

Bates, David ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5440-6039> (2025) Lions and dragons in the jungle: a short synopsis on the Chindit campaigns of 1943 and 1945 in the context of human factors. In: Lancaster Military History Group VJ Day Commemorative Talk, 25 September 2025, Lancaster, UK. (Unpublished)

Downloaded from: <https://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/9186/>

University of Cumbria will soon be migrating from Insight (the current EPrints repository) to Pure research information system. Existing research outputs currently in Insight will be migrated to Pure. For now, no action is required from researchers. Training and support will be available to help in the transition to the new platform.

Usage of any items from the University of Cumbria's institutional repository 'Insight' must conform to the following fair usage guidelines.

Any item and its associated metadata held in the University of Cumbria's institutional repository Insight (unless stated otherwise on the metadata record) may be copied, displayed or performed, and stored in line with the JISC fair dealing guidelines (available [here](#)) for educational and not-for-profit activities

provided that

- the authors, title and full bibliographic details of the item are cited clearly when any part of the work is referred to verbally or in the written form
- a hyperlink/URL to the original Insight record of that item is included in any citations of the work
- the content is not changed in any way
- all files required for usage of the item are kept together with the main item file.

You may not

- sell any part of an item
- refer to any part of an item without citation
- amend any item or contextualise it in a way that will impugn the creator's reputation
- remove or alter the copyright statement on an item.

The full policy can be found [here](#).

Alternatively contact the University of Cumbria Repository Editor by emailing insight@cumbria.ac.uk.

Lions and Dragons in the Jungle

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



<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>



Lancaster Military Heritage Group
VJ Day Commemorative Talk
25th September 2025

Presented By
Colonel David Bates ARRC
Senior Lecturer at the University of Cumbria

david.bates@cumbria.ac.uk

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

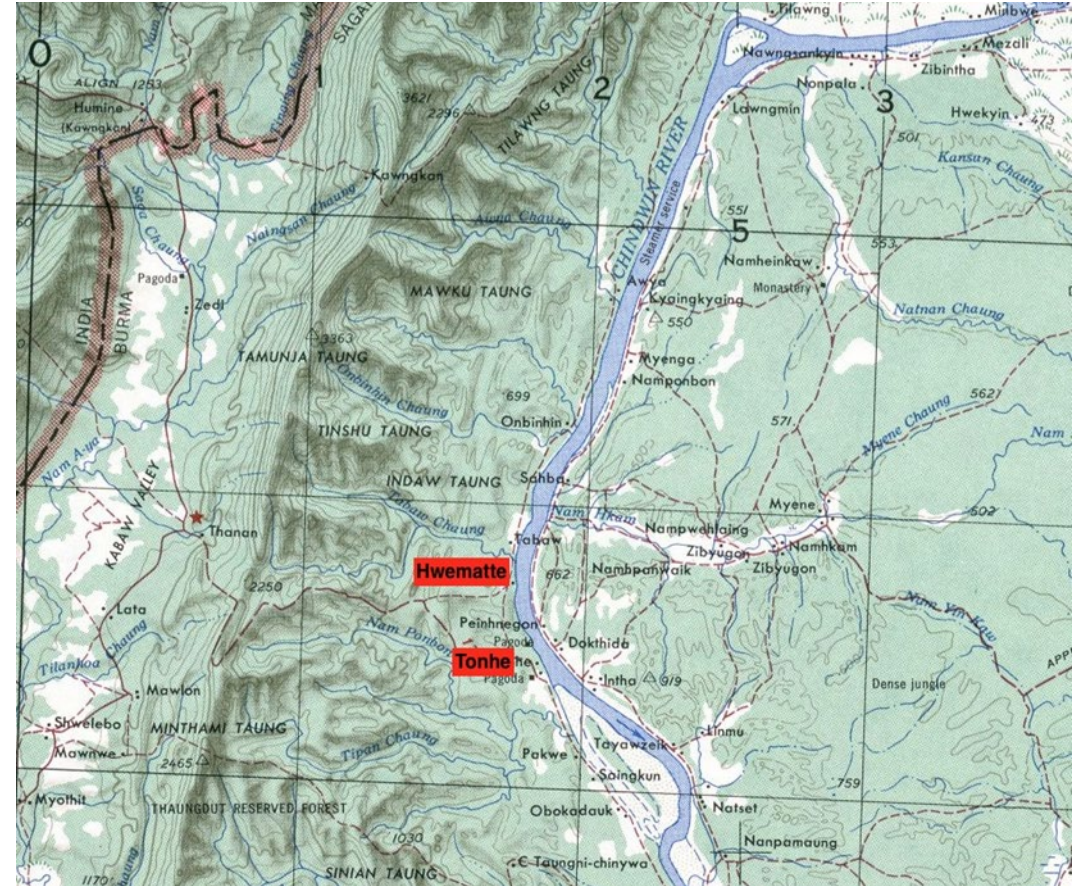


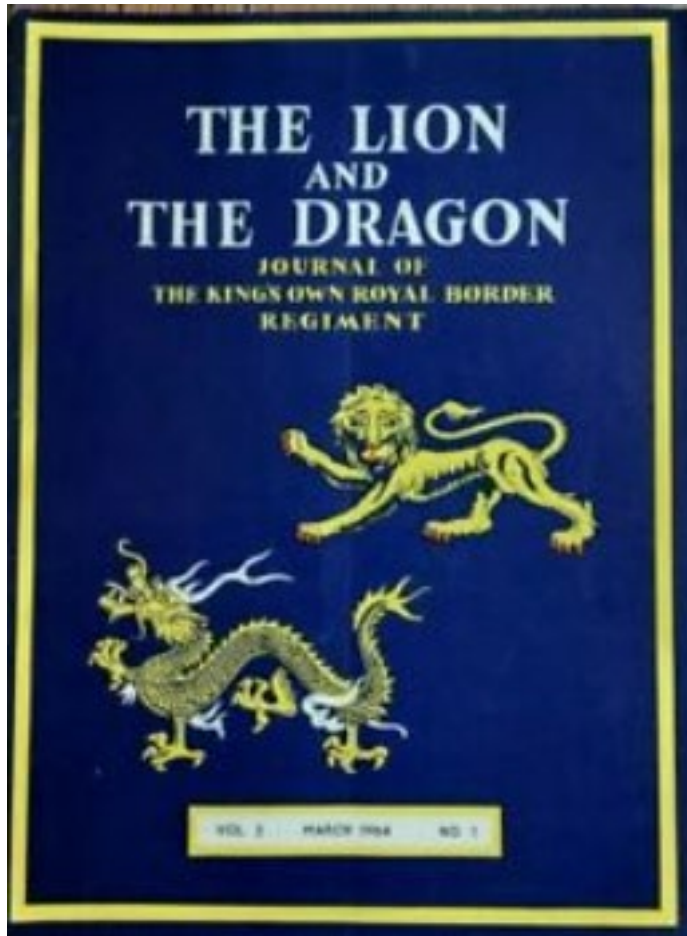
University of
Cumbria



Inspiration and Thank Yous

- 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
- 77th Brigade – 2016-21 Reserve Service
- **Chindit Society and Web Site**
- **KAR Association**
- **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

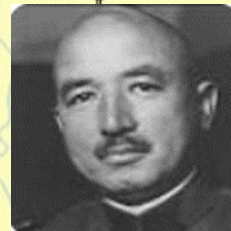


American General Joseph Stilwell with Admiral Louis Mountbatten in March 1944.



Transportation Lines of Allied Forces in Burma and Yunnan

- The Hump
- ... The Hump (Branch routes)
- The Burma Road (Dian-Mian Road)
- - - - The Burma Railway



Lieutenant-General
Renya Mutaguchi



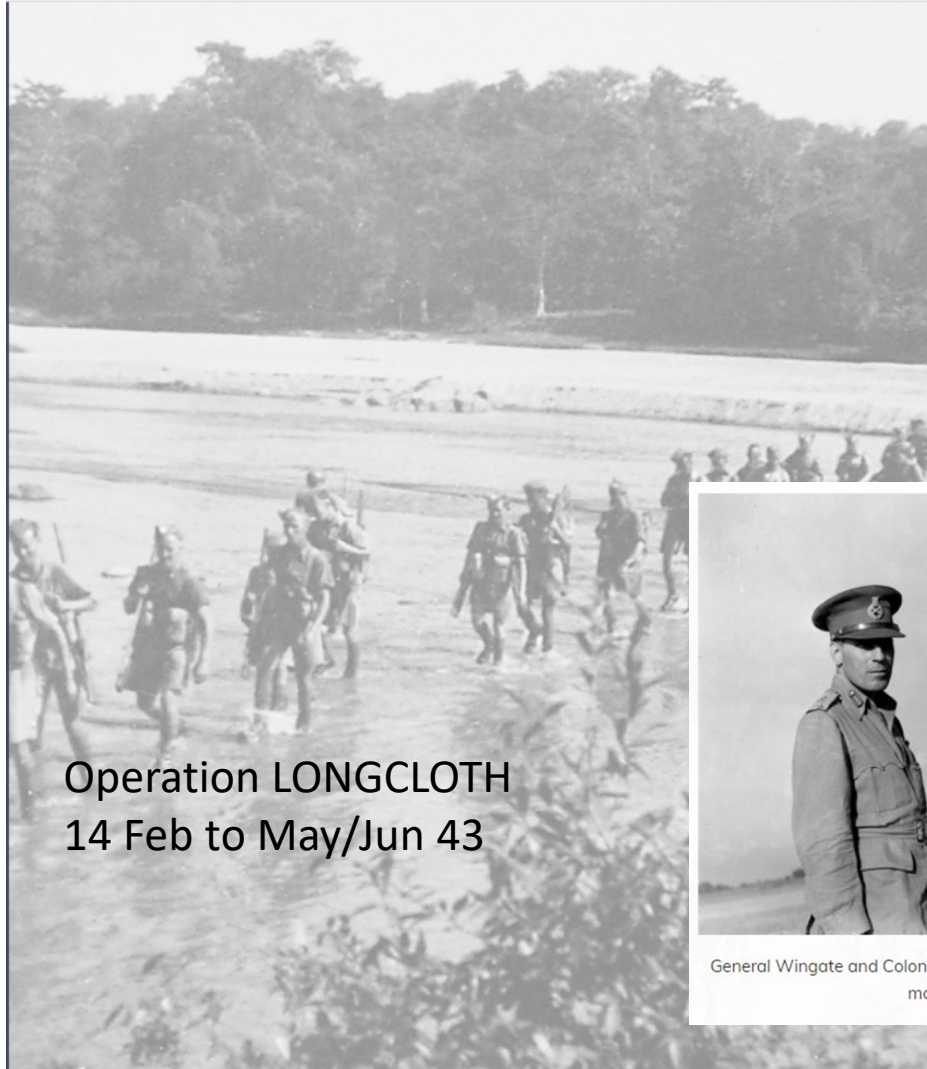
Chinese officers discuss operations in northern Burma.



American Volunteer Group:
'The Flying Tigers'



The Operations



Operation LONGCLOTH
14 Feb to May/Jun 43



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



Operation THURSDAY
5 Feb to 27 Aug 44

A GA-4A WACO Glider.

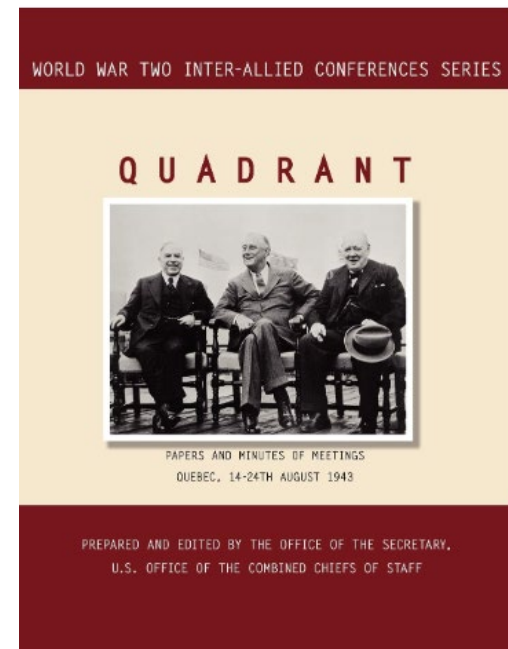
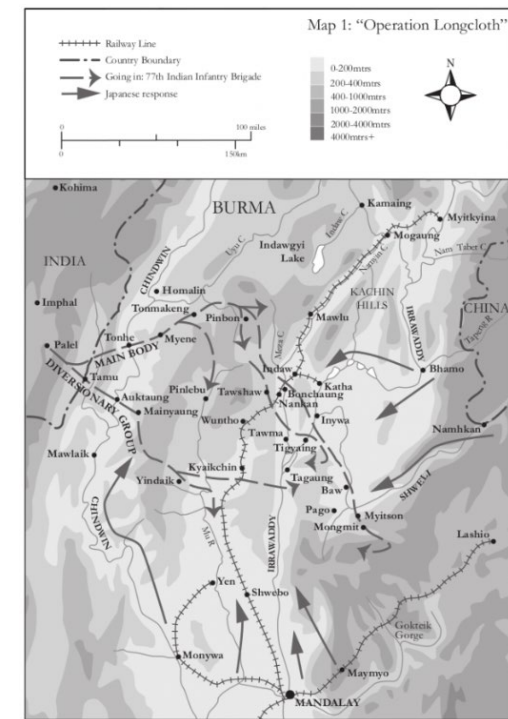
Other Theatres: Tunisia and Stalingrad Sicily (lessons)

Normandy Invasion

Saipan and Guam

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: 77th Indian Infantry Brigade – 3 000 tps proof of principle – 8 Feb to 17 Apr 43
- Quebec Conference
 - Thursday: Special Force - 3rd 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
- Arakan: The Admin Box (6 – 25 Feb 44) and 50 Ind Para Div Box (Mar 44)
- Crossing the Chindwin/Longcloth – mission rehearsal

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060036246>

- 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/1st Air Cdo
- White City – the Tobruk of Burma! Firm Base/air resupply

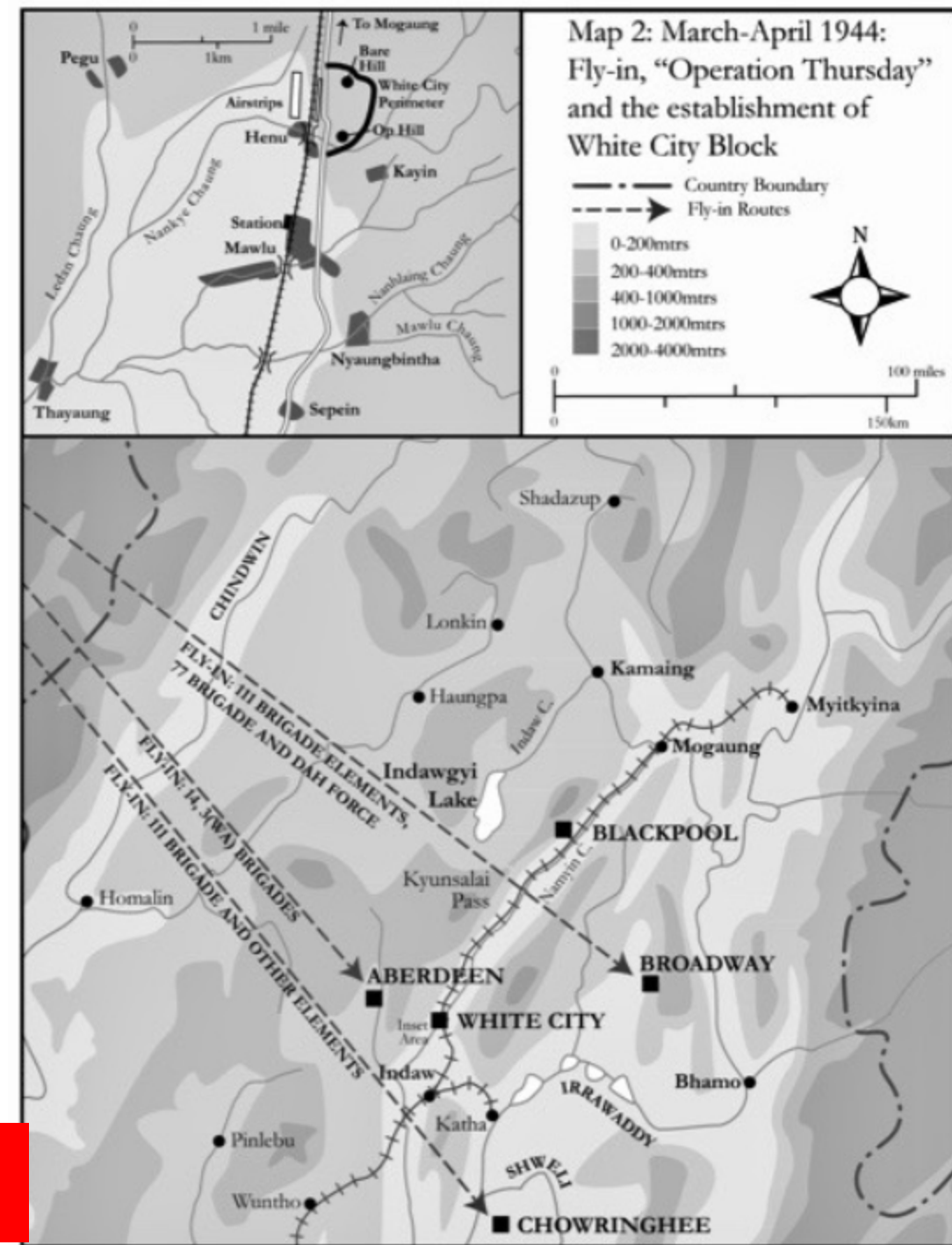


The Application



- 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?



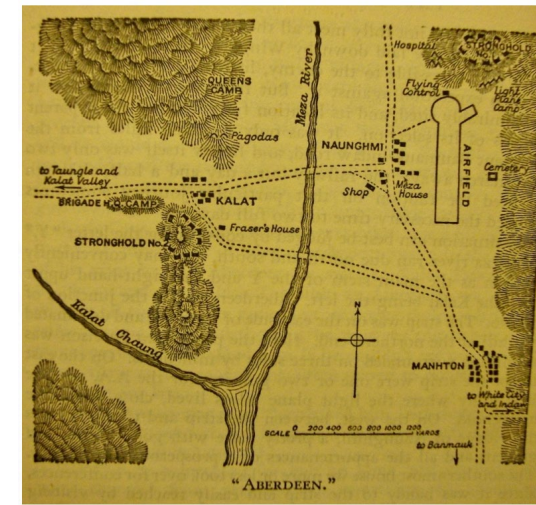
Special Force ORBAT

- 3 (West African) Bde (Thunder) (Gillmore/Ricketts) all Nigerian Regts – Chindit Bks, Zaria
- 14 Inf Bde (Javelin) (Brodie) - **2 York and Lancs, 65 and 61 Col**
- 16 (Enterprise) (Fergusson) – **2 BW, 1 Beds and Herts**
- 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 (sic)’
- 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 15th Army retreat and the ‘Road of Bones’



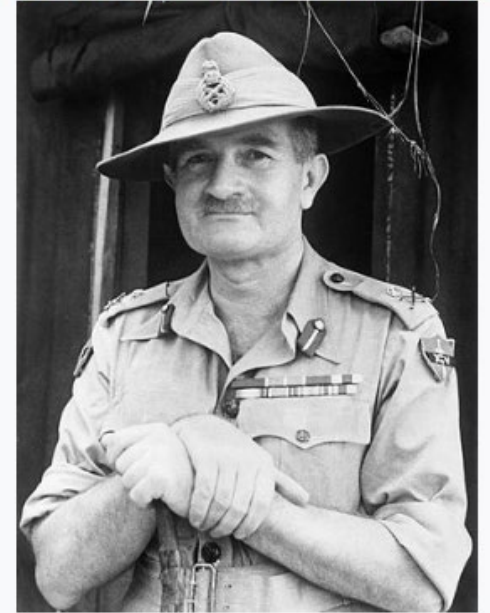
Aberdeen stronghold sketch map.



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'**

Field Marshal
The Right Honourable
The Viscount Slim
KG, GCB, GCMG, GCVO, GBE, DSO, MC



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

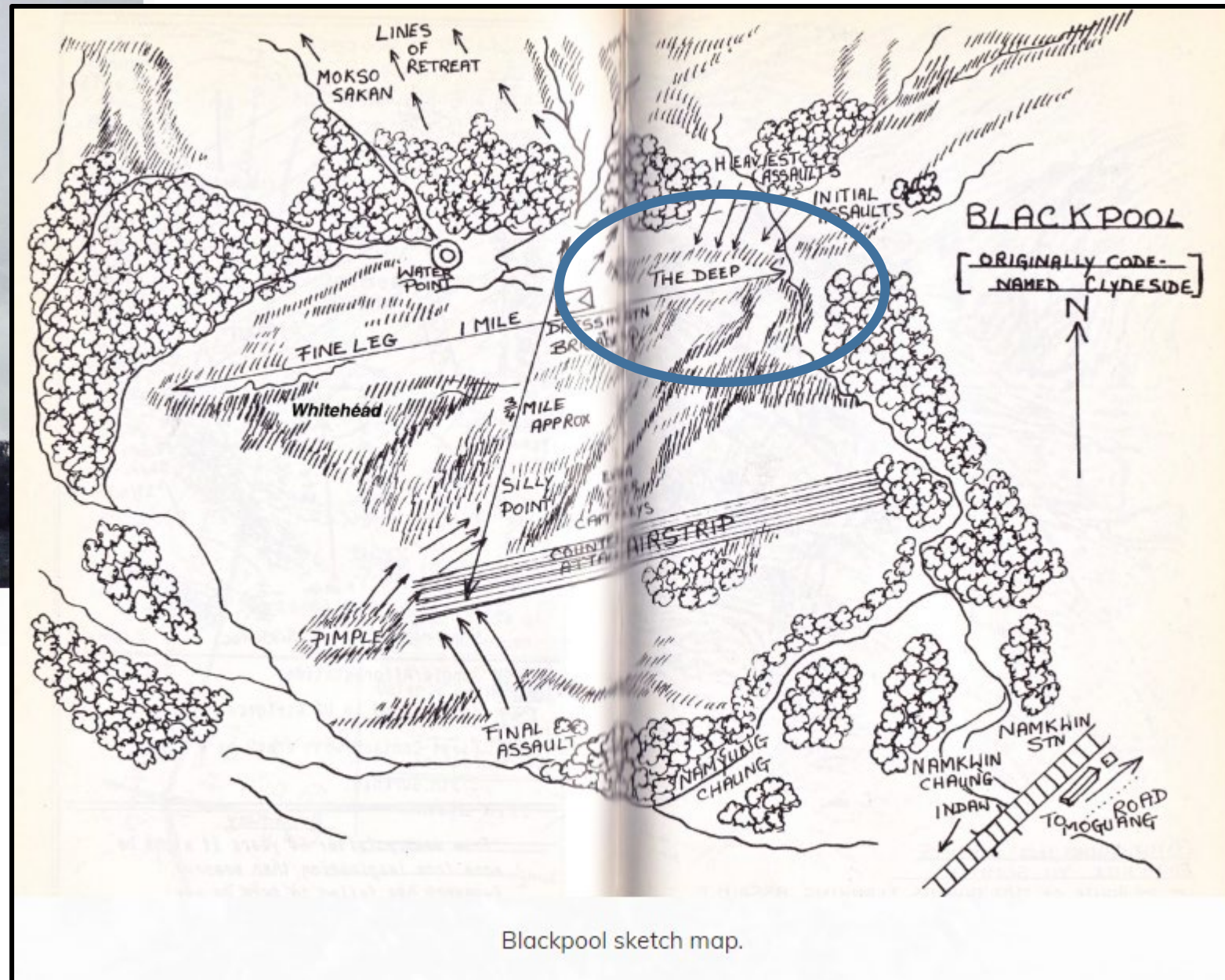


Pte Jack Redding.

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

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060028811>



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



A Sikorsky YR-4 type helicopter.

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)

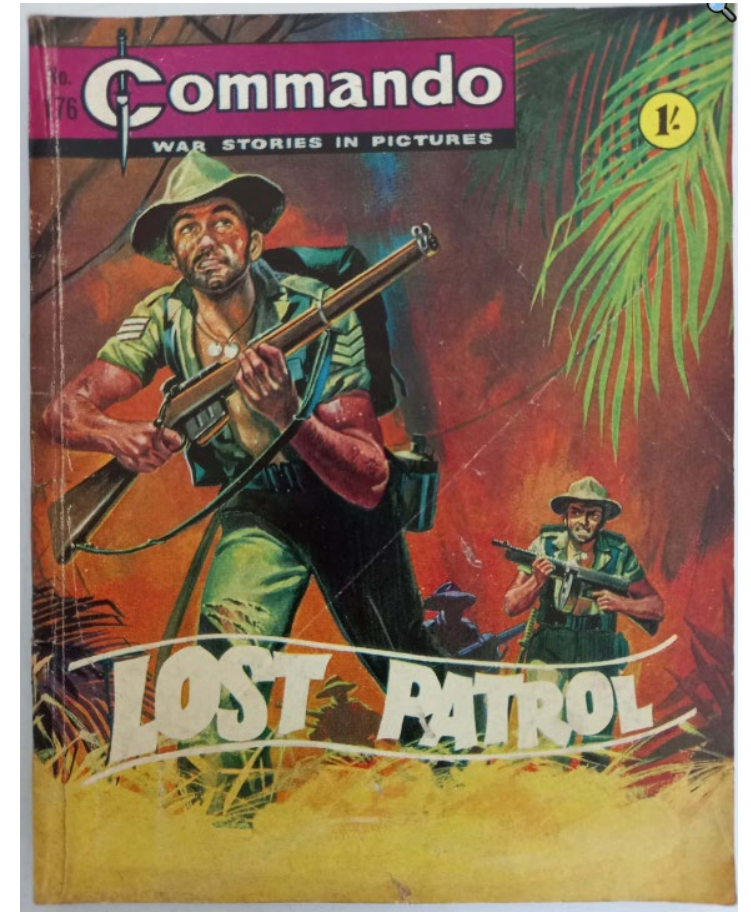
- Wingate's Death – Lentaigue takes over - Arlington Cemetery
- Calvert's 'Crimes' – dishonour or amplification?
- Slim and the Historians v Wingate
- Chindits v FEPOWs and other fmns' attitude to the Japanese
- PTSD – strange presentations not @ Burma but difficult situations
- Resilience of 80-100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



Brigadier Calvert in 1944.



The Legacy (2)



The Legacy (3)

Courtesy of the City of London Corporation
(8th August 2025 (photograph): 101-year-old former Chindit, Sid Machin receives the Freedom of the City of London



The King meets Chindit veteran, Charlie Richards after the main VJ80 commemorations at the National Memorial Arboretum. Paul Shenton commences the Chindit Society Act of Remembrance at the Chindit Memorial on the 15th August.



RAF Mildenhall 352nd Spec Ops Wg USAF
CO's Dining Out August 2023



Recognition by the Scottish Parliament for Matron Agnes McGearey

Last Word - Calvert

“We were a well - balanced fighting force, 20 000 or more men, all potential Jap (sic) 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 one part of a grander design”.

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

Question during 2016 Battlefield Tour:

What do you need to form a successful 77 Bde?

Answer presented by one of the participants

Calvert!



“

'When You Go Home, Tell Them of Us and Say, For Your Tomorrow, We Gave Our Today.'

'KOHIMA EPITAPH', JOHN MAXWELL EDMONDS - 1944

Acknowledgements

- **The Chindit Society** Chindit Society Chairman, Paul Shenton JP, on info@thechinditsociety.org.uk.
- Chindits – veterans <https://www.chindits.info/index.html>
- Burma Star Association <https://www.burmastar.org.uk/>
- **77th 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 and Burma Companies LANCS**
<https://www.lancsregiment.co.uk/heritage/history/>

