



CESSNOCK



SI VIS PACEM, PARA BELLUM,

RSL SUB-BRANCH

NEWSLETTER

Volume 2 Issue 4 September to December 2022

CONTENTS

Handy Phone Numbers

Sub-Branch News

RSL NSW News

HVDC News

Individual Highlights

A thought for:

Jokes Page

Sponsors Page

Historical Feature

Sub-Branch Executive

HANDY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Department of Honours and Awards 1800 11 321
ANZAC HOUSE 02)9264 8188

RSL Defence Care (02)80880388

Department of Veteran Affairs 1800 555 254

Home Care (Cessnock) (02)40304706

Cessnock Council Community Services 49907247

DVA Home Care Services 1300 550 450

Royal District Nursing Service 1300 665 444

HACC Community Care Access Point 1300 731 556

Hearing Services Australia 31 797

National Hearing Care Cessnock {02)9091 8613

Cessnock Police (02)49910199

Cessnock City Council (02)49934100

VVCS- Counselling Service 1800 011 046

Cessnock Hospital 4991 0555

Cessnock Taxi Service 4990 1111

EMERGENCY SERVICES 000

RSL Hall 4991 4141

SUB-BRANCH NEWS

We are holding a combined Christmas meeting and lunch at the RSL Hall on Tuesday 6th December commencing at 10am. As this is a social rather than a business event, we are extending an invitation to wives and partners to join us. We will also be inviting our business supporters and sponsors.

We have 2 more Bunnings BBQ fund raisers this year on Saturday the 26th November 8am to 4pm and Saturday 17th December 8am to 4pm. Volunteers most welcome for any part of the days.

Reminder the hall is open every Thursday from 9am to 1pm so drop in and join us for a coffee and a chat, play a game of snooker or assist some of our members working on projects to improve the Hall and the grounds.

RSL NSW NEWS

Circular 52/22 RSL NSW Recruitment Toolkit now available

Dear Honorary Secretary

Following the presentation by the Head of Communication, Marketing & Membership at the RSL NSW Annual State Congress in Newcastle on Monday 31 October, ANZAC House is pleased to launch the Recruitment Toolkit for use by all RSL sub-Branches.

The Recruitment Toolkit supports initiative 3.3 of Goal 3 of the RSL NSW Strategic Plan and is a one-stop shop for sub-Branches to

access on-brand promotional material to engage the local veteran community and attract new members.

Resources included in the Recruitment Toolkit:

- **Conversation Guide** to help initiate conversations with non-member veterans about joining the League – [Conversation Guide](#)
- **New Member Checklist** to guide through the ideal procedure for onboarding a new member, ensuring that new members receive a warm welcome and are linked up with the services and resources they need – [New Member Checklist](#)
- **Social Media Guide** about the importance of having an active social media profile and how to set up Facebook and Instagram pages for your sub-Branch – [Social Media Guide](#)
- **Welcome Postcard** to send/give to new members when they first join the League – [Welcome Postcard](#)
- **Invite Flyer** to invite potential new members to join a sub-Branch – [Invite Flyer](#)
- **Social Assets and Tiles** making it easier for sub-Branches and members to post on their social media channels
- **Print-ready items** such as [Member Car Sticker](#), [‘Ask me anything’ badge](#), [posters](#), and [pull-up banners](#).

The Recruitment Tools and RSL NSW Brand Guidelines are available on the RSL NSW website [here](#). To assist sub-Branches with event planning, an [‘Event in a Box’](#) is another useful management guide for sub-Branches to coordinate, organise and promote events. Resources include ‘How to Plan an Event’ guide, promotional templates for social media, event posters, and media release templates.

Sub-Branches are encouraged to work with local print companies to print small quantities of the resources. Alternatively, [Officeworks](#) and [Vistaprint](#) offer online ordering and delivery.

If smaller sub-Branches are concerned about the costs associated with printing the resources, Honorary Secretaries are encouraged to present a quote to support@rslnsw.org.au for consideration for

payment from the RSL NSW sub-Branch Support & Assistance Fund. The office of your local Member of Parliament also offers a free community printing service.

ANZAC House is finalising the RSL NSW merchandise shop and will advise sub-Branches when access to the shop is available.

If you require assistance to access or print the tools or have any questions regarding the Recruitment Toolkit, please contact support@rslnsw.org.au.

Yours faithfully,

Jeff O'Brien

State Secretary

HVDC NEWS

Next meeting 4th December at Cessnock Leagues Club. As we are hosting this meeting some assistance from Sub-Branch members would be appreciated.

SOMETHING TO LIGHTEN
YOUR DAY

**DRIVER: "WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO
WITH THIS SPEEDING TICKET?"**



**OFFICER: "KEEP IT, WHEN YOU COLLECT
FOUR OF THEM, YOU GET A BICYCLE."**

Off the rails

by Martin Fish

how is the wife Ted?

not so good Les,
she's struggling
with the booze
at the moment!

thanks Luv, just pop it over
there next to the telly!

THANKS
xxx
BEER

Martin Fish



I really don't
mind getting
older, but my
body is taking
it badly.

GN

OUR SUB-BRANCH SPONSORS

The Businesses/Individuals on these pages are the sponsor supporters of our Sub-Branch. Their continued support is very important to the continued successful operation of our Sub-Branch. Please support them as they support us.





CREIGHTONS

FUNERAL SERVICES & PREPAID FUNERAL PLANS

 **4991 5556**



Jabour Accountants

53 KING STREE NEWCASTLE



Bryce Gibson

Selling Principal
0422 227 688

Since starting in Real estate at the tender age of 16, Bryce has dedicated his whole real estate career to helping his many clients and customers achieve their real estate dreams.

Bryce is the Selling Principal of LJ Hooker Cessnock and leads an experienced, skilled and dedicated team to ensure your level of service is second to none.

Bryce has many qualifications including being a Licensed Real Estate Agent, a Licensed Stock & Station Agent, a Licensed Business Agent, a Licensed Strata Managing Agent and Licensed Auctioneer, Certified Practising Valuer.



HISTORICAL FEATURE

LEST WE FORGET BATTLE OF MILNE BAY

The **Battle of Milne Bay** (25 August – 7 September 1942), also known as **Operation RE** or the **Battle of Rabi** (ラビの戦い) by the Japanese, was a battle of the [Pacific campaign](#) of [World War II](#). Japanese [marines](#), known as *[Kaigun Tokubetsu Rikusentai](#)* (Special Naval Landing Forces), with two small tanks attacked the [Allied](#) airfields at [Milne Bay](#) that had been established on the eastern tip of [New Guinea](#). Due to poor intelligence work, the Japanese miscalculated the size of the predominantly Australian garrison and, believing that the airfields were defended by only two or three [companies](#), initially landed a force roughly equivalent in size to one [battalion](#) on 25 August 1942. The Allies, forewarned by intelligence from [Ultra](#), had heavily reinforced the garrison.

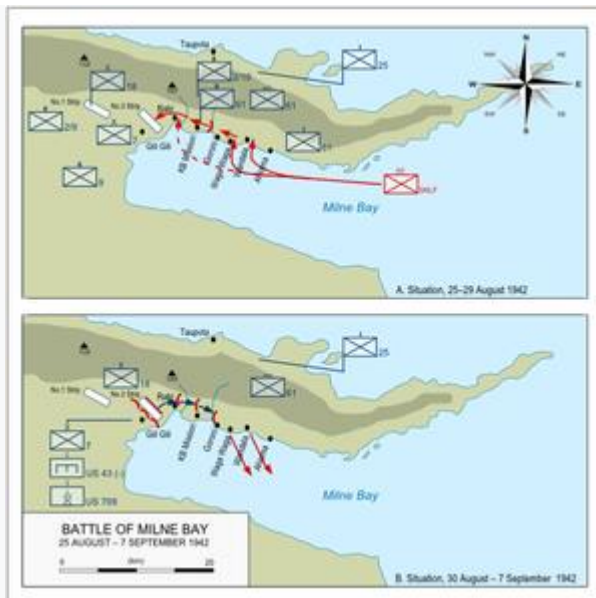
Despite suffering a significant setback at the outset, when part of their small invasion force had its landing craft destroyed by Royal Australian Air Force aircraft as they attempted to land on the coast behind the Australian defenders, the Japanese quickly pushed inland and began

their advance towards the airfields. Heavy fighting followed as they encountered the [Australian Militia](#) troops that formed the first line of defence. These troops were steadily pushed back, but the Australians brought forward veteran [Second Australian Imperial Force](#) units that the Japanese had not expected. Allied air superiority helped tip the balance, providing close support to troops in combat and targeting Japanese logistics. Finding themselves heavily outnumbered, lacking supplies and suffering heavy casualties, the Japanese withdrew their forces, with fighting coming to an end on 7 September 1942.

The battle is often described as the first major battle of the war in the Pacific in which Allied troops decisively defeated Japanese land forces. Although Japanese land forces had experienced local setbacks elsewhere in the Pacific earlier in the war, unlike at Milne Bay, these earlier actions had not forced them to withdraw completely and abandon their strategic objective. Nor did they have such a profound impact upon the thoughts and perceptions of the Allies towards the Japanese, and their prospects for victory. Milne Bay showed the limits of Japanese capability to expand using relatively small forces in the face of increasingly larger Allied troop concentrations and command of the air. As a result of the battle, Allied morale was boosted and Milne Bay was developed into a major Allied base, which was used to mount subsequent operations in the region.

Battle[\[edit\]](#)

Initial landing[\[edit\]](#)



Battle of Milne Bay 25 August – 7 September 1942

Over the course of 23 and 24 August, aircraft from the 25th Air Flotilla carried out preparatory bombing around the airfield at Rabi.^[45] The main Japanese invasion force left Rabaul on 24 August, under Matsuyama's command, at 7:00 am. The fleet was made up of two [light cruisers](#), [Tenryū](#) and [Tatsuta](#), as well as three [destroyers](#), [Urakaze](#), [Tanikaze](#) and [Hamakaze](#), in concert with the transports, [Nankai Maru](#) and [Kinai Maru](#), and the [submarine chasers](#) [CH-22](#) and [CH-24](#).^[50]

At 8:30 am on 24 August, Milne Bay GHQ was alerted by an RAAF [Hudson bomber](#) near [Kitava Island](#), off the [Trobriand Islands](#), and [coastwatchers](#) that a Japanese convoy was approaching the Milne Bay area.^[55] [HMAS Arunta](#) – escorting the transport [SS Tasman](#) – left the Milne Bay area and sailed for Port Moresby after learning of the invasion

force.^{[51][56]} Reports of the second Japanese convoy, consisting of seven barges, which had sailed from Buna carrying the force that would land at Taupota were also received at this time. In response to this sighting, after the initially poor weather had cleared, 12 RAAF Kittyhawks were scrambled at midday. The barges were spotted beached near [Goodenough Island](#) where the 350 troops of the 5th Sasebo SNLF, led by Commander Tsukioka, had gone ashore to rest. The Australian pilots then proceeded to strafe the barges and, over the course of two hours, destroyed them all and stranded their former occupants.^{[57][58]}

After the initial sighting, the main invasion force, consisting of the heavy naval screening force and the two transports, remained elusive until the morning of 25 August. In an effort to intercept it, US [B-17s](#) operating from bases at [Mareeba](#) and [Charters Towers](#) in Queensland, were dispatched, although they were unable to complete their mission as bad weather closed in.^{[51][57]} Later in the afternoon, a number of Kittyhawks and a single Hudson bomber strafed the convoy and attempted to bomb the transports with 250 lb (110 kg) bombs near Rabi Island. Only limited damage was caused to the convoy and no ships were sunk.^[57] After this, due to the withdrawal of the only Allied naval presence in the area – *Arunta* and *Tasman* – an RAAF tender was sent to act as a picket in the bay, ready to provide early warning of the approaching Japanese.^[59]

Meanwhile, earlier in the day, Clowes decided to shorten his lines and passed the order for D Company, 61st Infantry Battalion, which had been sent to Akioma in the east, to withdraw back behind 'B' Company at KB Mission and reposition itself at the No. 3 Airstrip at Gili Gili.^[60] A shortage of water craft, however, delayed D Company's departure until the evening of 25/26 August after requisitioning three

luggers *Bronzewing*, *Elevala* and *Dadosee*.^[59] At around 10:30 pm, the Japanese main force, consisting of over 1,000 men and two Type 95 Ha-Go tanks,^[61] had made landfall near Waga Waga, on the northern shore of the bay; due to an error in navigation they came ashore about 3 kilometres (1.9 mi) east of where they had intended, placing them further away from their objective. Nevertheless, they quickly sent out patrols to secure the area, rounding up local villagers, and established a beachhead.^[62]

Later that evening, two of the small water craft that D Company were using to withdraw to Gili Gili encountered the Japanese landing force.^[59] In the firefight that followed, one of the craft – *Elevala* – was forced to beach and its occupants forced to return to take to the jungle on foot, eventually reaching Gili Gili some time later; the other, *Bronzewing*, was holed and of its passengers, 11 were killed either in the engagement or by the Japanese following their capture.^[62]

Japanese advance inland^[edit]

By dawn of 26 August, advancing west along the coast with armoured support, the Japanese had reached the main position manned by troops from B Company, 61st Infantry Battalion, around KB Mission.^[59] The Japanese force moved through the jungle at the edge of the coastal track, and was headed by two light tanks.^[63] Although they lacked anti-armour weapons,^[64] the Australians were able to turn back the Japanese attack.^[59] At this stage, the Japanese suffered a serious setback when their base area was heavily attacked at daylight by RAAF Kittyhawks and a Hudson aircraft, along with [B-25s](#), [B-26s](#) and B-17s from the US [Fifth Air Force](#). As a result of the attack, a number of Japanese troops were killed, while a large quantity of supplies was destroyed, as were a number of the landing barges which were beached near the KB Mission.^[65] Aside

from severely hampering the Japanese supply system, the destruction of the landing barges also prevented their use to outflank the Australian battalions.^[66] The Japanese did not have any air cover as the fighters based at Buna which were to patrol over Milne Bay were shot down by Allied fighters shortly after they took off and other aircraft based at Rabaul were forced to turn back due to bad weather.^[67]

Nevertheless, the Japanese were still pressing on the 61st Infantry Battalion's positions throughout the day. Field, who had command responsibility for the local area, decided to send two platoons from the 25th Infantry Battalion to provide support. Later, the remaining two rifle companies from the 61st were also dispatched, along with their [mortar](#) platoon. The muddy track meant that the Australians were unable to move anti-tank guns into position; however, as a stop-gap measure quantities of [sticky bombs](#) and anti-tank mines were moved up to the forward units.^[64] At 4:45 pm, with air and artillery support, the Australians launched a minor attack upon the Japanese forward positions which were located about 600 yards (550 m) to the east of the mission, pushing the Japanese back a further 200 yards (180 m). Weary from the day's fighting, though, they withdrew to Motieau, west of the mission.^{[64][68]}



A Japanese Type 95 *Ha-Go* tank near Rabi, bogged in the mud and abandoned

The Australians then attempted to break contact and withdraw towards a creek line where they hoped to establish a defensive line as darkness came. The Japanese stayed in close contact with the Australians, harassing their rear elements.^[69] The men from B Company then sought to establish their position, while the 2/10th Infantry Battalion made preparations to move eastwards towards Ahioma, passing through the lines of the 25th and 61st Infantry Battalions.^[70] In the early evening, Japanese ships shelled the Australian positions and later, at 10:00 pm, the Japanese launched a heavy attack on the Australians which continued sporadically through the night. By 4:00 am the following morning, the Japanese began to employ infiltration and deception techniques to try to outflank the Australian positions. Anticipating an armoured attack at dawn, the Australians withdrew back to the [Gama River](#),^[71] which was situated 1 mile (1.6 km) to the west.^[72] During the night, the destroyer *Hamakaze* entered the bay to make contact with the Japanese troops and land supplies. The landing force had been out of radio contact since 2:00 pm, and the destroyer was unable to raise it with either her radio or visual signalling devices. As a result, *Hamakaze* departed Milne Bay at 2:30 am without having landed any supplies.^[73]

Shortly after dawn, in the air, a Japanese force consisting of eight dive bombers with 12 Zero fighter escorts attacked the Allied airfield at Gili Gili. One of the attacking aircraft was shot down, while only a small amount of damage was inflicted.^[74] Meanwhile, around the mission as the Japanese reconnoitred Australian positions, the 2/10th Infantry Battalion, consisting of just 420 men,^[75] was ordered to the Gama River by Clowes.^[72] This operation was badly planned and did not have a clear purpose; it was launched

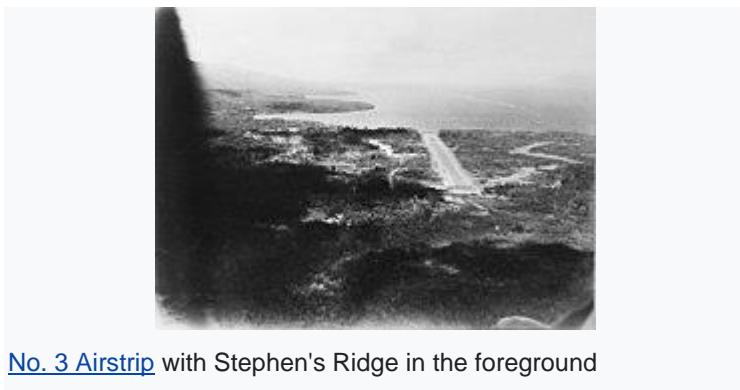
as both a reconnaissance in force and a counter-attack, but evolved into an attempt to establish a blocking force at KB Mission. Moreover, while the Australians had no knowledge of the strength or intentions of the Japanese, no force would be able to reinforce the battalion once it moved outside the main defensive lines near the airstrips.^[76] The 2/10th's forward patrols made contact with the 61st Infantry Battalion at around 10:30 am on 27 August and,^[72] upon arrival at around 5:00 pm,^[77] they began to establish their position; with only limited entrenching tools, they found the going difficult.^[70] At this point, the troops from the 25th and 61st Battalion were ordered to pull back, having lost 18 men killed and a further 18 wounded, along with an unknown number missing in action.^[78]

At 8:00 pm the Japanese sent two Type 95 tanks with bright headlights into the plantation.^[70] The men from the 2/10th tried to disable them with sticky bombs, but due to the humid conditions the bombs failed to adhere to the Japanese armour. In the fighting that followed over the course of two and a half hours,^[70] the Australians suffered heavy casualties. Receiving indirect fire support from the 2/5th Field Regiment's [25 pounder guns](#) situated near Gili Gili,^[79] they repelled four frontal attacks. However, by midnight the Japanese were inside the Australian position and in the confusion the 2/10th withdrew in some disorder to a number of scattered positions on the west bank of the Gama, which they reached by about 2:00 am on 28 August.^[80] A further assault, however, by tank-mounted infantry forced them back further,^[81] moving back through the 61st and 25th Infantry Battalions towards No. 3 Airstrip, which was still under construction, south of Kilarbo. During the brief engagement around KB Mission, they had lost 43 men killed and another 26 wounded.^{[66][82]}

As the 2/10th withdrew, the 25th Infantry Battalion, which had moved forward from Gili Gili to relieve the 61st, deployed around the airstrip and at Rabi, Daira Creek and

Kilarbo, laying mines in key locations.^[83] The airstrip proved a perfect defensive location, offering a wide, clear field of fire, while at its end, thick mud served to prevent the movement of Japanese tanks.^[84] Around dawn the advancing Japanese troops reached the airstrip and, under the cover of field artillery and mortars, they launched an attack. Although the Australians did not know it, the tanks that were supporting the attack became stuck in the mud and were subsequently abandoned;^[85] they would later be discovered by an Australian patrol on 29 August.^[86] Meanwhile, troops from the 25th and 61st Infantry Battalions, along with Americans from the 709th Anti-Aircraft Battery turned back the attacking Japanese infantry.^[84] Further strafing by Kittyhawks followed,^[87] and the Japanese were forced to fall back 2 kilometres (1.2 mi) to the east of Rabi.^[85]

Following this, for the next two days there was a lull in the fighting.^[88] During this time, the Australians consolidated their defences. The 61st Infantry Battalion, despite being seriously depleted from the previous fighting, were ordered back to the perimeter around the airstrip,^[89] subsequently deploying around Stephen's Ridge, tying in with the 25th Battalion's positions between the coast and Wehria Creek. Fire support was provided by mortars from the 25th along with Vickers machine guns from the 61st and .30 and .50 calibre machine guns mounted on the American half-tracks.^[90] The American engineers and anti-aircraft gunners became the first American troops to engage in ground combat in New Guinea.^[91]



[No. 3 Airstrip](#) with Stephen's Ridge in the foreground

Elsewhere, the 2/12th Infantry Battalion began moving forward from Waigani to enable it to join the fighting later as a counterattacking force.^[92] They, along with the 2/9th, were subsequently tasked to carry out an attack from No. 3 Airstrip to KB Mission.^[93] Meanwhile, the Japanese also sought to reconfigure their forces and Mikawa decided to reinforce the forces that were already ashore. These reinforcements, consisting of 567 men from the 3rd Kure SNLF and 200 from the 5th Yokosuka SNLF, left Rabaul on 28 August.^[94] At around 4:30 pm an RAAF patrol spotted the Japanese convoy – consisting of one cruiser and nine destroyers^[86] – and subsequently reported this to the Allied headquarters. Believing that further landings were about to occur, Clowes cancelled his plans to begin a counterattack with the troops from the 18th Brigade.^{[95][96]} Orders were also passed for the 30 Kittyhawks at Gili Gili to be flown off to Port Moresby in case the Japanese succeeded in breaking through to the airfield.^[97] The attack did not take place, though, and consequently early in the morning on 29 August they returned, albeit minus two aircraft which had crashed during the move.^[98]

The Japanese convoy arrived off Waga Waga at 8:15 pm on 29 August, and began landing troops and supplies. While this was taking place the warships shelled Allied

positions around Gili Gili and by 11:30 pm, had completed their landing.^{[94][99]} The shelling was not significant, however, and no casualties resulted from it.^{[86][95]} Throughout 30 August, the Australians carried out patrolling operations while the Japanese laid up in the jungle in preparation for an attack that night.^[100]

Later that night the Japanese began forming up along the track at the eastern end of No. 3 Airstrip by the sea,^[101] and at 3:00 am on 31 August they launched their attack.^[88] Advancing over open ground and illuminated by flares fired by the Australians, the first Japanese attack was repelled by heavy machine gun and mortar fire from 25th and 61st Infantry Battalions as well as the 46th Engineer General Service Regiment,^[88] and artillery fire from the Australian 2/5th Field Regiment. A further two *banzai charges* were attempted only to meet the same fate, with heavy Japanese casualties, including the Japanese commander, Hayashi.^{[102][103]} At this point, Commander [Minoru Yano](#), who had arrived with the Japanese reinforcements on 29 August, took over from Hayashi, and after the survivors of the attack had reformed in the dead ground around Poin Creek, he led them about 200 yards (180 m) north of the airstrip in an attempt to outflank the 61st Infantry Battalion's positions on Stephen's Ridge.^[104] After running into a platoon of Australians who engaged them with [Bren light machine guns](#), the Japanese withdrew just before dawn to the sounds of a bugle call.^[105] The Japanese troops who survived this attack were shocked by the heavy firepower the Allied forces had been able to deploy, and the assault force was left in a state of disarray.^[106]

Australian counterattack^[edit]



John French, posthumously awarded the [Victoria Cross](#) for his actions at Milne Bay

Early on 31 August, the 2/12th Infantry Battalion began moving towards KB Mission, with 'D' Company leading the way and struggling through muddy conditions along the track, which had been turned into a quagmire due to the heavy rain and equally heavy traffic.^[107] After passing through the 61st Infantry Battalion's position, at around 9:00 am they began their counterattack along the north coast of Milne Bay.^[88] As the Australians went they were harassed by snipers and ambush parties. They also encountered several Japanese soldiers who tried to lure the Australians in close for attack by pretending to be dead.^[108] In response, some Australians systematically bayoneted and shot the bodies of Japanese soldiers.^[106] At

noon, the 9th Infantry Battalion, a Militia unit from the 7th Infantry Brigade, dispatched two companies to occupy some of the ground that the 2/12th had regained around No. 3 Airstrip and the mission.^[109]

Making slow going amidst considerable resistance, the Australians nevertheless reached KB Mission late in the day. A force of Japanese remained there, and the Australians attacked with bayonets fixed. In the fighting that followed 60 Japanese were killed or wounded. The Australians were then able to firmly establish themselves at the mission.^[110] Meanwhile, the two companies from the 9th Battalion took up positions at Kilarbo and between the Gama River and Homo Creek with orders to establish blocking positions to allow the 2/12th to continue its advance the following morning.^{[109][111]}

That night, a force of around 300 Japanese who had been falling back since they had run into the 61st Infantry Battalion on Stephen's Ridge, encountered positions manned by the 2/12th and 9th Infantry Battalions around the Gama River. In a surprise attack, the Australians inflicted heavy casualties on the Japanese. After the battle the Australians estimated that up to 90 had been killed.^[111] Following this the Japanese began to employ infiltration techniques in an attempt to pass through the numerous listening posts that had been set up along the side of the track which formed the front of one side of the 2/12th's position.^[112] Elsewhere, at the mission, starting at around 8:00 pm, they carried out harassment operations in an effort to distract the Australians and assist their comrades to try to break through the Australian positions from the Gama River. This lasted throughout the night.^[113]

The following morning, 1 September, the 2/12th Infantry Battalion went on the offensive again,^[114] while a force of seven Kittyhawks attacked the Japanese headquarters around Waga Waga.^[115] By this time, the Japanese had

abandoned the objective of reaching the airfields and instead sought only to hold off the Australians long enough to be evacuated.^[116] This information was not known by the Allies, however, who were in fact expecting the Japanese to undertake further offensive action. In this regard, the 2/9th, initially with orders to join the 2/12th's counterattack, was delayed an extra day after an erroneous intelligence report from MacArthur's headquarters warning Clowes of a renewed Japanese attack forced him to briefly adopt a more defensive posture.^[117] The attack did not occur and, as a result, on 2 September the 2/9th was moved by barge up to the KB Mission. The next day it took over from the 2/12th and led the Australian advance.^[118] With the Japanese position at Milne Bay close to collapse, on 2 September Yano sent a radio message to the headquarters of the 8th Fleet which stated: "[w]e have reached the worst possible situation. We will together calmly defend our position to the death. We pray for absolute victory for the empire and for long-lasting fortune in battle for you all".^[119]

"Lying across the [air]strip were dozens of dead Japs... As our officer crossed in the vanguard a Jap, apparently wounded, cried out for help. The officer walked over to aid him, and as he did the Jap sprang to life and hurled a grenade which wounded him in the face. From then on the only good Jap was a dead one, and although they tried the same trick again and again throughout the campaign, they were dispatched before they had time to use their grenade.

"Our policy was to watch any apparent dead, shoot at the slightest sign of life and stab with bayonet even the ones who appeared to be rotten. It was all out from then on, neither side showing any quarter and no prisoners were taken."

– Sergeant Arthur Trail, 2/12th Infantry Battalion, Australian Army.^[120]

The terrain in this part of the bay offered significant advantage to defending forces, lined as it was with numerous creeks which slowed movement and obscured firing lanes.^[121] Throughout 3 September, the 2/9th Infantry

Battalion came up against significant resistance; in one engagement that took place around mid-morning along a stream to the west of Elevada Creek they lost 34 men killed or wounded as they attempted to force their way across a creek.^[122] Engaged with sustained machine gun fire, the two assault platoons withdrew back across the creek while elements of another company that was in support moved to the northern flank. Launching their assault, they found that the Japanese had withdrawn, leaving about 20 of their dead.^[123]

Following this, the 2/9th advanced a further 500 yards (460 m), reaching Sanderson's Bay, before deciding to set up their night location.^[124] That night Japanese ships again shelled Australian positions on the north shore of the bay, but without causing any casualties among the defenders.^[125]

On 4 September, the Australian advance continued as the 2/9th moved up the coast either side of the coastal track. After about one hour, the advance company struck a Japanese defensive position at Goroni.^[125] Throughout the day the Australians worked to outflank the position before launching an attack at 3:15 pm. During this action, one of the 2/9th's [sections](#) was held up by fire from three Japanese machine gun positions.^[126] Corporal [John French](#) ordered the other members of the section to take cover before he attacked and destroyed two of the machine guns with [grenades](#). French then attacked the third position with his [Thompson submachine gun](#). The Japanese firing ceased and the Australian section advanced to find that the machine gunners had been killed and that French had died in front of the third position. He was [posthumously](#) awarded the [Victoria Cross](#) for his "cool courage and disregard of his own personal safety" which "saved members of his section from heavy casualties and was responsible for the successful conclusion of the attack".^{[127][128]} By the end of the 4th, the Japanese force

included only 50 fully fit soldiers; all the other surviving troops were either incapacitated or could only offer token resistance. In addition, the commanders of all the Japanese companies had been killed and only three or four platoon leaders remained.^[129]

Japanese withdrawal[\[edit\]](#)

Following the fighting on 31 August, the Japanese forces ashore had reported the situation to their headquarters at Rabaul. In response, plans were made to send the Aoba Detachment, which comprised the Army's [4th Infantry Regiment](#) and an artillery company,^{[130][131]} to Rabi to complete the capture of the airfield.^[103] However, they were not scheduled to arrive until 11 September and so it was planned in the meantime to reinforce Yano's men with 130 men from the 5th Yokosuka SNLF. An abortive attempt was made to land these troops on 2 September and then again on 4 September. By that time, however, as further reports were received by the Japanese headquarters, it became apparent that Yano's troops would not be able to hold out until the Aoba Detachment could arrive. As a result, on 5 September, the Japanese high command ordered a withdrawal. This was carried out from the sea that evening.^{[132][133]}

Meanwhile, six [Beauforts](#) of [No. 100 Squadron RAAF](#) had arrived at Milne Bay on 5 September. An additional three [Beaufighters](#) of [No. 30 Squadron RAAF](#), the first to operate this aircraft, joined them the following day.^[115] The Beauforts were tasked with providing additional support against further landings and undertaking anti-shipping missions.^[3] On 6 September, the Allied offensive reached the main camp of the Japanese landing force, fighting a number of minor actions against small groups that had been left behind after the evacuation.^[134]



Anshun lying on her side in Milne Bay, New Guinea, 1942

Shortly after ten on the evening of 6 September, as the freighter [*Anshun*](#) was continuing unloading cargo under her lights, the port came under fire from the Japanese cruiser *Tenryū* and the destroyer [*Arashi*](#) with *Anshun* receiving about ten hits from the cruiser and rolling onto her side.^[135] The Japanese ships also shelled shore positions at Gili Gili and Waga Waga and illuminated, but did not fire on, the hospital ship [*Manunda*](#) which was displaying her hospital ship colours and lights.^{[135][136]} The next night, two Japanese warships – a cruiser and a destroyer – bombarded Australian positions causing a number of casualties for 15 minutes before leaving the bay; it would be their final act in the battle.^[137] During the mopping up operations that followed, patrols by Australian troops tracked down and killed a number of Japanese troops who were attempting to trek overland to Buna.^[9]

The 350 Japanese troops who had been stranded on Goodenough Island after their barges were destroyed on 24 August were not rescued until late October. An attempt to evacuate the force on 11 September ended in failure when the two destroyers assigned to this mission were attacked by USAAF aircraft, resulting in the loss of [*Yayoi*](#). Two further attempts to rescue the force on 13 and 22

September were unsuccessful, though supplies were air-dropped on Goodenough Island. A submarine landed further supplies and evacuated 50 sick personnel on 3 and 13 October.^[138] As part of the preparations for the [attack on Buna and Gona](#), the 2/12th Infantry Battalion was assigned responsibility for securing Goodenough Island on 19 October. The battalion [landed on the island](#) three days later. A series of small engagements on 23 and 24 October cost the Australian force 13 killed and 19 wounded, and the Japanese suffered 20 killed and 15 wounded.^[139] The remaining Japanese troops were evacuated by two barges to nearby [Fergusson Island](#) on the night of 24 October, and the light cruiser *Tenryū* rescued them two days later.^[140] After securing the island, the 2/12th began work on building [Vivigani Airfield](#) on its east coast.^[141]

Aftermath^[edit]

Base development^[edit]



The recreation hut at the Reception and General Details Depot, Milne Bay Sub Area, in 1944

The Allies continued to develop the base area at Milne Bay in support of the counter-offensive along the northern coast of Papua and New Guinea. The American base became

US Advanced Sub Base A on 21 April 1943, US Advance Base A on 14 August and US Base A on 15 November.^[142] Its Australian counterpart, the Milne Bay Base Sub Area, was formed on 14 June 1943.^[143] Two [155-millimetre \(6.1 in\)](#) coastal guns with searchlights were provided to protect the base from naval threats.^[144] New roads were built and the existing ones upgraded to make them passable in the wet conditions. A meteorological record was set on 29 April 1944, when 24 inches (610 mm) of rain fell in a 24-hour period. By June 1944, there was over 100 miles (160 km) of road in the area.^[145]

A bitumen-surfaced second runway was built at No. 1 Airstrip by [No. 6 Mobile Works Squadron RAAF](#), after which the original runway was only used for emergencies and taxiing. The minefield around No. 3 Airstrip was lifted and the airstrip was completed, with revetments and hardstands for 70 medium bombers. A new wharf, known as Liles' wharf after the American engineer who supervised its construction, was built in September and October 1942. This was capable of handling [Liberty ships](#). Henceforth ships could sail direct to Milne Bay from the United States, reducing the pressure on Australian ports and saving two or three days' sailing time in addition to the time formerly taken to unload and then reload the cargo on smaller ships in those ports.^[146] [PT boats](#) were based at Milne Bay from December 1942, with PT boat overhaul facilities, a destroyer base, a transshipment and staging area and a Station Hospital also constructed.^{[147][6]}

On 14 April 1943, the Allied base was attacked by 188 Japanese aircraft during the Japanese air offensive, [Operation I-Go](#). The base's anti-aircraft defences were limited, but a force of 24 RAAF Kittyhawk fighters were on hand to respond to the attack. Minor damage was inflicted on the supply dumps around the airfields, while one British motorship, *Gorgon*, was damaged and *Van Heemskerk*, a Dutch transport carrying US troops was

sunk. At least three Allied aircraft were shot down, while the Japanese lost seven aircraft.^[148] Later, Milne Bay was used as a staging area for mounting the [landing at Lae](#) in September 1943,^[149] and the [New Britain Campaign](#) in December.^[150] The base at Milne Bay remained operational until the end of the war.^[151]

War crimes^[edit]

During the Australian counterattack, the advancing troops found evidence that the Japanese had committed a number of [war crimes](#) at Milne Bay, specifically the execution of [prisoners of war](#) (POWs) and civilians.^[110] None of the 36 Australian troops who were captured by the Japanese survived; a number of them were found to have been executed with some showing signs of having been mutilated as well. In addition, at least 59 civilians were also murdered between 25 August and 6 September; included in this were a number of Papuan women who were sexually assaulted before being killed.^[152] The war crimes committed at Milne Bay hardened Australian soldiers' attitudes towards Japanese troops for the remainder of the war. Historian Mark Johnston has written that "the Australians' relentless killing of Japanese then and thereafter owed much to a determination both to retaliate in kind and to take revenge for Japanese atrocities and rumoured maltreatment of POWs".^[153]

Later, the Australian [Minister for External Affairs](#), Dr. [H. V. Evatt](#), commissioned a report by [William Webb](#) on war crimes committed by the Japanese. Webb took depositions about the Milne Bay incident from members of the Allied forces who had been present, and used them to form part of his report. In 1944 this was submitted to the [United Nations War Crimes Commission](#), which had been set up by the Allies following the [Moscow Declaration](#).^[154] Evidence about the crimes was presented to the [Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal](#) on 2 January

1947,^[155] but no Japanese personnel were prosecuted for actions during the fighting at Milne Bay.^[156]

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