THE TANK-TRAP ON THE MOUNTAIN:

Mr. Bert Weston's story in the October Bulletin, "They Shall Not Pass," brought back memories of the tank ditch (or tank-trap, as we called it). He stated that the ditch was dug from the lake to Brownsville. I feel sure that the tank ditch that he refers to was that dug from the lake to the cliff face on the southern ridge of Mount Kembla. The ditch passed through the properties of many landowners. My father's property on the mountain side was one, and "Farmborough" was another. I don't think that any of the landowners were notified of the project—I know my father was not. The ditch was dug with great speed. Three large bulldozers were used at the mountain end, working continuously from 7 a.m. to 2 a.m. the following morning. They then had five hours rest, during which the machines were serviced. Powerful lights on the dozers enabled them to work at night. I lived a short distance from my parents, our homes being separated by the ridge through which the tank trap cut. After the cut-through my home was isolated for a few days until a bridge was built. Our family had little sleep during that time as the noise and bright lights made it almost impossible. On the completion of the ditch, wire netting and twelve-foot poles spaced a few feet apart were erected along the sides to stop the earth from falling in. On the banks tangled barbed wire was placed and extended some eight to ten feet outwards, with steel pegs driven into the ground to keep the wire in place—it was impossible to walk through that tangled mass of wire.

While the trap was being dug a story went around that the enemy had broadcast over their news a commentary on the tank
traps on the South Coast of N.S.W. dug from the ocean to the mountain face—I don't know how true that was.

A sentimental landmark a short distance from our home was destroyed in digging a trap—we felt it could have been saved. It was a huge rock balanced on smaller ones which formed a cave. My father had claimed it had been the camping ground for aborigines. It was a lovely spot for us to play as children.

After the war the army demolished our bridge, filling in only enough earth to form a road. After repeated requests from my father, they returned and filled in his main cultivation paddock. None of the barbed wire around our area was removed. We used many of the steel pegs and poles in repairing fences. The owner of "Farmborough" converted a portion of his ditch into a dam.

—IVY MURRAY.