

SYDNEY MARCH BY SEVENTH

Veterans of Two Campaigns

Men of the Seventh Division, veterans of successful campaigns in the Middle East and New Guinea, are now home on leave, and those of them who enlisted in New South Wales will march through Sydney's streets on Friday week.

Only a few weeks ago the men were fighting in the Finisterre Ranges in New Guinea, where they established a reputation as unsurpassed jungle fighters.

The march will be commanded by Brigadier K. W. Eather, and Major-General G. A. Vasey, G.O.C. of the division, will be present at the saluting base at the Town Hall, where the Governor, Lord Wakehurst, will take the salute.

The men will leave Chalmers Street at about 10.20 a.m. and march along Elizabeth Street, Martin Place, George Street, Campbell Street, and Pitt Street to Central Station. The head of the column will reach the saluting base at 11 a.m.

Members of the division who are still on leave are required to report to the leave and transit camp, Addison Road, Marrickville, by next Monday, using their return rail warrants to reach Sydney. They will not lose any leave by taking part in the march, and will be issued with new leave passes and rail warrants after the march. No one will be permitted to join the march at the assembly point or during the march.

MIDDLE EAST SERVICE

The Seventh Division was formed in 1940, and includes men from all parts of Australia. The first commander was Major-General (now Lieutenant-General) Sir John Lavarack. The division sailed for the Middle East in October, 1940. After completing its training in Palestine, the division was to have sailed for Greece, but Rommel swept through the desert towards Egypt, and the division was moved to Mersa Matruh.

Under Major-General Allen, the Seventh Division returned to Syria, and while a portion moved north

and while a portion moved north along the coast, the remainder moved north along the inland route. Bitter fighting over appalling country followed, but in five weeks the campaign was completed with the fall of Damour and the capitulation of the Vichy French forces.

Japan entered the war in December, 1941, and Australia was threatened. The Seventh Division was ordered home, and after a brief seven days' leave, the troops went through concentrated training in Australia's rain jungles for a new type of warfare.

The Japanese were pushing towards Port Moresby when the Seventh Division reached New Guinea, but not much later the enemy was driven back over the Owen Stanleys, and crushingly defeated at Gona and Sanananda. In those campaigns the division added further lustre to its fighting record.

With the immediate threat to Moresby gone and our own bases growing rapidly at Milne Bay and Buna, the Seventh came home again for leave, re-organisation, and re-equipping, followed by further training in the light of jungle battle experience. Major-General G. A. Vasey assumed command during the Papuan campaign, and has since been the divisional leader.

NEW CONDITIONS

By the middle of last year the Seventh had returned to New Guinea to find that conditions had altered. The Allies had air superiority. Gone were the days, remembered so vividly by the veterans, when men trudged, clambered and fought across the almost impassable ridges and valleys of the Owen Stanleys. Now the division was to be flown into battle and training for the next operation took place on one of Moresby's great airfields.

Experiments were carried out with field guns, stores, and equipment, the men loading and unloading them into a couple of unserviceable transports until a standardised system was perfected.

In September, just after the Ninth Division, operating as an amphibious force, had landed near Lae, American paratroops were dropped on the old emergency landing ground at Nadzab, west of Lae, in the Markham Valley. Volunteers from one of the Seventh's artillery regiments jumped too, and took with them dismantled 25-pounders.

The 2/2 Pioneers, who had previously served with the Seventh in Syria, joined the ground forces in a hard, fast tramp through the kuni. The old strip was rapidly cleared and troops were flown in.

On September 8 the infantry began the drive down the old road towards Lae, while the Ninth Division pounded at Lae from the west. On the morning of September 16 troops of the Seventh entered the wreckage of the Japanese base just an hour or two ahead of the Ninth Division.

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The Seventh then turned back up the Markham Valley. Kaiapit fell to the men of an independent company and transport planes swarmed in. The division drove on at a tremendous pace by ground and air up the Markham Valley and into the Ramu. The Japanese, outpaced and out-manoeuvered, were forced back until the Seventh reached the Finisterres. Battles of King Hill, Uria River, Faria River, Guy's Post, Beveridge Post, and Shaggy Ridge followed, until the Japanese were driven over the ranges and their base at Bogadim on the coast endangered.

Men of the Seventh have established a proud fighting record, and Sydney will see these troops on parade on Friday week for the first time since the formation of the division.
