

I travelled from place to place in a jeep, always through heavy clouds of dust. It was impossible to keep clean, and I had little time for washing clothes. After I had had a bath in a bucket I was hotter than before. Going to bed meant taking off my clothes and lying down on the blankets, always after making sure that my mosquito net was firmly in place and that all the mosquitoes were outside. As a protection against malaria I was given half a little yellow pill each day of the week and a whole one on Sundays. At mess the food was tinned or dehydrated. We were lucky to see butter. Usually it was margarine or fat spread which I didn't like and so went without.

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When a plane made of thin metal has been lying out in the Solomons sun for a time it becomes like an oven inside and the outside becomes too hot to touch. The only temptation to enter it is the thought of the coolness some thousands of feet above. At about

8,000 ft. the air inside the plane becomes pleasantly cool, and because of this the hops to Munda, Vella Lavella, and Mono were all too short.

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Vella Lavella is a big island and, like Guadalcanal, mountainous and covered with dense jungle. New Zealand troops were here in strength and the work of building roads and establishing camps was making great headway. The camps were laid out with coral paths and were clean and tidy. Some of the paths had been lined with coconuts which had sprouted and grown three or four feet high. It looked as if a coconut dropped in the wrong place might become a tree almost overnight. One man had prepared a small garden and had acquired some dried beans from the cookhouse. In twenty-four hours these became plants an inch high, but from then on they grew tall and spindly and looked pale and unhappy. Like the gardener, it seemed, they didn't like Vella Lavella.



[E. W. Andrew Photo.]

A New Zealand encampment on Vella Lavella.