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# Lions and Dragons in the Jungle

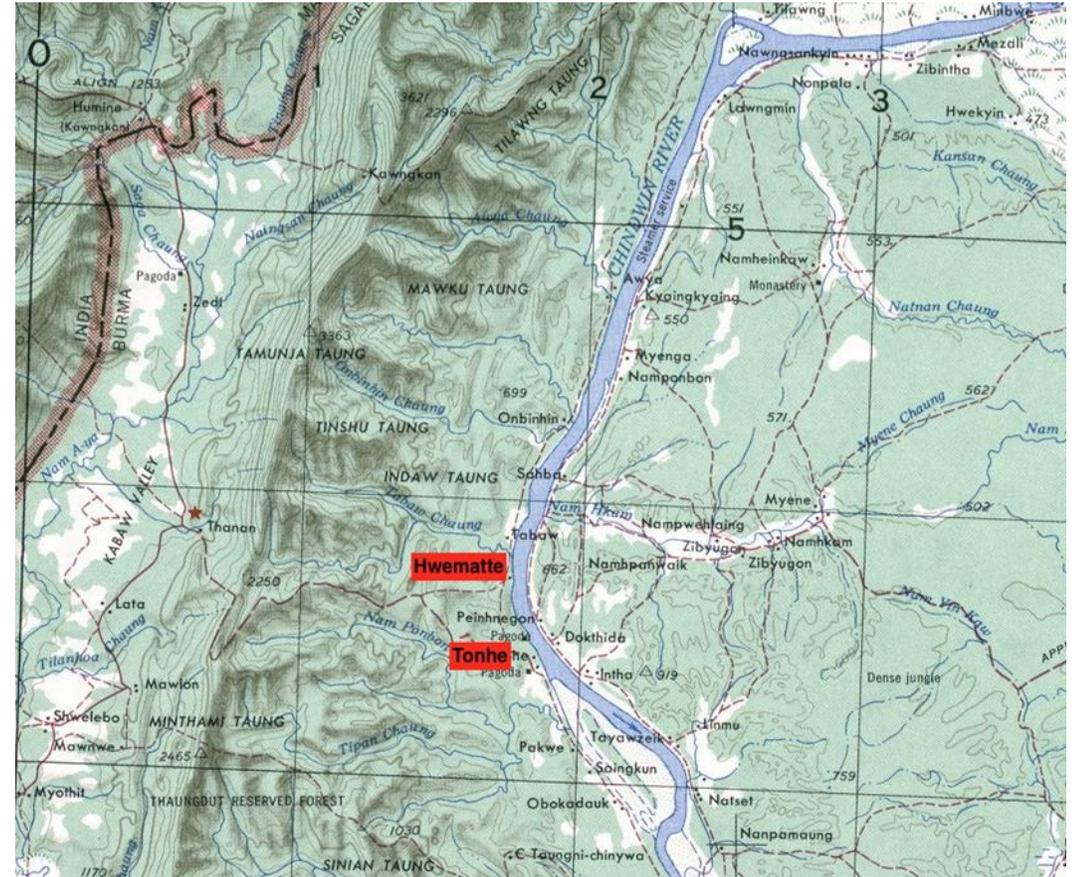
A short synopsis on the Chindit Campaigns of 1943 and 1945  
in the context of human factors

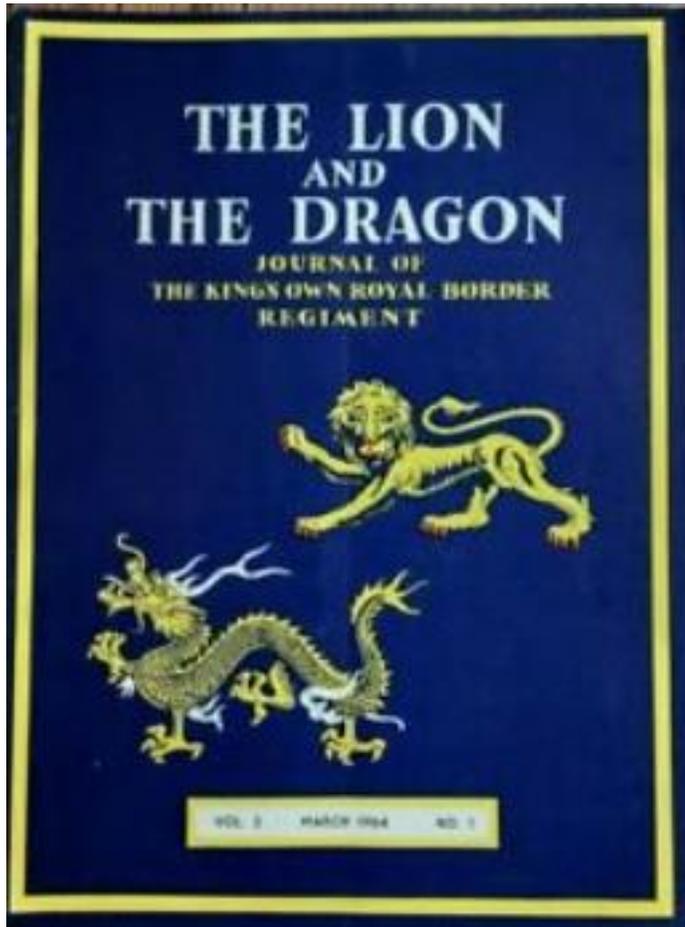


<https://thechinditsociety.org.uk/>

# Inspiration

- Quartered Safe Out Here – George Macdonald Fraser
- The War in Burma – James Holland
- **Lions in the Jungle – Martin Sambrook**
- **War in the Wilderness - Tony Redding**
- Road of Bones – Feargal Keane
- The Burma Campaign – Frank McLynn
- **Chindit Society Web Site**
- **Brig Tim Finnegan RAMC - Staff College Presentation (1985)**





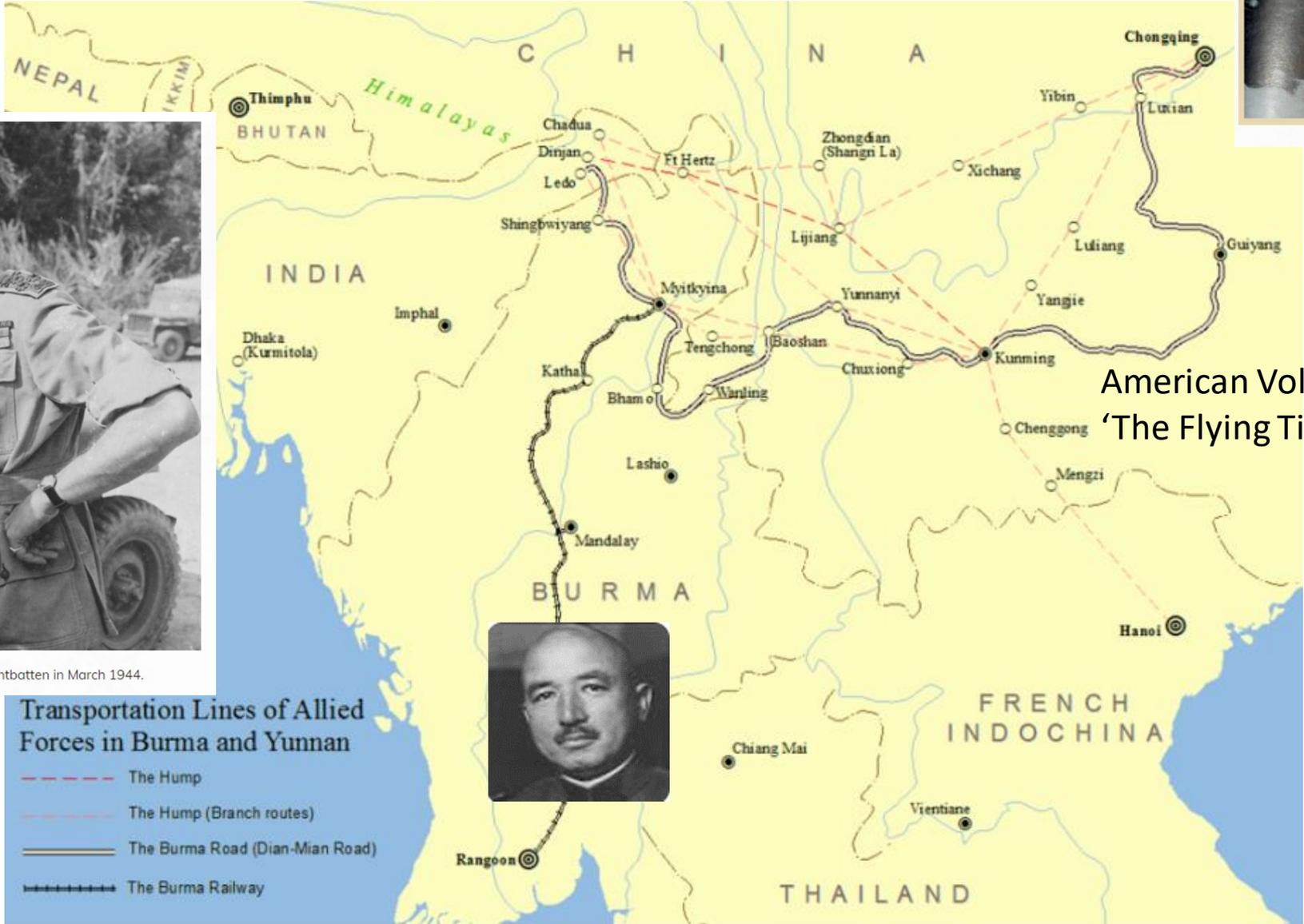
Were the Chindits an expedient but important bargaining chip within the global strategic context of Grand Alliance politics as expressed in the China-Burma-India Theatre?

Sambrook M (2019), *'Lions in the Jungle: Wingate and the Chindits' Contribution to the Burma Victory'*. Chindwin Publishing, Amazon. Primary Research Question for his thesis.

# The Strategy



American General Joseph Stilwell with Admiral Louis Mountbatten in March 1944.



Chinese officers discuss operations in northern Burma.



American Volunteer Group: 'The Flying Tigers'

# The Operations



Operation LONGCLOTH  
14 Feb to May/Jun 43

Tunisia and Stalingrad



Operation THURSDAY  
5 Feb to 27 Aug 44

Normandy Invasion

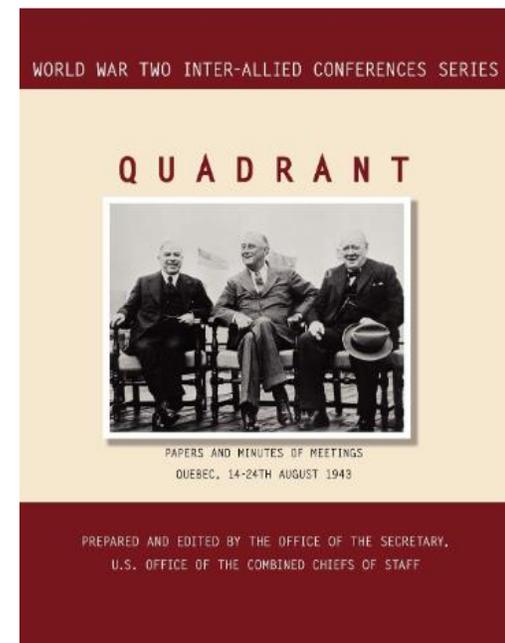
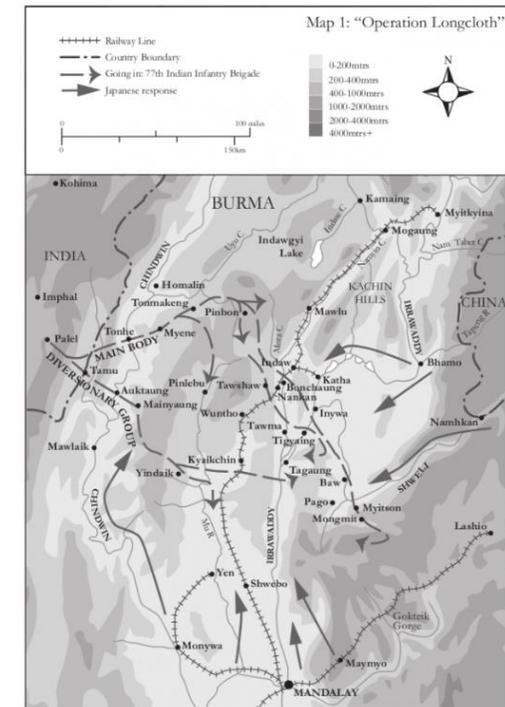


General Wingate and Colonel Philip Cochran USAAF. "The men that made it happen."

Sicily (lessons)

# Birth of The Concept

- Long Range Penetration – jungle fighting/manoeuvre
- Wingate’s professional military education
  - RMA Woolwich
  - Hagannah –Special Night Squads – Palestine
  - Abyssinia – Gideon Force: Sudan Defence Force – India – 1942
    - Longcloth: 77<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Brigade – 3 000 tps proof of principle – 8 Feb to 17 Apr 43
- Quebec Conference
  - Thursday: Special Force - 3<sup>rd</sup> Indian Division



# The Learning

- Retreat from Malaya – Japanese use of jungle as manoeuvre corridors – Wavell and Wingate ME and Abyssinia experience
- Fighting the Japanese on their own terms
- Crossing the Chindwin/Longcloth – mission rehearsal
- Arakan: The Admin Box (6 – 25 Feb 44) and 50 Ind Para Div Box (Mar 44)
- The W Desert and N Africa – logistics – Ground Air Support
- Sicily – airlanding versus airborne assault – raiding by sea best!
- Combined Joint Operations – training together  
Merrill's Marauders/1<sup>st</sup> Air Cdo
- White City – the Tobruk of Burma! Firm Base/air resupply

Field Marshal  
The Right Honourable  
**The Earl Wavell**  
GCB GCSI GCIE CMG MC KStJ PC

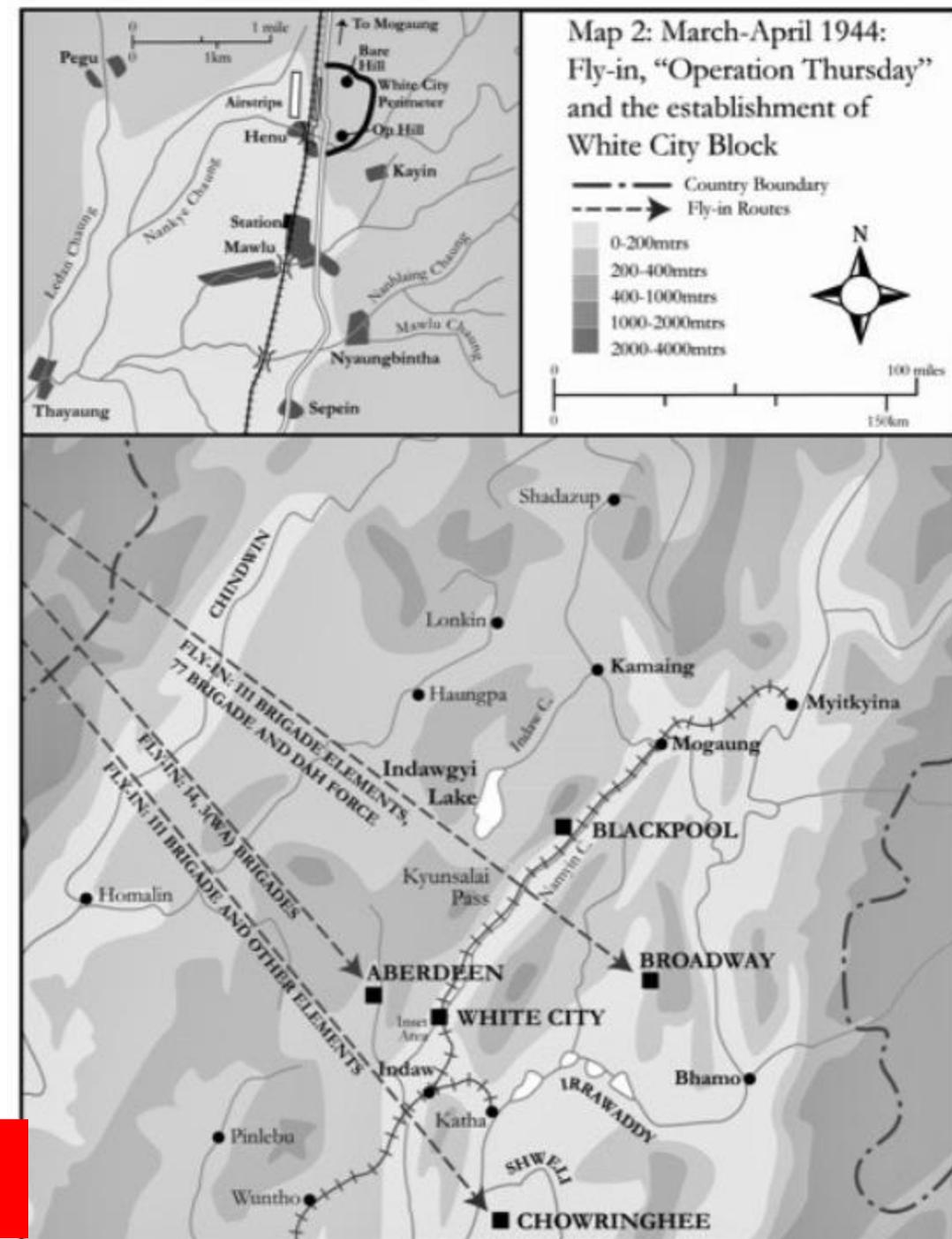


# The Application



- Blocks
- Bastions/Strongholds
- Manoeuvre as an **attitude** (Sun Tzu)
- Wireless and information manoeuvre – an **attitude** (links to 'modern Chindits' cyber and grey zone etc)
- Air insertion and resupply – air cdo another **attitude**
- Merrill's Marauders – co-trained with Chindits to cover Stillwell's N Combat Area Comd
- Helicopters and STOL ie L5s for CASEVAC etc

Do the moral and cognitive components of fighting power outweigh the physical?



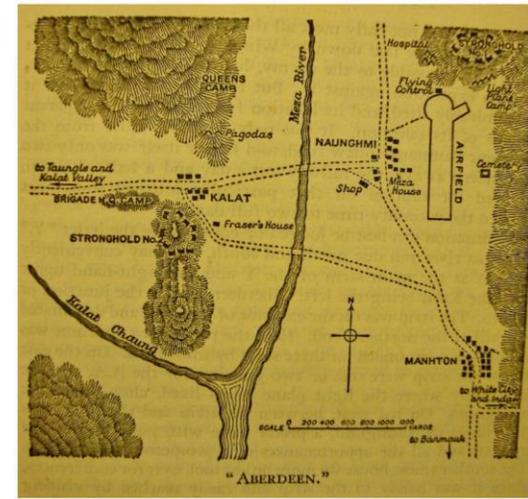
# Special Force ORBAT

- 3 (West African) Bde (Thunder) (Gillmore/Ricketts) all Nigerian Regts – Chindit Bks, Zaria
- 14 Inf Bde (Javelin) (Brodie) **2 York and Lancs, 65 and 84 Col**
- 16 (Enterprise) (Fergusson)
- 77 Bde (Emphasis) (Calvert) – **Kings Regt, 81 and 82 Col and Lancs Fus, 20 and 50 Col**
- 111 Indian Infantry Bde (Profound) (Lentaigne) – **2 KORR, 41 and 46 Col**
- 23 (Naga Hills) (Perowne) – **4 Border Regt, 34 and 55 Col**
- Merrill's Marauders (US) INSP Chinese Nationalists (Galahad)
- Morris Force (3 columns of Ghurkhas)
- Dah Force (Kachin Levies)
- BLADET (Airlanding Dems Spec)
- No 1 Air Cdo



# The Result

- ‘Get into the guts of the Jap’
- Proved that the Allies could defeat them
- Multi National Coalition worked unlike in USSR well below Div Level
- Controversy over value proposition – outcome and impact
- 23 Bde screening the Naga Hills – Ursula Graham Bower: anthropologist community engagement 1937-46 ‘Bower Force’ (42 to 45)
- Sum of its parts – V Force, Force 136 (SOE), Z Force (intel) etc
- Japanese, Koreans and INA – Aung et al
- Imphal and Kohima – D Day – Advance to Meitkila/Rangoon – Mutaguchi 15<sup>th</sup> Army retreat and the ‘Road of Bones’

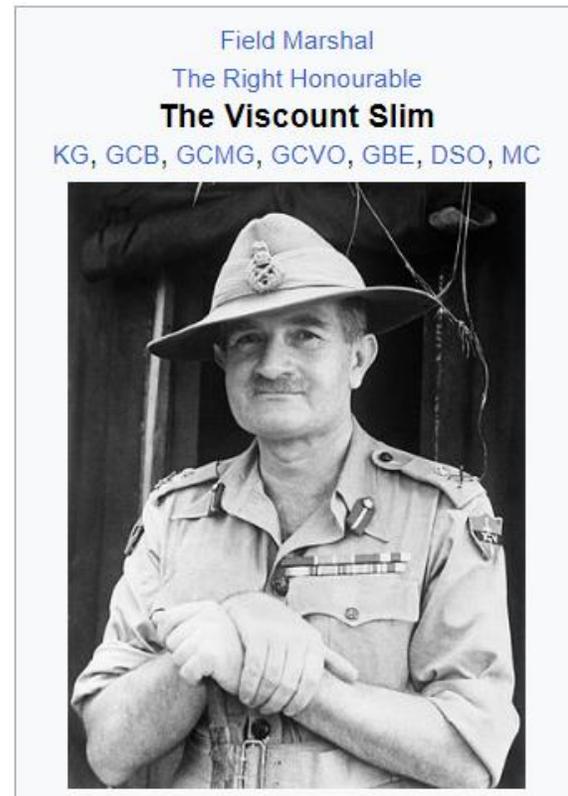


Aberdeen stronghold sketch map.



# The Result (2)

- Chindits disrupted 3 Japanese Divisions
- Arguably took some weight off Imphal and Kohima
- Dispelled the myth that the Japanese were ‘Supermen’
- White City – the perfect operation
- Mogaung – the bloodiest battle – Albert Cairns VC on Pagoda Hill
- Blackpool Block – a disaster – Jack Redding fighting in ‘The Deep’
- **Public Health/Force Health Protection as a force multiplier (or not?):**  
**Slim ‘Defeat into Victory’**



# The Result (3)

- Casualty Figures – Longcloth
  - 3000 set out
  - 2182 returned – many admits to hospital and unable to redeploy
    - @ 400 battle cas (13%)
    - @ 400 captured (13%) – Rangoon Jail
    - @ 100 remained (Burma Rifles allowed to remain at home with families)
- Casualty Figures – Thursday
  - 18 000 set out
  - 944 died (5%) mortality rate 77/1000 in 4 months
  - 452 missing (2.5%)
  - 2434 wounded (13.5 %)
  - 7217 admitted to hospital (41%)

Taken from Brigadier Tim Finnegan RAMC draft notes for a Staff College syndicate presentation 1985

# Human Factors (1)



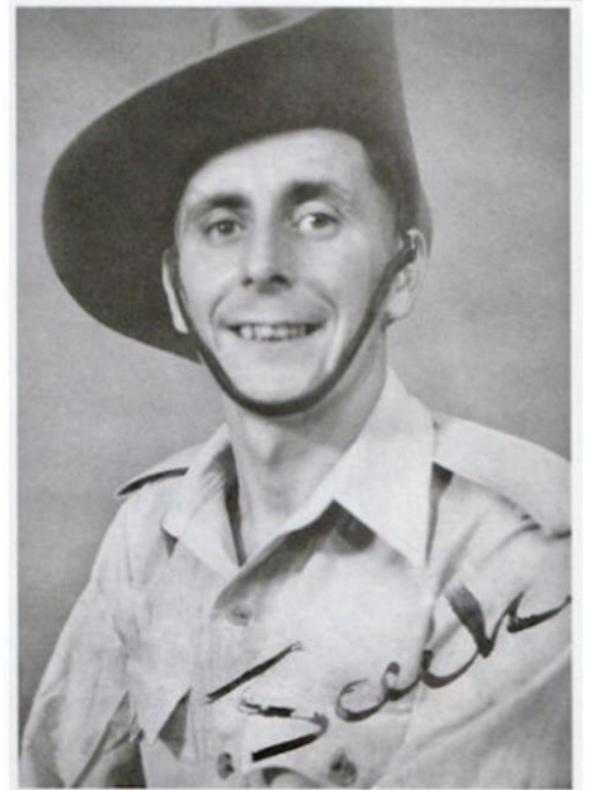
West African Chindits receive an air supply drop.



Wingate – trained endurance – to serve for 90 days in the jungle

# Human factors (2)

- Ops were too long – Longcloth showed 2 mths is optimal
  - Thursday far exceeded this without compensating change
- Many tps were too young/too old. Advice was:
  - Min age 20 yrs
  - Max all ranks to Capts 30,
  - Majs and above 35 (Wingate was 41 when he died)
- Nutrition inadequate
  - Everyone carried 60-70lb loads when dry!
  - Over harsh terrain
  - Distances up to 1500 miles
  - Weight losses 2-3 stones were normal
  - 2000 cal/day instead of 4000 due to resupply problems

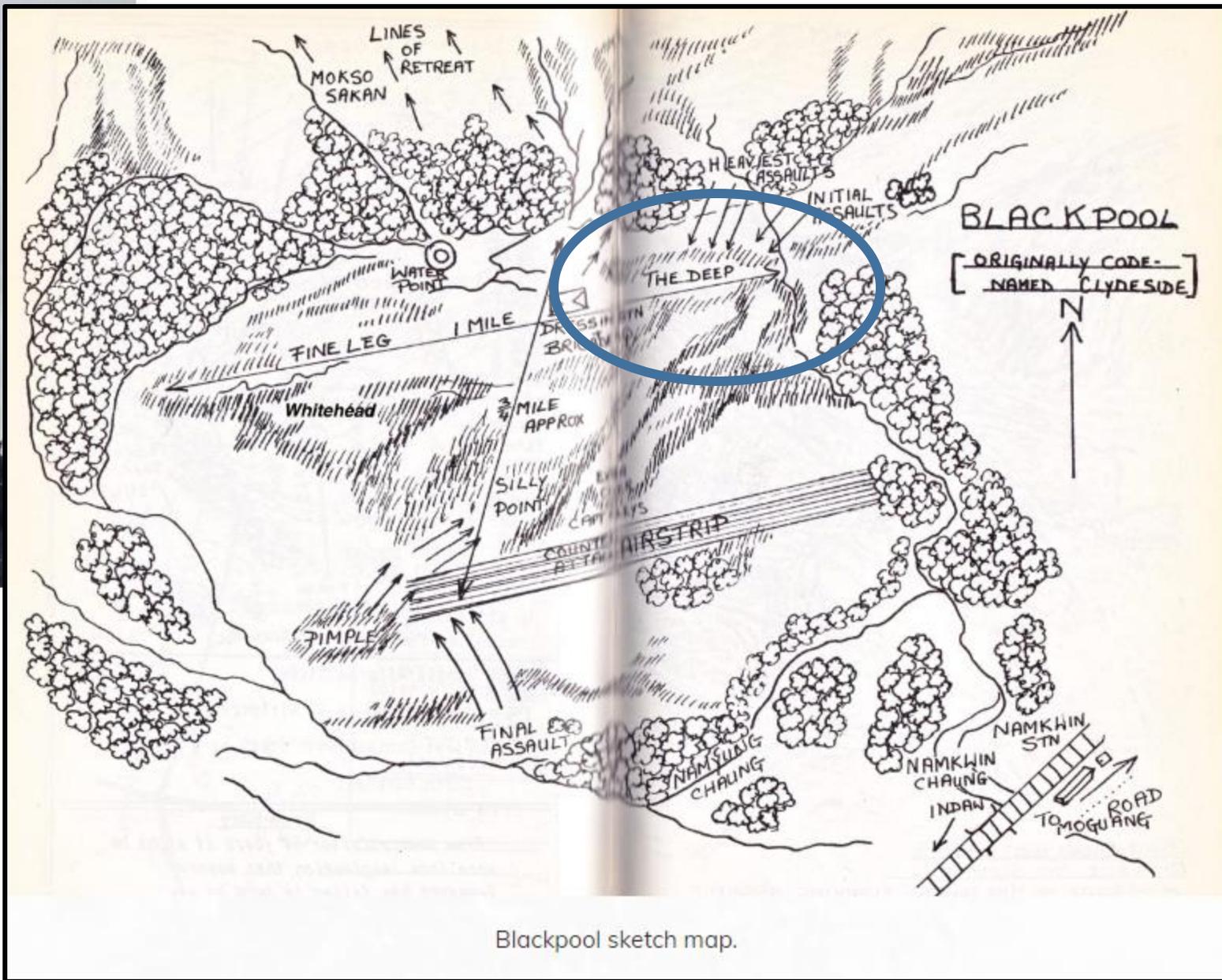


Pte Jack Redding.

2 KORR  
Fighting in 'The Deep'  
at Blackpool Block  
**"I was there!"**



Supply drop image.



Blackpool sketch map.

# Human factors (3)

- Chindit attitude to CASEVAC dominated by the tactical situation
  - Decision to CASEVAC when it was clear there would be no improvement
  - Incentive to carry on because there was no alternative:
    - 111 Bde after 3 months on Thursday had 118 men fit for role out of 2200
  - Less captivity or be shot!
- Wingate's attitude to health
  - "If a man is sufficiently tough he can avoid sickness even in the jungle"
  - "men also have to become used to diagnosing their own complaints and as far as possible curing themselves"
  - True but malaria and typhus overwhelm physical and psychological resistance
  - RMOs were restricted from attending the sick and injured in training
  - RMOs were not used to appreciate disease/avoid preventable disease and to teach self care that Wingate was advocating
- SMO not allowed to contact Bde HQ
  - CASEVAC unplanned/left to the last minute



US Library of Congress Photo: Stinson L5 5 'Flying Jeep'



Conversation with Tony Redding (10 Apr 23) and notes from Redding T (2011),  
*'War in the Wilderness: The Chindits in Burma 1943 – 1944'*, Spellmount Press, Gloucestershire

# The Legacy (1)

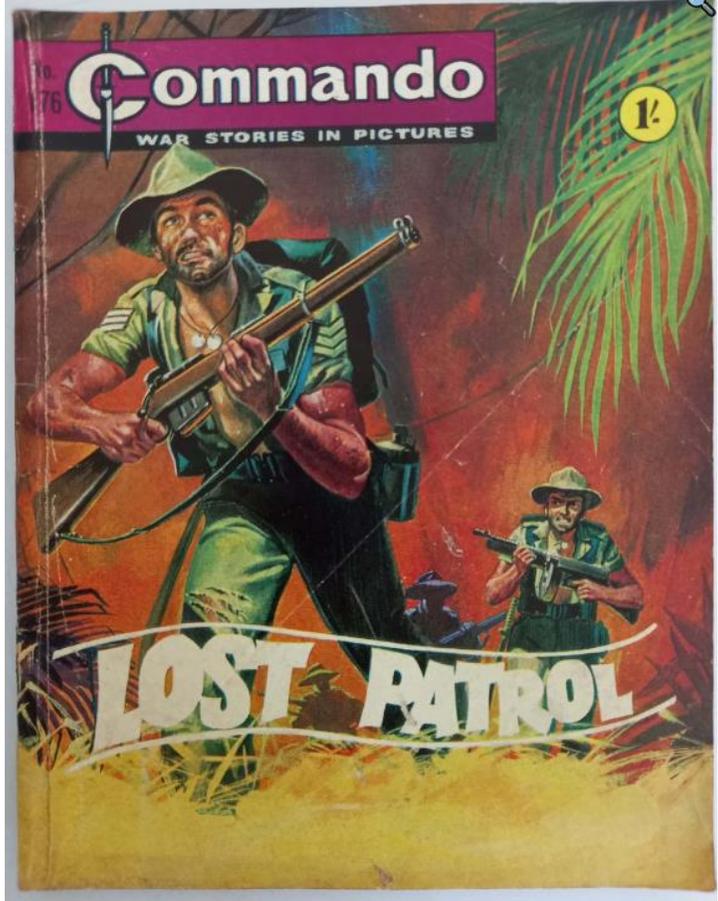
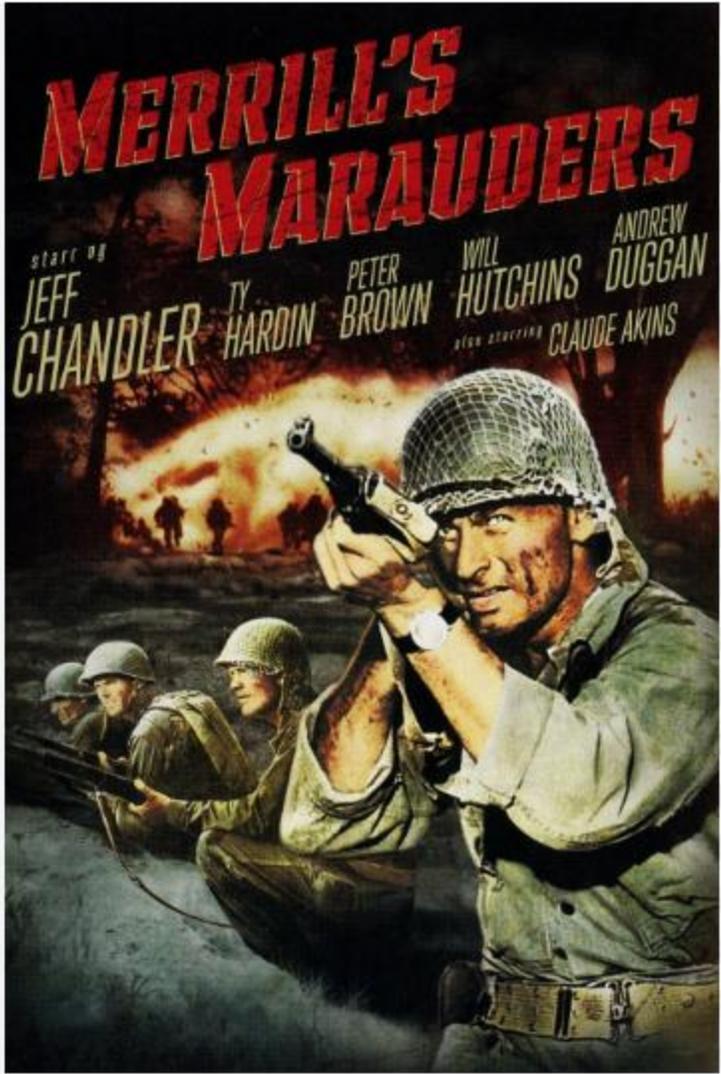
- Wingate's Death – Lentaigne takes over - Arlington Cemetery
- Calvert's 'Crimes' – dishonour or amplification?
- Slim and the Historians v Wingate
- Chindits v FEPOWs and other fmns' attitude to the Japanese
- PTSD – strange presentations not @ Burma but difficult situations
- Resilience of 80-100 year olds!



Brigadier Calvert in 1944.



# The Legacy (2)



# Last Word - Calvert

“We were a well balanced fighting force, 20 000 or more men, all potential Jap killers and no hangers on, going to the hub of the situation in order that we might cut some of the spokes. Then with pressure on the rim, the whole structure might break down. Thus Special Force in itself was onler part of a grander design”.

Calvert M (1952), *'Prisoners of Hope'*, p16. Cape Press, London (Reprinted 1971)

# The Chindit Society

Chindit Society Chairman, Paul Shenton JP,  
on [info@thechinditsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@thechinditsociety.org.uk).

- Chindits – veterans <https://www.chindits.info/index.html>
- Burma Star Association <https://www.burmastar.org.uk/>
- **77<sup>th</sup> Brigade**
- **USAF 352d Special Operations Wing, Mildenhall – Air Cdo**
- Memorial in the NMA
- Memorial on the Embankment
- Lancaster Museum Chindit Display  
<http://www.kingsownmuseum.com/burma.htm>
- IWM – Special Forces Section  
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205194381>
- **Chindit Company Lancs**  
<https://www.lancsregiment.co.uk/heritage/history/>

