some of **Turton's** men feared he was so aggressive that he would get them killed in what they believed was his pursuit of a Victoria Cross. **Turton's** platoon had been formed to accommodate the other Sparrow Force men from Dutch Timor, together with men from the engineers corps who had been made partly redundant by the destruction of the explosives at the Three Spurs camp. Instead of just doing demolition work, **Turton's** men became a 'fighting section' led by a fearless officer.

Callinan moved troops forward with a view to blowing roads linking Dili and Hato-Lia, and Gleno and Ermera, and finally challenge the Japanese incursion with a major blow. One of **Turton's** men, Corporal Lewis Thompson, 34, was bringing forward explosives and reserve ammunition on two ponies when he ran into a Japanese patrol. Thompson and another sapper had not seen any Japanese movements, so they followed their habit of taking the road rather than the track. As Thompson rounded a bend he almost ran into a Japanese soldier, and the two dived for cover. Thompson quickly grabbed one of the Bren guns and caught up with the soldier, who was now joined by several others taking cover in a culvert. Thompson opened up on them, killing or wounding all of the troops with the accurate machine gun. Then a truck came into view. Thompson fired on it, sending it over the side. Within a few minutes, the remaining enemy troops had set up machine guns and mortars, forcing Thompson and his mate to make a hasty retreat up a bare hillside. Thompson almost ran into a patrol sent to cut him off, but he and his mate lay low and the patrol completely missed them.

Turton and several other sappers heard the firing below them, and then some minutes later they were surprised by several Japanese who walked into their position. **Turton** responded by firing from the hip. The first Japanese came as close as a few metres. **Turton** shot the others at a range of 15– 30 metres. Suddenly there were Japanese appearing from all directions around **Turton's** men, who took cover in some scrub and lay hiding for about 12 hours until the Japanese moved off. For the rest of the day the Japanese shelled the hills all around the area of the ambush. They fired in an anticlockwise direction, lobbing four to six shells at a time before moving to the next target. None of the Australians was hit.

.....

Dunkley demonstrated bravery beyond the call of duty, as he was prepared to go into harm's way to retrieve the seriously wounded and bring them to safety, as he had shown at Bazar-Tete. While treating the wounded from Bazar-Tete, Dunkley learned of another Australian who was seriously wounded and would soon be in need of his assistance. Signaller Gerry Maley, 32, lay in a village near Hatu-Lia, several hours' walk from Dunkley's base at Atsabe, with a number of rounds from a Japanese machine gun having smashed his shoulder, knee, and thigh. Maley had been manning the post with two other signallers, Bernard 'Rip' McMahon and John 'Taffey' Davies, when the Japanese opened up with a machine gun, hitting Maley in the knee, while a bullet grazed the forehead of McMahon. Two Timorese boys who were with the soldiers quickly made a stretcher so that Maley could be moved to a neighbouring village, but as he was being moved the Japanese fired on them once more. Maley reasoned that his best chance of survival lay in Davies and McMahon creating a diversion and leaving him hidden in the village.

Davies and McMahon followed his instructions and made a successful exit. But the Timorese boys, known only to Maley as Antonio and Manere, stayed with him.

The report of Maley's plight reached a section commander in C Platoon, who was based only a few hours away from Hatu-Lia, while Company HQ in far-flung Cailaco was also informed. No-one seemed willing to do anything. The area where Maley lay—possibly already having bled to death—was crawling with Japanese. Dunkley was based at his hospital in Atsabe, several hours south of Hatu-Lia. Upon hearing the report, Dunkley set out to rescue Maley. But Dunkley realised he could not go alone; he found a willing volunteer in bold **Don Turton**, the commander of D Platoon. While **Turton's** daring often infuriated his men, on this occasion **Turton** was the right man for the job. With the aid of Timorese guides, Dunkley and **Turton** travelled through the night to reach the village above Hatu-Lia, where they found Maley, who was startled when he heard some typical Australian profanity uttered as his rescuers approached his hut.

When Dunkley inspected Maley's shattered knee, he discovered it was infested with maggots. Dunkley declared it was a 'wonderful sight' because they were stopping the spread of gangrene. Dunkley administered morphine and put Maley's leg in a splint, while **Turton** asked the Timorese boys to make a stronger stretcher for the long haul back to Atsabe. The next morning, Maley was safely ensconced in Dunkley's makeshift hospital and made a full recovery. While in hospital, Dunkley cleaned and dressed Maley's wounds each morning, a very painful experience for the soldier, who screamed loudly each time. Maley said many years later that he owed his life to the Timorese boys, whose initiative in making the stretcher got him to safety: 'I owe my life to Antonio and Manere in the first place. If they weren't able to rig up that stretcher in the first place I was gone.'

.....

In concert with the bombing campaign, the 2/2 Company carried out extensive demolition works on major roads. **Turton's** sappers blew roads from Dili to Hato-Lia, and to Aileu and Liquiça in early July, and later that month B Platoon demolished a section of the road heading east from Dili to Hera, completing the task despite coming under shell fire. In mid-July, Callinan led C Platoon in blowing roads near the former Three Spurs camp and in the hills around it. It was reported that these demolitions had gone ahead 'swimmingly', but then **Turton** produced estimates showing that it would take the Japanese one or two days to rebuild these roads; the work would only slow down, rather than completely halt, Japanese movements.

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Dexter realised that he risked being encircled. A Japanese drive from the south was also coming his way, so he ordered his less mobile men—the sick, the signallers, a medical orderly, and men with supplies—to withdraw to the east to Atsabe, where they would link up with **Don Turton's** D Platoon, which had established a defensive stronghold. Atsabe, at the foot of 3,000 metre high Mount Ramelau, was the place where much of the 2/2's store of ammunition had been stashed after being hauled up the mountain by Wilby's pony train in March. As Dexter made preparations to stage another ambush on a narrow pass linking the road from Bobonaro to Atsabe, a local elder, Chief Martinho, approached him with a surrender note distributed by the Japanese. Martinho told Dexter that the Japanese were advancing towards him with big

guns. Dexter's party of 28 men contacted the approaching enemy briefly before they withdrew and joined the flight to Atsabe.

Upon reaching the town, Dexter and his group learned that the Japanese were already there, so they climbed further up into the mountains, departing within minutes of the Japanese opening up on the town with mortars and artillery. Eventually Dexter regrouped at **Turton's** 'hideout'—a group of huts perched on a very steep hilltop—where the hungry men dined on a meal of grilled buffalo as the Japanese continued shelling the deserted nearby town. Joining the exodus to the cold and hungry high country was Callinan's headquarters, which set up a new base on the western slope of the Ramelau range on the night of 13 August.

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Don Turton's D Platoon, which had also been sent to contact the Japanese drive, spotted the Japanese column of about 500 men as it marched south along the track. **Turton's** men opened up on them from a distance of a few hundred metres, but the enemy immediately returned accurate fire, forcing **Turton's** group to break off the engagement and retreat into the hills. D Platoon had made little impression on the Japanese in the five-minute firefight. As the Japanese pursued **Turton's** platoon, they moved down the road, where they came within range of Dexter's platoon, which immediately opened up on them. A general stampede ensued when the Bren gunners and rifleman filled the valley with the crack of their .303 bullets, firing at a range of 800–1,200 metres. The Japanese took cover by diving into a culvert or climbing to higher ground, or into Timorese huts, where they made themselves easy targets against the skyline. The Australians were so far away, and so well camouflaged, that the Japanese could not see where the fire was coming from.

.....

Callinan's party slept the first night with Dexter's platoon in Samé, then climbed into the heart of the Kablaki range via a 'short but exceedingly precipitous track' to **Don Turton's** D platoon, where they slept the night. The following day they trekked north-west to one of **Turton's** forward sections near Ainaro and then linked up with the 2/4 Company's C Platoon, which had been involved in the Samé ambush, and then on to the 2/4's A Platoon HQ near the mountain-top town of Lete-Foho, which was reached by a very steep track that proved impossible for the Timor ponies.

.....

AT THIS tipping point in the conflict, the poor physical condition of the 2/2 men seriously impaired operations to the point where orders could not be followed. Lieutenant **Turton** attributed their poor condition to the 'lack of proper food and being in areas where to exist they must be on the alert 24 hours each day'.

.....

NAME **TURTON, Donald Kenton**

Award **M.I.D.** Reg.No. **WX 8440** Rank **CAPTAIN** Service **A.M.F.**

Recommended by Governor-General on **27/1/43.**

Promulgated in *London Gazette* on **29/5/43.** } G. H. File **A.M.F. O/A 5**

Promulgated in *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* on

Citation (G. H. File **AMF O/A 5**) **Exceptional services in field in S.W.P. Area.**

Insignia received from London G. H. File

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At On G. H. File

Address of recipient on presentation date

Remarks

Other Awards

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AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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TRANSCRIPT

SECRET

SUMMARY OF REPORT BY LIEUT D.K. TURTON, Ind. Coy. ON VISIT TO HATOLIA AND ERMARA 10 – 12 Jul 42.

1. I visited HATOLIA on Jul 10 and received a much better reception than that tended to the 2 Ind Coy three months ago.
2. The Portuguese Chiefe de Poste talked freely of the Japanese visit, though the lack of an interpreter meant the loss of much information.
 - (a) Two Jap patrols went to ATABAI (i) 22 Cavalry (ii) 45 infantry, time and dates were indefinite. (see Intel Report Situation 1 Jul para 6 (i).)
 - (b) Japs remarked that they found travelling and fighting difficult once away from roads.
 - (c) Chiefe de Poste remarked upon poor type, physically and mentally, of the soldiers, and this was supported by medical attendant at TALO.
 - (d) That only five days rations were given to troops going on long patrols.

- (e) All medical gear including surgical instruments were taken from HATOLIA by the Japs. He personally believes that in August, when the [BE BAI HQ VER] permits, all troops from Port Timor will move to ATAMBOEA via way of MAUBARA.
- 3. On 11 Jul, I visited the Portuguese plantation-owner at HIFU near ERMERA, and on 12 Jul the Chiefe de Poste at ERMERA. The reports of the latter confirmed those from HIFU.
 - (a) A Major was shot dead at ERMERA 1900 hrs 17 Apr, whilst on sentry rounds. On this date most troops were in HATOLIA.
 - (b) The Major was boiled in a 44 gal drum until well stewed then his bones were removed, burnt, and the remains casked in cement, borrowed from the Chiefe de Poste.
 - (c) After an action, dead and wounded brought back, and those suffering from broken bones, were machine-gunned and buried, sometimes whilst still kicking. This was not seen by the Chiefe de Poste, but told to him by Inpoushi [?] (a pre-war resident of DILLI, who assumed the rank of Captain in the army.)
 - (d) There were two young Jap interpreters who learnt Portuguese in Brazil. They stated they were sick of war and freely admitted the soldiers' intense dislike of mountain fighting. He likened Australians to monkies with human faces, who spring from the ground, fight, and jump back again.
 - (e) The Chiefe de Poste particularly noticed that discipline was gained by terrorism, having seen soldiers shaking all over when questioned by superiors.
 - (f) The Japs knew Aust stores were hidden in VILLA MARIA area, so gave the native Chief of the area picks and shovels and offered him a reward for all he brought in. The Chief told the Chiefe de Posto that he knew where the stores were, but he did not wish to hand them over to the Japs, so he was advised to hide the tools and vanish, which he promptly did.
 - (g) When fatigues were used for road work, the tools provided disappeared.
 - (h) Inpoushi [?] was annoyed with the results of mine laying – results being one truck, one Major and some men. He seemed afraid of hill-fighting, hated Aust hand-grenades after Lieut Rose (Ind Coy) threw one into a house at ATOORA. He stated that 400 soldiers had been killed since the Japs came out from DILLI to chase the Aust who, he admitted, were good soldiers.

[1]

3. (cont.)

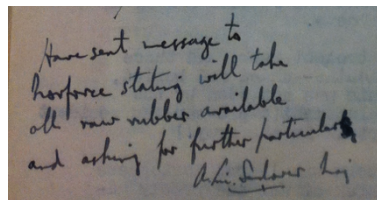
- (i) In the VILLA MARIA incident when Lieut Rose staged an ambush, 2 officers and many men were killed.
- (j) The Japs questioned the Chiefe de Poste re aerodrome at MAPE which was used for conveying stores to Australians.
- (k) He enjoyed a hearty laugh when even after his advice the Japs heavily mortared for half an hour, a native totem pole above ERMERA.

- (l) 5 Timors and 1 Chinese were shot before Japs departed. Personal belief the Chinese knew too much as he was recognized as pro-Jap before.
- (m) Stated that the dead were buried in the trenches. Did not investigate as trenches were partly filled by rotting refuse.
- (n) Stated that two officers and ten men perished during RAAF bombing.
- (o) Poste and outbuildings left like a pig sty with straw, in places, 1 metre thick.
- (p) The commander was a Colonel. No name given.
- (q) Two Vickers were mounted for A/A.
- (r) On night of arrival things were terribly disorganized. Very few guards and much equipment lying about. He stated an attack by a few would have caused a panic.
- (s) From FATUBESI an HATOLIA it is stated that 900 pecos of rubber ready for use is available and considerably more could be ready in a short time. If it is thought that Australia may be interested, will make fuller inquiries.

FROM FORO

TIME 1400 HRS

15 Jul 42



Have sent message to
headforce stating will take
all raw rubber available
and asking for further particulars
A. L. Delaney

[2]



ARCHIE Campbell and Don Turton go over final plans for their return trip to Timor.

NOSTALGIC JOURNEY TO TIMOR

by RICHARD GRANT

THIRTY-one years ago a 12 year old boy named Barana helped an Australian officer survive against the invading Japanese forces on Timor.

Soon the two men will meet again. "It will be an emotional meeting for me," said works supervisor Mr Archie Campbell of Mt Lawley. He and Pingelly farmer, Mr Don Turton, are on a sentimental journey that will take them back to the mountains of Timor where they served during the Second World War.

"I have not seen Barana since I left the island at the end of 1942. He does not know I am coming but I should have no trouble in finding him." The two men were attached to the famous 2/2 Independent and later Commando squadron that served on the island for 14 months during 1941-42.

It is history now that the squadron of about 300 raw recruits contained 15,000 Japanese troops on the island with their hit-and-run guerilla tactics before withdrawing.

Mr Campbell said almost every man in the squadron had his own boy to guard him while he slept and carry his pack during hikes through the mountains. "With their sharp senses they were our eyes and ears in the jungle and they knew the area extremely well.

After the war Mr Turton, a former captain who was second in command of the squadron, named his farm at West Pingelly Naibilla after his boy.

He met Naibilla five years ago when he returned to Timor for the opening of a memorial to the islanders who helped Australian soldiers during the war.

The two men left Perth on Tuesday, rigged out with a self-contained living unit on the back of a utility and a boat.

They will travel up the coast, stopping at their leisure at popular fishing spots, to Darwin. They will then fly to Timor.

• **Balaa survey**

Vale Donald Kenton TURTON WX 8440.

As reported in our March Courier Don passed away in Hollywood Hospital on the 26th February. He was 86.

Don was born in North Fremantle in the family home on the 13th January 1918, the youngest son of Arthur and Mamie Turton. His father, a prominent businessman, was mayor of North Fremantle for a number of years. Don was loved and spoilt by his sisters, Gwen, Mollie and Joy and often saved by his brother Glyde. A ball of energy Don thoroughly enjoyed his boyhood days, getting into his share of mischief. At the age of six he drove the family car through the Congregational Church during a Sunday service. When attending the Fremantle Boys School, though he copped the blame, he denied he was responsible for an explosion, which partly wrecked the science room. At an early age he acquired a knowledge of explosives from his father who imported gelignite for the mining industry. As a teenager he played hockey, rowed and sailed even building his own yacht. He was also a capable swimmer.

On leaving school he joined Elder Smith's Shipping Department and served in the 7th Heavy Artillery Garrison until enlisting in the AIF in October 1940. He was an original member of the 2/2nd and appointed officer in charge of the sapper section - a great bunch of blokes. Don was a good officer being utterly fearless and possessed of great stamina which was a big asset in the trying Timor conditions.

Bernie Callinan recognised Don's qualities and took him in hand for part of the time on Timor. Don was promoted to the rank of Captain on 1st September

1942 and became 2 IC of the Company under the CO Geoff Laidlaw in November 1942. They were a good team. Don continued as 2IC throughout the New Guinea Campaign in 1943/44 and in May 1945 was promoted to the rank of Major and placed in charge of the Cav Commando Training Centre at Canungra until his discharge in December 1945.

Don loved experimenting with explosives, which at times made Gerry Green, Smash Hodson, Bill Epps, and others in his Section decidedly nervous. Who could blame them for that?

While in Brisbane Don met an attractive young lass, Vida Frazer, an officer in the army intelligence whom he wooed and wed in 1945. A loving marriage, which lasted 58 years until Vida's death in 2003, produced three girls and one boy, Maxine, Dianne, Heather and Ian.

Don, an outdoors man, took up farming, buying a 1500-acre property at Wandering in 1947. Starting from scratch, his only transport being a motorbike and sidecar, Don worked long hours to make a success of his and Vida's new venture. Things stepped up a gear when army mate Ernie Bingham and his wife Verna appeared on the scene. Don and Ernie, over the following years, spent many long hard days together working to develop the property. By the late 1960s over two thousand acres had been cleared and well stocked and a rabbit proof enclosed the farm. A comfortable home for Vida and their four youngsters had also been built. It was a case of all hands on the farm and at a young age Ian was showing all the signs of being a good farmer. Don always acknowledged the great help Ernie had been to him and they remained close friends until Ernie's death in 1997. Don and the family also maintained close ties with Verna which exists to this day.

A community minded man; Don became involved in the local RSL, the Bushfire Brigade, and the Golf Club. He also helped

helped to establish the Pingelly Farm Advisory Service that was to have a key roll in the improved profitability of the farm in years to come. For relaxation Don took up fishing and became involved in a fishing boat venture at Point Samson. Nothing was more enjoyable than to have caught, cooked, and shared a seafood meal with his friends.

Don and Vida were great supporters of the Association and in our earlier years made their farm available for visits of the kids from Sister Kate's Home and Legacy, which were sponsored by our Association. These were happy times.

In 1978 after 41 years toil Don and Vida handed the farm over to Ian who by then was a capable as his Dad as regards farming. He then bought a lovely block at Keysbrook, which he used as a hobby farm and a retreat until 1997. He and Vida also bought a house at Applecross with Vida preferring the city life for a change. They later moved to a unit in Myaree.

Don enjoyed nothing better than entertaining his many friends on his property. He went out of his way to see everyone was looked after providing food and drinks at his own expense. His generosity knew no bounds. The Association had some happy outings at Keysbrook as did his Timorese friends. It was a delightful spot with dams and waterfalls, marron, an orchard and a rose garden.

In 1997, at 79 he called it a day and settled back in his unit at Myaree. An early riser, he was up every morning at 4 a.m. for his walk and spent his days visiting the family and his many friends. Vida's ill health eventually saw her spend the last years of her life in a nursing home at Mosman Park. Don never missed a day seeing her and this continued until her passing in 2003. Don was a great family man who adored his grandchildren and was in turn loved by

them. His great-grandchildren Annabelle and Miranda were his favourites

He always had a soft spot for the Timorese, naming his farm "Naibilli" after his creado. He made trips back to Timor in 1969 for the opening of the Dare memorial and again with Arch Campbell in 1973. A loyal member of the Association Don was president in 1990 and served on the committee for a number of years. He was made a life member in 1966.

He suffered a stroke in 2002 which set him back but he fought on and recovered to a degree, still managing his early morning walk. His death in Hollywood Hospital came as a great shock to his family and friends. So passed a good man, a great Australian, who was always kind, considerate, and generous to others. He will be sadly missed by his family and friends.

The Association extends its deepest sympathy to Maxine, Dianne, Heather, Ian, and their families.

Lest We Forget.

Jack Carey.

Vale Ivan James BROWN TX4950.

Tex Richards has kindly notified us of the death of Ivan in Hobart in February last, he was 87.

Ivan was on our mailing list until the mid 80s but then we lost touch with him and heard nothing more of him.

We do know Ivan was born in New Suffolk, Tasmania on 28/9/1916 and that he enlisted in the AIF in July 1941 and joined the Unit in Wilson's Promontory as a signaller under Johnny Rose and served in Timor with the sigs. Happy Greenhalgh remembers him as being a capable sig and a good soldier. He left the Unit after Timor and was discharged from the Army in October 1945.

Information, which Tex provided, is that Ivan commenced work as an apprentice



Captain Don Turton
2nd 2nd Commando Squadron 53rd Commemoration
Kings Park, Perth, 17 November 2002