

TUCKER, TROOPS FOR THE USE OF

BY JOHN HARNETTY, C COY., 2/1

The Australian Digger is noteworthy in his fondness for tucker with his meals, and recent experiments with field-rations are proving that a campaigning force can march on its stomach a lot easier than it did some wars ago.

Diggers operating in Malaya and in our special air units and commandoes are now using an Australian ration-pack which contains three meals and et ceteras parcelled up into a neat plastic container.

The Australian ration was evolved after a lot of research by our nutrition experts, working with the William Angliss laboratories in Victoria.

Needless to say, "trying it out on the dog" was a matter of testing the tucker on some guinea-pig Diggers. The current ration is the result of a lot of actual field tests.

Old hands who have used this ration say it's something of a change from the old bully-beef and hard-tack ("three to a tin and two to packet").

Not that the average Digger ever growled too much about bully. You could do things with it by frying or stewing if you didn't want to take it straight.

TASTY 'ERRINS AND TERMATER SAUCE!

But what about that thrice-damned canned fish?

The story goes of the Digger who, when told that his midday meal was to be tasty 'errins and termater sauce, remarked feelingly "Oh Gawd, not them bloody things again! I've eaten so many of them pregnant prawns, me stummick goes in and out with the tide!"

Field rationing has always been a problem. Old Monsieur Soyer made things a lot easier in the Crimea when he introduced the army stove which still bears his name.

Ever had to pull one apart and hump it on to a truckload of camp accommodation stores?

The Soyer stove was used in the Crimea for bulk meals.

Before that, troops drew individual issues of meat and vegetables, and were left to cook them as best they could—and find their own firewood as well.

When our troops were chasing the Reds in the North Perak area of Malaya, they enjoyed the personal ration-pack.

They pointed out that you didn't get terribly hungry in the fetid rottenness of a jungle hideout, just lying doggo, waiting for the Red who might shove his nose into your area.

But Digger appetites are nonetheless devoted groceries. Some troops liked the ham and egg of the early packs, and there were bacon and beans and sausage and beans.

Evening meal was the main one, with such things as canned corned beef (here we go again!), ham and beef and liver and bacon. There were also rice, raisins and other bits and pieces with which meat could be curried.

Fuel tablets were included to heat the food and tea and sugar or some other beverage in instant style.

The Australians didn't like the British version of the ration pack because it had too many lollies.

Even when he's not really hungry, the Digger still likes his three square meals a day.

WOODPILE, OR ELSE!

Long before M. Soyer's invention of his stove (which has often earned the sincerest curses of Diggers on woodheap fatigue because of the Soyer's insatiable appetite for firewood), armies on the move have had to face up to the problem of rations on the march.

Some did it by foraging . . . others were more provident.

Wasn't it the ancient Hun who used his meat rations as a saddle and ate it at body heat (human and equine) when the cookhouse call was sounded?

DINNER IS SERVED, SIR!

World War 11 gave young Diggers the chance to taste Maconochie's which had earned the praises or curses of their forbears of World War I.

Some of the new Diggers found it good, some didn't go for it at all. But it was a generously thick type of stew, with plenty of vegetables, and it certainly stuck to the ribs.

In the Sixth Division's Western Desert advance in near-Arctic temperatures, it was usually appreciated when somebody latched on to some tins.

Just throw it on the fire, chisel off the top of the can with a bayonet, and dinner is served!

In the Desert, German troops of Rommel's Afrika Korps had their food problems as well, though they were initially supplied with such things as canned bread, sausage and even beer.

Heinz Werner Schmidt's biography of Rommel tells how unpopular Italian rations were with the German troops.

One of the Italian specialties was a canned meat called "A.M." (initials for "Amministrazione Militare"). The Germans called it "Alte Mann" ("Old Man").

Oddly enough—as many of the 2/1 will remember—the Italians had some excellent dehydrated onions, and their wholemeal flour made fine dampers. Their canned fish steaks in olive-oil were a popular grab when the Digs came on an abandoned food dump.

But the Italian army biscuits were something to be used only as housing material.

How the Italian ate them without hours of preliminary soaking remains a mystery.

In their dry state they would have resisted assault with a jack-hammer.

Many Pioneers actually put stamps on them and posted them home—and

they got there, too, without a crumb missing!

The Korean War provided headaches for logistics officers of the United Nations command.

Many items came from American sources, but the British Commonwealth Division provided a lot of its own food.

SAWDUST AND BREADCRUMB SAUSAGE

Outstanding among the more on-the-coat dishes was a particularly noxious skinless sawdust-and-breadcrumb sausage which excited no enthusiasm and less appetite.

Australian troops were given plenty of American turkey and ham. But these choice foods began to cloy after a while, and there were nostalgic murmurs about the glories of a typical baked dinner—with either beef or mutton as the centre-piece.

The American canned C-ration was popular at first, but is generally pappy nature caused troops to tire of it.

Tommy troops were keen on bread, and a British field bakery on the outskirts of Seoul worked overtime to keep it up to them.

The Indian Field Ambulance was practically self-sufficient for dietetic and religious reasons.

Their curries were marvels and amply calculated to keep out the Arctic chill of the Korean winter.

Ration packs for the Turkish Brigade Group and other Muslim troops were carefully marked.

Ham and pork played a big part in the canned-ration scale, and nobody wanted trouble with the Sons of Islam over that.

(As a parting note — or footnote: Does anybody remember that shocking Smorgon's canned sausage and the M. and V. ration? Eaten hot, both were ghastly. Eaten cold, they simply beggared the imagination! I've often wondered if there's a special type of agony-after-death reserved for the sadists who put out that series of glue factory by-products for the consumption of our country's fighting men!)

VALE

Jack Griffiths and Mick Riley brought the sad news of the passing on of:

MAX GOLDRING, H.Q., 2/1

and

VIC. KING, C Coy.

Both were unfortunate enough to have been T.P.I. To the family and relatives of the two members, we extend the deepest sympathy of all the Association.

LAST POST

We are indebted to our Welfare Officer, JACK COLLIS, for sending along the following information regarding our former members:

NX 56464 BISHOP, J. S., 2/1.

NX 33968 HANSHAW, J. A., 2/1.

NX 29441 McGUINNES, J. 2/1.