

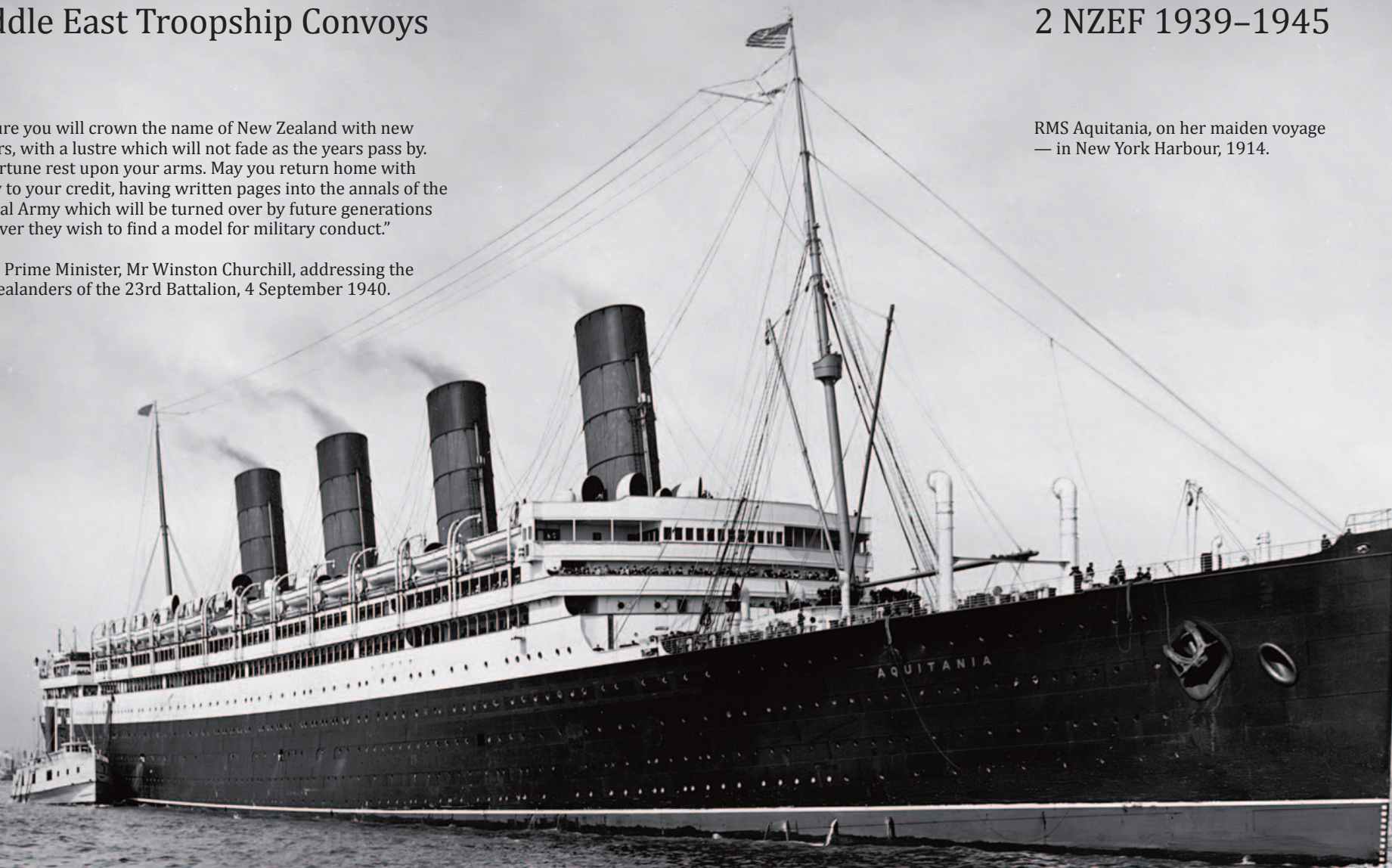
Middle East Troopship Convoys

2 NZEF 1939–1945

"I am sure you will crown the name of New Zealand with new honours, with a lustre which will not fade as the years pass by. May fortune rest upon your arms. May you return home with victory to your credit, having written pages into the annals of the Imperial Army which will be turned over by future generations whenever they wish to find a model for military conduct."

British Prime Minister, Mr Winston Churchill, addressing the New Zealanders of the 23rd Battalion, 4 September 1940.

RMS Aquitania, on her maiden voyage
— in New York Harbour, 1914.



Introduction	Nominal Roll	Embarkation dates	Group	Departure date
This document is intended as a guide to the movements of troopships that sailed from New Zealand to the Middle East during the Second World War. It sets out the convoys by their date of departure from Wellington. Troopships generally followed the same route to the Middle East: from Wellington across the Tasman Sea to the east coast of Australia (or Sydney or Hobart or Bass Strait), Melbourne, Fremantle, Colombo (or Trincomalee or Bombay [Mumbai]), across the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Suez to Port Tewfik (Tefiq) Suez—with the notable exception of the Second Echelon, which, with Italy on the brink of entering the war on the German side, sailed from Fremantle across the Indian Ocean to Capetown, to Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Gourock, Scotland. During the Second World War, the New Zealand government, the news media, and New Zealanders themselves maintained a high degree of secrecy around the nature and timing of troop movements to and from the Front, presenting some difficulties for modern day historians. Although some of the troopship voyages are described in the various Battalion histories published after the war by the Historical Publications Branch, Wellington, not all of the voyages are documented or presented in any great detail. Fortunately the British Board of Trade maintained a record of the movement of merchant ships through the war years: BT-389: 1939–1945: Merchant Shipping Movement Cards. These cards give the name of a ship and details of its movements, namely, the ports at which it docked, and passage between ports. They also record the location (by latitude and longitude) and date a ship was sunk, (if a ship met that fate). These records, held by the British National Archives at Kew, are the source of much of the detailed material presented here. Another valuable resource is the Convoy database website at: convoyweb.org.uk established by former Lieutenant Commander and naval historian Arnold Hague, and fellow enthusiasts John K. Burgess and Don Kindell. This work is released under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial license (CC BY-NC 4.0). Please feel free to share and add to the information contained in this document. Please note that the images used in this document may not be extracted or modified in any way.	Nominal Roll 1	Embarkations to 31 March 1940	Advance party: First Echelon	11 December 1939
			The First Echelon	5 January 1940
	Nominal Roll 2	Embarkations to 30 June 1940	Advance party: Second Echelon	17 April 1940
			The Second Echelon	2 May 1940
	Nominal Roll 3	1 July 1940 to 31 March 1941	The Third Echelon	28 August 1940
			4th Reinforcements: 1st Draft	8 November 1940
			4th Reinforcements: 2nd Draft	19 December 1940
			4th Reinforcements: 3rd Draft	1 February 1941
	Nominal Roll 4	1 April 1941 to 30 June 1941	5th Reinforcements	7 April 1941
			6th Reinforcements	27 June 1941
	Nominal Roll 5	1 July 1941 to 30 September 1941	7th Reinforcements	15 September 1941
	Nominal Roll 6	1 October 1941 to 31 December 1941	(Pacific)	
	Nominal Roll 7	1 January 1942 to 31 March 1942	(Pacific)	
	Nominal Roll 8	1 April 1942 to 30 June 1942	(Pacific)	
	Nominal Roll 9	1 July 1942 to 31 December 1942	8th Reinforcements	11 December 1942
	Nominal Roll 10	1 January 1943 to 31 March 1943	(Pacific)	
	Nominal Roll 11	1 April 1943 to 30 June 1943	9th Reinforcements	14 May 1943
	Nominal Roll 12	1 July 1943 to 31 December 1943	10th Reinforcements	22 July 1943
	Nominal Roll 13	1 January 1944 to 31 March 1944	11th Reinforcements: 1st Draft	12 January 1944
			11th Reinforcements: 2nd Draft	31 March 1944
	Nominal Roll 14	1 April 1944 to 31 December 1944	12th Reinforcements	29 June 1944
			13th Reinforcements	30 September 1944
	Nominal Roll 15	1 January 1945 to 31 December 1945	14th Reinforcements	5 January 1945
			15th Reinforcements	21 April 1945
	Nominal Roll 16	1 January 1946 to 30 June 1948		
New Zealand first sent troops into the Pacific in November 1940; these troops first appear in Nominal roll 3 then onwards.				

The First Echelon: Advance party	HMT Awatea				
“The advance party, commanded by Major A. W. Greville, consisted of 2 officers and 50 other ranks, plus 18 officers and 41 other ranks who attended courses in the Middle East.” Glue, W. A. ; Pringle, D. J. C. 20 Battalion and Armoured Regiment. Historical Publications Branch, 1957, Wellington, pp7–8 “In the advance party which left New Zealand on 11 December 1939 in TSS Awatea were two men of 4 Field Ambulance, and they were joined in Egypt by Lieutenant Harrison, who had come from the United Kingdom and who became acting Deputy Assistant Director of Medical Services to the Expeditionary Force.” Stout, T. Duncan M. New Zealand Medical Services in Middle East and Italy. Historical Publications Branch, 1956, Wellington, p35	TSS Awatea (Māori for “Eye of the Dawn”) was an ocean liner built for the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand. She is remembered as one of the most beautifully designed compact liners built in the mid 1930s. In peacetime, she operated the trans-Tasman route between Sydney and Auckland. Commandeered by the Royal Navy in 1940, she served as a British troopship under the name of HMT Awatea and was first used to transport Canadian troops to Hong Kong departing 27 October 1941, and arriving there on 16 November 1941. In November 1942, she was ordered to deliver the No. 6 Commando brigade to North Africa for Operation Torch. She completed the landing successfully (although she was two hours off schedule and the landing was off target by as much as several miles). As she was departing on 11 November 1942, an unknown number of aircraft from the Kampffgeschwader 77 of the German Luftwaffe started an attack. They bombed and strafed her, but her crew fought against the aircraft with anything they could find. Two torpedoes hit her port side and a dud bomb hit her deck. When the dud bomb fell into the fire started by the torpedoes, it exploded and the whole ship caught alight ... and at this point the crew abandoned ship, which was later sunk by the same aircraft. The admiral of her fleet said “she fought the battle of a battleship” in tribute to her. Source: Wikipedia According to the ships Master, the Awatea sank one mile north of Bougie Breakwater, Algiers, on 12 November 1942. Source: BT-389-2-260. National Archives, Kew.				

The First Echelon: Advance party	20 officers and 91 other ranks		—	Total troops:		111
TSS Awatea (1936)	13,482 GRT; 21 knots	BT-389-2-260	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
NZEF Advance party: Battalion representatives (2 officers + 50 other ranks) Others selected to attend courses in Egypt (18 officers + 41 other ranks)	111 (Glue; Pringle)	Wellington	11 December 1939	Sydney	14 December 1939	
The NZEF Advance party travelled from Sydney to Melbourne by overnight train, joining the AIF Advance party at Port Melbourne. (Source: Glue, W. A.; Pringle, D. J. C. 20 Battalion history).						
RMS Strathallan (1938)	23,722 GRT; 20 knots	BT-389-28-190	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
NZEF Advance party (20 + 91)	111	Sydney	14 December 1939	Melbourne	15 December 1939	
AIF Advance party (47 + 58)	105	Melbourne	15 December 1939	Adelaide	16 December 1939	
		Adelaide	17 December 1939	Colombo	27 December 1939	
		Colombo	28 December 1939	Bombay	—	
		Bombay	—	Aden	3 January 1940	
		Aden	3 January 1940	Port Tewfik	7 January 1940	
The AIF and NZEF Advance parties disembarked at Port Tewfik on 7 January 1940			Disembarked	7 January 1940		

RMS Strathallan continued on to London via the Suez Canal, Port Said (8 January 1941), Malta (11 January 1941), and Gibraltar (14 January 1941), but was finally diverted to Southampton.

On 21 December 1942, HMT Strathallan was struck by one of four torpedoes fired by U-boat U-562 (Horst Hamm) and sank on 22 December 1942, 12 miles north of Oran; (16 dead and 5,106 survivors).

Sources

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The First Echelon

The First Echelon of 2 NZEF was placed on ‘active service’ on the 14th [December 1939], and the troops went on a fortnight’s final leave. Major-General Freyberg inspected the battalion and the other troops at Burnham on the 30th; the final church parade was held on New Year’s Eve, a Sunday; there was a march through Christchurch and an official farewell at Cranmer Square on 3 January 1940, and in the afternoon the camp was open to visitors.

The question, What is the ship called Z6 on which we are to embark and where is she going? occupied all minds.

The embarkation was supposed to be shrouded in secrecy. The blinds of the train were drawn on the journey from Burnham to Lyttelton, in the afternoon of 5 January, and an officer was on duty at each end of each carriage, but ‘bush telegraph’ methods must have been at work—when the blinds were raised multitudes were revealed milling around the wharf behind a barrier of locked gates.

The battalion went aboard a Polish ship, the Sobieski, which also carried 4 Reserve Mechanical Transport Company, a section each of the Medical Corps and Dental Corps, and three nursing sisters. Lieutenant-Colonel Inglis was in command of all troops.

The troopship Dunera took aboard 20 Battalion and other troops, and both vessels sailed about 5:00pm [4:30pm] escorted by HMS Leander. Next morning they joined the ships from Wellington—Rangitata, Orion, Strathaird and Empress of Canada, escorted by HMS Ramillies and HMAS Canberra—which had been lying at anchor in Cook Strait since the previous afternoon. The convoy headed westwards into the Tasman, and the First Echelon’s last glimpse of New Zealand, the white tip of Mount Egmont sank below the horizon.

On a glassy sea the convoy steamed west at a deliberate twelve and a half knots until, on 10 January, it came close enough to the Australian coast to be within range of patrolling aircraft. Next day it was augmented by four Australian troopships—Orcades, Orontes, Orford and Strathnaver—and on the 12th by the Empress of Japan. The Leander left the escort, which was strengthened by HMAS Australia and HMAS Sydney, making a total of fourteen ships. Cold winds and heavy seas were encountered in the Australian Bight, where some of those who had prided themselves on being good sailors were disillusioned.

The next port was at Fremantle, where the Sobieski berthed on the 19th, and leave was granted to Perth, whose citizens were lavish in their hospitality. The appearance of men parading next day with Australian badges and even Australian uniforms, for which they had exchanged their own, was ‘ghastly’. They showed little repentance, despite rigid inspections and disciplinary action, but a vaccination had a salutary and sobering effect.

For the second stage of the voyage the Australian warships left

the convoy, which was joined by HMS Kent and the French cruiser Suffren. When Colombo was reached on 30 January, the Sobieski was one of the last ships to enter the harbour, which appeared to be ‘a terrific jumble of funnels and masts’. Only one ship at a time could pass between the two moles. There were no wharves and the ships were lined up in seven rows, with about 50 yards between the vessels and the rows about 200 yards apart. Tugs butted at the bow, sides and stern of each new arrival until it was in its mooring place, and there were tugs, barges, launches, bum-boats, catamarans and junks all over the place. The transports were soon surrounded by swarms of small craft laden with fruit, curios, and eager vendors gesticulating and crying their wares. Purchases were made by basket, in which money was lowered over the ship’s side. As soon as the gangway was let down agents from laundries and other businesses tried to get past the guards by dodging under their arms and between their legs, but although they waved papers, which they claimed were references from the port authorities, only officials were allowed aboard.

The troops were paid the equivalent of 16 shillings sterling in Ceylon currency and were advised to get rid of it or to change it ashore as it could not be accepted in the ship’s canteens. Each man was given a packet of biscuits and an orange, so as not to impose too great a strain on Colombo’s caterers. The troops disembarked by lighter and marched through the town to Rifle Green, where a canteen and other facilities had been prepared for them. They were then dismissed until late afternoon, when they reassembled to return to the ship. Those who were on duty during the day were given leave at night. Most of them went sightseeing and looking for bargains. “It was rather fun watching the troops making their way back in rickshaws,” said somebody who preferred to walk. “They had the poor devils racing one another. It looked odd to see a great 6 foot New Zealander sitting in a sort of enlarged two-wheeled pram being pulled along by a skinny 5 foot native.”

Only eight men failed to return to the ship on time, and they arrived before morning. Next day training was resumed as usual. Colonel Inglis was most emphatic that the ship had to be just as clean and tidy and everybody fit for work after leave as at any other time. The training was suspended, however, when the time came to leave Colombo. The boom across the harbour entrance was swung aside and ship after ship slipped her moorings and headed out towards the horizon.

Now the convoy was escorted by an aircraft carrier, HMS Eagle, and three warships, the Sussex, Ramillies and Hobart, and also included a French troopship, Athos II, bound for French Somaliland. The New Zealanders had already been told that their destination was Egypt. The ship’s magazine announced: “We are

going to a place called El Ma’adi, about twelve miles south of Cairo on the east bank of the River Nile.” Men wondered how to pronounce the name.

The voyage across the Arabian Sea was as calm and uneventful as that from Perth to Colombo, except that aircraft from the Eagle flew about daily, and one of them plummeted into the sea within sight of the convoy. The crew was rescued. The troops manned ship as a salute to the Eagle when she passed down the line of transports, and again for the Ramillies when she left the convoy in the Gulf of Aden; the latter was replaced by the destroyer Westcott. The convoy divided while passing Aden on 8 February; the Orion and Rangitata and three of the Australian transports put into that port to refuel, the French ship proceeded to her destination, and the rest of the convoy entered the Red Sea through the straits of Bab el Mandeb, where it left the naval escort, with the exception of the Hobart.

By this time the troops were finding the routine of shipboard training increasingly irksome, although some variety had been provided by a live-shoot practice from the deck, which had aroused intense interest among the ship’s crew. As the destination drew near, however, the training was discontinued in favour of packing and storing equipment in readiness for disembarkation. The Vickers guns were to be left on the ship.

A following wind made the Sobieski, now low in oil and water, roll badly for a day or two. The temperature rose, but not as much as might be expected, and when the convoy ran into a head wind it became appreciably cooler. Islands were passed, land appeared on both sides, the barren, rugged coasts of Arabia and North-East Africa, and the convoy reached Suez on the morning of the 12th, after a voyage lasting thirty-eight days.

The Sobieski and Dunera were the only two transports to berth alongside the quay at Port Tewfik, at the end of a causeway running out from Suez and near the entrance of the Canal; the other ships anchored a short way out in the bay and were unloaded by lighter.

The machine-gunners had time to study their surroundings before disembarking on the 15th. Their first impressions were not very favourable. The Egyptian, while perhaps sturdier than the Sinhalese of Colombo, seemed dirtier and more ragged. “The outer garment appears to be a night-gown affair, a bit of cloth round the head, no footwear.” Native vendors who came alongside the ship sold leather handbags, purses, wallets, cigarette cases, wooden camels and donkeys, and large numbers of oranges, but the troops had been dissuaded from touching other foodstuffs and drinks because of the risk of disease.

The town looked interesting at a distance but lacked the green trees of Colombo. At close quarters it was much less attractive.

Some officers who went ashore were struck by the filthiness and dilapidation of the mud-daubed, lath and plaster buildings. "It is a wonder the first puff of wind doesn't raze the whole show. ... The smell! We first whiffed it while on the boat and on land it became more pronounced but here it was overpowering ... a combination of over-ripe pigsty plus Rotorua ... add a strong component of carbide and you about have it."

At last the time came to disembark. After a four o'clock reveille the battalion was entrained by 7:40am and began the 90-mile journey to Maadi actually ahead of schedule. The carriages had hard wooden seats and bare floors—a harsh contrast to the comforts of the Sobieski—and the journey was dusty, smoky and hot. "We admired just sand, sand in ridges, flats, scarps, heaps. ... There were working parties in some places but all they appeared to be doing was just shifting sand—some guessed roads, some guessed searching for ancient ruins. We saw many ruins but whether ancient or modern it would be hard to say after seeing Suez." When the train entered the cultivated Nile Delta, interest quickened at the sight of lucerne crops, orange groves, water buffalo pulling wooden ploughs, "the kind of plough Jesus must have made in his carpenter's shop," donkeys carrying incredible loads, and blindfold oxen turning water wheels.

Cairo looked much the same as Suez, except that some parts of it were "really attractive, new looking, clean buildings, bright gardens". At the main railway station (Bab el Hadid), where "we were immediately besieged by Gyppos selling all manner of stuff including lurid literature," the engine changed ends before pulling out on a branch line through the Dead City—graves and houses mixed up in a macabre fashion—and into the desert again. And then the train suddenly stopped.

Major White describes the arrival at Maadi: "We could see a few trucks standing about, a lot of soldiers and a band but why for? in the middle of the desert? We were soon disillusioned. Here we were to detain! We stepped out into about 4 inches of soft fine dust and soon were enveloped in a cloud of it as men tramped about forming up into companies.

"Soon we were on the move, each company in a smoke screen of dust of its own making. A hundred yards or so we passed over the crest of a rise and could see desert stretching away before us on either hand with many tents nearer at hand. Before long we were in among the tents and were led aside to our own group."

Source: Kay, Robin. 27 (Machine Gun) Battalion. Historical Publications Branch, 1958, Wellington, pp4–10

RIGHT: Sister Muriel Betty Haskins and Francis Leslie Jones at the 3rd NZ General Hospital, Beirut, 7 September 1942.



PHOTO: M. D. ELIAS. COURTESY ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

The First Echelon	354 officers and 6,175 other ranks			Convoy US.1	Total troops:			6,529
HMT Dunera (1937)	11,162 GRT; 14 knots	BT-389-10-62	Z2	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date	
Embarked Wellington: Divisional Signals (287) NZANS Nursing Sisters (3)	1,355 (all ranks) (McClymont)			Embarked	4 January 1940			
Embarked Lyttelton:				Wellington	4 January 1940	Lyttelton	5 January 1940	
20 (Canterbury and Otago) Battalion (38 + 752)				Lyttelton	5 January 1940	Cook Strait	6 January 1940	
4 Field Ambulance (6 + 217)				Cook Strait	6 January 1940	Sydney Heads	10 January 1940	
4 Field Hygiene Section (1 + 28)				Sydney Heads	10 January 1940	Fremantle	18 January 1940	
Dental Corps (one section)				Fremantle	20 January 1940	Colombo	30 January 1940	
				Colombo	1 February 1940	Port Tewfik	12 February 1940	
				Disembarked	13 February 1940			
				Disembarked	14 February 1940			
HMT Sobieski (1938)	11,030 GRT; 16 knots	BT-389-42-218	Z6	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date	
27 (Machine Gun) Battalion (30 + 704)	1,145 (McClymont)			Embarked	5 January 1940			
4 Reserve Mechanical Transport Company (94)				Lyttelton	5 January 1940	Cook Strait	6 January 1940	
Medical Corps (one section)				Cook Strait	6 January 1940	Sydney Heads	10 January 1940	
Dental Corps (one section)				Sydney Heads	10 January 1940	Fremantle	19 January 1940	
NZANS Nursing Sisters (3)				Fremantle	20 January 1940	Colombo	30 January 1940	
				Colombo	1 February 1940	Port Tewfik	12 February 1940	
				Disembarked	13 February 1940			
				Disembarked	15 February 1940			
HMT Empress of Canada (1928)	20,022 GRT; 18 knots	BT-389-12-119	Z1	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date	
HQ 2 NZ Division	809 (McClymont)			Embarked	5 January 1940			
Divisional Artillery				Wellington	6 January 1940	Cook Strait	6 January 1940	
				Cook Strait	6 January 1940	Sydney	10 January 1940	
Major-General B. C. Freyberg, GOC 2 NZEF, disembarked at Sydney to fly to Egypt.				Sydney	10 January 1940	Fremantle	18 January 1940	
				Fremantle	20 January 1940	Colombo	30 January 1940	
				Colombo	1 February 1940	Port Tewfik	12 February 1940	
The Empress of Canada (BT-389-10-27) was earlier named the Duchess of Richmond (BT-389-12-119)				Disembarked	—			
HMT Strathaird (1932)	22,281 GRT; 20 knots	BT-389-28-189	Z3	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date	
19 (Wellington) Battalion	1,350 (McClymont)			Embarked	5 January 1940			
5 Field Park Company, NZ Engineers (3 + 153)				Wellington	6 January 1940	Cook Strait	6 January 1940	
6 Field Company, NZ Engineers (5 + 237)				Cook Strait	6 January 1940	Sydney Heads	10 January 1940	
10 Light Aid Detachment (LAD) (1 + 12)				Sydney Heads	10 January 1940	Fremantle	18 January 1940	
11 Light Aid Detachment (LAD) (1 + 12)				Fremantle	20 January 1940	Colombo	30 January 1940	
Divisional Postal Unit (1 + 24)				Colombo	1 February 1940	Port Tewfik	12 February 1940	
Headquarters Staff Divisional Engineers (6 officers, 1 medical officer and 31 other ranks)				Disembarked	12 February 1940			
NZ Medical Corps (NZMC) (13 + 12)								
NZANS Nursing Sisters (18)								
Provost Company								
Base Pay								
Base Post Office (1 + 11)								
Base Records								

HMT Orion (1935)	23,371 GRT; 20½ knots	BT-389-22-309	Z4	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
18 (Auckland) Battalion		1,428 (McClymont)		Embarked	5 January 1940		
4 Reserve Mechanical Transport Company (284)				Wellington	6 January 1940	Cook Strait	6 January 1940
Army Service Corps (ASC)				Cook Strait	6 January 1940	Sydney Heads	10 January 1940
Divisional Ammunition Company: A Section				Sydney Heads	10 January 1940	Fremantle	18 January 1940
Divisional Petrol Company				Fremantle	20 January 1940	Colombo	30 January 1940
NZANS Nursing Sisters (3)				Colombo	1 February 1940	Aden (refuelled)	8 February 1940
				Aden	8 February 1940	Port Tewfik	12 February 1940
				Disembarked	13 February 1940		
HMT Rangitata (1929)	16,737 GRT; 14 knots	BT-389-24-231	Z5	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
Divisional Cavalry: A and B Squadrons (369)		442 (McClymont)		Embarked	5 January 1940		
2 NZEF Overseas Base				Wellington	6 January 1940	Cook Strait	6 January 1940
13 Light Aid Detachment (LAD) (1 + 12)				Cook Strait	6 January 1940	Sydney Heads	10 January 1940
14 Light Aid Detachment (LAD) (1 + 12)				Sydney Heads	10 January 1940	Fremantle	18 January 1940
NZANS Nursing Sisters (3)				Fremantle	20 January 1940	Colombo	30 January 1940
RNVR (Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve) ratings				Colombo	1 February 1940	Aden (refuelled)	8 February 1940
				Aden	8 February 1940	Port Tewfik	13 February 1940
				Disembarked	14 February 1940		

Escorts and other troopships

5 January 1940	HMS Leander served as naval escort from Lyttelton; Dunera (1,355) and Sobieski (1,145).
6 January 1940	HMAS Canberra led the convoy out of Wellington: Empress of Canada (809), Orion (1,428), Strathaird (1,350) and Rangitata (444), followed by HMS Ramillies.
11 January 1940	Australian troopships Orcades (1,593 troops), Orford (1,263), Otranto (1,404), and Strathnaver (1,456) joined the convoy from Sydney.
	HMAS Australia and HMAS Sydney joined the convoy off the east coast of Australia. HMAS Sydney sailed with the convoy to Jervis Bay. HMS Leander left the convoy.
12 January 1940	The Australian troopship the Empress of Japan (789) joined the convoy in Bass Strait from Melbourne.
18 January 1940	HMAS Adelaide joined the convoy off Rottnest Island.
20 January 1940	HMS Kent and the French heavy cruiser Suffren joined the convoy off Fremantle and escorted the convoy to Colombo.
	HMAS Australia and HMAS Canberra sailed with the convoy from Fremantle until 6:00pm, when they returned to Fremantle.
1 February 1940	A French troopship, Athos II, bound for French Somaliland, joined the convoy at Colombo.
	HMS Kent and Suffren were replaced at Colombo by an aircraft-carrier, HMS Eagle, destroyer HMS Westcott, and two cruisers HMAS Hobart and HMS Sussex.
3 February 1940	HMS Eagle left the convoy.
5 February 1940	HMS Ramillies continued as an escort until the Gulf of Aden.

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The Second Echelon

The original plan had been for the second convoy to leave towards the end of March, with the divisional troops landing in Egypt and the railway and forestry companies going straight to France [to Brest]. Consequently all units were declared on active service and sent away for final leave by 14 March. But the date of departure was changed because it was found advisable to split the great convoy into a “slow” group and a “fast” group. The former would leave first with an Australian brigade; the latter would take the rest of the Australian contingent and the New Zealand echelon.

The only New Zealand unit sent with the first or slow convoy was an advance party from the railway and forestry companies [who had been called up to meet an urgent request from Britain for men with experience in the operation of sawmills and the construction of railways]. Under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Anderson they left Wellington for Sydney on 17 April and sailed from there in the *Orcades* for Port Said on the 27th.

The rest of the echelon continued its training throughout April ... There was, by then, a greater sense of urgency; the storm had broken and changed overnight the character of the war. Denmark and Norway had been invaded on 9 April; the naval engagements at Narvik had been fought; the British Expeditionary Force had landed in Norway. And in the Mediterranean theatre there was that wavering neutral, Italy.

In these circumstances the Admiralty insisted upon a concentration of naval forces in the Mediterranean. To this end the escort for the second or fast convoy had to be reduced, even though New Zealand had requested the maximum protection for the convoys in which her troops were despatched. The Admiralty explained that because of the Norwegian operation the units of the German fleet, including the pocket battleships, had been located. The only possible danger would be from a merchant raider, for which the lighter escort would be adequate. Nevertheless, there still remained the possibility of Italy declaring war and closing the entrance to the Red Sea.

The Australian Government thereupon suggested that the troops should not embark until the situation had been clarified. The New Zealand Government did not think that the departure of the convoy should be postponed but it did ask for further information, including an indication of the ‘probable steps that would be taken’ should the convoy have to be diverted. Such information was already on the way.

The convoys, the slow one already at sea and the fast one about to leave, would not, unless the situation improved, enter the Red Sea, nor would the troops be landed at Basra in the Persian Gulf. The ships would be diverted to Britain, where the troops would have better training facilities. The Dominions

were asked to accept this suggestion and to continue with their plans for embarkation.

In the meantime the fast convoy had already left New Zealand with the Second Echelon, the railway construction and forestry companies and several hundred naval ratings. With them were Brigadier Barrowclough, DSO, MC, his Brigade Major, Brooke, and other members of the headquarters staff of 6 Brigade. They were to observe the methods used by the other brigades and be ready to train the brigade as soon as it arrived in the Third Echelon ...

The troops had embarked, those at Lyttelton on the *Andes*, those at Wellington on the *Aquitania*, the *Empress of Britain* and the *Empress of Japan*. At 6:00am on 2 May the great liners, together with HMS *Leander* and HMAS *Canberra*, slipped quietly away from their berths at Wellington, with the *Trentham* Camp Band playing to each ship in succession. They linked up in Cook Strait with the *Andes* and HMAS *Australia* from Lyttelton and set out for Sydney. Here they were joined by the *Queen Mary* and the *Empress of Canada* and sailed south to be joined by another transport from Melbourne and to arrive at Fremantle on 10 May, the very day that the slow convoy left that port for Colombo.

The voyage, so far, had been without incident, living conditions were luxurious and the reception in Fremantle and Perth as enthusiastic as it had been and ever was to be for all New Zealand convoys.

The war situation was still serious but no worse than it had been when the convoy left New Zealand. On 4 May, when the Second Echelon was steaming across the Tasman Sea, the Dominion parliaments had received the promised appreciation of the war situation as seen by the Chiefs of Staff in Britain. They had reviewed the situation on all fronts and had considered that the possibility of a direct attack by Japan upon Australia and New Zealand was very remote. If the convoys were diverted and formations split, all possible steps would be taken to reassemble the forces. Neither India nor Kenya was suitable for training so the diversion, if it should take place, would have to be to the United Kingdom.

The situation, however, was being watched from day to day and at the moment no diversion was necessary. This was a more confident statement than the Dominions expected. The Governments were reassured though both made several reservations. They still demanded full information, they wanted the opportunity of deciding the ultimate destination of the convoys and they insisted upon strong escorts should the ships have to enter the more dangerous Atlantic. Once again it was apparent that the Dominions were not subordinates but members of a Commonwealth with equal status and equal rights. On the basis of this appreciation the convoys left Fremantle for

Egypt. The fast convoy left on 12 May and made steady progress towards Colombo, with the more serious soldiers listening to the wireless reports, well aware that the international situation was changing every hour. The 5 Brigade war diary records that, ‘What news we did get was most disquieting.’

Germany had made an unexpected move across the European chessboard and the Allies had not been able to make any effective counter move. On 10 May, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg had been invaded. Mr Chamberlain had resigned and a Coalition Government had been formed with Mr Churchill as Prime Minister. On 13 May Churchill told the House of Commons and the world: ‘I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.’ Next day the War Office announced that Local Defence Volunteers¹ were to be raised in Britain and that Holland was about to capitulate. Italy, the political barometer of Europe, was showing no immediate change, but the British Government decided that no more ships were to come through by way of Aden and the Suez Canal. The two convoys in the Indian Ocean—the slow and the fast—therefore turned south-west towards Capetown.

The fast convoy swung round from its course on the night of 15 May. The men, whose paybooks had been made out for a day in Colombo, learned of this change by observing that the morning sun was shining from another angle. The slow convoy went through to Colombo, left there and was diverted south on 19 May. Instead of being the advance party it was now four days behind the other convoy. In this order the ships moved south, with the Governments of two Dominions very apprehensive about the presence of German raiders in the South Atlantic and the Admiralty calling together for that portion of the voyage the most formidable escort it could assemble.

On the morning of 26 May the fast convoy and its escort were seen like another Armada by the surprised inhabitants of Capetown. For five days the city showered upon the troops every hospitality it could offer.

The Maori Battalion paid a visit from Simonstown and, as 5 Brigade’s war diary records, ‘They were a credit to their people and a marked example for the remainder of our troops.’ The *Empress of Japan* was going no farther so her troops were transferred to the other ships, which by the incredibly luxurious standards of 1940 were already classed as overcrowded. The naval unit went to the *Empress of Canada*; 21 Battalion to the *Empress of Britain*. Finally, on 30 May the slow convoy came into port.

Next day the fast convoy put out to sea, calling at Freetown and steaming on with increased precautions against attacks from U-boats and aircraft. The troops crowded about the loudspeakers

and listened to the news from the BBC. The announcers were describing the evacuation that was taking place at Dunkirk and the approach of the panzer units towards Paris; on 10 June they announced the declaration of war by Italy. These tremendous events caused no alteration to the route.

The convoy rounded Cape Verde at midnight and steamed north for the Irish Sea and increased naval protection. The war was closer now. The wreckage from torpedoed ships drifted past, a tanker stood on its stern with its bow above water, 'blazing like a torch'. The convoy, however, was not attacked, and on 16 June the ships anchored in the Clyde. The reception given to the Australian and New Zealand forces was genuinely warm, even pathetic in its expressions of gratitude. Their arrival after a voyage of 17,000 miles was dramatic enough to be classed as a triumph and to be featured as an example of unity within the Commonwealth. It was the opinion of General Freyberg, who had not wanted the Second Echelon diverted to Britain, that 'the arrival of the New Zealanders and Australians in the circumstances had been most opportune and had steadied the nation considerably.' There was little else to be confident about. The British offer of an Anglo-French union had been rejected, M. Reynaud had resigned, Marshal Pétain had formed a government to negotiate peace with Germany.

The men of the Second Echelon, however, were not unduly excited by the gravity of the international situation. They were too interested in the last stages of their Grand Tour, which began with a train journey to Edinburgh and ended in southern England with a march along tree-lined avenues to the tented camps of the Aldershot Command. The units of the brigade, now together for the first time, were in and about Mytchett; 1 General Hospital took over Pinewood Sanatorium near Wokingham and 1 Convalescent Depot staffed a camp reception hospital near Farnborough.

The railway and forestry companies went to Woolmer, where the advance party left behind with the slow convoy at Capetown was already in quarters. This party's ships had left a day after the fast convoy, had called at Dakar and Casablanca, and on the collapse of France had been diverted from Brest to Plymouth. From there it had gone straight to Woolmer to receive the companies on 20 June.

McClymont, W. G. To Greece, Historical Publications Branch, 1959, Wellington, pp28-33

RIGHT: Wounded British soldiers evacuated from Dunkirk make their way up the gangplank from a destroyer at Dover, 31 May 1940. © Imperial War Museums. H 1623.



The Second Echelon: Advance party	6 officers and 44 other ranks		—		Total troops:	50
TSS Awatea (1936)	13,482 GRT; 21 knots	BT-389-2-260	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
Forestry Company (1 + 15)	50		Embarked	17 April 1940	Sydney	—
Railway Construction and Maintenance Group (5 + 29)			Wellington	17 April 1940		
HMT Orcades (1937)	23,456 GRT; 20½ knots	BT-389-22-295	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
The Second Echelon Advance party transhipped to the Orcades at Sydney, then sailed for Hobart.			Sydney	27 April 1940	Hobart	28 April 1940
			Hobart	1 May 1940	Melbourne	3 May 1940
			Melbourne	4 May 1940	Adelaide	5 May 1940
			Adelaide	6 May 1940	Fremantle	9 May 1940
The Second Echelon Advance party left for Colombo the day the Second Echelon arrived at Fremantle.			Fremantle	10 May 1940	Colombo	17 May 1940
	Diverted to Capetown (original destination: Brest, France, via the Suez Canal).		Colombo	18 May 1940	Capetown	30 May 1940
Arrived in Capetown the day before the Second Echelon departed.			Capetown	1 June 1940	Freetown	10 June 1940
			Freetown	10 June 1940	Dakar	10 June 1940
Called at Dakar and Casablanca.			Dakar	12 June 1940	Casablanca	14 June 1940
Diverted to Plymouth.			Casablanca	14 June 1940	Plymouth	18 June 1940

Sources

McClymont, W. G. To Greece. Historical Publications Branch, 1959, Wellington, pp28–30

The Second Echelon

The Second Echelon sailed from Wellington on 2 May 1940 in the ships Aquitania, Empress of Britain, Empress of Japan, and Andes (Lyttelton). These ships were joined in Australian waters by the Mauretania and Queen Mary (Sydney) and Empress of Canada (Melbourne). The convoy anchored off Fremantle on 10 May.

The biggest ship of the New Zealand section, the Aquitania, lay at anchor in the roads two miles off shore, while the other ships berthed at the wharves. By special arrangement a pleasure steamer, a tug, and a Dutch oil tanker were obtained to transport the men on the Aquitania to the wharf for shore leave.

At midday on 12 May 1940 the convoy sailed from Fremantle, headed north-west for Colombo. During the evening of 15 May 1940, when the ships were just south-west of Cocos Islands, orders were received with instructions to change course. The convoy then steamed in a westerly direction towards South Africa. [By mid-May it appeared likely that Italy would enter the war on the German side, escalating the danger of passage by the Red Sea; Italy entered the war on 10 June 1940.] The convoy reached Capetown on the morning of 26 May 1940, and troops were granted four days leave. The Aquitania, being too big to berth in the harbour, had to go to the naval base at Simonstown.

Because her Chinese crew had declined to proceed beyond

Capetown into the less peaceful Atlantic, the troops on the Empress of Japan were transferred to the Empress of Britain and the Andes.

Just before setting sail once more, eight sisters transhipped from the Empress of Britain to the Mauretania to assist in nursing the Australians, amongst whom an epidemic of measles had broken out. A lighter arrived at the ship’s side and, with little ceremony, they were hustled off. It was a very choppy sea, and when they arrived alongside the Mauretania they found they were to clamber aboard, in true sailor fashion, by means of a rope ladder. From the lighter it seemed miles to the top of that ladder. Their hearts sank within them, and with a final look at the ship’s heaving side they decided it couldn’t — and wouldn’t — be done. Kind-hearted sailors finally lowered a bosun’s chair and in this, one by one, the sisters ascended to the deck. ¹

The convoy left Capetown on 31 May. Continuing north, the convoy touched Freetown, Sierra Leone, where there was no leave — and in the sultry heat no inclination for any.

On 14 June 1940, as the ships were approaching Britain, escort reinforcements consisting of six destroyers, the aircraft carrier HMS Argus and the battle-cruiser HMS Hood joined the convoy. The next day the troops had a glimpse of the havoc of war.

In a letter home, Driver W. A. Mackinder, MM wrote:

“The first traces of the war passed at 10:30 this morning: two empty lifeboats, one upside down; dozens of empty oildrums, and timber all over the place. And now, at 12:15pm, we are just passing a burning ship on the horizon, but can see the flames quite clearly, and huge clouds of smoke...” ²

During the afternoon a lookout on the Aquitania reported that a torpedo, fired at long range, had passed astern of HMS Hood and between the Queen Mary and the Aquitania, and sank at the end of its run. The warships of the convoy heeled around at right angles and steamed away at full speed. The destroyers converged on a point away on the horizon and their depth-charges threw up fountains of white spray. The following morning [16 June 1940] the convoy sailed up the Clyde, anchoring at Gourrock and Greenock.

1. McKinney, J. B. Medical Units of 2 NZEF in Middle East and Italy. Historical Publications Branch, 1952, Wellington, pp17–18
2. Kidson, A. L. Petrol Company. Historical Publications Branch, 1961, Wellington, p48

The Second Echelon	428 officers and 6,410 other ranks		Convoy US.3		Total troops:	6,838
HMT Andes (1939)	25,689 GRT; 22 knots	BT-389-1-237	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
23 (Canterbury and Otago) Battalion		1,396 (McClymont)	Embarked	1 May 1940		
Railway Construction and Maintenance Group (11 +342)			Lyttelton	1 May 1940	Cook Strait	2 May 1940
Railway Construction and Maintenance Group: HQ			Cook Strait	2 May 1940	Sydney Heads	5 May 1940
9 Survey Company			Sydney Heads	5 May 1940	Melbourne	6 May 1940
10 Railway Construction Company			Melbourne	6 May 1940	Fremantle	10 May 1940
11 Forestry Company (1 + 170)			Fremantle	12 May 1940	Colombo (redirected to Capetown)	
NZANS Nursing Sisters (3)			Cocos Island	15 May 1940	Capetown	26 May 1940
			Capetown	31 May 1940	Freetown	8 June 1940
			Freetown	8 June 1940	Gourock	16 June 1940
			Disembarked	19 June 1940		
HMT Aquitania (1914)	44,785 GRT; 25 knots	BT-389-2-14	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
28 (Māori) Battalion (39 + 642)		2,862 (McClymont)	Embarked	1 May 1940		
Divisional Supply Column (243 all ranks)			Wellington	2 May 1940	Cook Strait	2 May 1940
Divisional Cavalry: C Squadron			Cook Strait	2 May 1940	Sydney Heads	5 May 1940
5 Field Ambulance			Sydney Heads	5 May 1940	Melbourne	6 May 1940
5 Field Regiment: 27 and 28 Batteries			Melbourne	6 May 1940	Fremantle	10 May 1940
7 Anti-Tank: 31 and 32 Batteries			Fremantle	12 May 1940	Colombo (redirected to Capetown)	
4 Field Artillery reinforcements			Cocos Island	15 May 1940	Capetown	26 May 1940
RNVR (Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve) (25 + 219)			Capetown	27 May 1940	Simonstown	28 May 1940
			Simonstown	31 May 1940	Freetown	8 June 1940
			Freetown	8 June 1940	Gourock	16 June 1940
			Disembarked	17 June 1940		
HMT Empress of Britain (1931)	42,348 GRT	BT-389-12-118	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
22 (Wellington) Battalion		1,622 (McClymont)	Embarked	1 May 1940		
5 Brigade: HQ			Wellington	2 May 1940	Cook Strait	2 May 1940
5 Anti-Tank Company			Cook Strait	2 May 1940	Sydney Heads	5 May 1940
1 General Hospital (21 + 145)			Sydney Heads	5 May 1940	Melbourne	6 May 1940
Nursing Sisters (37)			Melbourne	6 May 1940	Fremantle	10 May 1940
			Fremantle	12 May 1940	Colombo (redirected to Capetown)	
			Cocos Island	15 May 1940	Capetown	26 May 1940
			Capetown	31 May 1940	Freetown	8 June 1940
			Freetown	8 June 1940	Greenock	16 June 1940
			Disembarked	—		
HMT Empress of Japan (1929)	26,032 GRT; 21 knots	BT-389-12-123	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
21 (Auckland) Battalion		958 (McClymont)	Embarked	1 May 1940		
1 Convalescent Depot (5 + 49)			Wellington	2 May 1940	Cook Strait	2 May 1940
RN (Royal Navy) (3 + 137)			Cook Strait	2 May 1940	Sydney Heads	5 May 1940
			Sydney Heads	5 May 1940	Melbourne	6 May 1940
			Melbourne	6 May 1940	Fremantle	10 May 1940
			Fremantle	12 May 1940	Colombo (redirected to Capetown)	
			Cocos Island	15 May 1940	Capetown	26 May 1940

The Chinese crew of the Empress of Japan refused to proceed beyond Capetown.
Troops on the Empress of Japan transhipped at Capetown to the Andes and the Empress of Britain.

Escorts and other troopships

1 May 1940	HMAS Canberra accompanied the Andes from Lyttelton.
2 May 1940	HMAS Australia and HMS Leander accompanied the Aquitania, the Empress of Britain and the Empress of Japan from Wellington.
5 May 1940	Australian troopships Mauretania (2,616), Queen Mary (5,059) joined the convoy at Sydney Heads. HMAS Australia and HMS Leander put in to Sydney to refuel and 5 hours later, sailed to rejoin the convoy.
7 May 1940	The Empress of Canada (1,615), sailing from Melbourne, joined the convoy in Bass Strait.
16 May 1940	At 00:42 on 16 May, instructions were received from the Admiralty for the convoy to ‘steer towards the Cape of Good Hope’. HMS Leander was ordered to proceed independently to Colombo.
—	The convoy was joined by the heavy cruiser HMS Shropshire at a point halfway between Fremantle and Capetown. HMAS Canberra left the convoy.
—	HMS Cumberland joined the convoy at Capetown. HMAS Australia left the convoy at Capetown.

The Second Echelon: From Great Britain to Egypt

After a visit to the War Office General Freyberg informed the New Zealand Government that “There is a desperate shortage of equipment and for some time to come we shall be short of many of our weapons. This is the common lot of most troops here; nevertheless in spite of this I feel, and I am sure that Cabinet will agree with me, that New Zealand troops must be prepared to accept battle upon uneven terms in defence of Great Britain.” He knew that should there be an invasion the first question the people of New Zealand would ask would be, “What part did our men take?” After this correspondence all questions concerning the role of 2 NZEF (UK) were left to him. He returned to the War Office to say, “My Government want you to give us as much equipment as you can spare, and would wish you to cast	the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the role in which you may consider us to be of greatest assistance at the present moment.” Thereupon the force became part of GHQ Reserve. “The great hunt for stores and equipment was also on forthwith. We found conditions infinitely worse than in New Zealand—no new weapons, no ammunition, no transport. The BEF had lost everything in France and, naturally, had priority in refitting. It was almost heartbreaking but we carried on for the first week and the equipment started trickling in.” The first issue of equipment was received on 28 June 1940; next day 2 NZEF (UK) was placed at eight hours’ notice because an invasion was thought possible that coming weekend. There was no suggestion that the First Echelon should be brought over from	Egypt. Such plans had been shelved when Italy entered the war and challenged Britain’s control of the Mediterranean. The echelon would stay where it was and there be joined by the Third Echelon, which was due to leave New Zealand in August. The Second Echelon would remain in Britain until mid-August at least, or until the danger of attack on England was over. Until then only those units not actually required in the defence of Britain would leave in the convoys that were being so boldly despatched to the Middle East. McClymont, W. G. To Greece. Historical Publications Branch, 1959, Wellington, pp34
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The Second Echelon	From Great Britain to Egypt: August 1940		Convoy WS.2	Total troops: —		
HMT Andes (1939)	25,689 GRT; 22 knots	BT-389-1-237	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
Convalescent Depot and Medical Staff (5 + 49)		WS.2 Fast	Embarked	—		
			Glasgow	5 August 1940	Freetown	15/16 August 1940
			Freetown	16 August 1940	Capetown	25 August 1940
			Capetown	30 August 1940	Port Tewfik	15 September 1940
		WS.2A	Disembarked	—		
HMT Franconia (1922)	20,341 GRT; 16 knots	BT-389-13-263	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
Railway Construction and Maintenance Group		WS.2 Slow	Embarked	—		
			Gourock	7 August 1940	Freetown	15/16 August 1940
			Freetown	18 August 1940	Capetown	27 August 1940
			Capetown	29 August 1940	Durban	—
			Durban	1 September 1940	Port Tewfik	15 September 1940
		WS.2A	Disembarked	—		

The Second Echelon	From Great Britain to Egypt: October 1940		Convoy WS.3B Fast; WS.3		Total troops:	—
HMT Georgic (1932)	27,469 GRT; 18 knots	BT-389-13-379	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
1 General Hospital	—		Embarked Gourock (Clyde) Freetown Capetown Aden Disembarked	4 October 1940 7 October 1940 20 October 1940 30 October 1940 12 November 1940 —	Freetown Capetown Aden Port Tewfik	18 October 1940 28 October 1940 12 November 1940 16 November 1940
HMT Oronsay (1924)	20,043 GRT; 18 knots	BT-389-22-323	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
2nd Echelon (363 all ranks)	—		Embarked Greenock Disembarked	— 7 October 1940 —	Greenock	10 October 1940
The Oronsay was attacked from the air on 8 October 1940 and returned to Greenock.						

The Second Echelon	From Great Britain to Egypt: December 1940		Convoy WS.5A Slow		Total troops:	363
HMT Rangitiki (1929)	16,698 GRT; 14 knots	BT-389-24-232	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
7 Anti-Tank Regiment	—		Embarked Avonmouth Freetown Durban Disembarked	— 17 December 1940 7 January 1941 29 January 1941 17 February 1941	Freetown Durban Port Tewfik	7 January 1941 24 January 1941 16 February 1941
HMT Elisabethville (1921)	8,351 GRT; 13 knots	BT-389-36-10	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
Advance parties	—		Embarked Liverpool Freetown Durban Disembarked	— 18 December 1940 7 January 1941 29 January 1941 —	Freetown Durban Port Tewfik	7 January 1941 24 January 1941 16 February 1941
This vessel is recorded as both ‘Elisabethville’ (BT-389-36-10) covering 1939–1943, and ‘Elizabethville’ (BT-389-35-104) 1944–1947						
HMT City of London (1907)	8,956 GRT; 14 knots	BT-389-7-129	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
5 Field Regiment: 27 and 28 Batteries	—		Embarked Liverpool Freetown Durban Disembarked	— 18 December 1940 7 January 1941 29 January 1941 —	Freetown Durban Port Tewfik	7 January 1941 24 January 1941 16 February 1941

The Second Echelon	From Great Britain to Egypt: January 1941		Convoy WS.5B		Total troops:	—
HMT Athlone Castle (1936)	25,564 GRT; 18½ knots	BT-389-2-199	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
23 (Canterbury and Otago) Battalion		1,480 (McClymont)	Embarked	3 January 1941		
28 (Māori) Battalion			Liverpool	7 January 1941	Colwyn Bay, Wales	7 January 1941
5 Field Ambulance: B Company			Colwyn Bay, Wales	10 January 1941	Belfast Lough	11 January 1941
5 Field Company, New Zealand Engineers			Belfast Lough	12 January 1941	Freetown	25 January 1941
			Freetown	29 January 1941	Capetown	8 February 1941
			Capetown	12 February 1941	Durban	16 February 1941
			Durban	16 February 1941	Port Tewfik	3 March 1941
			Disembarked	4 March 1941		
Ships of the New Zealand convoy berthed for five days in Capetown.						
HMT Duchess of Bedford (1928)	20,123 GRT; 17 knots	BT-389-10-24; BT-389-12-120	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
21 (Auckland) Battalion		3,040 (Cody)	Embarked	4 January 1941		
22 (Wellington) Battalion			Newport, Wales	5 January 1941	Off Newport	5 January 1941
5 Field Ambulance: HQ			Off Newport	7 January 1941	Belfast Lough	8 January 1941
5 Field Ambulance: A Company			Belfast Lough	12 January 1941	Freetown	25 January 1941
			Freetown	29 January 1941	Capetown	8 February 1941
			Capetown	12 February 1941	Durban	16 February 1941
			Durban	16 February 1941	Port Tewfik	3 March 1941
			Disembarked	5/6 March 1941		
			Disembarked	8 March 1941		
22 Battalion disembarked on 5th or 6th March 1941 (both dates are given). 21 Battalion did not disembark until 8th March 1941, because of rough seas.						
The Duchess of Bedford (BT-389-10-24) was later renamed Empress of France (BT-389-12-120). This journey is recorded on the card for the Empress of France (BT-389-12-120).						

Other vessels in this convoy:

Arundel Castle, Britannic, Cameronia, Capetown Castle, Duchess of Richmond, Duchess of York, Durban Castle, Empress of Australia, Empress of Japan, Franconia, Highland Chieftain, Highland Princess, Monarch of Bermuda, Nea Hellas, Nieuw Holland, Orbita, Ormonde, Pennland, Samaria, Takliwa, Varsova, Waimarama, Winchester Castle, Windsor Castle.

The battleship HMS Ramillies was the first ship of the naval escort and the cruisers included HMAS Australia and HMS Emerald.

Other men of the Second Echelon: 10 officers and 404 other ranks sailed to Egypt in the ships carrying the transport vehicles; 112 other ranks sailed as anti-aircraft defence parties on other vessels. The only troops left in Britain were the Base Details, approximately 90 all ranks, who eventually reached Port Tewfik on the 20 June 1941.

Sources

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<https://www.naval-history.net/xAH-WConvoys01.htm>

The Third Echelon

Italy had not long entered the war and with bases in East Africa her air force and navy could prove troublesome to transports in the Red Sea and in parts of the Indian Ocean. As it was thus not advisable to risk the large liners of the convoy on the final stage of the journey to Egypt, a convoy of smaller transports replaced them. In the new convoy room could not be found for the whole contingent, and 6 Field Ambulance, together with a draft of 550 reinforcements, was obliged to wait at Bombay until transport could be arranged.

At long last, on 27 August 1940, the time arrived for the battalion to leave Trentham and embark. It was, of course, an occasion of mixed emotions. All were glad to end the monotony of the training camp and looked forward with keen anticipation to the voyage, the first experience of overseas travel for the great majority of the troops. Mounting excitement and the urge to move onward to the task for which they were in training were tempered by memories of sad partings and by the deep realisation of all that this departure, a significant and irrevocable step, meant to those who must remain behind and wait and pray and hope. But the bustle of departure, the novel surroundings, the proximity and companionship of hundreds of others, and the resilience of youth soon dissipated any sombre thoughts, and so the excitement of the occasion reasserted itself.

The battalion embarked in the trans-Atlantic Cunard liner *Mauretania*, of 35,739 tons, at 9:00am on 27 August, the total number of troops aboard being 2,334 all ranks. Lieutenant-Colonel Wilder was appointed Officer Commanding the convoy; Lieutenant-Colonel Weir, 6 Field Regiment, was appointed OC Troops; and similar appointments were made for the two other ships of the convoy, the *Empress of Japan* and the *Orcades*.

The *Mauretania* and the *Empress of Japan* left the wharf early in the afternoon and anchored in the harbour until next morning. This pause enabled essential ship routine and organisation to be established before the vagaries of the ocean could exert any unsettling influence. Escorted by the cruiser *HMS Achilles*, the ships sailed at 8:00am, 28 August, and an hour later were joined in Cook Strait by the *Orcades* from Lyttelton. The sight of the *Achilles* of River Plate fame sent a thrill through the troops, the more so as she belonged to the New Zealand Squadron.

On the second day the escort was reinforced by the Australian cruiser *Perth* but lost the *Achilles* the next day when she turned back for New Zealand, her crew cheering each ship in turn as she passed along the convoy. Everyone was sorry to see her go. The following day, 31 August, the Australian contingent which sailed from Sydney, escorted by *HMAS Canberra*, joined the convoy, whereupon *Perth* departed.

The first few days of the voyage were spent in settling down to shipboard routine. Regular submarine lookouts were established and boat-drill was practised frequently to ensure that everyone knew his duty and station if an emergency occurred. Life jackets, which had to be carried at all times, were regarded as a cumbersome nuisance, or worse. In these big ships, with their numerous decks, corridors, lifts and stairways, it was easy to get lost and only constant practice offered any prospect of avoiding confusion if trouble arose. The large numbers aboard necessitated careful routing and timing to prevent 'traffic jams' and it had to be remembered that enemy action at night by mine, torpedo, or gunfire could destroy the ship's lighting system and so immeasurably increase the difficulties.

Fortunately the weather was fine during these preliminaries and all went well. Elementary training proceeded throughout voyage, including, in addition to physical and recreational training, a good deal of weapon training, semaphore signalling, and lectures on a variety of subjects. The training was hampered by a shortage of equipment and lack of space; route-marching round the decks with the men wearing boots is very useful exercise and also the best way of keeping the feet in good condition. Unfortunately, 25 Battalion and other troops from Trentham and Ngaruawahia were denied this advantage as both pairs of boots on issue had been hobnailed and so, because of the damage that would be caused, could not be worn on the decks.

The 800 miles of the Great Australian Bight produced its usual great rollers from the south, to the discomfort of many of the men, and of course disrupted the training. Fremantle was reached on 4 September and the ship berthed at noon. For the majority this was the first sight of a land other than their own and it carried a thrill of interest and anticipation which few will forget. It was of course well known by repute, through reports from preceding troops in both wars, as the gateway to a land of unbounded hospitality, which was never diminished by the frequent demands upon it nor by the boisterous behaviour of a proportion of its visitors, both Australian and New Zealand. Leave was granted from 1:00pm to midnight and the troops enjoyed the same enthusiastic hospitality in Perth and Fremantle as those who had gone before. The Third Echelon must have established a record by having only one man absent on sailing time, though ten others who were too late to rejoin their own ships were placed in the last ship to leave.

The convoy, which had now completed some 3,100 miles of its voyage, sailed just before noon the next day and encountered a moderate sea which had the usual effect, but from then onwards, as the ships approached the Tropic of Capricorn on their north-westerly course, the weather was fine with calm seas

and rising temperatures. Sports meetings began soon after the voyage resumed, a boxing tournament and tugs-of-war creating keen interest; the officers distinguished themselves by winning the tug-of-war. "The Sunday Church parades were impressive," said one man, "with 6 Brigade band playing the hymns."

The tropical weather was rather a revelation to many of the men, who found the high temperatures in the sleeping quarters below very trying. A strict blackout had been maintained throughout the voyage and the various ventilation devices, efficient though they were, did not overcome the effect of closed portholes and doors. Vaccination and an inoculation, which had been purposely delayed to avoid interfering with training in camp, had been given during the first few days after leaving Fremantle, and their after-effects aggravated the discomforts below. Sleeping on deck was permitted and was popular, though there was sometimes a tropical shower and always the unwelcome interruption when decks were hosed down very early in the morning.

In addition to its effects on ventilation the blackout prohibited lights of any kind on deck and smoking there was forbidden. Double doors, one of which had to be closed before the other was opened, were installed, and all portholes were masked. Unless there was moonlight it was pitch dark on deck and this caused one amusing incident. On opening a door to go on deck an officer was grasped firmly by someone on the outside who said fervently, "I just stepped out for a breath of fresh air and I've been groping round for that door for the last half-hour."

Collisions with objects animate and inanimate also occurred with results that had better, perhaps, be left to the imagination. But it was a serious matter when the ever-vigilant escorting cruiser reported a light showing. This was regrettably frequent and caused a considerable flurry among the officers both of the ship and the army, for the troops were not always at fault.

On 15 September the ships reached Bombay after a voyage of about 7,000 miles from Wellington and were then a little under 3,000 miles from Suez. Unfortunately it was now necessary to tranship as the big liners were required elsewhere, being too valuable with their speed and carrying capacity to be exposed unnecessarily to the risk of attack in the narrow waters at the entrance to the Red Sea. Twenty-fifth Battalion and other troops from the *Mauretania* were to re-embark in the *Ormonde* and those in the *Orcades* in the *Orion*.

The battalion spent 15 and 16 September in the *Mauretania* at anchor in the stream, the shore authorities stating that no transport was available to take the troops ashore. At seven next morning disembarkation into another vessel, the *Rona*, began and after what appeared to be an unnecessarily long delay in the

very hot sun, the men were landed, had lunch, marched two miles to the Ormonde, which lay alongside the wharf, and embarked. Leave was then granted from 3:30pm to midnight.

But the men's troubles were by no means ended. While on leave the troops were drenched by a severe thunderstorm, with torrential rain of a density far exceeding any they had previously experienced, and on their return to the ship found there were no drying rooms or a change of clothing available. Altogether it had been a trying day, for the men had had trouble in changing their money, Ceylon rupees placed on board in New Zealand for use at Colombo, the usual and expected port of call. The trading banks could not change this currency and the native shopkeepers would not accept it. However, the Reserve and Imperial Bank of India and the larger European stores converted the rupees into Indian currency at face value, though money-changers charged up to 7 per cent. It was most frustrating and exasperating to run into this difficulty, which wasted a good deal of precious leave.

Next morning, 18 September, the Ormonde moved into the stream and anchored. It was soon evident that the change of ships was a change very much for the worse so far as the men's accommodation was concerned. The messing arrangements were poor and the sleeping quarters overcrowded. The ship was dirty and insanitary as there had not been time to clean up after the disembarkation of British troops the day before, and the very hot climate aggravated the conditions.

The contrast between the Ormonde of 15,000 tons and the Mauretania of 35,739 tons was startling.

The troops remained on board during the 18th as again transport was not available to take them ashore. At dinner that night the meat was bad, with a peculiar taint. There had previously been very strong comment amongst the men about the way the meat had been handled at the wharf, where natives had been noticed walking over the carcasses, which were exposed to the blazing sun and to numerous flies while awaiting loading. That this made a very deep impression amongst the men of the battalion is very evident since men in discussion about it eighteen years later condemned it in the strongest terms.

Colonel Weir did his best to remedy the bad conditions aboard. He tried without success to have New Zealand beef transferred from the Mauretania and to have 400 men disembarked from the Ormonde to make more room. Another serious difficulty was the different ration scale, the Ormonde being on the British scale which was less generous than that to which the men had been accustomed. It was unfortunate, too, that the continuous rain forced the men off the decks and so accentuated the discomforts below, which as the ship was stationary, were more acute than when she was under way.

This catalogue of errors and misfortunes came to a head shortly before 1:15pm on 19 September when the convoy was due to sail. A large body of men, allegedly encouraged by a disgruntled crew, occupied the ship's bridge and wheelhouse, telling the Captain they were taking charge and that the ship would not sail till their grievances were adjusted. A deputation then waited on Colonels Wilder and Weir and all the grievances, other than the one of accommodation, were disposed of satisfactorily. In the meantime the remainder of the convoy had sailed at the appointed time.

On discussing the situation with the naval and embarkation authorities ashore, Colonels Wilder and Weir were told that the convoy had been slowed down to enable the Ormonde to rejoin, that the action of the troops was very serious, and that the ship had been placed in arrest. Colonel Wilder had earlier declined an offer of naval assistance to restore order aboard.

On his return to the ship Colonel Weir told a conference of officers that the overcrowding had been largely overcome by arranging for many of the men to sleep on deck. The trouble then seemed to have died down, guards were posted at various points early next morning, and at 7:00am the ship sailed without further incident."

Puttick, Lieutenant-General Sir Edward. 25 Battalion. Historical Publications Branch, 1960, Wellington, pp8–13

Medical units

"Troops on the Mauretania and Orcades were transhipped to the Ormonde and Orion respectively. The staff of 2 General Hospital were ferried across to the Ormonde and the patients from the little ship's hospital on the sun deck were settled into the new ship. The unit fitted itself with a struggle into Section 11, E Deck—their dining-cum-sleeping quarters for the next two weeks.

Then there was a rush for leave. By taxi and gharri men travelled to the city, sampling the cool drinks and ices at the Services Club, and then sallying forth to new sights, sounds, and smells. Some bought postcards, sandals, shorts, fly swats; others fathomed the relative values of rupees, annas, and pies in the Bazaar—a foretaste of the economics of the Mousky in Cairo; some went past the stadium to the seafront with its streets of modern flats. A tropical storm caught many in its deluge and prompted an early return to hammocks on the Ormonde.

The more crowded and less comfortable quarters on this ship were not popular with the men, although the staff of 2 General

Hospital were relatively fortunate in their billets. As a protest against their living conditions and the food, a demonstration by the troops on the Ormonde delayed its departure from Bombay with the rest of the convoy on 19 September. However, the complaints were adjusted and the transport rejoined the convoy next day."

The Félix Roussel

After the luxury conditions on the Orcades, the men were not prepared for those prevailing on the Félix Roussel when they embarked in October. This ship was dirty; its Lascar crew were dirty, too, and conditions were in every way deplorable. As there was little ventilation to the troop deck, the men slept out on the open decks, but here they were caught by torrential rains and thoroughly soaked. In the fore galley cooks from the unit made a gallant attempt to provide meals, but they were incapacitated during the first few days of the voyage and everyone had then to be content with hard rations.

Off Aden the convoy was joined by another twenty ships and the escort of armed merchantmen was reinforced by the cruiser HMS Leander. In the Red Sea Italian planes made repeated bombing attacks on the large convoy. They were over almost every afternoon, but with little success. Then, in the early hours of the morning of Trafalgar Day, two Italian destroyers attempted an attack. The cruiser and merchant cruisers slipped off into the night and gunfire was heard well in the distance. Next morning the destroyer Kimberley was towed back to the convoy by the Leander with a gaping hole amidships, having sunk an enemy destroyer, damaged another, and silenced a shore battery that had joined in the action. The convoy kept steaming on slowly and safely.

The Félix Roussel left the convoy to call at Port Sudan for a few hours to take on water. While she was at the wharves, two Italian planes came out of the sun, and almost before anyone was aware of their appearance a bomb had shattered a goods shed on the wharves with a terrific blast and scattered the natives in all directions. One bomb fell in the sea just beyond the water barge alongside the Félix Roussel, shaking the ship with the blast as if she had been hit and throwing men off their feet, while another also fell into the water close by. The experience was shaking, but the troopship resumed her journey unscathed and steamed up the Suez Canal alone to Port Said.

McKinney, J. B. Medical Units of 2 NZEF in Middle East and Italy. Historical Publications Branch, 1952, Wellington. pp21–22

The Third Echelon	356 officers and 6,078 other ranks		Convoy US.4		Total troops:	6,434
HMT Orcades (1937)	23,456 GRT; 20½ knots	BT-389-22-295	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
Third Echelon Signals (7 + 105)		1,465 (McClymont)	Embarked	—		
26 (Canterbury) Battalion (671)			Wellington	20 August 1940	Lyttelton	20 August 1940
6 Field Ambulance (234)			Lyttelton	27 August 1940	Cook Strait	28 August 1940
Divisional Ammunition Company: C Section			Cook Strait	28 August 1940	Fremantle	4 September 1940
2 × infantry reinforcement companies (268)			Fremantle	5 September 1940	Bombay	15 September 1940
Transhipped at Bombay to the Orion						
The 14 and 15 Forestry Companies transhipped at Bombay to the Orcades which was sailing for the UK.			Bombay	—	Colombo	—
			Colombo	29 September 1940	Capetown	12 October 1940
			Capetown	13 October 1940	Freetown	23 October 1940
			Freetown	—	Greenock (Clyde)	5 November 1940
			Disembarked	—		
The Orcades continued to transport troops until she was sunk by U-boat U-172 (Carl Emmermann) off the Cape of Good Hope on 10 October 1942 (45 dead and 1,022 survivors).						
HMT Empress of Japan (1929)	26,032 GRT; 21 knots	BT-389-12-123	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
24 (Auckland) Battalion (33 + 638)		2,635 (McClymont)	Embarked	27 August 1940		
13 Railway Construction Company			Wellington	28 August 1940	Cook Strait	28 August 1940
14 Forestry Company (162)			Cook Strait	28 August 1940	Fremantle	4 September 1940
15 Forestry Company (162)			Fremantle	5 September 1940	Bombay	15 September 1940
Railway Operations Group: HQ			Bombay	19 September 1940	Port Tewfik	29 September 1940
16 Railway Operating Company			Disembarked	—		
17 Railway Operating Company						
19 Army troops Company						
HMT Mauretania (1938)	35,739 GRT; 22½ knots	BT-389-20-199	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
25 (Wellington) Battalion		2,334 (McClymont)	Embarked	27 August 1940		
Headquarters New Zealand Division			Wellington	28 August 1940	Cook Strait	28 August 1940
Divisional Provost Company			Cook Strait	28 August 1940	Fremantle	4 September 1940
Divisional Signals			Fremantle	5 September 1940	Bombay	15 September 1940
Overseas Base (Records)			Transhipped at Bombay to the Ormonde			
Base Pay Office (Details)						
Base Post Office (Details)						
1 Survey Troop						
2 General Hospital (18 + 148)						
Nursing Sisters (39)						
6 Infantry Brigade HQ						
6 Infantry Anti-Tank Coy						
6 Field Artillery (661)						
7th Anti-Tank: 33 Battery						
8 Field Company						
New Zealand Engineers						
19 Light Aid Detachment						
First reinforcements (1,228)						

The Third Echelon	— officers and — other ranks		Convoy BN.5A		Total troops:	—
The Empress of Japan, Orion and Ormonde formed Convoy BN.5A (Bombay to Suez)						
HMT Orion (1934)	23,371 GRT; 20½ knots	BT-389-22-309	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
Troops on the Orcades transhipped at Bombay to the Orion.	—		Bombay Disembarked	19 September 1940 —	Port Tewfik	29 September 1940
HMT Ormonde (1918)	15,047 GRT; 16½ knots	BT-389-22-320	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
Troops on the Mauretania transhipped at Bombay to the Ormonde.	—		Bombay Disembarked	20 September 1940 1 October 1940	Port Tewfik	29 September 1940

6 Field Ambulance and about 550 Reinforcements remained in Bombay until taken further by the Félix Roussel in Convoy BN.7.

Escorts and other troopships

28 August 1940	HMS Achilles accompanied the convoy from Wellington.
29 August 1940	HMAS Perth joined the convoy on 29 August 1940 on the Tasman Sea.
30 August 1940	HMS Achilles turned back for New Zealand.
31 August 1940	HMAS Canberra from Sydney joined the convoy in the Great Australian Bight.
	Australian troopship Aquitania (2,780) from Sydney joined the convoy in the Great Australian Bight.
	HMAS Perth left the convoy.
13 September 1940	HMS Colombo took over escort duties from HMAS Canberra on 13 September 1940.
19 September 1940	HMS Colombo and HMAS Kanimbla served as naval escorts from Bombay.
20 September 1940	The Ormonde departed Bombay and was escorted by the armed merchant cruiser HMS Antenor until she made rendez-vous with the convoy.
25 September 1940	HMS Ajax, destroyers HMS Kandahar and HMS Kimberley, and an anti-aircraft cruiser HMS Coventry took over escort duties on 25 September 1940.

The Third Echelon	— officers and — other ranks		Convoy BN.7		Total troops:	—
HMT Félix Roussel (1929)	17,083 GRT; 17 knots	BT-389-12-283	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
6 Field Ambulance (234)	—		Bombay	9 October 1940	Port Sudan (water)	22 October 1940
Reinforcements (about 550)			Port Sudan	22 October 1940	Port Tewfik	25 October 1940
			Port Tewfik	25 October 1940	Port Said	26 October 1940
Convoy BN 7 consisted of 32 British, Norwegian, French, Greek and Turkish merchant ships.			Disembarked	26 October 1940		

Sources

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Puttick, Lieutenant-General Sir Edward. 25 Battalion. Historical Publications Branch, 1960, Wellington, pp8–15

4th Reinforcements: 1st Draft	83 officers and 1,404 other ranks		Convoy US.7		Total troops:	1,487
HMT Batory (1936)	14,287 GRT; 17 knots	BT-389-3-201	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
4th Reinforcements: 1st Draft Reinforcements: 28 (Māori) Battalion (300)		2,772 (Arnold Hague)	Embarked	—		
			Wellington	8 November 1940	Sydney	11 November 1940
			Sydney	14 November 1940	Fremantle	—
			Fremantle	27 November 1940	Colombo	5 December 1940
			Colombo	—	Port Tewfik	15 December 1940
			Disembarked	16 December 1940		
HMT Maunganui (1911)	7,527 GRT; 16 knots	BT-389-39-190	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
4th Reinforcements: 1st Draft Transhipped at Sydney to the Orion		1,487 (McClymont)	Embarked	—		
			Wellington	8 November 1940	Sydney	11 November 1940
Reinforcements on the Maunganui transhipped at Sydney to the Orion.						
HMT Orion (1934)	23,371 GRT; 20½ knots	BT-389-22-309	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
4th Reinforcements: 1st Draft	—		Sydney	14 November 1940	Fremantle	—
			Fremantle	27 November 1940	Colombo	5 December 1940
			Colombo	—	Port Tewfik	15 December 1940
			Disembarked	—		

Escorts and other troopships

- 8 November 1940 HMS Achilles arrived at Wellington on 7 November 1940 and sailed the next day as ocean escort for the Batory and Maunganui.
- 14 November 1940 Australian troopships Stratheden (2,733) and Strathmore (2,713) joined the convoy.
- HMAS Perth joined the convoy as a naval escort.
- 28 November 1940 HMAS Canberra joined the convoy as a naval escort until 3 December, when she returned to Fremantle.

Sources

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4th Reinforcements: 2nd Draft	— officers and — other ranks		Convoy US.8		Total troops:	—
HMT Dominion Monarch (1939)	27,155 GRT; 21 knots	BT-389-9-221	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
4th Reinforcements: 2nd Draft		1,434 (Arnold Hague)	Embarked	19 December 1940		
General cargo			Wellington	20 December 1940	Sydney	23 December 1940
			Sydney	28 December 1940	Fremantle	3 January 1941
			Fremantle	4 January 1941	Trincomalee	12 January 1941
			Trincomalee	12 January 1941	Colombo	12 January 1941
			Colombo	16 January 1941	Port Said	30 January 1941
			Disembarked	30 January 1941		
HMT Empress of Russia (1913)	16,810 GRT; 19 knots	BT-389-12-122	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
4th Reinforcements: 2nd Draft		2,321 (Arnold Hague)	Embarked	19 December 1940		
			Wellington	20 December 1940	Sydney	23 December 1940
Reinforcements on the Empress of Russia transhipped at Sydney to the Aquitania and Awatea.						
HMT Aquitania (1914)	44,785 GRT; 25 knots	BT-389-2-14	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
4th Reinforcements: 2nd Draft		3,350 (Arnold Hague)	Sydney	28 December 1940	Fremantle	3 January 1941
			Fremantle	4 January 1941	Trincomalee	12 January 1941
			Trincomalee	12 January 1941	Colombo	12 January 1941
Transhipped at Colombo to the Khedive Ismail						
HMT Awatea (1936)	13,482 GRT; 21 knots	BT-389-2-260	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
4th Reinforcements: 2nd Draft		571 (Arnold Hague)	Sydney	28 December 1940	Fremantle	4 January 1941
Transhipped at Colombo to the Khedive Ismail			Fremantle	4 January 1941	Colombo	12 January 1941
Reinforcements on the Awatea and Aquitania transhipped at Colombo to the Khedive Ismail.						
HMT Khedive Ismail (1922)	7,290 GRT; 16 knots	BT-389-17-220	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
4th Reinforcements: 2nd Draft		—	Colombo	14 January 1941	Port Tewfik	28 January 1941
			Disembarked	—		

Escorts and other troopships

20 December 1940 HMS Achilles sailed from Wellington as naval escort for the Dominion Monarch and Empress of Russia.
28 December 1940 Australian troopships Mauretania (2,761) and Queen Mary (5,261) joined the convoy at Sydney.
HMAS Sydney, HMAS Canberra and HMNZS Leander escorted the convoy from Sydney.

Sources

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Stout, T. ; Duncan M. New Zealand Medical Services in Middle East and Italy. Historical Publications Branch, 1956, Wellington. p77

4th Reinforcements: 3rd Draft	181 officers and 3,559 other ranks		Convoy US.9		Total troops:	3,740
HMT Nieuw Amsterdam (1938)	36,287 GRT; 20 knots	BT-389-40-130	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
18 Army Troops Company		—	Embarked	1 February 1941		
8 Field Company (5 + 237)			Wellington	1 February 1941	Sydney	3 February 1941
21 Mechanical Equipment Company (8 + 234)			Sydney	4 February 1941	Fremantle	—
36 Survey Battery			Fremantle	12 February 1941	Bombay	22 February 1941
3 General Hospital (14 + 143)						
Nursing Sisters (48)						

The reinforcements on the Nieuw Amsterdam transhipped at Bombay to the following vessels:

HMT Nevasa (1913)	9,213 GRT; 13 knots	BT-389-21-271	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
8 Field Company (5 + 237)		1,196 (McClymont)	Bombay Disembarked	26 February 1941 —	Port Tewfik	15 March 1941
HMT Empress of Australia (1919)	13,882 GRT; 18 knots	BT-389-12-117				
3 General Hospital (205)		—	Embarked	11 March 1941		
Nursing Sisters (48)			Bombay Disembarked	12 March 1941 —	Port Tewfik	23 March 1941
HMT Indrapoera (1926)	10,825 GRT; 17 knots	BT-389-16-111				
36 Survey Battery		—	Bombay Disembarked	12 March 1941 24 March 1941	Port Tewfik	23 March 1941
HMT Nieuw Zeeland (1928)	11,069 GRT; 14½ knots	BT-389-40-133				
Not known (mostly Australian troops)		—	Bombay Disembarked	12 March 1941 —	Port Tewfik	23 March 1941
HMT Windsor Castle (1921)	19,141 GRT; 19 knots	BT-389-32-127				
Not known		—	Bombay Disembarked	12 March 1941 —	Port Tewfik	23 March 1941

Escorts and other troopships

4 February 1941 Australian troopships Aquitania (3,345) and Queen Mary (5,718) joined the convoy off Sydney Heads.
Mauretania (3,927) joined the convoy in Bass Strait. After leaving Fremantle the Queen Mary left the convoy for Singapore.

Sources

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5th Reinforcements	222 officers and 6,066 other ranks		Convoy US.10		Total troops:	6,288
HMT Mauretania (1938)	35,739 GRT; 22½ knots	BT-389-20-199	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
5th Reinforcements		3,891 (Arnold Hague)	Embarked	—		
Reinforcements: 28 (Māori) Battalion (6 + 250)			Wellington	7 April 1941	Sydney	10 April 1941
Reinforcements: Army Service Corps (ASC)			Sydney	11 April 1941	Fremantle	16 April 1941
			Fremantle	19 April 1941	Colombo	28 April 1941
			Colombo	6 May 1941	Port Tewfik	13 May 1941
			Disembarked	13 May 1941		
HMT Nieuw Amsterdam (1938)	36,287 GRT; 20 knots	BT-389-40-130	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
5th Reinforcements		2,642 (Arnold Hague)	Embarked	—		
14 Light Anti-Aircraft regiment			Wellington	7 April 1941	Sydney	10 April 1941
Australian troops (about 1,200) boarded at Sydney			Sydney	11 April 1941	Fremantle	16 April 1941
Australian troops disembarked at Singapore			Fremantle	19 April 1941	Singapore	24 April 1941
Troops on the Nieuw Amsterdam transhipped at Singapore to the Aquitania			Transhipped	25 April 1941		
The Nieuw Amsterdam remained in Singapore for repairs (commencing 28 April 1941) then sailed for Bombay on 9 May 1941.						
HMT Aquitania (1914)	44,785 GRT; 25 knots	BT-389-2-14	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
5th Reinforcements		—	Singapore	28 April 1941	Colombo	1 May 1941
14 Light Anti-Aircraft regiment			Colombo	6 May 1941	Port Tewfik	13 May 1941
			Disembarked	13 May 1941		
			Disembarked	16 May 1941		

Escorts and other troopships

7 April 1941	HMS Achilles, HMAS Australia and HMAS Hobart sailed with the convoy from Wellington.
? 9 April 1941	HMS Achilles left the convoy for Jervis Bay to protect the Queen Mary which was anchored there, refuelled at Sydney and returned to Auckland.
10 April 1941	Australian troopships the giant Cunard liners Queen Elizabeth (5,633) and Île de France (4,046/Arnold Hague: 3,269) joined the convoy at Sydney on 10 April 1941
11 April 1941	Queen Mary (5,724) joined the convoy at Jervis Bay on 11 April 1941.

Sources

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Waters, S. D. The Royal New Zealand Navy, Historical Publications Branch, 1956, Wellington, p153

6th Reinforcements	145 officers and 3,663 other ranks		Convoy US.11A		Total troops:	3,808
HMT Aquitania (1914)	44,785 GRT; 25 knots	BT-389-2-14	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
6th Reinforcements		4,012 (Arnold Hague)	Embarked	—		
Reinforcements: 28 (Māori) Battalion			Wellington	27 June 1941	Sydney	4 July 1941
Reinforcements: Dental Corps (8 + 12)			Sydney	9 July 1941	Trincomalee	16 July 1941
Reinforcements: Artillery gunners (370)			Trincomalee	17 July 1941	Port Tewfik	28 July 1941
			Disembarked	29 July 1941		

Escorts and other troopships

27 June 1941 HMS Achilles escorted the Aquitania to the east coast of Australia where, on 30 June 1941, HMAS Australia took over convoy duties.
30 June 1941 Australian troopships Queen Elizabeth (5,807) and Queen Mary (5,723) joined the convoy of the east coast of Australia on 30 June 1941.
HMAS Australia joined the convoy as naval escort on 30 June 1941. HMS Achilles returned to Wellington.

7th Reinforcements	159 officers and 5,610 other ranks		Convoy US.12B		Total troops:	5,769
HMT Aquitania (1914)	44,785 GRT; 25 knots	BT-389-2-14	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
7th Reinforcements		3,296 (Arnold Hague)	Embarked	—		
Reinforcements: 28 (Māori) Battalion			Wellington	15 September 1941	Melbourne	18 September 1941
			Melbourne	18 September 1941	Fremantle	25 September 1941
			Fremantle	28 September 1941	Colombo	7 October 1941
			Colombo	10 October 1941	Port Tewfik	20 October 1941
			Disembarked	—		
HMT Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1929)	19,429 GRT; 17 knots	BT-389-38-75	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
7th Reinforcements		2,146 (Arnold Hague)	Embarked	—		
			Wellington	15 September 1941	Melbourne	18 September 1941
			Melbourne	18 September 1941	Fremantle	25 September 1941
			Fremantle	28 September 1941	Colombo	7 October 1941
			Colombo	10 October 1941	Port Tewfik	20 October 1941
			Disembarked	—		

Escorts and other troopships

15 September 1941 HMS Achilles accompanied the convoy from Wellington to a point 130 miles off the south coast of New South Wales, then handed escort duties to HMAS Adelaide.
18 September 1941 HMAS Adelaide escorted the Dutch transport Sibajak (1,398) from Sydney.
22 September 1941 HMAS Sydney escorted the Marnix van St. Aldegonde (2,409) from Melbourne to Sunda Strait.

Sources

Waters, S. D. The Royal New Zealand Navy, Historical Publications Branch, 1956, Wellington, pp158–162

8th Reinforcements	218 officers and 5,287 other ranks		Convoy US.18		Total troops:	5,505
HMT Aquitania (1914)	44,785 GRT; 25 knots	BT-389-2-14	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
8th Reinforcements		5,505 (Arnold Hague)	Embarked	—		
Reinforcements: 28 (Māori) Battalion (2 + 56)			Wellington	11 December 1942	Fremantle	19 December 1942
			Fremantle	21 December 1942	Aden	2 January 1943
			Aden	2 January 1943	Port Tewfik	5 January 1943
			Disembarked	5 January 1943		
9th Reinforcements	107 officers and 3,402 other ranks		Convoy US.19		Total troops:	3,509
HMT Dominion Monarch (1939)	27,155 GRT; 21 knots	BT-389-9-221	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
9th Reinforcements		3,535 (Arnold Hague)	Embarked	—		
Medical Section (1 + 95)			Wellington	14 May 1943	Fremantle	23 May 1943
NZANS Nursing Sisters (5)			Fremantle	26 May 1943	Colombo	4 June 1943
Reinforcements: 28 (Māori) Battalion			Colombo	—	Aden	7 June 1943
			Aden	8 June 1943	Port Tewfik	11 June 1943
			Disembarked	11 June 1943		
10th Reinforcements	176 officers and 5,887 other ranks		Convoy US.21		Total troops:	6,063
HMT Nieuw Amsterdam (1938)	36,287 GRT; 20 knots	BT-389-40-130	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
10th Reinforcements		—	Embarked	—		
Medical Section (6 + 118)			Wellington	22 July 1943	Hobart	27 July 1943
NZANS Nursing Sisters (20)			Hobart	27 July 1943	Fremantle	2 August 1943
Commissioned dispensers (2)			Fremantle	2 August 1943	Port Tewfik	18 August 1943
Reinforcements: 28 (Māori) Battalion			Disembarked	—		

Sources

Stout, T. Duncan M. New Zealand Medical Services in Middle East and Italy. Historical Publications Branch, 1956, Wellington, p470
Documents Relating to New Zealand’s Participation in the Second World War 1939–45: Volume II. Publication details: Historical Publications Branch, 1951, Wellington, p222

11th Reinforcements: 1st Draft	144 officers and 3,242 other ranks		Convoy US.23A		Total troops:	3,386
HMS Mooltan (1923)	20,952 GRT; 15 knots	BT-389-21-85	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
11th Reinforcements: 1st Draft Reinforcements: 28 (Māori) Battalion		3,395 (Arnold Hague)	Embarked Wellington Hobart Fremantle Bombay Aden Disembarked	— 12 January 1944 17 January 1944 27 January 1944 11 February 1944 16 February 1944 —	Hobart Fremantle Bombay Aden Port Tewfik	16 January 1944 23 January 1944 9 February 1944 16 February 1944 21 February 1944
11th Reinforcements: 2nd Draft	68 officers and 2,564 other ranks		Convoy US.24		Total troops:	2,632
HMT Ruys (1937)	14,155 GRT; 17 knots	BT-389-42-34	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
11th Reinforcements: 2nd Draft Reinforcements: 28 (Māori) Battalion NZMC (5 + 118) NZANS (12)		(Journey not recorded)	Embarked Wellington Fremantle Aden Disembarked	— 31 March 1944 14 April 1944 28 April 1944 23 May 1944	Fremantle Split from convoy Port Tewfik	— 24 April 1944 23 May 1944
12th Reinforcements	154 officers and 1,640 other ranks		Convoy US.24B		Total troops:	1,794
HMT Highland Princess (1930)	14,133 GRT; 15½ knots	BT-389-15-170	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
12th Reinforcements Reinforcements: 28 (Māori) Battalion (400)		1,794 (Arnold Hague)	Embarked Wellington Fremantle Trincomalee Aden Disembarked	— 29 June 1944 11 July 1944 26 July 1944 29 July 1944 2 August 1944	Fremantle Trincomalee Aden Port Tewfik	9 July 1944 24 July 1944 29 July 1944 2 August 1944
13th Reinforcements	106 officers and 2,022 other ranks		Convoy US.24C		Total troops:	2,128
HMS Dunnottar Castle (1936; F34)	15,007 GRT; 16 knots	BT-389-10-77	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
13th Reinforcements Reinforcements: 28 (Māori) Battalion		2,100 (Kay)	Embarked Wellington Fremantle Seychelles Aden Disembarked	28 September 1944 30 September 1944 14 October 1944 26 October 1944 2 November 1944 5 November 1944	Fremantle Seychelles Aden Port Tewfik	10 October 1944 26 October 1944 2 November 1944 4 November 1944

14th Reinforcements	275 officers and 3,421 other ranks		Convoy US.25		Total troops:	3,696
HMT Empress of Scotland (1929)	26,032 GRT; 21 knots	BT-389-12-123	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
14th Reinforcements		3,705 (Arnold Hague)	Embarked	—		
Reinforcements: 28 (Māori) Battalion (150)		3,695 (Kay)	Wellington	5 January 1945	Hobart	8 January 1945
			Hobart	9 January 1945	Aden	25 January 1945
			Aden	26 January 1945	Port Tewfik	29 January 1945
			Disembarked	29 January 1945		

Escorts and other troopships

5 January 1945 Destroyers HMAS Quiberon and HMAS Quickmatch (manned by Australian crews) accompanied the Empress of Scotland from Wellington.
9 January 1945 HMS Achilles joined the convoy at Hobart, sailing with the convoy to Fremantle.
14 January 1945 On 14 January the convoy was met off Cape Leeuwin by HMS London, which took over escort duties.

15th Reinforcements	155 officers and 3,391 other ranks		Convoy US.26		Total troops:	3,546
HMT Empress of Scotland (1929)	26,032 GRT; 21 knots	BT-389-12-123	Departure port	Departure date	Destination	Arrival date
15th Reinforcements		3,500 (Kay)	Embarked	20 April 1945		
Reinforcements: 28 (Māori) Battalion			Wellington	21 April 1945	Melbourne	24 April 1945
			Melbourne	24 April 1945	Colombo	6 May 1945
			Colombo	7 May 1945	Port Tewfik	14 May 1945
			Disembarked	15 May 1945		

Germany capitulated on 7 May 1945.

Other sources

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