

# ***Kokoda Trail Battle Was Our Costliest***

Most punishing of all Australian ground operations in the South-West Pacific area was the Kokoda Trail, Buna and Gona campaign, which cost the AMF 5749 battle casualties.

Next in severity were the Huon Peninsula operations at Lae and Finschhafen, with 2361 casualties. Third heaviest casualties—2110—occurred in the Wau operations and the march to Salamaua and Lae.

These figures have just been compiled by 2nd Echelon, H.Q. A.M.F. They refer only to casualties sustained in battle, distinct from deaths by sickness, accident or natural causes.

Battle casualties, here detailed for the first time, of A.M.F. operations in Papua, New Guinea, Bougainville, New Britain, New Ireland and Australia, were:

## **ISLANDS AREA**

**Kokoda Trail, Buna and Gona,** December, 1941, to January 31, 1943: Killed in action, 144 officers; 1593 other ranks. Died of wounds, 28 officers; 310 other ranks. Wounded in action, 3611; still missing, 60; prisoners of war, 1. Total, 5749.

**Lae and Finschhafen,** September, 1943, to August, 1944: Killed in action, 38 officers; 434 other ranks. Died of wounds, 17 officers; 151 other ranks. Wounded, 1682; still missing, 9; prisoners of war, nil. Total, 2361.

**Wau, Salamaua, Lae,** January to September, 1943: Killed in action, 56 officers; 502 other ranks. Died of wounds, 10 officers; 111 other ranks. Wounded, 1422; still missing, 9; prisoners of war, nil. Total, 2110.

**Bougainville,** November, 1944, to August, 1945: Killed in action, 34 officers, 370 other ranks; died of wounds, 6 officers, 96 other ranks; wounded, 1578; still missing, 10; P.O.W., nil. Total, 2094.

**Aitape-Wewak,** November, 1944, to August, 1945: Killed in action, 27 officers, 349 other ranks; died of wounds, 4 officers, 71 other ranks; wounded,

cers, 349 other ranks; died of wounds, 4 officers, 71 other ranks; wounded, 1163; still missing, 3; P.O.W., nil. Total, 10617.

**Markham-Ramu-Shaggy Ridge to Alexishafen,** September, 1943, to April, 1944: Killed in action, 16 officers, 132 other ranks; died of wounds, 24; wounded, 432. Total, 604.

**New Britain,** November, 1944, to August, 1945: Killed in action, 40; died of wounds, 8; wounded, 134. Total, 182.

**Elsewhere in S.W.P.A.:** Killed in action, 13 officers, 26 other ranks; still missing, 13; P.O.Ws., 22. Total, 74. These comprise casualties suffered by Commandos on special missions.

For the lowness of the A.M.F.'s missing and prisoners of war in S.W.P.A. operations, the official explanation is that no quarter was given. Also it reflects the difference between offensive operations and defensive operations such as the Malayan campaign.

## **DARWIN DEATHS**

**Australia:** Killed in action, 31 officers, 200 other ranks; died of wounds, 6; wounded, 172. Total, 409. These casualties comprise 13 killed and 138 wounded during the Darwin raids, one killed by a bomb at Port Hedland, 222 killed and 34 wounded when the hospital ship Centaur was torpedoed, and one air liaison officer lost on an operational flight.

## **MIDDLE EAST**

Middle East theatre battle casualties for the A.M.F. were:

**Western Desert,** December 19, 1940, to December 5, 1942: Killed, 124 officers, 1747 other ranks; died of wounds 43 officers; 534 other ranks; wounded, 2316; prisoners of war, 1999. Total,

43 officers; 534 other ranks; wounded, 6216; prisoners of war, 1898. Total, 10,562. This includes 39 prisoners of war killed outright and 30 who died of wounds as a result of transport sinkings and shootings for attempted escape or insubordination.

**Greece and Crete, April 16, 1941, to June, 1941:** Killed, 20 officers; 467 other ranks; died of wounds, 5 officers, 84 other ranks; wounded, 1085; still missing, 13; prisoners of war, 5214. Total, 6888.

**Syria, June 3, 1941, to July 12, 1941:** Killed, 32 officers, 294 other

ranks. Died of wounds, 5 officers, 82 other ranks. Wounded, 1151. P.O.W's. 176. Total, 1740.

A.M.F. officers attached to B.E.F. Western Europe, 1944-45—3 wounded in action.

### 8 DIV. AREA

**Malaya, December, 1941, to February, 1942.**—Killed in action, 93 officers, 920 other ranks. Killed as P.O.W's., 33 officers, 449 other ranks. Died of wounds, 8 officers, 104 other ranks. Died of wounds as P.O.W's. 23 other ranks. Wounded, 1201. Still missing, 716. P.O.W's., 841 officers, 14,534 other ranks. Total, 18,911.

**Java, March, 1942.**—Killed in action 39. Killed as P.O.W's., 191. Died of wounds, 2. Wounded, 60. Still missing, 10. P.O.W's., 167 officers, 2612 other ranks. Total, 3621.

**Timor, February, 1942.**—Killed in action, 5 officers, 64 other ranks. Killed as P.O.W's., 132. Died of wounds, 1. Died of wounds as P.O.W's., 13. Wounded, 91. Still missing, 33. P.O.W's. 51 officers, 1089 other ranks. Total, 1479.

**New Britain, 1942.**—Killed in action, 30. Killed as P.O.W's., 784 (mainly in the sinking of the transport *Montevideo Maru*). Died of wounds, 2. Wounded, 1. Still missing, 162. P.O.W's. 862. Total, 1841.

**New Ireland, 1942.**—Killed in action 2. Killed as P.O.W's., 132. Died of wounds, 6. Still missing, 3. P.O.W's. 146. Total, 289.

The final summary of the 8th Division and attached troops' casualty list is: Killed in action, 158 officers, 3026 other ranks. Died of wounds, 9 officers, 158 other ranks. Wounded, 1368. Still missing, 958. P.O.W's., 1104 officers, 19,937 other ranks. Total 26,718.

### CASUALTY TOTALS

A.M.F. battle casualties in all

theatres of war, compiled to March 31, 1946, were:

Killed in action, 730 officers, 9609 other ranks; died of wounds, 140 officers, 1754 other ranks; wounded, 1291 officers, 20,263 other ranks; still posted missing, 27 officers, 1048 other ranks; prisoners of war, 1413 officers, 26,939 other ranks. Total, 63,214 (3601 officers, 59,613 other ranks).

[The ratio of killed to died of wounds in the two wars was: First World War, 39,880 Australian soldiers killed in action, 13,681 died of wounds; Second World War, 10,339 killed, 1894 died of wounds.]

These all-theatre figures for the A.M.F. will probably constitute the final battle casualty totals for Australia's official history of the Second World War. The only alterations likely are that a few more prisoners of war may prove to have been wounded before capture, and the deaths will probably be presumed of those still posted as missing.