

## GREEK CAMPAIGN

### Private? Arthur Evans, 2/11<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Army Field Workshop

From Arthur's son Phil Evans:

"My late father was Private Arthur Raymond Evans of the Australian Army, WX2422, and served in Greece during the April 1941 campaign. He sailed from Alexandria on the 1st of April on board the SS Cameronia and served with the 2/2nd Army Field Workshops, 5th Recovery Section. The unit initially camped at Hymettus before moving north via Lamia, Volos, Larissa and stopping around Elasson.



SS Cameronia

After the retreat south, my father was taken as a POW on the 28th April, possibly at Tolon, and like all POWs would have been initially held at Corinth before transfer to Salonika and the onward torturous train journeys to Stalag XVIIID at Marburg/Maribor."

**Archivist's Note:** If Arthur Evans moved "north via Lamia, Volos, Larissa and stopping around Elasson" he would have been involved in the following actions (albeit credited to the 2/3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Field Regiment – to which he may have been temporarily attached – or is it a typo?):

#### From "Greece and Crete 1941"

April 18<sup>th</sup>

"6th New Zealand Brigade . . . covered the two roads which led, respectively, southeast and almost due south from Elasson and united at Tirnavos. On the former road, which led over the Meneksos Pass, was the 24<sup>th</sup> New Zealand Battalion; on the latter, traversing easier country, the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion was in position, well supported by the 2/3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Field Regiment and a troop of the 64<sup>th</sup> Medium Regiment, with two troops of New Zealand field guns further in the rear. The 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion and a number of New Zealand anti-tank guns were in reserve at Dhomenikon, and an additional New Zealand field battery was also available if needed. We had no tanks. When battle was joined in this pleasant valley, Australian, New Zealand and British guns opposed German armour."

April 22<sup>nd</sup>

"Further to the left at the Brallos Pass the thinning-out process had left Brigadier Vasey of the 19<sup>th</sup> Australian Brigade with the 2/1<sup>st</sup>, 2/4<sup>th</sup> and 2/11<sup>th</sup> Battalions, all weak in numbers, two companies of the 2/8<sup>th</sup>, and the 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Field Regiment. Detachments were maintained at the crest of the pass well forward of the Brallos position. The Australian gunners had some difficulty in finding battery positions which gave crest clearance; but two guns which came into action on a mountain ledge with good observation over the plain did considerable execution before being shelled to destruction in their precarious position."

April 22<sup>nd</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>

“Bombardment and counter-bombardment continued all through the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Germans shelling our positions as a preliminary to launching their assault, the Australians and New Zealanders firing with the determination to expend as much ammunition as possible upon their targets before the order came to go.”

April 24<sup>th</sup>

“In the morning Australian observers on the forward crests near the Brallos road had seen the Germans cross the Sperkhios in the plain below and concentrate for their attack eastward against the New Zealand position. On the Australian left, men of the advanced companies of the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Battalion watched German mountain troops scaling the hillsides out of range. At intervals throughout the morning the battery positions were under attack by dive-bombers but the 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Field Regiment, which had moved most of its guns to rear positions before dawn, suffered little loss.

. . . Later . . .

Rather unexpectedly the Australians, who had been watching the southward road to Ano Kalivia, were able to board their trucks and withdraw without interference. The tail of the column moved off about 10.15 p.m. First ordered to destroy their guns, the 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Field Regiment was told, later, to bring them away, and did so, with the scanty supply of ammunition that remained. Driving through the night, mostly with headlights on, Vasey's troops passed through Mandhra and at about 8 a.m. on April 25<sup>th</sup> – Anzac Day – arrived at Megara.”

#### **The story continues from “The London Gazette”:**

“On this night (25th/26th April), 5,700 troops were embarked from the Megara area (P beach) in spite of the losses of the transport S.S.PENNLAND on the way north, and of one of the two L.C.T. which had arrived in this area. Seven caiques under the command of Commander Michell assisted. It is believed that about 500, many of them wounded, were left on shore after waiting four days near the beach. This was due to the facts that they were to be embarked last, and that the L.C.T. fouled her propeller with a wire on her last trip (the other engine already being out of action). It is not yet known whether the wounded were taken off from another beach, and to what extent the caiques were able to assist.”

**Archivist's Note:** Obviously Arthur Evans was not one of the fortunate 5,700 troops embarked that night. He and some of his colleagues in 5<sup>th</sup> Recovery Section (as some were captured with Arthur) must have crossed the Corinth Canal on the 25<sup>th</sup> (or in the very early hours of the 26<sup>th</sup>) to be able to proceed on to the Tolos area, as the Canal Bridges were damaged and in the hands of German paratroops by mid-morning of the 26<sup>th</sup>.