

**THE FOUNDATIONS OF VICTORY:  
THE PACIFIC WAR  
1943-1944**

**A FATALISTIC BLOKE:  
AUSTRALIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE JAPANESE  
IN NEW GUINEA, 1943-1944  
Mark Johnston**

According to the military historian John Laffin, Australians of the Second AIF often discussed their enemies.<sup>1</sup> He had fought the Japanese himself, and other Australian soldiers' writings bear out his assertion. Letters and diaries penned in 1943 reveal a complex set of experiences and attitudes. That is not surprising, considering that Japanese and Australians were fighting almost continuously in 1943, and that tens of thousands of Australians were operating in close proximity to Japanese. This chapter will concentrate on attitudes in the period from September 1943 to January 1944, when the 7th and 9th Divisions fought large scale campaigns against the Japanese in New Guinea.

I want to start with a reflection about attitudes towards the Japanese in 1942. An illuminating article on this topic appeared in *Army* magazine in December 1943. The article is entitled 'Moral Advantage', and the setting is Papua in late 1942, as a section of infantrymen are sitting down to a meal. One of the men, Private Skilly, is talking about how best to tackle the Japanese. His tired mates try to change the subject even though, the anonymous author says, they are sympathetic to the speaker. 'Everyone had a theory about the Nips', the article says. 'There were theories on what made them tick', it continues, 'theories about how to trick them; theories on the way to reach Tokio in the shortest time; theories—or perhaps you might call them certainties—on their ancestry and immediate parentage, which were always under question.'<sup>2</sup>

Private Skilly's theory is built on the notion that the Japanese were 'just ordinary civilians thrown into uniform ... just like we are'. He argued that in civil life, though, most Japanese were simple people, peasants. If the Australians 'blitzed them', by which he meant attack them, then the Japanese would collapse. He used this analogy: 'Human beings are just like dogs. You blitz a savage dog on sight, without waiting to let him find out you're scared of him, and—.'<sup>3</sup> His mates didn't let Skilly finish. However, in the story, he and his acolyte, Wicks, are proved right at Gona shortly afterwards. Japanese surround their patrol in large numbers but Skilly and Wicks launch an unexpected and entirely successful attack. To persuade his mate to attack with him, Skilly says, 'It's the best time [to try out theories]- Don't you reckon you're worth a dozen of these filthy little—.' Wicks nodded and replied, 'Two dozen'.

This sounds like boys' own fantasy, but it is based on fact. Skilly and Wicks are thinly disguised pseudonyms for Les Crilly and Stan Weeks, both of whom won Military Medals at Gona in just such an action with the 2/14th Battalion.<sup>4</sup> The article shows us that Australians were still trying to fathom the Japanese at the end of 1942.

By then they had already had a good deal of practice. It is undeniable that when the 2nd AIF went to war with the Japanese in Malaya in January 1942, many of its troops suffered from a racist ignorance and complacency. When confronted with the reality of a tough and daring opponent, Australians of the 8th Division fought hard, but could not avoid defeat. By the time of the campaigns in Papua in late 1942, Australian soldiers were no longer complacent. They knew that their lives depended on an accurate and sober assessment of Japanese fighting qualities. Some overestimated Japanese abilities, but as we all know, by early 1943, the Australians had won the Papuan campaign, with substantial American assistance.

A little book about that extraordinary campaign was produced for Australian soldiers serving overseas in 1944, as part of a series called *The Australian Army at War*. The title page called this 'An Official Story of the Australian Soldier—First Victor of the "INVINCIBLE" Jap'. The book was entitled *The Jap Was Thrashed*.

That arresting title has some basis in statistics, for in that campaign the Japanese lost more than 13,000 killed, while the Australians suffered about 5,700 casualties.<sup>5</sup> Given the paucity of Japanese supplies, their inability to escape, their unwillingness to surrender, and the Australians' unwillingness to accept surrender, the high Japanese casualties are not surprising. But do these figures mean that the Japanese were 'thrashed'? Were they losers in a one-sided contest? No. Had they been so, these campaigns would not be as famous as they are, and General Blamey would not have written on the inside cover of this official story: 'Australian troops had never previously been called upon to perform a harder task than that which faced us in New Guinea in the latter half of 1942.'

At the sharp end, too, Australians knew that the Japanese had been extremely hard to beat. For example, in the very first week of 1943, a tired and wet trooper of the 2/7th Cavalry Regiment sat in a foxhole near Sanananda and wrote up the day's events in his diary. His name was Ben Love. Japanese were just 40 yards away, so close that shrapnel from Australian artillery had wounded two of Love's comrades that day. Half of his troop had been evacuated sick, wounded or dead in the three weeks since arriving at the front. Love found time to muse on the enemy: 'How these Nips have stood the shelling [,] rain, and lack of food these last 2 weeks is a "plurry marvel".'<sup>6</sup> After a week more of it, he conceded: 'He is a tough nut to crack, this so often despised little yellow chap.'<sup>7</sup> Another week, with the awful fighting for Sanananda at last coming to a close, the trooper expressed his frustration with the Japanese: 'What a peculiar manner these fanatical Jap soldiers display in their utter disregard of lives-their own as well as others. They say all Jap positions are now smashed, it is just a matter of mopping up. This mopping up costs lives against these mad-men.'<sup>8</sup> You might have picked up a contrast in tone here with Private Skilly's comments earlier, but Trooper Love's three exasperated quotations sum up much of the typical Australian attitude to the Japanese by the end of the campaigns on the Papuan beachheads. The Jap was persistent, he was a despised little chap, and he was a fanatical 'madman'.

The Japanese continued to bewilder Australians throughout 1943. I mentioned that tens of thousands of Australians lived, fought and died in close proximity to the enemy in 1943. We might expect that physical closeness to have created a profound understanding of the Japanese, or even sympathy. In fact, as 'Jo' Gullett said in the light of his experiences with the 2/6th Battalion at Wau and Mubo in 1943, 'there was no point of sympathy, no communication between us at all'.<sup>9</sup> This was due less to the formidable language barrier than to Japanese behaviour. For the way of the Japanese warriors puzzled and shocked Australians, and fed their pre-existing racism.

They often described the Japanese as 'fanatical'. For example, in March 1943, a lieutenant in an Independent Company wrote home from New Guinea: 'I have not worked out yet whether the Nip is fanatically brave or idiotically stupid—he has very little regard for life.'<sup>10</sup> That disregard for life was one of the most baffling aspects of the Japanese. Troops of the 7th Division had seen evidence of it in Papua, where Japanese were willing to die in defence to the last man. One of the features that made the Gona-Buna-Sanananda fighting so appalling was what the official historian describes as 'the fixity of purpose of the Japanese for most of whom death could be the only ending'.<sup>11</sup> The matter of fact way in which those men faced death is exemplified by their use at Gona of their comrades' corpses as protection on the parapets, as firestops in the slime, and as a storage surface for food and ammunition.<sup>12</sup>

When the 7th Division fought for Lae and the Ramu Valley in 1943, they saw more examples of that outlook. The number of Japanese captured in this campaign and the 9th Division's simultaneous operations totalled fewer than 100.<sup>13</sup> Here are three anecdotes that illustrate the typical behaviour of Japanese faced with capture. On 7 October 1943, two patrols of the 2/33rd Battalion were in the foothills of the Finisterres. Three men in one patrol saw a Japanese soldier trying to cross a stream from the opposite bank. They called on him to raise his hands. Instead the Japanese unslung his rifle and made to shoot: he was killed. The other patrol, at platoon strength, found a Japanese asleep on a small knoll about 50 metres away. They crept towards him, intent on taking a prisoner, only to see him suddenly sit up and reach for his rifle—he was shot dead. The battalion historian who records these incidents concludes: 'Such was the Japanese soldier. Both of these could have been taken prisoner and the chance was offered them ... Japanese [were] incapable of surrender.'<sup>14</sup>

A second illustration of Japanese attitudes to death. On 12 October 1943, Australians of the 2/14th launched a bayonet charge along a narrow path at King's Hill. Ten Japanese defending the hill jumped off and fell hundreds of feet to their deaths. This was a gesture that one Australian wartime publication says was typical on the cliffs of the Finisterres.<sup>15</sup>

A third story concerns one of the best-known episodes of the Finisterres campaign, the capture of a Japanese gun on Mount Prothero. An Australian stretcher-bearer who had evacuated some of the many casualties caused by this gun witnessed the clearing of the enemy dead from the gun-pit:

Dead Japs lay every-where [he wrote], piled on top of each other. Some had limbs blown right off ... There were some in a small store-room under the floor—killed by blast. The Batt lads hauled them out of the gun-pit, by tying a rope to a leg, and one of them received a big shock when on tying the rope around the Jap's leg, he felt warmth in the leg. They hauled the Jap out, and found him dazed with his only wound a small piece of shrapnel in his left wrist. Brigade [HQ] was offering £5 for a prisoner and so the lads thought they had a fiver worth on hand—until the Jap started biting and kicking. When he started this performance, one of the lads stepped back a pace and gave him a short burst of his Owen gun. They threw the Jap into the big hole with his mates, before he had finished kicking.<sup>16</sup>

These three stories show Japanese defying death, as in 1942. However, they also express what Australians identified as a new mood in 1943. The 2/33rd patrols that killed the two Japanese were part of a battalion advance. A few days later, the unit found that the Japanese had unaccountably retreated from good defensive positions: a tendency that had been apparent since the 7th Division landed at Nadzab and marched on Lae.<sup>17</sup> The cliff-jumpers too had chosen to run rather than fight on ground that was superbly suited to defence.

The Mount Prothero gun also exemplified a Japanese failure to make the most of their defensive positions. The Japanese did not patrol the difficult but obvious approach path that the Australians took in capturing the gun, and indeed did not patrol the entire Shaggy Ridge area sufficiently, being content to wait in their defences.<sup>18</sup> Many Japanese fought hard in the Ramu and Finisterres, and they chose their ground well. However, it is little wonder that a veteran of the Kokoda and Gona fighting wrote as he left the Ramu Valley in January 1944: 'And so I've finished a 3-month campaign which will always be remembered by me as the easiest fighting I've been in so far.' As partial explanation, he said that Australian 'organisation and supply were well nigh perfect'.<sup>19</sup>

Few men of the 9th Division would have said that of the organisation of their campaign in the Huon Peninsula, and particularly of the early stages when rations were scandalously inadequate. The results of the campaign were similar, although the 9th Division's experience with the Japanese was bound to be different in some respects, for they had no previous experience against the Japanese. Before their landing on the Huon Peninsula, the 9th Division expected a really difficult task, as they knew that the Japanese had not been thrashed in 1942. A member of the 2/43rd Infantry Battalion later recalled that while he and his mates trained for the landing at Lae, they tended to believe the many horror stories they heard about jungle warfare against the Japanese. In retrospect he was surprised that there weren't mass applications for transfer to base units, but argued that 'most of us anticipated the next campaign with considerable trepidation'.<sup>20</sup> Just after the actual landing, another infantryman in the division wrote in his diary that when the men heard rustling in the trees, they asked themselves: 'were the Japs infiltrating to cut our throats in our shallow weapon pits as we were told so much about back in Australia?'<sup>21</sup>

Once the two sides clashed, the Australians found their opponents baffling. Like the 7th Division men, they were shocked by the apparent Japanese fondness for suicide. The 2/24th Battalion was dug in one night when a Japanese rose from a foxhole in their midst, shot and winged one man, and then killed himself with a grenade.<sup>22</sup> This action seemed foolhardy, but at least partly rational, unlike a case reported by Private Fred Camarsh during the advance towards Sio. A grenade had exploded just before dawn within Australian positions. Two young Japanese were found dead. Camarsh wrote:

They had sheltered the night in [a] bunker in the heart of our perimeter ... They had then stood together, face to face, placed the grenade to their chests and pulled the pin ... We wondered why they had not waited, used their grenade to better effect and then gone for a break.<sup>23</sup>

The Japanese predilection for futile suicide, exemplified here, was still more outlandish to Australians than reckless attacks and 'fanatical' defence.

Even when Japanese surrendered, their subsequent behaviour seemed odd to Australians. Japanese prisoners did not follow the international convention of maintaining a strict silence on all but name, number and unit. Instead they frequently gave valuable information, as in this example reported by Corporal Jack Craig of the 2/13th:

Another Jap caught has dropped his 'guts' in a big way. He has informed HQ where all their troops are, who they are, Generals names & everything. He said he knows his mates will be killed after giving this information but war was war & the Australians have been very kind to [him] ... This information was found to be correct.

Given that Australians were so committed to the idea of loyalty to their mates, it is not surprising that Craig concluded this description with the comment: 'I think they are crazy.'<sup>24</sup> It is also no surprise that monetary rewards were offered for prisoners, as mentioned in the Prothero quotation.

Such enticements were offered because of a Japanese reluctance to surrender, but also because of an Australian reluctance to take prisoners. Australians regularly shot Japanese rather than capture them. To take just one example that appeared recently in a Melbourne publication, *Tobruk House News*. A 9th Division veteran of Tobruk, Alamein and New Guinea was asked whether the Japanese were a different enemy than the Germans. 'Yes', he replied. 'After the battle of El Alamein I was sent to take four German prisoners to the rear in the back of a truck. It was just me and them but I felt quite safe. The Japanese, on the other hand, neither gave nor expected mercy. We took no prisoners and nor did they.'<sup>25</sup> Such explanations cannot prevent modern readers from being somewhat bewildered by this Australian behaviour and attitude.

This behaviour is well illustrated by two stories that appear in a wartime diary kept by Captain JJ May during the fighting at Wau early in 1943. At the airfield he saw a prisoner wearing a notice round his neck on a piece of cardboard. Printed on it, above the signature of Brigadier Moten, were the words: 'I am not a Jap P.O.W. I am a Korean a prisoner of the Japanese and made to be a carrier for them. I have given valuable information.'<sup>26</sup> The need to make such a sign is itself a sign of Australians' homicidal feelings towards Japanese. May was responsible for the loading of wounded men on air transports from the Wau airfield during the hard fighting there in January 1943. He was approached one day to make room for six Japanese prisoners who would soon arrive, bound together, and who were to be taken to Port Moresby for questioning. The Japanese did not come at the expected time, but eventually:

A soldier appeared with his rifle slung over his shoulder and looking at the ground told me that they would not be coming. I blew off what the bloody hell do you mean you ask us to make room for you and now you don't want it. One could sense something was wrong and it very shamefacedly came out, they had been killed, a soldier had opened up on them with a Tommy gun and shot the lot. The boys and I were pretty aghast at this and we said they had been tied up; the poor messenger was also rather stricken and tried to explain how it happened. A soldier that opened up had his mate killed alongside him during the night. It somehow cast a dark shadow over us including the poor B who had to tell us.<sup>27</sup>

Australians did not take prisoners because of the tit-for-tat aspect mentioned by the Rat of Tobruk, because of the anger at the killers of mates mentioned at Wau, because of the logic of close fighting in the jungle, because of the tendency of Japanese men to offer fake surrenders and then try to kill approaching Australians. Most of all though, they killed prisoners because of fear and anger engendered by Japanese brutality. That brutality was most evident in 1942. The nature of the 1943 campaigns allowed the Japanese few opportunities to maltreat prisoners, because most of the time they were retreating from the Australians.

Which brings us back to a point of similarity between the 7th and 9th Division experience against the Japanese. Australians were not only bewildered by much of the Japanese behaviour, but also felt that it reflected a poor ability as fighters. Needlessly committing suicide was one example, dropping one's guts as a prisoner was another. Corporal Jack Craig witnessed two others. After their edgy first night, in his unit's first day of combat against the Japanese at Scarlet Beach, he was involved in an action in which 'a heap of Japs screaming "banzai" and charging down a track' were annihilated at no cost to the Australians.<sup>28</sup> Later he met soldiers of the 2/28th who reported a Japanese habit of blowing a bugle that warned the Australians of their approach. Unusually, these Australians did not want to be relieved from their frontline position on the Sattelberg Track, for the bugle was giving them perfect warning of attacks into their sights. Craig wrote:

... they were having a great time knocking off Japs as they attack 6 abreast down the Track. They say it is like shooting sitting rabbits ... They have been warned by their CO that the man that shoots "Merv's" [the Japs'] bugler will be courtmartialled. He blows his bugle just before his attack & during it. The attacks are always attempted at exactly the same time ...<sup>29</sup>

Men of the 2/28th at that time were heard saying 'the Jap's only a fourth rate Italian'.<sup>30</sup> Vickers gunners of a sister battalion, the 2/32nd, were said to have become 'almost hysterical with joy' on Pabu Hill when day after day groups of Japanese continued to walk to their deaths along the nearby track-heedless of the piles of Japanese corpses around them. Australian onlookers were 'speechless with astonishment' that the Japanese did not change their approach, and that the soldiers in the forward positions did not warn their compatriots of the danger.<sup>31</sup>

After the 9th Division's first efforts against them, at Lae, a unit diarist asserted: 'The enemy has done nothing to entitle him to our respect during the operation.'<sup>32</sup> Tom Derrick, who was destined to win a Victoria Cross against the Japanese, and later to be killed by them, wrote scornfully after the fall of Lae: 'Just under a fortnight to take the place from a never surrender fanatical enemy—hoey—our greatest problem was trying to catch up with him.'<sup>33</sup> No doubt there was some self-satisfaction and relief here that pre-campaign trepidation had proved unfounded. Moreover, the Japanese did fight the 9th more stubbornly later, around Sattelberg, where Derrick won his VC. However, the scorn owed something also to genuine surprise at the enemy's inability or unwillingness to hold very defensible positions.

In the last week of 1943, near the end of the 9th Division's campaign, a diarist wrote: 'As usual he's only fighting rearguard actions and pulls out as soon as we arrive in strength.'<sup>34</sup> This is quite a contrast to the quotation from Trooper Love in the first week of 1943, referring to the Japanese steadfastness as a 'plurry marvel'.

Private Keys of the 2/15th wrote proudly to his sister in October:

When we came up here we were told how bad the conditions were & what a wonderful fighter the Jap is. Well, Min, the conditions here are 100 per cent better than in the desert ... [The Jap] has had everything in his favour, such as high ground, etc & every time we've met him we have belted him & he has run.<sup>35</sup>

Others made the point that the ground lost by the Japanese would have been held by the Germans, let alone the Australians.<sup>36</sup>

David Dexter's official history volume, *The New Guinea Offensives*, covers the period from April 1943 to mid 1944. He calculates that in that period the Australians suffered 1,231 killed and their Japanese opponents 35,000.<sup>37</sup> The Army's wartime booklet describing the campaigns of 1943-4 was called *Reconquest*, but it could plausibly have been called *The Jap Was Thrashed* Dexter wrote: 'Any soldier who fought the Japanese cannot but have respect for them as fighters, even though, with the tide turning against them, they did not fight it out to the last, as on the Papuan beaches.'<sup>38</sup> Some Australians did respect Japanese bravery and fighting skill: for example, the battalion historian who acknowledged the courage of a Japanese who had buried three dead comrades despite a severe leg wound; or Jack Craig, whose disparaging remarks were quoted earlier, but who also wrote: 'The Jap is sure making a stand here & taking some shifting. It looked so easy at the start but gets harder every day.'<sup>39</sup>

Yet most Australians expressed little or no respect for the Japanese as fighters in these campaigns, largely because they did not fight it out when at times they could have. In assessing the Japanese, the Australians did not always take into account certain important factors in the result: their own numerical and material superiority, and the Japanese supply difficulties, not to mention the ineptitude of the enemy commanders. To paraphrase another assessment of this campaign. 'Blunder above Bravery' might be taken as the epitaph of those 35,000 Japanese dead.

As mentioned, many Australians at the time spoke of 'fanaticism' rather than bravery. Even Dexter talks of the Japanese as 'a fanatical enemy'.<sup>40</sup> Neither this assessment, nor that of the Japanese as an idiot, made for empathy. Nor did the assessment offered by General Blamey in the foreword to *The Jap Was Thrashed*. The then commander-in-chief of the Australian Military Forces said that in 1942-43 the Australians 'proved their superiority—and that of the white races—over the beast from the Western Pacific'. If the Australian troops who read those words took them to heart, perhaps it is not surprising that so few Japanese were captured. Not that many needed much encouragement, but it is interesting to contrast this with what Private Crilly said to his mates on the Kokoda Trail: the Japanese were 'just ordinary civilians thrown into uniform ... just like we are'. Both the racist epithet and the cool estimate of Japanese weaknesses probably reflect attitudes that helped to defeat the Japanese.

What is certain is that by the time the article 'Moral Advantage' appeared at the end of 1943, its conclusion about the way Australian frontline troops were thinking a year after Crilly and Weeks had their discussion was accurate. It said to Australians in late 1943 that 'although [the Japanese soldier] was tough, a dogged stickler when trapped in his pill-boxes, he had long been proved "just human". The idea that he was some incredible, superhuman kind of fighter had been exploded. He was just a fatalistic bloke with some training and not much brains—but one you had to watch.'

The Australians would have to do more than watch him in their next campaigns, in 1945, but the moral advantage lay well and truly with the Australian and against his frightening, bewildering and death-embracing opponent. In 1943 this enemy had thought himself superior in martial spirit, and believed that this would carry him through against material superiority. He was wrong, for he had underestimated not just the material but also the tactical and moral strength of the Australian Army.

## Endnotes

1. John Laffin, *Forever Forward* (Newport, NSW 2/31st Battalion Association, 1994), 10.
2. Anon, 'Moral Advantage', *Army* (December 1943), 38-9, at 38.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Information supplied by Mr John Crilly, son of Les, who also kindly alerted me to this article.
5. Dudley McCarthy, South-West Pacific Area (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1959), 531; Gavin Long, *The Six Years War* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1973), 249n.
6. Tpr B Love, 2/7th Cav Regt, diary 7 January 1943, A[ustralian]W[ar]M[emorial] 3 DRL 7211.
7. *Ibid.*, diary 12 January 1943.
8. *Ibid.*, diary 20 January 1943.
9. Henry Gullett, *Not as a Duty Only: An Infantryman's War* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984), 127.
10. Lt A Crawford, 2/3rd Independent Coy, letter 17 March 43, Mark Johnston's collection [hereafter cited as MJC].
11. McCarthy, *South-West Pacific*, 508. He says this in reference to Sanananda, but the point applies to all the fighting in the area. See, for example, McCarthy, *South-West Pacific*, 443 re Gona, 484 re Buna.
12. Raymond Paull, *Retreat From Kokoda* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1958), 295; Victor Austin, *To Kokoda and Beyond: The Story of the 39th Battalion 1941-1943* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988), 203; Lida Mayo, *Bloody Buna* (London: New English Library, 1975), 130.
13. My estimate based on the official histories.
14. William Crooks, *The Fights: The Story of the 2/33rd Australian Infantry Battalion, AIF in the War of 1939-45* (Brookvale, NSW Printcraft Press, 1971), 321-2.
15. Anon, *Reconquest* (Melbourne: Director General of Public Relations, 1944), 118, 123. This incident may actually have occurred on Pallier's Hill.
16. Cpl FT Wade, 2/5th Field Ambulance, diary 22 January 1944, MJC.
17. See, for example, Frank Rolleston, *Not a Conquering Hero* (Eton: Frank Rolleston, 1984), 163.
18. Long, *Six Years War*, 351; *Reconquest*, 132.
19. Sgt CE Edwards, 2/27th Bn, diary 7 January 1944, MJC.
20. Allan Jones, 'A Volunteer's Story', unpublished memoir, 1988, 227.
21. See Mark Johnston, *Fighting the Enemy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 106. Some sailed into this campaign very confident of success: David Dexter, *The New Guinea Offensives* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1961), 328.
22. RP Serle, *The Second Twenty-Fourth* (Brisbane: The Jacaranda Press, 1963), 289.
23. Pte F Camarsh, 2/17th Bn, diary 10 January 1944, MJC. Similar: HD Wells, *'B' Company Second Seventeenth Infantry* (Toowoomba Bay, NSW: HD Wells, 1984), 165.
24. Cpl J Craig, 2/13th Bn, diary 30 November 1943, MJC. Also on giving information: Dexter, *New Guinea Offensives*, 520; McCarthy, *South-West Pacific*, 517; Russell Mathews, *Militia Battalion at War* (Sydney: 58/59th Battalion Association, 1961), 173.
25. Interview with William Nathan Tolliday, ex 2/32nd Bn, *Tobruk House News* 19 June 2002), 16. Numerous other examples can be found in my *Fighting the Enemy*.
26. Capt JJ May, 2/10th Field Ambulance, diary 1 February 1943, AWM PR87/135.
27. *Ibid.*, diary 30 January 1943. See also the story told by Bill Crooks in Eric Bergerud, *Touched with Fire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), 423-4.
28. Craig, diary 23 September 1943, MJC.
29. *Ibid.*, 25 October 1943.
30. Pte J Butler, 2/23rd Bn, diary 23 September 1943, AWM 3 DRL 3825.
31. Dexter, *New Guinea Offensives*, 651.
32. In Dexter, *New Guinea Offensives*, 391. He does say that not all members of the Division would have agreed, even at this point.
33. Sgt TC Derrick, 2/48th Bn, diary 17 September 1943, AWM PR82/190.
34. In H Gillan (ed), *We Had Some Bother* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1985), 112. My emphasis.
35. Pte C Keys, 2/15th Bn, letter 4 October 1943, MJC.
36. Allan Dawes, 'Soldier Superb': *The Australian Fights in New Guinea* (Sydney: FH Johnston Publishing Co, 1944), 44.
37. Dexter, *New Guinea Offensives*, 817.
38. *Ibid.*, xi.
39. John Burns, *Brown and Blue Diamond at War* (Adelaide: 2/27th Battalion Ex-Servicemen's Association, 1960), 184; J Craig, diary 7 November 1943, MJC.
40. Dexter, *New Guinea Offensives*, 817.