

AUSTRALIA IN THE WAR OF 1939-1945

**SERIES FIVE
MEDICAL**

**VOLUME III
*THE ISLAND CAMPAIGNS***

AUSTRALIA IN THE WAR OF 1939-1945

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THE ISLAND CAMPAIGNS

by

ALLAN S. WALKER
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*“To live is to achieve a perpetual triumph;
it is to assert oneself against destruction,
against sickness, against the annulling and
dispersion of one’s physical and moral being.”*

(H. F. Amiel)

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ABBREVIATIONS

- A.A.C.C.*—Australian Army Catering Corps.
A.A.M.C.—Australian Army Medical Corps.
A.A.M.W.S.—Australian Army Medical Women's Service.
A.A.N.S.—Australian Army Nursing Service.
A.A.S.C.—Australian Army Service Corps.
A.D.G.M.S.—Assistant Director-General Medical Services.
A.D.M.S.—Assistant Director Medical Services.
A.D. of H.—Assistant Director of Hygiene.
A.D.S.—Advanced Dressing Station.
A.G.H.—Australian General Hospital.
A.I.F.—Australian Imperial Force.
A.M.C.U.—Australian Malaria Control Unit.
A.M.D.—Army Medical Directorate.
A.M.F.—Australian Military Forces.
Angau—Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit.
A.R.C.S.—Australian Red Cross Society.
A.S.P.—Ambulance Staging Post.
- B.M.A.*—British Medical Association.
B.T.—Benign Tertian (malaria).
- C.C.S.*—Casualty Clearing Station.
C.M.C.C.—Central Medical Coordination Committee.
C.O.S.C.—Combined Operational Service Command.
C.S.I.R.—Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.
- D.A.D.H.*—Deputy Assistant Director Hygiene.
D.A.D.M.S.—Deputy Assistant Director Medical Services.
D.D.M.S.—Deputy Director Medical Services.
D.D.T.—Dichloro-diphenyl-trichlorethane.
D.G.M.S.—Director-General Medical Services.
D.I.D.—Detail Issuing Depot.
D.P.1—Draft Priority 1.
D.R.S.—Divisional Rest Station.
D.U.K.W.—Amphibious powered vehicles.
- E.P.I.P. Tent*—European Privates Indian Pattern Tent.
- Fd. Amb.*—Field Ambulance.
- G.O.C.*—General Officer Commanding.
G.R.O.—General Routine Order.
- H.Q.*—Headquarters.

L.C.A.—Landing Craft, Artillery.
L.C.M.—Landing Craft, Mechanised.
L.C.T.—Landing Craft, Tank.
L.C.V.—Landing Craft, Vehicle.
L.C.V.P.—Landing Craft Vehicle—Personnel.
L.S.I.—Landing Ship, Infantry.
L.S.T.—Landing Ship, Tank.

M.B.D.S.—Main Beach Dressing Station.
M.D.S.—Main Dressing Station.
M.E.C.C.—Medical Equipment Control Committee.
M.S.P.—Medical Staging Post.
M.T.—Malignant Tertian (malaria).

N.C.O.—Non-Commissioned Officer.
N.G.I.B.—New Guinea Infantry Battalion.
N.G.V.R.—New Guinea Volunteer Rifles.

O.R.—Other rank.

P.I.B.—Papuan Infantry Battalion.
P.O.W.—Prisoners of War.
P.U.O.—Pyrexia of unknown origin.

Q Branch—Quartermaster-General's Branch.

R.A.A.F.—Royal Australian Air Force.
R.A.E.—Royal Australian Engineers.
R.A.N.—Royal Australian Navy.
R.A.P.—Regimental Aid Post.
R.M.O.—Regimental Medical Officer.

S.A.T.—Sea Ambulance Transport.
S.B.—Stretcher Bearer.
S.M.O.—Senior Medical Officer.
S.W.P.A.—South-West Pacific Area.

W.E.—War Establishment.
W.O.—Warrant Officer.

PREFACE

THIS volume is the second of two describing the operational experiences of the Australian Army Medical Corps during the war of 1939-45. In the previous volume, *Middle East and Far East*, the narrative, having traced the return of the I Australian Corps to Australia, passed on to the frustrate actions in Malaya and in the chain of islands stretching from Sumatra to Timor. Here the proximity of Northern Australia to these events gave warning of the dangers that might lie to the north of the island continent, but between Australia and an enemy from the north lay the bulk of New Guinea. This large island with its vast variety of country and people was already closely linked with the destiny of Australia, and in the coming struggle was evidently to be the proving ground of the Japanese and the Allied American and Australian forces.

In *Middle East and Far East* the story swept on past New Guinea, the Solomons and other islands and followed the fate of the prisoners of war scattered over the eastern zones of conflict. We now return to New Guinea and other related areas and fill the gap in the medical records that we previously left, telling the story of hard striving against a stubborn foe, and a constant fight against tropical disease in a wild and formidable terrain. The medical narrative deals largely with the topic of preventive medicine, never absent from the mind of the administrator, who is ever alert to the man-wastage wrought by the forces of nature. It further deals with the effects of the violence of war on the fighting men, and tells how the medical services strove always to lessen this wastage by methods that had a constant background of science, and yet were interwoven with all the extemporisations that ingenuity could compass.

With so many medical units engaged in work in the field, in training and in rehabilitation, the scope of the New Guinea story has widened, and thus its scale will permit only a somewhat lessened degree of personal detail, which hardly gives these actors in the medical history the appreciation they merit. It is hoped, however, that a presentation which lays emphasis on the work of the units of the Australian Army Medical Corps, as well as that of individuals, will produce a more compact narrative, on which a brighter light shows up the outstanding achievements.

Administration is treated in only moderate detail, and one chapter is devoted to some of the most important problems arising in Australia during the last vital years of the war.

Post-war activities, as in preceding volumes, are not dealt with except in occasional faint outline, and for this reason little is said of the excellent work carried out by members of medical units on repatriates and prisoners of war.

All the chapters and sections of this volume have been submitted to medical officers whose experience enabled them to correct and criticise the facts and opinions which make up the text of the story. I am grateful for the interest and assistance given by these colleagues, especially in

parts of the history where records were meagre, by reason of the nature of the episodes they describe. I have had free access to the available records, and take the responsibility for the presentation of this phase of the medical history and the opinions expressed.

I am specially indebted to Mr Gavin Long, the General Editor, for his advice and help, and for the assistance of his staff in correction of drafts dealing with matters outside the scope of a medical writer. My part-time assistants have been particularly helpful during the past year, during which removal of the medical history's headquarters from Canberra to Sydney increased our difficulties. The work of Mrs Evelyn East as research assistant has been invaluable in all phases of compilation of this book. Mrs Gladys Pope promptly and efficiently carried out the majority of the typing and secretarial work in Canberra. Mr H. W. Groser, the cartographer of the War History, has again made the maps a most valuable adjunct to the text. Mrs Gwen Jacobson wrote the index.

Major-General F. Kingsley Norris, D.G.M.S., and the members of his staff have again been most cooperative and helpful. Major J. J. McGrath, Director of the Australian War Memorial, and his staff in Canberra and Sydney have also assisted us to obtain and hold relevant records, and to use official photographs.

I am again grateful to Dr Mervyn Archdall, Editor of *The Medical Journal of Australia*, and Dr R. R. Winton, the Assistant Editor, for reading and criticising the typescript. Lastly, the friendly cooperation and encouragement of numbers of my medical colleagues have often been a great uplift in the task of compiling a medical war history.

A.S.W.

Sydney, 28th September 1954.