

To Buin: Australians in South Bougainville, 1945

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Non-Commissioned Officers of the
58th/59th Battalion, Siar, New Guinea,
17 June 1944.

Sergeant James Matheson MM is rear
row, centre.

Photography by Alton Frazer. 073934

General Sir Thomas Blamey,
Commander-in-Chief Australian
Military Forces, with
Lieutenant General Stanley
Savage, commanding the
II Australian Corps, North
Bougainville, 25 March 1945.

Much of the criticisms of the
Australian campaigns in 1945
has been directed against
Blamey.

Savage, a loyal supporter of
Blamey, tightly managed the
fighting on Bougainville. He
wanted Australian casualties
kept to a minimum.

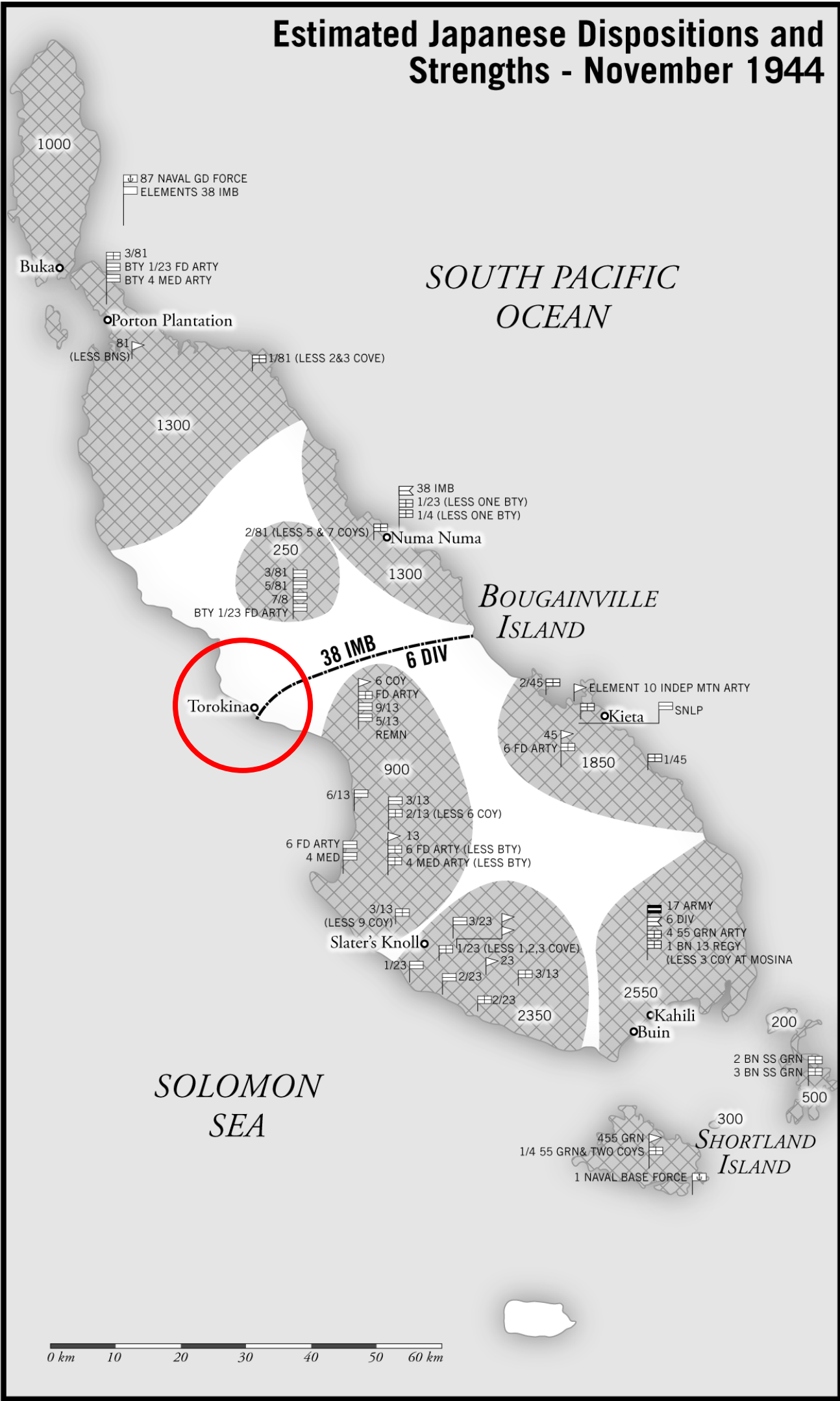
Photographer unknown. 090031



Bougainville Island



Estimated Japanese Dispositions and Strengths - November 1944



A Matilda tank from the 2/4th Armoured Regiment with infantry from the 24th Battalion during the 15th Brigade's advance along the Buin Road in the Southern Sector, Bougainville, 16 May 1945.

Photographer unknown. 092041





The 58th/59th Battalion's Sergeant Gordon Ayres leads Private William Johnson to an aid post, 13 July 1943. Ayres was awarded an MM. Johnson returned to duty but was later wounded again.

Photography by Damien Parer. 127971



15th Brigade officers' conference, New Guinea, 25 July 1945. From left: Major George Warfe, Brigadier Heathcoat Hammer, and Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Starr.

Photography by Damien Parer. 127974



Lieutenant Lawrance Proby, with other newly decorated 58th/59th Battalion personnel, New Guinea, 1 January 1944. Awarded an MC for Old Vickers Position, he was awarded a Bar to his MC on Bougainville in 1945.

Photograph by Kieth Rainsford. 063146



Taking Old Vickers Position, Bobdubi Ridge, 28 July 1943

Ivor Hele (1960). ART27543

Troops from the 58th/59th
Battalion move along a flooded
road near the Torokina River,
19 March 1945.

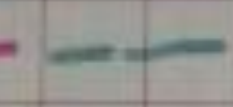
Photographer unknown. 079805



O C E A N

- Native Gardens
- Dense Jungle
- Open Forest
- Scattered Trees
- Scrub
- Secondary Growth
- Plantation
- Mangroves
- Swamp
- Swamp
- River or Stream
- Reef
- Coconut Palm
- Cliff
- Sand

WARNING: This copy
available
without
all services



A 58th/59th Battalion patrol
pauses for a drink of water
from a jeep train before
setting out again along the
Buin Road, 17 April 1945.

Photographer unknown. 091030





Troops from the 58th/59th Battalion work in the rain to repair a length of the Buin Road, 20 July 1945.

Tractors were used to pull jeep trains along sections that otherwise, would have been impassible.

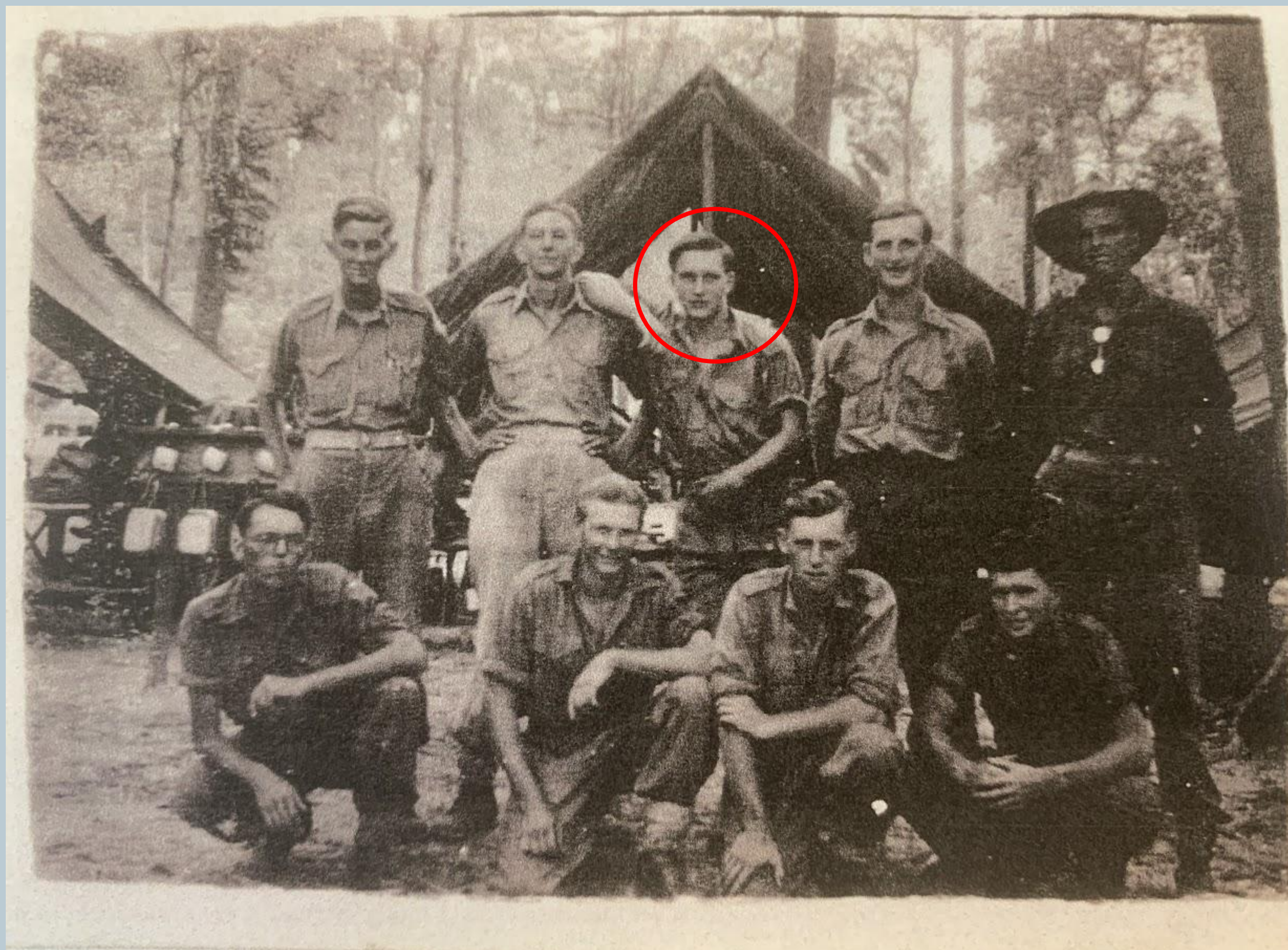
Photographer unknown. 094226



Intelligence Section, 58th/59th Battalion,
Torokina, Bougainville, c.1945.

Private David Trist is rear row, centre.

Photographer unknown. David Trist OAM collection





Soldiers who have patrolled through heavy rain enjoy a hot brew of tea at the YMCA stall on returning to their company position, 58th/59th Battalion, 20 July 1945.

Photographer unknown. 094227

PATROL TECHNIQUES

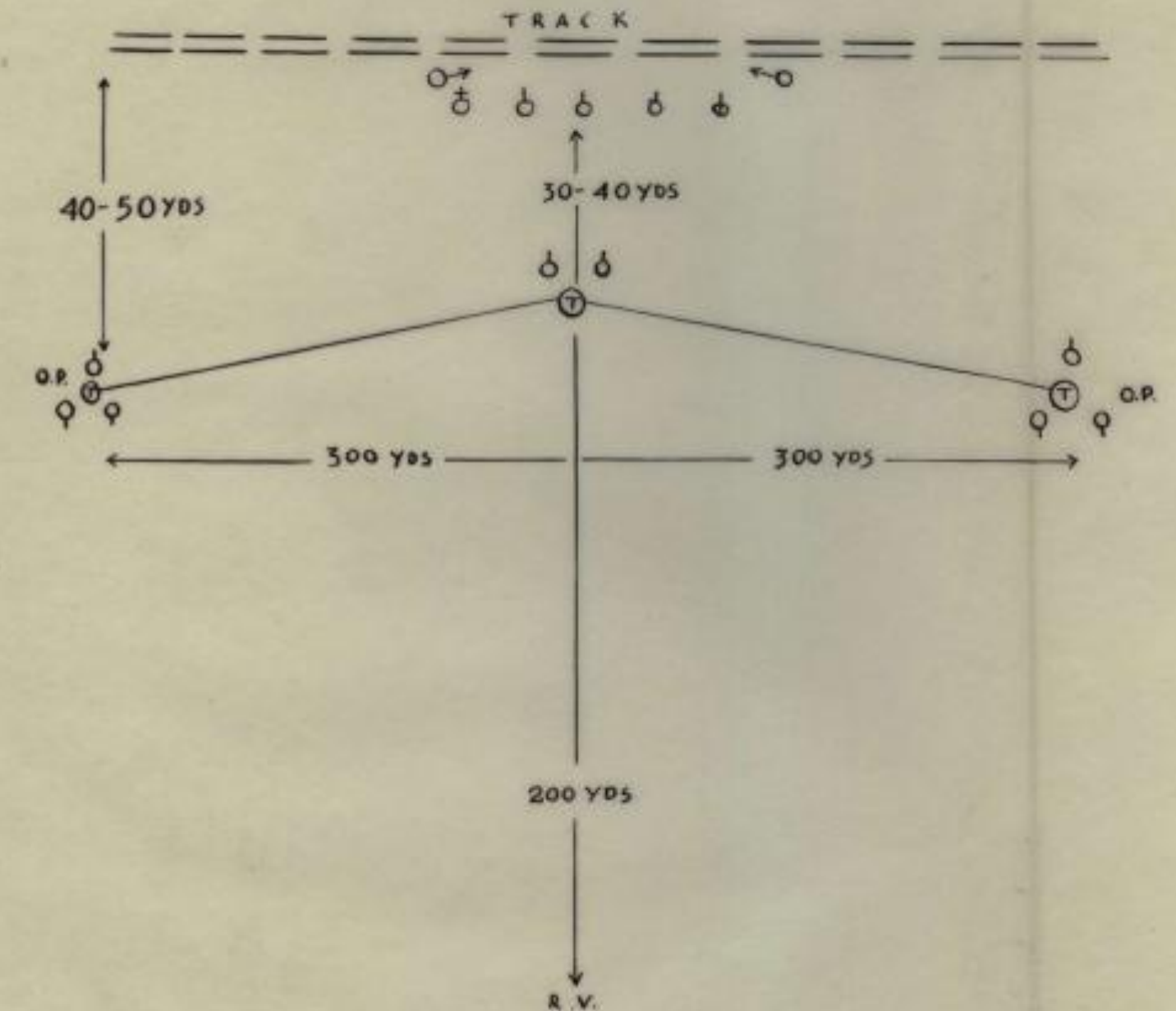
WHEN SETTING OUT ON PATROL REMEMBER THESE SLOGANS AND HOW TO APPLY THEM AND OUR REWARD WILL BE SUCCESS IN BATTLE.

- A) MOVE WELL OFF TRACKS
- B) MOVE QUIETLY AND SLOWLY
- C) TALK ONLY WHEN ESSENTIAL AND THEN IN WHISPERS
- D) CONTROL BY HAND SIGNAL
- E) NO SMOKING
- F) SLEEVES DOWN
- G) CAMOUFLAGE HANDS AND FACE
- H) MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO RECOVER WEAPONS
- I) CAREFUL DETAILED ACCURATE PATROLLING – YOU ARE THE CO'S EYES
- J) RAHTER TOO MUCH INFORMATION THAN TOO LITTLE

ANNEX I TO APPX V TO PART II

THE MULBERRY AMBUSH

DIAGRAMMATIC PLAN



LEGEND	
OF	OFFR
O→	LMG
O-	RIFLE
⊖	OSMG
⊙	TELEPHONE
⊗ O.P.	OBSERVATION POST

NOT TO SCALE

Bougainvilleans were active throughout the campaign, working as labourers, guides and scouts, and were combatants. From Bougainville's pre-war population of 52,000 people, it is thought that up to a quarter died either during or because of the war.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL



Bougainvilleans load 155mm artillery shells for movement to an ammunition dump, Toko, Puriata River, 3 April 1945.

Photographer unknown. 090313



Sergeant Victor Roberts, 58th/59th Battalion, is evacuated after being wounded in a patrol clash south of the Pororei River, 25 May 1945.

Photographer unknown. 092576



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL



An Aboriginal soldier from Queensland, Private Leslie Fuller was wounded by Japanese artillery south of the Hongorai River, 21 May 1945.

Photographer unknown. 092484



Lieutenant Rusell Mathews, Adjutant and later unit historian, (left), with Major Hyde Sweet, 58th/59th Battalion, Madang, New Guinea, 17 June 1944.

On 30 May 1945, during the campaign in Southern Bougainville, RNZAF Corsairs mistakenly bombed B Company and strafed battalion headquarters. Mathews and four others were wounded, and Lieutenant Albert Wheeler was killed.

Photography by Alton Frazer. 073957



Troops of the 2nd Field Regiment use a bulldozer to tow a 25-pounder along the corduroyed Buin Road, 25 May 1945.

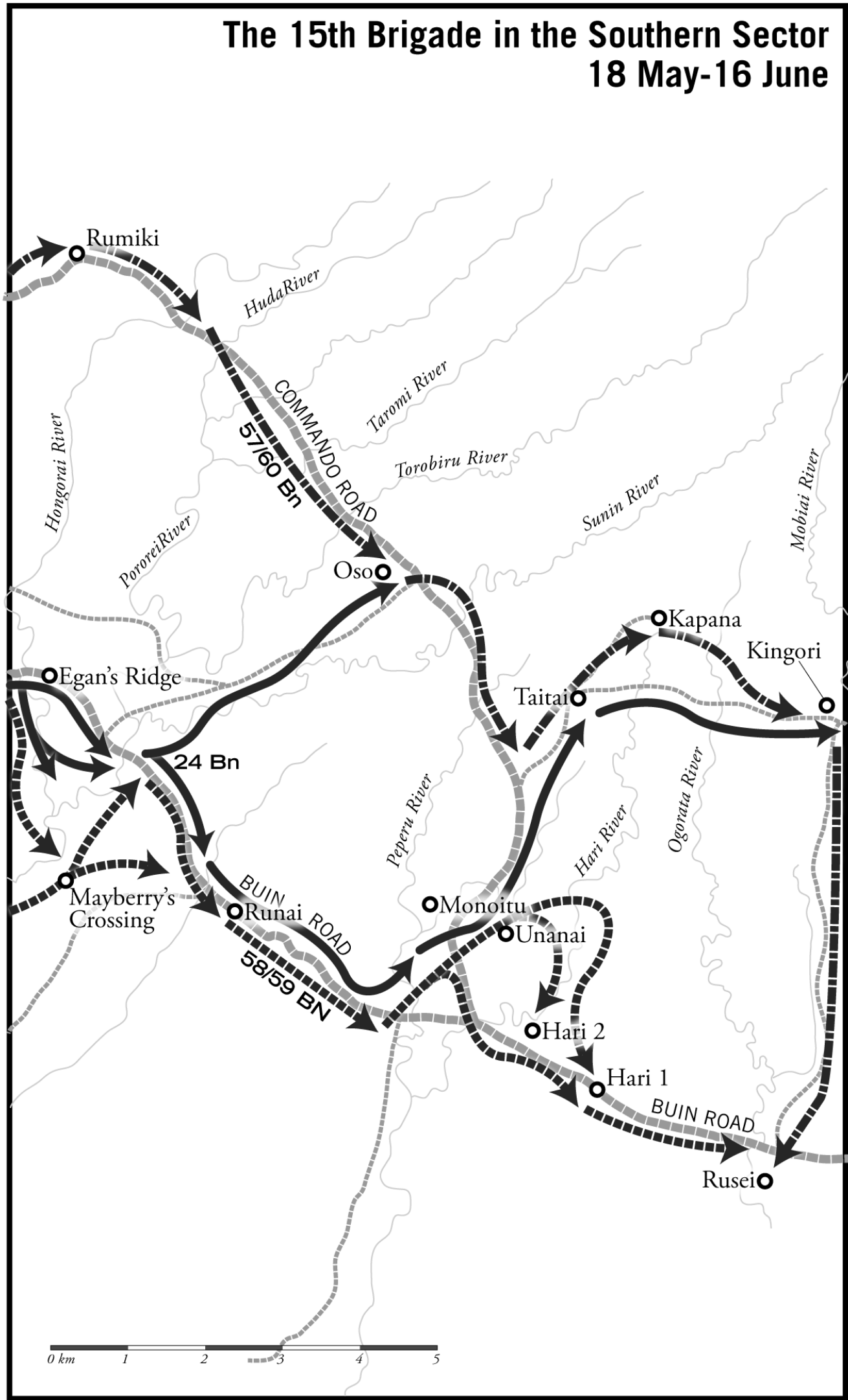
Photographer unknown. 092580



A Matilda tank from the 2/4th Armoured Regiment named "Brassiere", acknowledging the close support it gave the infantry of the 58th/59th Battalion, 23 May 1945.

Photographer unknown. 092572

The 15th Brigade in the Southern Sector
18 May-16 June





Soldiers from the 58th/59th Battalion on the Buin Road, east of the Ogorata River. They had just been relieved, 18 June 1945.

Photographer unknown. 094167



Corporal David Trist OAM in 2016.

A veteran of the Bougainville campaign, he was one of the last surviving members of the 58th/59th Battalion.

Trist died on 27 July 2025, aged 99 and 10 months.

Photograph by Teowai Ratahi. AWM2017.520.1.4225