

Allan Gordon Campbell (1916-2011), was born on 4 May 1916, at North Croydon, Hindmarsh, South Australia, the eldest child of Gordon Cathcart and Iris Emma Campbell (ne Fisher). His sister, Judith, was born in 1920. Campbell was educated at the prestigious Anglican Collegiate School of Saint Peter, Adelaide. He entered the University of Adelaide Medical School at age 16, where he was awarded the Harold Fisher Scholarship. He was top of the leaving honours examinations in 1932 and gained first credit and the Elder prize in first year medicine in 1933. In 1934, he secured fifth credit in second year medicine, and was awarded an all-Australian University Blue for athletics. After graduating Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) in 1938, Campbell became a Resident Medical Officer (RMO) at Royal Adelaide Hospital. His registrar, Dr Ina Fox, three years his senior, later became his wife. In 1940, he was an RMO at Adelaide Children's Hospital. His grandfather, Dr Allan Campbell, had founded this hospital in 1876.

On 1 April 1939, Campbell volunteered for service with the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), as a Surgeon Lieutenant, Royal Australian Naval Reserve (RANR), and was inducted into naval service at his home Port division of Port Adelaide. On 15 July 1940, he was mobilised for full-time service by proclamation, and was granted the antedated seniority of 1 April 1939. On 15 July, he was appointed to HMAS *Cerberus IV*, before being appointed to the destroyer HMAS *Vendetta* on 21 July 1940, as the ship's medical officer. Following a lengthy refit at Malta dockyards, *Vendetta* resumed escort and screening duties, a routine broken on 18 August by her participation in the bombardment of Bardia, in company with HM battleships *Warspite*, *Malaya* and *Ramillies*. During the withdrawal from this action, the fleet was subjected to heavy enemy air attacks, but fighter cover by the RAF and Fleet Air Arm managed to destroy eleven Italian aircraft without any losses of their own. Engine room problems again forced *Vendetta* back to Malta for repairs, from 11 October until 9 November.

On 3 January 1941, *Vendetta* participated in the bombardment of Bardia for the second time. Bardia was then occupied by Australian troops the next day. The Italians surrendered on the 5th, with forty-five thousand made prisoner. *Vendetta* then joined the inshore squadron and was engaged for a short spell on Libyan patrol duty. In early March 1941, the destroyer played her part in the Commonwealth reinforcement of Greece as a unit of 'Lustre Force'. This operation involved the movement of fifty-eight thousand troops with their unit transport, equipment and stores, all of which were transported without loss. On 27 March, *Vendetta* joined Light Forces, made up of HM Cruisers *Orion*, *Ajax*, *Gloucester* and HMAS *Perth*, and HM Destroyers *Ilex*, *Hasty* and *Hereward*, to rendezvous with the RN Battle Fleet south of Crete. However, at 08:00 next morning, *Orion* sighted four Italian cruisers, screened by three destroyers. The Battle of Matapan had started. For just under an hour the ships on both sides blazed away, but to little or no effect. At 08:59, the Italian ships turned away and headed for home at their best

speed, with the four RN Cruisers in hot pursuit. By 09:30, *Vendetta* was unable to keep pace, and was ordered to detach and join with the battle fleet. After joining with the battle fleet, the aging destroyer developed more engine problems and was ordered into Alexandria for repairs before rejoining 'Lustre Force' on 21 April. However, by the 24th, the situation in Greece had gone from bad to worse, so much so that it was decided to evacuate as many Allied troops as possible.

On the evening of 25/26 April, *Vendetta* was joined by the anti-aircraft light cruiser, HMS *Calcutta* and four other destroyers, then ordered to proceed to Megara, just north of Corinth Canal and evacuate troops. During the evacuation *Vendetta's* motor cutter broke down and had to be rowed in the same fashion as her whaler and skiff. *Calcutta* and the other destroyers soon filled up with troops. As *Vendetta* had no working motor cutter, and there had been a field hospital ashore with wounded still on the beach, it was decided by *Vendetta's* CO, Lieut. Commander R Rhodes, RAN - at Campbell's insistence - to move closer to the shore and clear the beach of wounded, eventually leaving at 04:00 with four hundred and sixty-nine wounded and exhausted troops on board. The more seriously wounded were made as comfortable as possible in the wardroom accommodation and mess decks, but quite a few managed as best they could on the upper deck, with little or no protection from ongoing enemy action. It was a situation where Campbell came into his own. He insisted quite strongly to Rhodes that the seriously wounded be given priority, and then set about doing what he could to alleviate their agony and dress their wounds. The twenty-five-year-old RANR Surgeon Lieutenant did amazing life-saving work under heavy air raids, and in less-than-ideal conditions. It was also noted that it was Campbell's calm manner which provided constant reassurance to the seriously wounded, and they were heartened by his caring professional attitude and his natural calmness.

In recognition of his service, Campbell was recommended for the award of the Distinguished Service Order (DSO). On 3 June 1941, The Supplement to The *London Gazette* has recorded the following:

'The King has been graciously pleased to approve the following Rewards for gallantry and distinguished service in the withdrawal from the beaches of Greece under fire and in the face of many and great difficulties of many thousands of Troops and Allied Armies. His Majesty has also been graciously pleased to give orders for the following Appointments to the Distinguished Service Order, and to approve the following Awards for like services: - To be Companion of the Distinguished Service Order: Surgeon Lieutenant Allan Gordon Campbell. MB, BS, RANR.' The Citation for this award reads thus: 'For gallant and distinguished service rendered to the wounded who were evacuated by HMAS *Vendetta* from Megara Beach on the night of 25/26 April 1941, during the withdrawal from the beaches of Greece in the face of many and great difficulties of many of thousands of troops of the Allied Armies.'

Due to the constant air raids by enemy aircraft, *Vendetta* had exhausted all of her small arm's ammunition. The embarked troops who were able, and still had their weapons and ammunition, were organised into serried ranks alongside the guard rails and fired volleys of 303s at the diving aircraft. It was quite spectacular to see one dive bomber hit by their fire and plunge into the water, amidst loud cheering from the embarked troops. Arriving at Suda Bay the next morning, *Vendetta* discharged her passengers ashore, refuelled, and then set sail for Navplion, south of Megara, again in company with *Calcutta* and other destroyers. In all, four thousand five hundred troops were evacuated on the night of 27/28 April. While it was deemed essential to sail by 04:00 so as to be clear of the coast and beyond the range of bombers, *Vendetta* did not clear Greek waters until 06:00, when the *Luftwaffe* came over with thirty dive bombing *Stukas*. The Dutch steamship, *SS Slamet*, loaded with troops, was attacked and hit by these aircraft. HM destroyers *Wryneck* and *Diamond* went to *Slamat's* aid, but then all three ships were attacked, bombed and sunk with a resultant huge loss of life.

The Germans launched the invasion of Crete in May 1941, and despite the RN's best efforts against *Luftwaffe* air supremacy the island fell, but not before some seventeen thousand troops had been successfully evacuated. During this operation, *Vendetta* performed screening duties on the battle fleet south of Crete, from 21 to 26 May. At the same time, Tobruk was under siege in the Western Desert campaign, and the task of supplying the tenacious Australian 9th Division was taken up by the 10th Destroyer Flotilla. All up, the Flotilla made one hundred and thirty-nine logistic and support runs, in and out of Tobruk, during the period this service was in place. The record number of thirty-nine individual passages went to *Vendetta*, with twenty into Tobruk, made up of eleven from Alexandria and nine from Mersa Matruh, and nineteen from Tobruk, with eight to Alexandria and eleven to Mersa Matruh. All of these logistic and support runs were carried out during the period 29 May and 2 August 1941, when *Vendetta* entered Tobruk for the last time. On 11 July 1941, during a return run to Alexandria on a bright moonlit night, enemy bombers attacked *Vendetta* and HMS *Defender*. A near miss exploded beneath *Defender* causing catastrophic damage to her underwater hull. *Vendetta* went alongside and embarked two hundred and seventy-five troops and their equipment from her consort, then took the crippled destroyer in tow. However, due to the damage she had sustained, *Defender* started to settle, so *Vendetta* took off her crew and finished her off with a torpedo.

Vendetta's service in the Mediterranean came to an end on 20 October 1941, when she departed Alexandria for the last time, bound for Singapore and a long overdue refit and refurbishment. Her respite, however, would prove to be all too brief, after Japan entered the war on 7 December. On *Vendetta's* departure, Campbell was appointed to the 'N' class destroyer, HMAS *Napier*. In the closing months of 1941, *Napier* took part in supplying the besieged Tobruk, provided protection to Mediterranean and Red Sea

convoys, and served on the screen of the fleet at sea. During November, *Napier* was also employed in the transfer of troops between Cyprus and Haifa, and on 31 December, *Napier* and *Nizam* bombarded Bardia before its capture by the British 8th Army. In January 1942, in company with HMA Ships *Nizam* and *Nestor*, *Napier* left the Mediterranean theatre of operations for the Indian Ocean, but on reaching Aden the three destroyers were ordered to escort the aircraft carrier HMS *Indomitable*, which was ferrying aircraft to the Malaya-Java area. When this assignment was curtailed, *Napier* was attached to the Royal Navy's Eastern Fleet, operating out of Trincomalee, Ceylon. *Napier* returned to the Mediterranean briefly in June 1942, acting as escort for an Alexandria-Malta convoy. It was during this operation that her sister ship, HMAS *Nestor*, was sunk. In late August 1942, Campbell was appointed to HMAS *Cerberus*, to join upon his eventual arrival in Australia.

It was while he was on leave that he married Dr Ina Fox of Strathalbyn, at Saint Peter's College chapel. He was evacuated from Darwin to 105 Military Hospital, Adelaide, in August 1943, suffering from a pleural effusion. Campbell was promoted to Surgeon Lieut. Commander on 1 April 1945, while serving in the *County* class heavy Cruiser, HMAS *Shropshire*. After refit at Garden Island, the cruiser returned to the operational area in June 1945, supporting the landings at Brunei and Balikpapan in early July, and then returned to the Philippines, serving there until the Japanese surrendered. *Shropshire* then sailed for Tokyo Bay and was present for the official surrender ceremony. She remained in Japanese waters until 17 November 1945, when she departed for her home port of Sydney. Campbell remained a member of the RANR after he was demobilised in December 1945. He was promoted Surgeon Commander, RANVR on 31 December 1954. He also appears in *The Navy List* of September 1967, as Surgeon Captain, RANVR. It is assumed with some certainty that Campbell would have continued in his profession, and beyond, until his retirement, whenever that may have been. Allan Gordon Campbell, DSO, VRD, RANVR, passed away peacefully on 29 June 2011, aged 95. He was buried in the same vault as his wife at North Road Cemetery Nailsworth, Prospect City, South Australia, at Plot South Path 5 West-Vault DM6.