

FROM DONEGAL to NAGASAKI

The Life and Times of
FRANK SCOTT
1907 – 1982

Schoolboy, Emigrant, Farmer, Miner,
Fisherman, Powder Monkey,
Surveyor's Assistant, Australian Soldier,
Husband, Father.

PROUD SAPPER OF THE 2/6th FIELD
COMPANY 'MIDDLE EAST AND
NORTH AFRICA ORIGINALS'
7th DIVISION ENGINEERS
AUSTRALIAN ARMY
1940 -1946



PRISONER OF WAR 1942 - 1945



The River Finn, County Donegal, Ireland



Mushroom cloud over Nagasaki August 1945

*Till a voice, as bad as Conscience,
rang interminable changes
In one everlasting Whisper
day and night repeated -- so:
"Something hidden. Go and find it.*

*Go and look behind the Ranges --
Something lost behind the Ranges.
Lost and waiting for you. Go!"*

RUDYARD KIPLING b. 1865 'The Explorer'

WRITTEN AND COMPILED BY
PETER RUSSELL SCOTT 2015

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Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia. ANZAC Day, 25th April 2015, on the 75th Anniversary of the raising of the 7th Division, 2nd AIF at Ingleburn in 1940.

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PART 1

1. PROLOGUE

I have written this narrative principally for the descendents of my late father Lewis Francis 'Frank' Scott who may be interested in their family history, so that they may know about the Scott family from east Donegal, Ireland, and something about Frank the man, his personality and character traits, some of which might pass from generation to generation.

These characteristics are, principally, a love of adventure and travel, a sense of fairness in all things, a rejection of falseness and patronising behaviour, and some quietness of a person who minds their own business, yet who, from time-to-time, may express a deeply held opinion. Basic to all of this is an underlying commitment, once made, to family.

I also want to pay tribute to Frank's service to his adopted country during World War 2, so that people might know of the price that he paid for becoming an Australian. **In doing so, I pay tribute to the Sappers of his unit, the 2/6th Field Company, who fought and died beside him, mostly as a lost company of Australian Army combat engineers, Prisoners of War of the barbaric and cruel Japanese in the period 1942 to 1945. I want their service to be acknowledged and appreciated by future generations of Australians and not carelessly cast aside by uncaring history revisionists.**

Despite the brutal treatment meted out to them, the Sappers remained defiant and dignified. They refused to buckle and submit, often to the point of death.

At the end of his captivity in the coal mine near Nagasaki, Japan in August 1945, Frank was near death but still saying to his captors:

NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO TO ME,
NO MATTER HOW YOU TREAT ME, I
AM STILL HERE AND WILL NOT GIVE UP!

My father told me little of his upbringing and life in Ireland or indeed of his life before he was married. It was not until I was in my thirties and after he had died did I begin to wonder about his life experiences in Donegal, England, Western Australia, and Darwin and on active service with the Australian Army during World War 2.

My interest in things Irish was kindled during my childhood at the 'Irish Corner' of Gipps Street West Tamworth. Frank would sit with Harry Attwell and his father Ned Attwell (a WW1 Battle of the Somme veteran with one artificial leg) both from Lisburn in Northern Ireland, and with George Blair from Balleybofey in Donegal, and philosophise about the World in general, and the then 'troubles' in Ireland in particular.

In about 1987 at the time of the 'Welcome Home Parade' for Vietnam War veterans, I began to reflect not only on my own experiences as a Sapper during the Vietnam War, but also on what might have been Frank's experiences as a Sapper during WW2. I really regret not having exchanged those experiences with him; no doubt we would have performed a lot of similar Engineer tasks and got up to similar Sapper mischief.

One thing that I do know is that we shared not only an enormous pride in having been a Sapper on Active Service, but also the great sadness at the loss of comrades who fell on the battlefield.

Perhaps this written account to Frank's war service will in some way help redress missed opportunities.

We both knew the adverse effects that our traumatic experiences have had on our own families, those effects being common within families of many war veterans.

I have been fortunate to travel twice with my wife Julianne over much of Ireland, and particularly to east Donegal, where, through research and the kindness of many people, I was able to locate the places in the beautiful Finn Valley and in New Buildings, where Frank spent his childhood up until the age of about 14 or 15.

Julianne also encouraged me to travel to Thailand, and the Three Pagodas Pass, and we had at that time a most amazing journey with my brother Rob and his wife Jill, and Rob and I crossed over into Burma along the route of the terrible Burma-Thailand Death Railway.

Frank's life experience was based on three things: the desire for adventure and opportunity, the impact of war, and the value of family life.

Firstly, the desire for adventure and opportunity, that is, 'the Irish rover' factor.

Seeking adventure and opportunity has characterised the history of people named Scott (Latin *Scotti*) for centuries, and the history of the Scotts in the province of Ulster in north Ireland is part of the rich but often conflicted history of Ireland over many centuries.

Many say this history can be traced back to Irish sea raiders who migrated from Ireland to Scotland in the 5th Century AD, and who in fact gave Scotland its' name.

The *Scotti* became intermingled with other invaders of the British Isles and the name Scott became common on the Anglo-Scottish border.

It is thought that Frank's forbears, seeking new opportunities, migrated to the province of Ulster in north Ireland in the 1600's or 1700's as part of the English sponsored 'Plantation of Ulster'.

The earliest Scott of Frank's line that I have a record of is a John Scott, b. 1800, a teacher living just north of Donegal Town, in charge of a school comprised of Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic students.

Second, the impact of war on Frank's lifelong family relationships (both prior to

and after marriage) was profound. His childhood and early teens were spent in the picturesque Welchtown district in east Donegal where his father's family had lived for many generations, and had a strong Irish identity.

The Easter uprising in Ireland in 1916 led to the Anglo-Irish War, followed by the Irish Civil War and, in 1922, the Partition of Ireland into two parts: The Irish Free State (which later became the Republic of Ireland) and Northern Ireland (part of the UK). All of County Donegal, including the predominantly protestant Welchtown, formed part of the Free State.

Frank's (Church of Ireland) family were forced to chose to flee Donegal due to intimidation by zealous post-Partition republicans known as 'the raiders'.

Like so many other east Donegal Protestants, Frank's family were excluded by the Border Commissioners (the British Government) from becoming part of Northern Ireland at the time of Partition, and chose the path of emigration, firstly to England.

My father espoused neither unionist nor nationalist ideology, nor sectarianism, and especially not any religious bigotry. He was just an Irish boy from Donegal.

He could be described as having an open mind and a very humanist outlook, no doubt reinforced by his dreadful experiences as an Australian Prisoner of War of the Japanese, where it was necessary for mates, irrespective of politics or religion, to support each other in order to survive; No Australian prisoner ever died alone on the Burma-Thailand Railway.

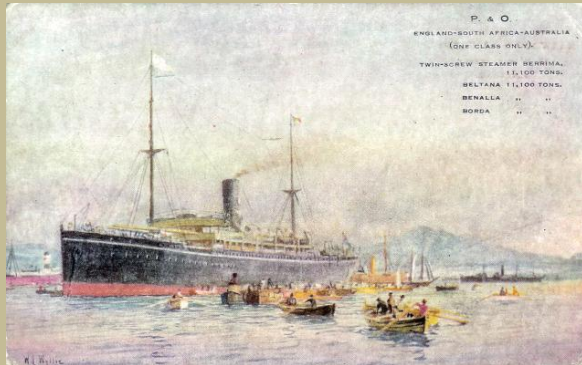
Frank's 'Irish rover' father, Lewis Henry Scott, supported unenthusiastically by his mother Christina Jane Scott, settled in Massachusetts the United States of America in the 1930's, and took up American citizenship. Frank chose Australia.

Abandoning their homeland for the promise of a better life across the sea, the ambitious, the talented, the optimistic and the restless departed. (from the BBC TV program 'The

History of Scotland', talking about Depression-era migration from the British Isles)

Leaving his parents and sister Eileen behind in England in 1926, Frank, then aged 19, set off on his own on the long voyage to Australia.

He never saw his family again.



Liverpool to Fremantle via South Africa:

P & O steamer SS Berrima on which Frank Scott travelled to Australia in 1926 (P&O Ocean Liner Postcards)

Little could he have guessed that after he came to Australia, war would again rear its' ugly head, and that he would be caught up in its' maelstrom.

Little could he have imagined that August 1945 would find him as an Australian soldier, prisoner of war and slave-labour in a coal mine very near Nagasaki, Japan, where a nuclear bomb was detonated.

The sight of Nagasaki in ruins must have seemed like Dante's Inferno when compared to the beauty of the Finn Valley.

His journey to freedom out of the Japanese PoW Camp at Omuta through bombed-out Nagasaki would have been bitter sweet; His emaciated body was wracked with pain and illness – he had tapeworms in his gut and bowel, grit scars in his eyes and was suffering with chronic sinusitis; his spine was twisted and bent from daily bashings from the Japanese and Korean guards. But he was leaving that God-forsaken place.

He told Mavis that towards the end at Omuta Camp 17 he sometimes thought about giving up, but, having already endured 3 ½ years of brutality,

starvation, torture and degradation, he just kept on going.

Putting aside this Irish stubbornness and Australian outback toughness, his imprisonment must have felt something like being in exile from Australia:

... You shall leave everything you love most: this is the arrow that the bow of exile shoots first.

You are to know the bitter taste of others bread, how salty it is, and know how hard a path it is for one who goes ascending and descending others' stairs

Dante, In Paradiso XVII

Third, Family Life: Frank and Mavis were married in 1946 in what was then considered 'later in life' – he 39, she 34. Their marriage of thirty six years was sound, although sometimes very bumpy, mainly due to the enduring physical and mental impacts of Frank's harsh treatment by the Japanese, and to Mavis' somewhat Victorian upbringing.

Yet they were good parents and did all they could to create a good family life.

In their later years they found security and contentment in their home in West Tamworth.

2.COUNTY DONEGAL 1600s to early 1900s

MAPS OF IRELAND

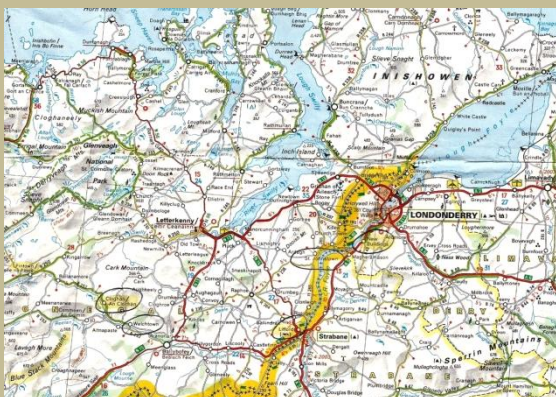
'Too many maps are never enough' PR Scott



- **Map 1: Ireland and Great Britain**



- **Map2: North Ireland**



- **Map 3: East Donegal** and surrounds with New Buildings, St Johnston, Lifford, Welchtown and Cloghan circled. Northern Ireland is east of the yellow line

FRANKS CHILDHOOD IN IRELAND 1907 to 1921/22

Frank left small pieces of oral history for his family, but nothing detailed, and for that reason it has taken me over a decade to piece together some facts about where they lived, and to gain some understanding of the Irish social and political situation of that time.

New Buildings, his birthplace In 1997, my brother John Lewis Scott was the first of Frank's sons to visit Ireland, and he obtained the following extract of his birth particulars from Irish Government Births Records.

The village of New Buildings (in Northern Ireland) is located just outside of the City of Derry/Londonderry* in the district known as Waterside Rural, and is circled on Map 3.

*Note: I have learned that most Finn Valley people historically, irrespective of affiliations, use the name Derry, so I will continue that convention.

It was here that Frank's father Lewis Henry Scott (a native of the Finn Valley in nearby County Donegal, d. 12 June 1944 aged 72 at Winchendon, Massachusetts USA) had been the Stationmaster on the since closed-down County Donegal Railway, and it was here that Lewis Henry met and married Christina Jane Parke (Granny Scott b. 25 Sept 1876 d. 21 Nov 1968 Aylesbury, England), the niece of William Blackburn Nixon, the owner of a nearby grocery and liquor store.

Christina's father Joseph Parke was a boatman on the nearby River Foyle, and would have rowed people from New Buildings to the village of St Johnston on the western side of the river. Joseph was drowned in the River Foyle about 1885.



County Donegal narrow gauge locomotive



New Buildings Railway Station now demolished and replaced by housing (very reminiscent of the former railway station at Mavis' home village of Nemingha, near Tamworth, New South Wales)



WELCHTOWN, his home

In 1903, before Frank was born, his grandfather William Hamilton Scott (b.1840), passed away, and his grandmother asked her son Lewis Henry Scott to leave New Buildings and return home to Welchtown on the River Finn, County Donegal, to take over the family business, a spirit grocer (liquor) store.



The old school in Welchtown was opened as a National School on the 1st April 1867. This was a one-roomed building and a second room was added in 1911. It remained the primary National School for the Church of Ireland population until 1962. (source Glenfin.com) The remnant foundations of this school were still evident (2011) just up the hill from the former Scott house, and it is probable that John Scott* (Frank's great-grandfather) William Hamilton Scott, Lewis Henry Scott and Mary Anna Scott (later Mrs Francis Guy) were all teachers here.

CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1911.												
RETURN of the MEMBERS of this FAMILY and their VISITORS, BIRTHDAYS, DEPARTURES, &c., who were at home in this House on the night of SUNDAY, the 2nd of APRIL, 1911.												
HOUSEHOLD NO.	NAME AND SURNAME	RELATION	AGE	SEX	MARRIAGE	RELIGION	EDUCATION	OCCUPATION	BIRTHPLACE	MARRIAGE	MARRIAGE	
												1901
1	Catherine Scott	Wife	42	F	Married	Roman Catholic	None	None	Welchtown, Donegal	1901	1906	1911
2	Nora Eileen Scott	Daughter	12	F	Single	Roman Catholic	None	None	Welchtown, Donegal	1901	1906	1911
3	Lewis Francis Scott	Son	10	M	Single	Roman Catholic	None	None	Welchtown, Donegal	1901	1906	1911

1911 Ireland Census at Welchtown showing Catherine (not Christina) Scott, daughter Nora Eileen and son Lewis Francis. Father Lewis Henry absent on Census night – see below. Why Christina showed and signed her name Catherine at that time is a mystery.

CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1911.												
RETURN of the MEMBERS of this FAMILY and their VISITORS, BIRTHDAYS, DEPARTURES, &c., who were at home in this House on the night of SUNDAY, the 2nd of APRIL, 1911.												
HOUSEHOLD NO.	NAME AND SURNAME	RELATION	AGE	SEX	MARRIAGE	RELIGION	EDUCATION	OCCUPATION	BIRTHPLACE	MARRIAGE	MARRIAGE	
												1901
1	Lewis Henry Scott	Head	42	M	Married	Roman Catholic	None	None	Rosstownlagh, Donegal	1901	1906	1911
2	Elizabeth Scott	Wife	38	F	Married	Roman Catholic	None	None	Rosstownlagh, Donegal	1901	1906	1911

1911 Ireland Census at the Hotel at Rosstownlagh, including Lewis Henry Scott



Eileen, Christina and Frank Scott c.1912



Peter Scott standing at the front of the former Scott house in Welchtown with local farmer Mr Jim Kee. Photo Julianne Scott 2011



The banks of the Finn near the Salmon Leap
Photo: Peter Scott 2011



Finn Valley landscape Photo Peter Scott 2011



The former Scott home at Welchtown, side view
Photo Julianne Scott 2011

THE PRIOR SCHOOL, LIFFORD

1879 -1971

Lifford is a small town on the western side of the River Foyle, just inside the Republic of Ireland. Strabane is its twin town, on the Northern Ireland side, over the connecting Lifford steel Bridge.

Frank's early schooling was at the privately-run Prior School, and he probably would have travelled there each day by train on the Donegal Railway, from the former Glenmore Railway Station near Welchtown. On closure, the School was sold to the Irish Government and was until 2009 a barracks of the Irish Army.

Peter and Julianne visited the old School/barracks in 2004 and were made very welcome by the Irish Army's Provost Sgt Brian McGlinchy, who had served alongside Australian soldiers on peacekeeping missions in Europe.



Welcome to the old Prior School, Lifford, 2004, then an Irish Army Barracks, by Sgt. Brian McGlinchy, Irish Army

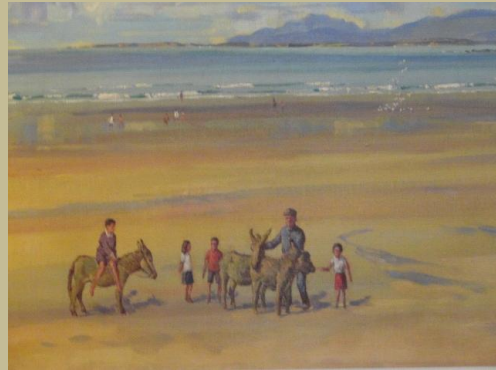


Rear of an old classroom
Photo: SGT Brian McGlinchy, Irish Army

ROSSNOWLAGH is a coastal holiday village in south Donegal, where the Scott family took seaside holidays. It was here, and in the River Finn, where Frank gained his love of fishing.



Plaque: The Prior School 1879-1971



Donkeys on the Strand (beach) at Rosstownlagh. Painting in the Rosstownlagh Hotel 2011

They would have travelled down on the train, alighting at Rosstownlagh station. Their friends from the Kee family lived one stop shorter at Ballintra.



Front Façade of the former Prior School



Above A photo on display at the current Rosstownlagh hotel showing the long demolished

original hotel (where Lewis Henry Scott stayed on Census night 1911) top right hand (largest) building.

Rossnowlagh has in recent decades been a popular surfing beach and the Hotel boasts an informal 'Surfers Bar'.



A Century later: Present Day Rossnowlagh Hotel photo: Peter Scott 2011

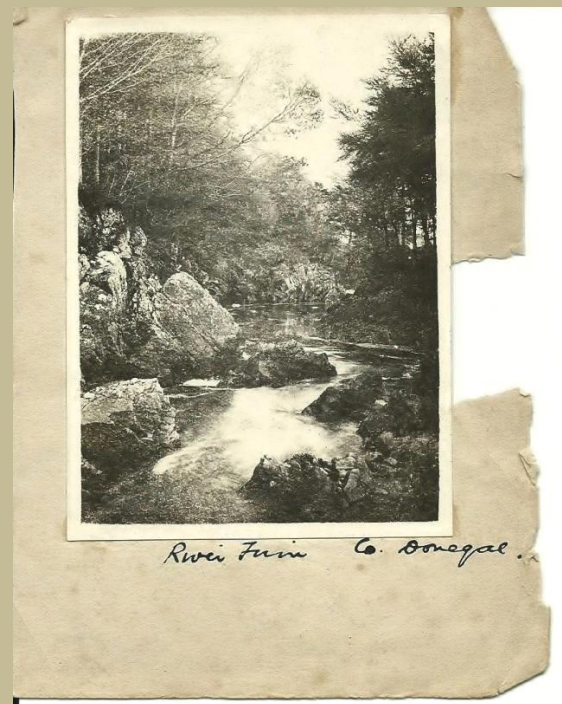


Surfers at Rossnowlagh present day

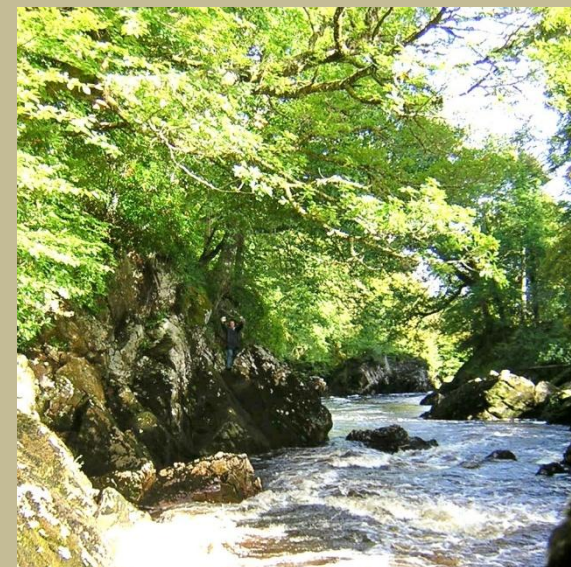


Wild swans in wetlands behind the dunes Rossnowlagh Photo: Peter Scott 2011

The 'River Finn' Photograph c. 1920. My first major clue to the geographic location of the Scott's home in Donegal was a small black and white photograph in the family album kept by Mavis, titled "River Finn Co. Donegal", thought to be c. 1920, with a pencil note on the back saying 'Near Salmon Leap Cloghan'. The village of Cloghan is located in the Finn Valley on the road north from the town of Ballybofey, and just north of Welchtown.



Above Scott family photo c. 1920. Peter and Julianne located the exact site that this photo was taken, during their first visit to Ireland in 2004.



Peter Scott (arms raised) in 2006 standing on the same rock as in the 1920s photo

3.A TIME OF CHANGE . IRELAND AFTER THE EASTER UPRISING.

Much of Irish history is open to interpretation, depending on perspective. For an Australian with no preconceptions and not much knowledge to gain a balanced perspective, a lot of reading is required, and from a wide range of sources. Search of internet pages will quickly reveal many journal articles and blogs, some of them quite polarised towards either end of the republican - unionist divide.

I am grateful to Dr Andy Bielenberg, School of History, University College, Cork, Ireland, for responding to my requests for information about the 1920 - 1922 history of Donegal, and providing a wide range of readings, including his own academic perspective:

Abstract of a paper presented by Dr Bielenberg 26 May 2011 'Exodus: the emigration of southern Irish Protestants during the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War'

The mass mobilisation of revolutionary nationalism and regime change across Europe during and after the First World War, led to communal divisions, revolutionary violence, and for a number of ethnic minorities defeat and emigration from a host of emerging nation states. The southern Irish Protestant minorities were not exceptional in these respects, experiencing a population fall from 327,179 in 1911 to 220,723 in 1926; this fall was the equivalent of almost 33% of the 1911 minority population compared to a Catholic contraction of just 2%. The scale of this fall is generally recognised by historians, but the causes remain unclear. The longer than usual gap between the census years in question, and the major historical events which took place in the intervening years further complicate the picture. The issue which was and remains most contentious in the historiography is the portion of this exodus which was

'forced'. This paper attempts to provide a coherent overview of all the causal factors driving Protestant emigration, including the impact of British military withdrawal, agrarianism and land reform, revolutionary violence and regular economic migration. Following an assessment of a wide spectrum of factors (including estimates of their respective magnitudes) the paper concludes that revolutionary terror accounted for a relatively small share of total Protestant departures.

SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ireland was one of England's first colonies, having been under some control as far back as the 1100's. The English had a particularly difficult job in ruling the rebellious Irish in the northern part of the country, the Province of Ulster. To increase their control, they sent Protestant English and Scots to settle in this area and simply take over land by force from the Irish. This immigration or "Plantation of Ireland" proved very effective for the English at the time, and by 1703, less than five per cent of the land of Ulster was still in the hands of the Roman Catholic Irish.

In 1801, the Act of Union made Ireland a part of the United Kingdom. Roman Catholic people were suppressed through discriminatory laws and regulations, and they started several uprisings which were swiftly crushed by the police and the British Army.

After the republican Easter Uprising in 1916, there followed a period of guerrilla war – the Anglo-Irish War, or War of Independence (as depicted in the movie *Michael Collins*). In 1921 an agreement about Irish independence was reached between the republicans and the English. The main provision of the Treaty was that six counties in the north (Ulster) were to remain in the union with Great Britain. The majority of people in the north were Protestant and wanted to keep the bond with Britain.

In Ireland this provision stirred strong feelings, and disagreement over the Treaty threw the country into a civil war between pro-Treaty, or Irish Free State forces, led by Michael Collins, and anti-Treaty forces led by Eamon de Valera. The Pro-treaty forces prevailed, but Collins was shot dead in an ambush by anti-treaty forces, whether by design or accident, at Béal na Bláth, an isolated crossroads in West Cork.

With friends Gary and Diana O’Keeffe we visited both the GPO in Dublin where the republic was proclaimed in 1916, and the ambush site at Béal na Bláth. At both places I felt a strong Irish identity.



General Michael Collins in Irish Free State Army Uniform



Eamon de Valera, political leader of the anti-treaty forces. Later President of the Irish Republic.

De Valera is said to have declared in 1966: "It is my considered opinion that in the fullness of time history will record the greatness of Michael Collins; and it will be recorded at my expense"

The remaining three of the nine Counties of Ulster, including Donegal, became part of the Irish Free State, but it took some time to re-establish consistent law and order after the British left. During this period many of the "Protestant Ascendancy" "Big Houses" or manor

houses, were burned to the ground by republicans either as reprisals for past subjugation by the British landlords, or as just as flexing of their new-found independence.

In the border counties such as Donegal there were many instances of Protestants being intimidated by more extreme neighbours and groups, most notably the I.R.A.

It has been difficult to find out exactly what happened to the Scotts in Welchtown in 1921/22, but Granny Scott’s version, via Margaret Ruth’s *William Nixon Report*, was that "the IRA forced them to leave in haste".

Oral history from the late Neil Clark (Frank’s nephew) tells how ‘the raiders’ came into the Scott home and tried to get Frank to join the IRA (he had apparently been friends with a number of ‘republican boys’) and when his family refused, they tied up his donkey with barbed wire, saying that Frank would be next to receive that treatment. Frank would have been about 14 or 15 years of age at the time.

Frank told his wife Mavis that his family had always enjoyed good relations with Roman Catholic people in the Valley, and I can imagine that the Scott’s ‘spirit grocer’ business would have facilitated some lively drinking and music ‘sessions’, and Irish dancing. The ‘barbed wire’ incident would therefore have been both surprising and alarming.

4.THE FLIGHT FROM IRELAND

The intimidation by ‘the raiders’ was said to have alarmed Granny Scott to such an extent that she/they decided to abandon their Welchtown home and business, take flight to England then emigrate to America, where Grandfather Scott’s brother (Frank’s Uncle) Louis Scott De Burgh (born William Scott but changed his name in America) had emigrated a quarter of a century earlier.

The victory of the pro-Treaty side in the Civil War led to the restoration of order in the Free State, and the suppression of direct attacks on Protestants. In fact the new Government worked hard to keep the Protestants in the Free State.

5. IN ENGLAND 1922-1926

It is possible that the Scott family received some British Government assistance to re-settle in England, and they chose the market town of Aylesbury, just north of London in Buckinghamshire, one of the Home Counties.

Frank apparently continued his education at the Aylesbury Grammar School but left about the age of 15-16. His 'classical education' as a young man showed in his later life and he was, for example, able to talk to us about the meaning of Latin and Greek words, and engage in philosophical discussions.

Grandfather (Lewis Henry) Scott apparently opened a shop in Aylesbury under the name 'Scott and Son', and Cousin Ruth tells me that Granny Scott ran the 'Post Office at the top of Walton Street (part of the same shop?)

After he left school, Frank was not keen to join the family business, and went to work in a bicycle and motor bike garage in Folkestone, south-east of London near Dover.

It would have been there that he learned to ride and maintain a motor bike, a skill that would later stand him in good stead in the North African Desert in 1941, when the Australian Army was looking for despatch riders.



Frank Scott aged about 17-18 years, on his Ariel Motorcycle c.1925-26

Uppings Farm, Aylesbury. Frank's sister Eileen married in 1926 to a farmer, Bertram Clark from Uppings Farm, north of Aylesbury on the Buckingham Road, Weedon. They had three children: Christine, Neil and Ruth – our Cousins.



Uppings Farm 2011

photo: Peter Scott

Granny Scott came back to Uppings farm to live out her remaining days until she died in 1968. The **following poem** of hers is reproduced from a letter she wrote in January 1965, to her grandson John Scott.

ON SEEING A SCARLET TANAGER FOR THE FIRST TIME

By Christina Jane Scott



*Today, upon my vision,
There flashed a lovely thing,
A brilliant scarlet tanager,
With purple on its wing,
And, looking on its beauty,
In rapture there I stood,
And wondered how it happened here,
This gay and gorgeous bird*

II

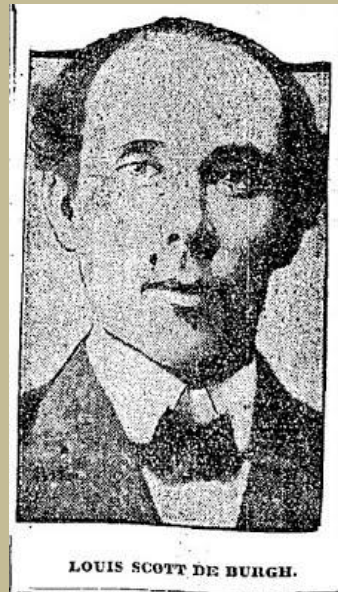
*Perhaps, it was a feather,
Dropped from an angel's wing,
And on its journey earthward,
Became a lovely thing,
Perhaps He dropped it gently,
That, we might glimpse a fairer vision
Of what is yet to be*

III

*The Springtime's full of beauty
Clothing the hills & plains
With verdure and with flowers
Clothing the country lanes
But sweeter far than anything,
That Spring can ever bring,
Is a brilliant Scarlet Tanager
With purple on its wing*

This interest in birds continued in Frank Scott and his son Robert with their various budgerigars and finches in their Gipps Street aviary. Rob continues with a great fascination with and love of birds in the wild.

THE MYSTERIOUS MR (and 'Reverend' and "Doctor") WILLIAM SCOTT DeBURGH



(Source: Stephen Lyons)

Thanks to the amazing detective work of my Irish American cousin Stephen Lyons of Boston, Massachusetts, I have learned that my Grandfather Lewis Henry Scott had an older brother William J Scott (1868 – 1949), my father's uncle.

William Scott emigrated to America in the late 1800's and took the **alias Louis Scott DeBurgh**. He served as US Marine Private in the Spanish – American War of 1898. US military records confirm the alias and the fact that in later life he received a military pension.

As Mr DeBurgh, he worked as a postal official and sometime 'itinerant' Methodist Minister at St Louis, Missouri, on the banks of the Mississippi River. Later, as the Reverend Louis Scott DeBurgh he fell out with the Church Board after renouncing Methodism as "to emotional and lachrymose" and saying that Methodists "should be permitted to smoke, drink wine, dance, go to theatres, play cards and attend Sunday baseball games". (St Louis *Post-Despatch* 31 March 1913).

Louis Scott DeBurgh was obviously somewhat of a character that never let the

truth get in the way of a good story. He re-invented himself in America as ‘a graduate of the University of Glasgow and having been educated for the Presbyterian ministry’. This, as pointed out by Stephen Lyons, can now be seen as ‘a lot of malarkey’; especially as in his statements in the local St Louis newspaper he references people and events in Scotland when they were obviously from Welchtown, Ireland – Mary Leeper, Mary Ann Scott (his sister), Miss McCready and the two Misses Kee’.

From numerous newspaper reports in St. Louis, I read between the lines that he left home after a disagreement with his father, and cut ties with his family in Ireland. Still, I wonder if there was any contact between him and his younger brother (my Grandfather) Lewis Henry Scott who arrived in Boston in the 1930s.

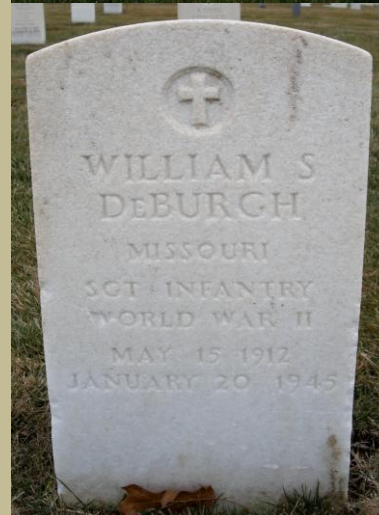
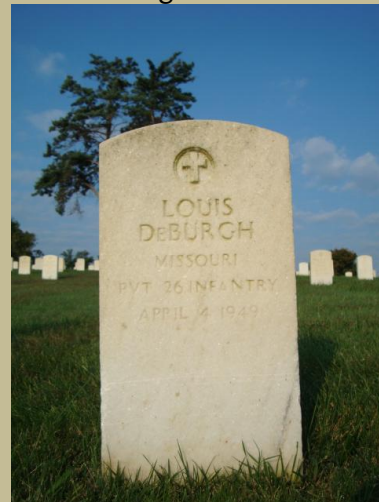
In 1936 he pops up again, this time in Florida, claiming to be “Dr DeBurgh, political activist and Doctor of Literature from Glasgow University’.

In later working life he fell on hard times after being accused of stealing from the US Postal Service, proffering the defence that his salary was insufficient to support his whiskey drinking.

He died in Los Angeles, California in 1949 and is interred in the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery, St Louis, MO., along with his sons William Scott Deburgh (US Army WW2 Infantry Sergeant killed in action in Belgium 1945, possibly in the Battle of the Bulge) and Louis Scott Deburgh Jnr (ex US Navy).

There is some sadness in the fact that first cousins William Scott DeBurgh and Lewis Frank Scott were, probably unbeknown to each other, fighting the forces of Fascism in Europe and Militarism in Asia. William gave his life, Frank suffered torture of body and mind.

Despite the best efforts of the amazing Stephen Lyons, no descendants of William Scott DeBurgh can be found in America.



De BURGH Graves
Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery, St Louis,
Missouri, USA
(my great uncle and second cousins)

6. EMMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA 1926

A search of the National Archives of Australia reveals that Frank Scott arrived in Fremantle on 15th August 1927 on the P&O liner SS Berrima. He shows his occupation as 'farm worker' (an occupation which attracted a free passage)

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
 Immigration Act 1912-1925. 11
 Form P.
 (Mandatory)

Page No. 5

Return of Passengers Brought to the Port of FREMANTLE from Places Outside Australia.
 (To be furnished to Department.)
 Name—last, first, and middle, and Sex Class: Passengers are to be returned in separate groups.

Name of Ship	Vessel Number	Port of Origin	Master's Name	Arrival Date	Form
P.O. "BERRIMA"	186528	Perth, Australia via S. O. Cape Services.	C. H. BIRCH	10 11, 1927	1

Names and Descriptions of Passengers.

No.	Port where first landed	Name	Profession, Occupation, or Rating	Sex	Age	Country of Birth	Place of Birth	Religion	Country of Destination
1	ESPERANCE	RICHARD James	Self Farm Worker	M	21	Ireland	British	Australia	
2	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Patrick	"	M	19	Ireland	"	"	

Page No. 4

Return of Passengers Brought to the Port of FREMANTLE from Places Outside Australia.
 (To be furnished to Department.)
 Name—last, first, and middle, and Sex Class: Passengers are to be returned in separate groups.

Names and Descriptions of Passengers—continued.

No.	Port where first landed	Name	Profession, Occupation, or Rating	Sex	Age	Country of Birth	Place of Birth	Religion	Country of Destination
61	ESPERANCE	RICHARD James	Self Farm Worker	M	21	Ireland	British	Australia	
62	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Patrick	"	M	19	Ireland	"	"	
63	ESPERANCE	CHARLES Owen W.	Self-Joiner	M	20	Ireland	"	"	
64	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
65	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
66	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
67	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
68	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
69	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
70	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
71	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
72	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
73	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
74	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
75	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
76	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
77	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
78	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
79	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	
80	ESPERANCE	WILLIAM Owen	Domestic	M	21	Ireland	"	"	

Why he left the ship at Fremantle rather than go on to Melbourne or Sydney, is unknown. Mavis said that, because of his Grammar School education, he had a written introduction to the Melbourne Age Newspaper, with a view to becoming a cadet reporter. Perhaps he was attracted to the romance of the Western Australian outback and the prospect of making his fortune goldmining.

7. THE WESTERN AUSTRALIA YEARS



Farm Work in the Esperance District.

Frank told John Scott that he spent his 21st Birthday (28th June 1928, the year after his arrival) ploughing on a farm in the coastal Esperance District, 750 km south-east of Perth.

Farming would have been tough during the hard times of the Depression in 1928



Life in the Outback: The Murchison Goldfields

It is not known exactly when or where Frank was involved in gold mining, as the only comments he ever to us were that it was in the Murchison Goldfields, and that you could see the night sky and stars during the daytime by looking up the vertical shaft from deep underground; and it was dreadfully hot over the summer months.

Daytime temperatures in this region for the month of January average over 38°C or 100°F.

As to when he was there, it would have probably been after his farming days at Esperance, a time when farmers began to walk off their farms due to the Great Depression.

So, we can guess that Frank moved north to the goldfields late 1920's / early 1930's, probably passing through Perth. He obviously never made his fortune mining for gold, but he never would have envisaged that he would go underground again a decade or so later, this time unwillingly as slave labour digging coal in Baron Mitsui's freezing cold coal mine near Nagasaki, Japan. What a contrast.



Entrance to an abandoned gold mine



Yellow paper daisies bloom in August among the Mulga trees.



Aboriginal Rock Paintings Murchison District

Northwards to Darwin

As he travelled north, Frank variously took up other activities including fishing at Broome and Carnarvon (where, as he often said, 'a galloping horse could not beat the incoming tide'), and contract work on large agricultural holdings such as Victoria River Downs.



Early days in Broome



Carnarvon One Mile Jetty was used as a deep sea port until the 1980s.



Kimberly landscape



The Kimberley coastal cliffs clearly show the rise and fall of the areas' famous 12 metre tides (Tim Bowden)

The most defining characteristic of the Pilbara and Kimberley regions of Western Australia where Frank spent many years have always been their remote and desolate nature.

It is 'big sky' country, full of not only magnificent beauty but also hazardous conditions for the unwary and unprepared. Self reliance is absolutely essential.

It is a place where people can be whatever they want to be. It was a place in the

1930s where people could leave behind the conflict of Europe.

Primarily, it was and still is Indigenous Country.



These superb Aboriginal Wandjina paintings on the roof of a cave behind Raft Point on the Kimberley Coast (Tim Bowden)

Frank had great respect for indigenous Australians, and talked to me about sitting around campfires with tribal people in the bush in Western Australia in the 1930s. I share that respect and remember my late Sapper mate Bob 'Butch' Marden and other indigenous Sappers who served in the Vietnam War.



"Vincent Lingiari, I solemnly hand to you these deeds as proof, in Australian law, that these lands belong to the Gurindji people and I put into your hands part of the earth itself as a sign that this land will be the possession of you and your children forever."

—Gough Whitlam, Northern Territory, August 1975

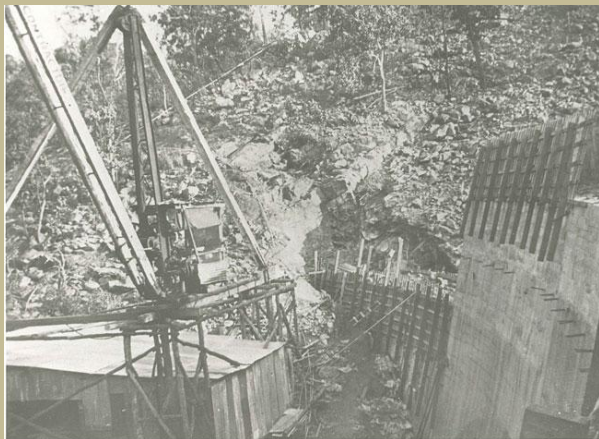
8. DARWIN AROUND 1940



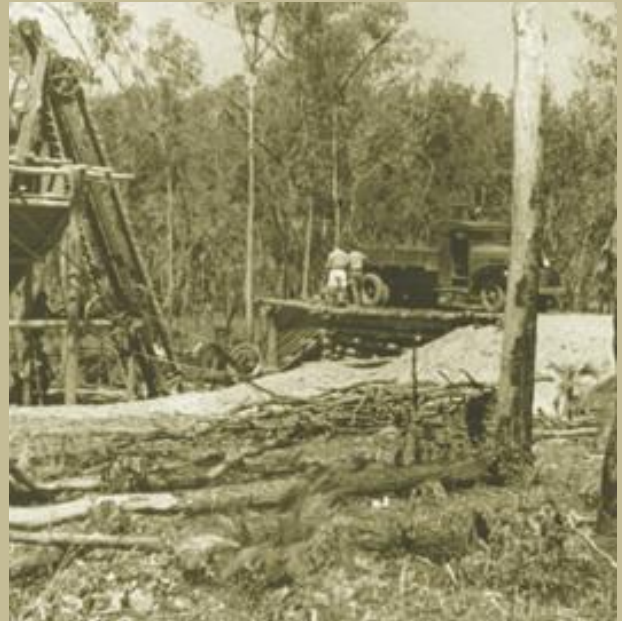
Cavenagh Street, Darwin, late 1930's

During his time in Darwin, Frank worked as a Field Hand (chainman) for a Surveyor Dick Tidy, and also as a 'powdermonkey' using explosives in the construction of the Manton water supply dam. Possession of these skills undoubtedly marked him out for the Corps of the Royal Australian Engineers when he volunteered for Army service in 1940.

MANTON DAM PHOTOGRAPHS



Manton Dam wall under construction



Manton Dam forms part of the traditional lands of the Larrakia Aboriginal people. Its local landscape, wildlife and native plants supported their way of life over thousands of years.

It was built to not only meet the needs of Darwin's growing civilian population, but an increased military presence as the threat of war drew closer. In particular, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) called for a reliable water supply for its fleet as did the Royal Navy and as it was agreed that the existing, limited water supply needed to be expanded, this was achieved with funding from the RAN. Construction of the dam and the pipeline to Darwin started in 1938.

During construction numerous industrial disputes (organised by the North Australian Workers Union) caused the financial collapse of the contractor (Manton Construction Pty Ltd) and there was increasing tension between the defence forces and the civilian administration, mainly over prioritising water supplies between the military and civilians.

It was in Darwin that Frank met and became good mates with James ('Jimmy' or 'Scottie') Russell, also known in the Army as 'the little bloke'. Jimmy was a small wiry Scotsman, and like many Depression - era emigrants from 'The Clyde' near Glasgow.

They joined the Australian Army together on 15th June 1940, and were allocated consecutive Army numbers, **Frank DX561** and **Jimmy DX562**. The DX prefix denoted that they joined up in Darwin.

Sapper James Russell was to die a Prisoner of the Japanese on 21st September 1943 at Kilo 100 camp at Anganan, just north of the Burma/Thailand border at Three Pagoda Pass. He was buried there in the POW graveyard by his Sapper mates including Frank Scott. His body was recovered after the War, and he now lies in the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery at Thanbyuzayat, 65 Km from Moulmein in Burma (Myanmar).



The Three Pagodas (Dan Chedi Sam Ong) on the Thai border with Myanmar (Burma) Photo: Peter Scott 2006

A long way from Darwin, and a very long way from Ingleburn.

PART 2

9. AUSTRALIA IN 1940: JOINING THE SECOND AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE (2ndAIF)



LG McPherson One in - all in 1939-1942
[Lithograph 50.8 x 63.2cm. AWM V6766]

PROLOGUE: My purpose in this part is to record some of the ‘adventures’ of my father Frank Scott and his Company of Sappers in the 2/6th Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers, 7th Australian Division, in the Middle East and North Africa Desert Wars, then when they became ‘the lost Company of Sappers’ in Japanese captivity for 3 ½ years.



**THE PURPLE DIAMOND: THE COLOUR PATCH
OF THE SEVENTH DIVISION ENGINEERS**

The material contained in the following sections relating to Frank’s war service is not a comprehensive nor complete account of the history of either the 2/6th Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers, or the 7th Division Engineers at War, but hopefully gives a good précis of their service.

For the more complete story of the 2/6th Field Company, you should read ‘Sappers of the Silent Seventh’ and ‘The Gap is Bridged’, told by the men themselves. Quotations from these two publications are reproduced with the kind permission of the Seventh Division Engineers Association.

There were a number of books written post WW2 by returned Australian servicemen and women, and many more have been written since by academics and the descendents of those who served, and many of these are available through local libraries.

I hope that my extended family, and others who read this, might understand that Australian Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Nurses who served overseas in World War 2, helped firstly defeat 20th Century Italian, French and Nazi German fascism in Europe, then Japanese military aggression and atrocity in Asia.

I do not seek to demonise the behaviour of the Japanese leading up to, and during WW2, for they did that for themselves. As University of Oxford historian Professor Rana Mitter has said, the victory over Japan by allied forces, including China, was a titanic struggle against one of the darkest forces that history has ever produced. That fact, however much an inconvenient truth, should never be forgotten.

In order to protect people of peace and to stop aggression, it sometimes becomes necessary to take up arms against the aggressor.

Freedom is the sure possession of those alone who have the courage to defend it.

[Pericles 495-429 BC](#)

I give some account the hardship, sacrifice, degradation and humiliation that Frank and his fellow captives endured at the hands of their Japanese captors, the dreadful treatment and torture that resulted in countless thousands of deaths, and that thousands more survivors returning home physically and mentally damaged for the remainder of their often shortened lives.

For those fortunate to return home, the qualities of courage, endurance and the will to survive, together with a certain

amount of good fortune, overcame horror and despair.

The Australians who returned home were told by their politicians to forget about their experiences, and in their silence gave a lie to 'lest we forget'.

The comradeship among the former POWs, born of determination to survive that came out of horror and despair, was sometimes more important than family, and families had little chance of understanding that.

Richard Flanagan has coined the description "Children of the Railway" for those of us whose parents were the POWs, and it was not until I heard this description that I realised that I was not alone, and I am only one of those Children of the Railway.

Another of the 'Children of the Railway' was Paul Jenner, who, with Peter Dunn, was a childhood friend from caving and bushwalking in the Scouts, and whose father Eric Jenner was an 8th Division POW.

I urge readers to be wary of so-called historians, often self styled and self promoting, who would diminish the service of Australian men and women who were Prisoners of War during World War 2.

Yes, they are out there, and some have even served in the ADF, mainly in support or peacekeeping roles, and often pretentiously cling to their former rank long after they retire. They have never experienced the shit, the piss and the filth that is war and that no combat soldier would wish on anyone.

Then there are the apologists for, and denialists of, Japanese WW2 behaviour, both in Japan and Australia.

In Japan, the ultra-nationalist and Japanese racial supremacist Yuko Tojo 1939-2013 (granddaughter of General Hideki Tojo),

dismissed Japanese acts of aggression and brutality during WW2 as "purely US propaganda", designed to "smear the glorious reputation of the proud and honourable Japanese warrior race".

There are even current reports (2015) that more than 10,000 people are suing Japan's leading liberal newspaper over stories on Tokyo's system of wartime sex slavery, which they say have stained their reputation as Japanese nationals.

"The move is the latest salvo in the battle over Japan's history, which pits a revisionist right wing against a mainstream that accepts the country's guilt over World War II atrocities.

The group, led by Sophia University professor emeritus Shoichi Watanabe, is demanding 10,000 yen (\$107) in symbolic compensation each, describing themselves as "Japanese citizens whose honour and credibility were damaged by the false reports made by the *Asahi Shimbun*".

They argue that *Asahi* reports on the "comfort women have imposed indescribable humiliation not only on former soldiers but also on honourable Japanese citizens ... who are labeled as descendants of gang rapists."

Up to 200,000 women, many from Korea but also from China, Indonesia, The Philippines and Taiwan, served soldiers in military brothels called "comfort stations". Most agree the women were - coerced by the regime of Hideki Tojo. The Right says they were common prostitutes."

AFP/The Australian 28 January 2015

It's a pity that history revisionists such as professor Watanabe haven't carried out original research including the personal accounts of the so-called 'comfort women', or looked at other sources including Robbie's account of a Japanese 'comfort women' train coming along the Railway in Burma.

It seems that the majority of younger Japanese are unaware of Japan's aggression and atrocities during WW2, as that dark part of that Country's history is conveniently not taught in its' schools.

Most of the ex-POWs have now passed on, but their words remain to give witness to the truth, and express their feelings.

In *One Fourteenth of an Elephant (2003)*, former POW Ian Denys Peek talks about continuing Japanese indifference to acknowledging the immense brutality, barbaric savagery, suffering and death they inflicted on Asia during their period of militarism.

Peek says that, because it is impossibly difficult for the Japanese to pronounce the word 'apology', **"there is a need to remind the rest of the World that there is undeniable evidence of what actually happened methodical programs of massacre, rape, torture, looting and repression"**.

I totally agree.

In Australia, there are people who rail against the horror that was the atomic bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, yet do not have a clue that the atomic bombs fell near Australian prisoners including Mick Flynn and Frank Scott who, towards the end of the War, had been transported like cattle to Japan itself, to work as slaves of the 'Son of Heaven' and were being treated like wild animals.

These peace activists would be the first to demand protection should Australia be again threatened by brutal military force. They are easily recognised by their self-righteousness.

Among the Japanese military there were certainly a few decent men, and those that the 2/6th came across are mentioned herein.

Among the POWs there were also allied forces men of appalling character such as the 'rice trading king', the American Ted Lewin, who thrived on the misfortune of others in Omuta Camp 17 (Gavin Dawes, *Prisoners of the Japanese*, 1994) as mentioned towards the end of the book.

I wish to especially mention and thank Linda Dahl from Idaho, USA who has set up a website <http://www.lindavdahl.com> devoted to telling the story of those prisoners who were held in captivity in Japan at Omuta Camp 17.

Modern day relations with Japan. In July 2014, during a trade visit to Australia, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe gave a special address to Federal Parliament, in English. In what ABC radio called 'an extraordinarily frank speech', Abe promised to never let the horrors of the past century repeat themselves.

Abe: I can find absolutely no words to say, Abe said, I can only stay humble against the evils and horrors of history. May I most humbly speak for Japan and one on behalf of the Japanese people here in sending my most sincere condolences towards the many souls who lost their lives ... and for those who made it through the war, how much trauma did they feel, even years and years later from these painful memories.

Not quite an official apology, for that would be a 'loss of face' for the Japanese, and still no mention of recompense, for example, from the rich Japanese industrialists like Baron Mitsui who profited from the prisoners being used and abused as slave labour in their coal mines and industrial facilities at Nagasaki and other places.

There is some talk of Abe endorsing the 1995 Murayama statement, which is the closest thing the Japanese have given to an apology for their actions in China and during the Pacific War, however the political right wing in Japan seem determined that any statement continues to be restricted to that of 'remorse'. An unambiguous expression of regret and apology from Japan appears as far away as ever.

The right-wing Prime Minister Tony Abbott has now been removed by his own

party, but questions remain about a possible 'hand-shake deal' he may have done with Abe to build Japanese submarines in Australia.



Cartoonist Malcolm McGookin's response to Abe's visit to Australia 2014 (Brisbane Courier Mail)

In an Appendix 18J, I have reproduced the views of others about the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo which is generally accepted as an unashamed celebration of Japanese militarism and revisionism, and has been visited by Abe.

In writing this book I have tried to understand, through the stories of others, how my father survived his captivity, particularly the last dreadful period at Omuta Camp 17 near Nagasaki, Japan in 1945.

Lance Corporal Alan Herd:

The working conditions (at Omuta Camp 17) were hell, being harder and hours longer than experienced on the Railway the sea poured in as the timber mine shaft supports cracked above your head the Japanese guards were worse and the Koreans more sadistic, with harshest discipline . Strange as it may be, where the Japanese could not break our spirits, it was Mother Nature who was the cruellest of all !

I have concluded that survival was always hanging by a thread, and the thread that held it was the unwavering care and support that the Sappers gave each other through their adversity. I also think that Frank's survival was due in part to his Irish stubbornness – he wasn't going to let the Japanese and Korean guards win.

I wish I had heard his stories directly from him.

The bright-eyed and excited service men and women who sailed out of Sydney

Harbour on the troop ship *Queen Mary* in October 1940 could have had no idea what hardship and sacrifice lay ahead for them. Many would die in battle in North Africa, Syria and on Java, and many would be cast into captivity and cruel slavery in Asia for 3½ years.

When I sit on the amazing Sydney Harbour foreshore at Watsons Bay, I often try to imagine the WW2 troop ships sailing down the harbour and out through the Heads, away to far-flung battlefields in foreign lands.

I can only guess how those who survived might have felt, five long weary years later, sailing back up the harbour in October 1945, seeing the Sydney Harbour Bridge again, and docking at the Pyrmont wharves.



BRINGING HOME THE AUSSIERS

HMS Speaker approaches Sydney Harbour Bridge on 15 October 1945. Australian ex-POWs including Sapper Frank Scott stand on the bow of the flight deck, British sailors form up behind.

The final insult, by the way, was that the docking of HMS Speaker that had brought Frank and his fellow Prisoners home from Japan, was delayed 36 hours in Sydney by the bastardry of communist-led waterside workers. (Colebatch, *Australia's Secret War*, 2014). It seems that while Australia's soldiers, sailors, airmen and nurses were defending the Country, there was an enemy within.

So, on with the story.

HOW THE PACIFIC WAR STARTED

The volunteer Sappers of the 2/6th Field company would have gone off to the Middle East on the Queen Mary with great zeal and enthusiasm, (“off to help the old country” as Bert Field says in his diary), and they would have been well satisfied with their performance in that theatre of war, having contributed to the defeat of not only the fascist Vichy French but also the Axis Powers of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

Like most Australians, they would have had little idea of how the geopolitical situation was playing out, and of the fate that lay in store for them when Japan entered the War by attacking Australia and the Americans at Pearl Harbour.

THE FALL OF SINGAPORE: AUSTRALIA’S GREATEST MILITARY DISASTER AND HOW IT BROKE THE BONDS OF EMPIRE



British Forces Surrender to the Japanese

The outbreak of the Pacific War between the Allies and Imperial Japan had, as in Europe, its beginnings in the aftermath of “The Great War” of 1914-18.

Only 38 years before the outbreak of WW2, Australia was still part of the imperial British Empire, and imperial sentiments lingered on into the 1960s.

So, in Australia in the 1930s, the bonds of Empire were still very strong and a residual loyalty to the ‘mother country’ was still firmly established.

Peter Ewer’s *The Long Road to Changi* (Harper Collins 2013) talks of how the British Government’s flawed strategy on fortress Singapore, together with the complicity of successive British-Empire leaning Australian Governments, led to resounding defeat of British and Commonwealth troops in 1942, and to Australia’s greatest military disaster at the hands of the Imperial Japanese Army.

I acknowledge that much of what is written in this section is referenced from that work; Ewer’s clarity of thought is refreshing.

I thank my son Hamish for giving me Ewer’s book.

Ewer:

The road to Changi prison and the Burma railroad began with (British) bad planning, over-confident and under-qualified leaders, and a misunderstanding of modern warfare. The results were catastrophic – not just a humiliating defeat and imprisonment, but also the pall cast over Australian soldiers, and the break in trust between Australia and England.

Background to Japan initiating War. At the end of WW1, Australian Prime Minister WM ‘Billy’ Hughes was concerned that the ‘yellow hordes of Asia’ (i.e. industrialized Japan) where a long-term threat to Australia’s existence, and that the then League of Nations (forerunner to today’s United Nations) threatened the then ‘White Australia’ policy.

Hughes successfully pushed Japan to the margins of the international community, but there was one problem – Japan’s burgeoning Navy. By 1918 Japan had giant new battleships under construction which promised to make obsolete much of the British battle fleet (with no new ships under construction). The United States was the only Country building new ships to meet the threat of Japan.

In order to try to contain international naval rivalries, the US picked up on an idea of a naval disarmament treaty which became the Washington Naval Treaty of 1921. This basically involved the scrapping of old ships and a ban on building new ones.

The result for Japan was that it was relegated by Treaty to owing a fleet smaller than both Britain and the USA.

[Note: The British 'dominions' like Australia, Canada and New Zealand were included in the British quota, and the once pride of the Royal Australian Navy – the battle cruiser HMAS Australia, just 11 years old – was scuttled off Sydney Heads in 1924 as part of Britain's obligations under the Treaty. No wonder that the RAN and New Zealand questioned the value of being integrated into the British naval establishment.]



HMAS AUSTRALIA, scuttled off Sydney Heads 1924, passing under the then under-construction Sydney Harbour Bridge (naval-history.net)

The Japanese were now annoyed, and becoming more annoyed, on these two fronts; First on the League of Nations racial equality snub orchestrated by Billy Hughes, and secondly, on their right to build and operate a Navy to a size of their own choosing.

Britain wanted to continue to maintain its global Empire, but, following the Washington Treaty, the Royal Navy had fewer ships with which to do this. It did not have the numbers to station a fleet in Asia, so decided that the next best thing was to build a naval base at Singapore for the purposes of supply and repair.

As part of British strategy to fortify the base, big guns were placed at Singapore pointing out to sea, arguably to fight off any hostile navy attacks on the Island.

Billy Hughes was delighted with the British naval base at Singapore and he told the Australian public:

We must have a scheme of Empire defence in order to defend Australia. We cannot defend ourselves. We haven't enough men or money. There is no-one who we can expect to rely on except Great Britain....

Hughes was replaced as Prime Minister by a leading empire loyalist, SM Bruce, an Australian who had chosen to serve in the British Army during WW1, and who followed Hughes in support for the Singapore base. The only dissenter at the time was the Australian Rear Admiral Percy Grant, who argued the obvious – that Singapore was too far away to provide any protection for Australia.

With the onset of the Great Depression in 1929-30, things got worse: western powers put in place tariffs on imports in order to protect their own economies.

This was the last straw for Japan, which relied heavily on income from manufactured exports. The insult of such western protectionism led to the rise of aggressive militarism in Japan, and the plan for a 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere', with Japan at its head.

Peter Brune *Descent into Hell*: The Japanese plan to secure a large South East Asian empire was based upon an audacious and speedy naval dominance of the Western Pacific. In order to accomplish this task, the navy planned to deliver a crippling blow against the American fleet at Pearl Harbour and bomb Malaya and Singapore, the Philippines, Borneo, Sumatra and the Dutch East Indies.

The Japanese were concerned about the growing sense of nationalism in China and, according to Mitter (2013), “Japan ended up with a toxic situation where most of its’ politicians, military and public had become infected with ‘war fever’.”



The Japanese Invasion of Manchuria

Source: www.lyndenpacificheater.wordpress.com/china-invasion/

Ten years before the attack on Pearl Harbour, Japan commenced its aggression by invading Chinese Manchuria, and so, from 1931 the flag of the Rising Sun was on the march.

The Japanese seized this region from China following the ‘Mukden Incident’, staged by the Japanese Army, and established a puppet state in calling it Manchukuo.

During that (and subsequent) invasions, the Imperial Japanese Army, under leaders such as the infamous **General Matsui Iwane**, became synonymous with mass killing, looting, rape and arson, such as occurred after the Battle of Nanjing, where a claimed 300,000 Chinese were put to death.



Chinese Soldiers present wreaths in 2013 during a 75th anniversary memorial ceremony at the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre (source: Xinhua/Shen Peng)

To top this off, the Japanese occupiers destroyed much of the infrastructure (roads, railways etc) that the Chinese had built up in the early part of the 20th century as part of their development and modernisation.

Japan’s barbarism in conquest continued right up until the end of WW2, and the antipathy to Japan that these atrocities generated continues to this day, and not only in China.

Many people, including myself, find it paradoxical that the Japanese, who showed such a high degree of education, knowledge, artistic ability and industrial proficiency, also possessed an underlying barbarity and total disregard for basic human rights. They were racist to the extreme, showing contempt for Europeans and their (seen as) inferior Asian neighbours.

Japanese aggression was bound up with the strong nationalistic fervour under the **Showa Emperor (Hirohito)** who was seen as *Arahitogami* or ‘a god who is human’.



Hirohito/Emperor Showa (Wikipedia)



General Hideki Tojo, the highly decorated (literally) fascist, nationalist and militarist Prime Minister of Japan during WW2. Prior to his execution as a war criminal on 1948, Tojo apologised for the atrocities committed by the Japanese Military and urged the occupying Americans to show compassion towards the Japanese people. Some commentators consider that the Americans through General MacArthur deliberately worked to shift responsibility for the Pacific War from the Emperor Hirohito to Tojo, thus allowing the position of Emperor to remain as a stabilising force in post-war Japan. (Wikipedia)



THE JAPANESE THRUST The map shows how, at the maximum extent of their conquests in mid-1942 the Japanese occupied a vast territory. In the north they controlled Manchuria, northern China and a series of enclaves along the Chinese coast. All of South East Asia was occupied except Thailand which had limited sovereignty. Japanese power also extended east into the Pacific including the Mariana and Caroline Islands, and northern New Guinea. Its land advance was finally halted in Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands between August 1942 and early 1943. (Department of Veterans Affairs).

In order to circumvent the Washington Treaty restrictions on naval power, the Japanese Government came up with an innovative strategy to substitute long range torpedo / medium bombers for battleships. These aircraft were the all-metal Mitsubishi G3M type, based on technology from the

German firm Junkers, and they proved effective in not only sinking battleships (such as HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse), but also in carrying out raids on Singapore.

In Australia, the Chief of Army, **General John Laverack**, and Chief of the RAAF, **Air Vice Marshall Richard Williams**, who both had outstanding careers during WW1, put forward their professional view that the Singapore policy was bad strategy, and that Australia's defence should be organised on national, not imperial lines.

They felt that Australia could and should defend itself by its own efforts. However, they could not persuade yet another new Prime Minister, Joe Lyons.

The Lyons Government refused to grasp the change in world affairs caused by Hitler's seizure of power in 1933, and the fact that the Royal Navy would not be sailing anywhere other than to keep an eye on Hitler and the Italian dictator Mussolini. The British certainly had a very limited number of ships available to go to Singapore to counteract the increasing military adventures of Japan.

Still, Lyons continued to ignore the advice of his defence professionals, and continued to try to sell Australia's commitment to imperial defence before the 1937 Federal Election:

"I suggest the people should be made aware of Australia's position in the world as it is today, so as to bring them behind the Government's sound defence policy That our integrity is dependent on our partnership with Great Britain."

However New Zealand did not agree with the Australian Government. The Kiwis wanted to abandon imperial defence in favour of a local defence plan, based on the theory of substitution of aircraft for warships and army garrisons (much the same innovative strategy of the Japanese).

The Kiwis wanted to return to Britain the warships staffed by Kiwi sailors, and put

the savings into building up the Royal New Zealand Air Force as a self defence unit.

But, as with Australia, the British would not agree to New Zealand's self-sufficiency ideas, because, in fact, it was Britain who was getting Pacific Defence on the cheap through its Dominions.

So, nothing changed, and with the Armies of Fascism on the march in Europe, the British Fleet stayed at home; there were no warships in Singapore. As it turned out, it was not the confident Australian military planners like Laverack and Williams who would face the Japanese, but the flawed strategists of the Royal Navy.

(Note: Laverack would go on to command the 7th Australian Division in North Africa, then be put in charge, in an acting capacity, of all Commonwealth Forces in that region following the capture of the British General Neame by Rommel's Africa Corps.

John Laverack went on to become the Governor of Queensland 1946 – 1957, and Laverack Army Barracks in Townsville is named in his honour.)

About this time, the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation was established under the industrialist Essington Lewis, but this potentially great venture, to build an independent Australian aircraft industry using modern American engines, was white-anted all the way by imperialists wanting to stick to outdated British technology.

Things got worse when Lyons died in Office, and another empire man, **Robert Menzies, became Prime Minister of Australia.** The professional, experienced and competent Laverack was ousted as head of Army, and the more politically compliant **General Thomas Blamey** put in his place.

The British kept on stringing Australia along that it was safe to send its forces

overseas, without any guarantee that Britain would underwrite its Singapore strategy.



So, without consulting Parliament, Menzies declared in a radio broadcast on 3rd September, 1939:

*"Fellow Australians,
It is my melancholy duty to inform you officially that in consequence of a persistence by Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her and that, as a result, Australia is also at war."*



THIS THEN WAS THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE SEVENTH AUSTRALIAN DIVISION, INCLUDING THE 2/6th Field Company RAE, WAS RAISED TO GO TO WAR.

On 15 September 1939, Menzies announced the formation of the Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF). This was an expeditionary force, which initially consisted of 20,000 men organised into an infantry division (the 6th Division) and auxiliary units. A further three AIF infantry divisions (the 7th Division, 8th Division and 9th Division) were raised in the first half of 1940 as well as a corps headquarters (I Corps) and numerous support and service units.



Recruitment Poster

All of these divisions and the majority of the support units were deployed overseas during 1940 and 1941.

Personal Note: An AIF Armoured Division (the 1st Armoured Division) was also raised in early 1941 but only the 2/6th Armoured Regiment saw overseas service, in Papua against the Japanese in late 1942 (The Vital Factor: The history of the 2/6th Armoured Regiment 1941-1946, Paul Handel).

My much loved Uncle Bill (Sgt William Edgar Hazell, from Perth, Western Australia) was a member of the 2/10th Armored Regiment which was never posted overseas. Had his tanks gone onto active service, I am sure that they would have acquitted themselves to the highest standard. Uncle Bill and Aunt Beryl, with Judy and Stuart Hazell were at Sydney Airport to see me off to Vietnam in August 1969, and there to welcome me home 12 months later. I valued and still remember that support.



SGT William Edgar Hazell
Royal Australian Armoured Corps



Bill Hazell's 2/10th Australian Armoured Regiment training near Gunnedah NSW (Light Tank M3 Stuart)

I have some personal connection to 'Tankies', and especially their brave RAEME vehicle mechanics, having spent time attached to them on Operations in Vietnam in 1969/70.

Another Uncle, Dick Woolner, served as a Gunner, a very young reinforcement with the 6th Division in the North Africa and Syrian Campaigns, then in Borneo. Anti Tank Regiments like his were vital in the Desert War.

After the War, Dick took a Commission in his local CMF Battery in Sydney.



Previous: Members of the 2/3rd Anti Tank regiment, 6th Division, on leave in Jerusalem c. 1941. Gunner RA Woolner sixth from left in second row.

My mother's family also played a large part in the war effort. Four of the six Johnston girls from Nemingha signed up, with twins Mavis and Doris, and their sisters Hazel and Beryl joining the WAAAF (Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force). Aunty Joy was married with a young child, and Aunt Marie was too young. Uncle Stan was a NSW Police officer in 1939 and was therefore in a protected occupation.



From top left (twins) Mavis and Doris Johnston, Hazel Johnston WAAAF, and Joy Davis with baby Graeme.



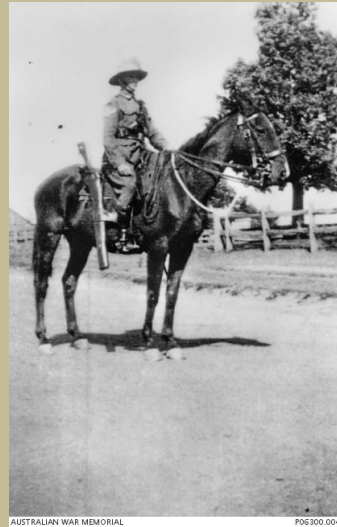
Beb Johnston (2nd from right) in a group of WAAAF girls at Tamworth early 1940's. Looks like they've copped mess duties!

My mother Mavis was a Corporal Cipher Clerk at RAAF unit RO4 at Albert Park in Melbourne, responsible for preparing and checking the all important codes and ciphers that protected military orders going north to the War in the Pacific. All of the WAAAF 'girls' were extremely proud of their contribution to the war effort.



My maternal Grandfather Robert John 'Bob' Johnston b. 1887, set the example for military service in his family, and was a member of the Light Horse (Hunter River

Lancers) – a local militia – in Tamworth. Had not he been severely injured and almost died during cavalry training, Bob Johnston might have been with the Light Horse at the battle of Beersheba during WW1.



Informal portrait of Staff Sergeant William Harper Walker of Raymond Terrace, NSW. After service in the 16th Light Horse Regiment (Hunter River Lancers) before the war. AWM

I also acknowledge Julianne's step-mother Shirley MacDonald (nee Cox, from Tingha NSW) who volunteered for service in the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) which existed from 1941 to 1947.



Until that time there had been no women accepted by the Army except those in the Medical Services, and the potentialities of women in other trades and professions had not been utilised. (National Library of Australia).

By the end of the War, the status and expectations of and for women, had risen greatly, and many married women, including Mavis Scott and Shirley MacDonald, went on expect to hold paid employment, a situation that was frowned

on before the War. Both were extremely proud members of the Ex-Servicewomen's Association up until the time of their passing.

They paved the way for women who proudly serve in the Australian Defence Force today.

Most Australian families had members in the Services during WW2, and the Cox family was no exception. Shirley's brothers Max and Lester were both RAAF Flying Officers, Max being killed in 1944 in the UK during Lancaster bomber flying training with the RAF, and Lester flew Beaufighters in the Pacific War.



RAAF Lancaster Bomber Crew in Britain (AWM)



RAAF Bristol Beaufighter (AWM)

Julianne's Uncle Ronnie MacDonald served in the North African Campaign and was one of the 'Rats of Tobruk'.

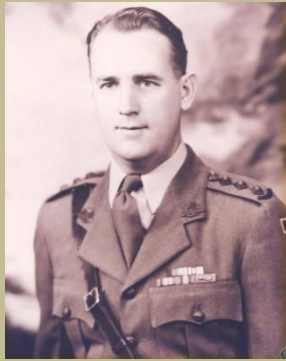


"Give me two Australian Divisions and I will conquer the World" Rommel to Adolf Hitler after the Battle of Tobruk (source: Wikiquote)

Growing up in Tamworth NSW I had the pleasure to know the Dunn family, Newsagents, and developed a deep respect for Peter's father Ron Dunn who served with the Ninth Australian Division in North Africa (including the Battle of El Alamein) and later in New Guinea at Milne Bay.

I am particularly grateful that people like Ron Dunn (Assault Pioneers) and Maxine Dunn's father Lloyd Metcalf (Field Artillery who dragged howitzers over the Kokoda Track) were able to fight on to victory in the place of those like my own father who were cast into captivity.

**BEYOND ALL PRAISE – A COMMENTARY ON THE
MILITARY SERVICE OF CAPTAIN R.L. DUNN**



British General Bernard Montgomery to General Moreshead, Cmr 9th Australian Division 1942:

“I want to congratulate you on the magnificent work that your division has doneYour men are absolutely splendid and the part they have played is beyond all praise”

“Beyond all praise”. These three words of Montgomery not only sum up the performance of the 9th Australian Division at El Alamein in 1942, but also the courage, leadership and ability of the man who became known as among the bravest Diggers in the 2/3 Pioneer Battalion.

That man was NX46688 Captain Ronald Leslie Dunn, M.I.D. (twice), recommended for the Military Cross, and an Officer in the Netherlands Government’s Order of Orange Nassau. He shared membership of this Dutch Order with a very small elite group of Australian soldiers including Field Marshall Sir Thomas Blamey GBE, KCB, CMG, DSO, ED.

Ron Dunn, like many young Australians of the time, joined up in Melbourne in 1940, and soon found himself in North Africa as second in command of a Company of Assault Pioneers, whose dirty dangerous work included laying mines, breaching enemy minefields, neutralising enemy booby traps, and being in the first line of attack as infantry against the might of the German Field Marshall Erwin Rommel’s Africa Corps.

The 9th Australian Division, by fate and circumstance, saw more combat duties than any other Division. Fighting the Grand Panzer Armeewas not for the faint hearted; the Australians not only had to contend with Tiger Tanks and 88mm artillery guns, but also Luftwaffe aerial attacks. As part of the British Eighth Army, the Ninth

Australian Division provided 10% of troop numbers, but took 22% of the casualties.

Ron Dunn personally led many patrols into the desert against the Enemy in 1942, and was shot twice in this period, once in the head, and once in the leg. On one such patrol, only four of his 17 men were not either killed or wounded, and Ron had to be carried back to his lines. His courage during this time was recognised by the British 8th Army with the award of a Mention in Dispatches.

I had the opportunity, in about 1995 I think, to sit with Ron at his Mahoney Avenue home in West Tamworth, and ask him about El Alamein; I was particularly interested in the 2nd battle, where the Ninth Division broke through the German barrier minefield in the middle of the night, with Pioneers and Sappers leading the way through the barbed wire of what Erwin Rommel called his “Devil’s Garden”.

As he talked, Ron’s eyes became locked in that thousand yard stare of soldiers who have had the surreal experience of combat. For a moment he was back there, and he talked, not in a vainglorious manner, but with the heartbreak of having to quickly bury one of his fallen Diggers in a shallow grave under a sheet of iron, then push on against the Enemy.

After the German defeat in North Africa, the 2/3rd Pioneers returned to Australia before going on to New Guinea to fight an even more desperate Enemy, the Imperial Japanese Army. During his Pacific Campaign, Captain Ron Dunn was heavily involved in routing the Japanese at Milne Bay, and was awarded a second Mention in Dispatches, an event as rare as hen’s teeth in the Australian Army.

The recommendation for the award of the Military Cross demonstrated what a great leader and soldier he was. He was an inspiration to the men in his Battalion. The confusion at the end of WW2 resulted in Ron’s MC recommendation becoming pushed aside and unacted upon, however he was promoted to the Field Rank of Major (Retired List) in the 1980’s as a belated (and inadequate) gesture in recognition of his Gallantry.

Peter Scott November 2008

The Volunteers –Why Australians joined up for WW2

Like most WW2 Diggers, Frank Scott never talked about why he 'joined up'. Sources such as the Australian War Memorial do however give an understanding of motives for enlistment.

Reinforcing common culture was the powerful tradition of the (first) Australian Imperial Force of twenty years before. So high was the prestige of that volunteer army that a desire to qualify for membership of its' brotherhood and to march on Anzac Day was to some a strong motive for enlistment.

Some men said that they enlisted to escape from uninteresting occupations, dull towns or suburbs, or domestic difficulties—in fact, for adventure; and this motive, mixed with other feelings of duty and of desire for self-enhancement, was undoubtedly powerful in a colonial community where men were often less firmly tied to home than in the old world, and were habitually on the alert for better opportunities in distant places. But the chronicler who follows these men through their training and campaigns must reach the conclusion that most of them were conscious of a peculiarly compelling duty towards the State and their fellow men.

One of the new recruits (unable to define exactly why he himself had joined) questioned his companions but found all too shy or reserved to confess a serious reason for enlisting.

Finally he decided:

The men who joined the army (volunteered) were the type who stood up in trams and gave their seats to women. There are people who are constitutionally unable to resist when a call is made, or when they feel they are under some obligation. I doubt whether many of them could tell why they enlisted. The real cause was something deeper than they could fathom. We could not see ourselves as fitting the glowing words of Masfield

about the Anzacs at Gallipoli, and, although we were born with a tradition to carry on, and were proud of it, we were only too ready to admit that we were a ragtime army—though woe betide the militia or the civilian who suggested that.

There was, I believe, a large body of men, perhaps the majority, who were adventurers at heart but common citizens by force of circumstance—how many of us are not—who saw in this call a glorious combination—the life of an adventurer with the duties of a citizen.

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Lewis Frank Scott took the Oath of Enlistment in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia 'For Special Forces raised for Service in Australia or Abroad' on 15th June 1940, and was **allocated to Engineers** with the number **DX561**. He was aged 33 years, gave his occupation as labourer and his address as Post Office, Darwin.

Two days later he was found medically fit for service Class 1.



CERTIFIED
DECEASED Form A208
AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES

ATTESTATION FORM
FOR SPECIAL FORCES RAISED FOR SERVICE IN AUSTRALIA OR ABROAD.

Army No. DX 561
Surname SCOTT Other Names LEWIS FRANK
Unit Engineers
Enlisted for service at Darwin (Place)
N.T. (State) 17.6.42 (Date)

1. What is your name?
1. Surname SCOTT
Other names LEWIS FRANK

2. Where were you born?
2. In or near the town of WESGAL
in the county of IRELAND
Natural Born

3. Are you a natural born or a naturalized British subject? If the latter, papers are to be produced.

4. What is your age and date of birth?
4. Age 33
Date of Birth 29/6/1907

5. What is your trade or occupation?
5. Labourer

6. Are you married, single or widower?
6. Single

7. Have you previously served in the military? If so, where and in what unit?
7. Lewis Henry Scott
Address: Carrington, St. John's, Uppingham, Leicestershire, England
Relationship Father

8. Name
9. Address
10. What is your permanent address?
10. P.O. Darwin

11. What is your religious denomination? (This question need not be answered if the man has a conscientious objection to doing so.)
11. Church of Ireland

I, Lewis Frank Scott do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true and that I am willing to serve in the Australian Military Forces within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

Witnessed by Attesting Officer Signature L. Scott

DECEASED

heading from Darwin to Sydney to the Army basic training camp at Ingleburn.

This would be the first of their many journeys together by sea, but, of these two men, it would only be DX561 that would make the bittersweet return to Sydney Harbour on 15th October 1945.

At the end of war, Sapper James Russell, like thousands of other Australian Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Nurses, would lie in foreign soil, in Jimmy's case, Burma.

At Ingleburn, Frank and Jimmy were to join the 2/6th Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers, part of the newly raised 7th Division of the Australian Army. They, along with the 2/4th and 2/5th Field Companies and the 2/2nd Field Park Company became the **combat Sappers of the 7th Division.**

The 7th Division was an infantry division, formed in February 1940 to serve in World War II, as part of the Second Australian Imperial Force (2nd AIF). As well as Infantry and Engineers, the structure of the Division also included Field and Anti-Tank Regiments of Artillery, Assault Pioneers, Machine Gun Battalions and Cavalry.

The Division is sometimes known as "The Silent Seventh", due to a perception that its achievements were under-recognized in comparison to the other Australian divisions. The origin of this belief appears to be censorship of the part played by the 7th Division in the fierce fighting in the 1941 Syria-Lebanon campaign.

The 7th Division, along with the 6th and 9th Australian Divisions, served in both the Middle East and the South West Pacific Area. It was disbanded in 1946, following the end of the war.

B DECEASED
MEDICAL EXAMINATION

I have made full and careful examination of the above-named person in accordance with the instructions contained in the Standing Orders for Australian Army Medical Services. In my opinion he is—

1. Fit for Class I.
2. Unfit for Class I.
3. Unfit for military service.

Name Narwon Date 17.6.42
Signature of Examining Medical Officer M. Russell

C OATH OF ENLISTMENT

Lewis Frank Scott swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord, the King, in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia until the cessation of the present time of war and twelve months thereafter or until sooner lawfully discharged, dismissed, or removed, and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's power to be kept and maintained, and that I will in all matters appertaining to my service faithfully discharge my duty according to law.

So Help Me God!

Signature of Person Enlisted L. Scott
Subscribed at Darwin in the State of N.T.
this 17th day of June 1942
Before me—
Signature of Attesting Officer Attesting Officer

DECEASED

ENLISTMENT FORM

James (Jimmy) Russell, a mate of Frank's from Darwin, joined up with him, and as next in the recruitment line became **DX562, Sapper James Russell.**

A short time later, the newly recruited DX561 and DX562 were on a Coastal Steamer (Ship No. 1) full of recruits



7th Division Tactical and Vehicle Signs

WHAT IS A SAPPER?

Sappers, including **combat engineers**, are soldiers who perform a variety of military engineering duties such as bridge-building, laying or clearing minefields, demolitions, field defences and general construction, as well as road and airfield construction and repair.

They are also trained to serve as infantry soldiers in defensive and offensive operations. A sapper's duties are devoted to tasks involving facilitating movement of allied forces, and impeding those of enemies.

A sapper, in the sense first used by the French military, was one who excavated trenches under defensive musket or artillery fire to advance a besieging army's position in relation to the works of an attacked fortification, which was referred to as sapping the enemy fortifications.

This was achieved by digging what the French termed a sappe (derived from the archaic French word for spade). (Wikipedia)

The title "Sapper" was conferred by Queen Victoria as a distinction because of the gallant assault operation carried out by British Engineers in the Crimean War.

The Corps of Engineers is one of the combat arms of the Army. Officers and Soldiers are selected for allocation to the Corps on the basis of their knowledge, aptitude, ingenuity, and common sense, or, the ability to 'get the job done'.

The Sappers of the three Field Companies of the 7th Division included former construction workers, miners, tradesmen and bushmen, led by professional engineers and men with leadership and project management experience. These Sappers, like those who came before them and those who came after them, were more likely to be the type to exercise personal initiative, rather than blindly follow orders. They were not 'spit and polish soldiers'.

The associated Sappers of the Field Park Company were responsible for the heavier

Engineer stores/equipments - bridging etc. – ready to be brought forward to the front line as required, but they were also pressed into service as field engineers when required.

The Australian Engineers adopted the Royal Engineers practice of calling their private soldier rank "Sapper", but all ranks of the RAE are often called, and proudly refer to themselves as, sappers.

RAE CORPS MOTTOS

The following mottos are used within the Corps of Australian Engineers (Royal Australian Engineers from 1947):

Facimus et Frangimus – Latin for 'We Make and we Break'. This is the original motto of Australian Army Engineers adopted at Federation and appearing on the engineer hat badge up until 1947. This motto now only appears on the RAE Corps Cipher shown below.



WW2 Hat Badge of Australian Army Engineers

with the inscription *Facimus et Frangimus*

(Courtesy of Dawn Holden)



RAE Corps Cipher

Ubique - Latin for 'Everywhere'. This motto was originally bestowed on Engineers and Artillery Gunners, and has remained, because at most times they serve as small detachments in support of other combat arms, and never as a whole unit.

Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense – 'Evil to He who Evil Thinks' - This motto which appears around the

Garter, was bestowed on the Corps by King William IV in 1832 in recognition that both Sappers and Gunners were not entitled to carry Regimental Colours. **It was bestowed on Australian Engineers in 1947 in recognition of service by the Corps during WWII.** Source: RAE Assn of Western Australia.

SOME WORDS WRITTEN ABOUT SAPPERS

What is a Sapper? This versatile genius ... condensing the whole system of Military Engineering and all that is useful and practical under one red jacket. He is a man of all work of the Army and the public. – astronomer, geologist, draughtsman, artist, architect, traveler, explorer, antiquary, mechanic, diver, soldier and sailor, ready to do anything or go anywhere; in short, he is a Sapper.

Captain TWJ Connolly, Historian, Royal Sappers and Miners, 1855.

*I have stated it plain, an' my argument's thus
("It's all one," says the Sapper),
There's only one Corps which is perfect -- that's us;
An' they call us Her Majesty's Engineers,
With the rank and pay of a Sapper!*

Excerpt from *The Sapper* by Rudyard Kipling b.1865

We have had such an expenditure of Engineers that I can hardly wish for anybody, lest the same fate befall him as has befallen so many.

Wellington

The Sappers really need no tribute from me; their reward lies in the glory of their achievement. The more science intervenes in warfare, the more will be the need for engineers in field armies; in the late war there were never enough Sappers at any time. Their special tasks involved the upkeep and repair of communications; roads, bridges, railways, canals, mine sweeping. The Sappers rose to great heights in World War II and their contribution to victory was beyond all calculations.

Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, 1945

Once again we are reminded that there comes a time in war when Sappers have to go in front to open up the way. "Follow the Sapper" is a timeless cry.

Brigadier ITD Gill, ROYAL engineers, 1995

The esprit de corps of Australian Army Engineers is seldom exceeded by, and often envied by, other Corps. Frank and the 2/6th Sappers firmly believed that any rank in Engineers is equal to one higher rank in any other Corps.

Sappers, especially combat engineers, have immense pride in what they contribute and achieve in warfighting; they especially revere and remember the sacrifice made on the battlefield by their fallen comrades and are ever mindful of the dreadful suffering and pain that falls on the families of the fallen.



A modern day Sapper proudly shows his colours

If you scratch the surface of any modern-day combat engineer, you will find underneath the DNA of the Sappers of the Seventh Australian Division, passed on to the RAE Tunnel Rats who served in the Vietnam War, and the Sappers who have served in Afghanistan.

INGLEBURN 1940 – Initial military training

Lindsay Peck's 'Sappers of the Silent Seventh' — (published by the 7th Division Engineers Assn, Sydney, 1979) records how the Army transformed an assorted bunch of civilians, by rigorous training, into soldiers and army engineers. Some found the experience traumatic and those who were found unsuitable were not sent on active service overseas.



Recruits for the Second AIF (AWM)

SSS: *They organised us into sections and allotted us huts for living purposes – our bedding comprised straw filled palliasses placed on bare board flooring – corrugated fibro roofs and unlined weatherboard walls. As winter set in with its freezing weather, and with no hot water for showering and shaving, almost everybody succumbed to the ‘Ingleburn throat’, a famous malady of the times. We were an awkward raw bunch of blokes who had to be knocked into some semblance of soldiers.*

The following manning detail from the initial set-up of the 2/6th Field Company (before all members had joined) shows the wide variety of job classifications required to run a unit of combat engineers.

The OC Major John Calder and the Company Sergeant Major George Mullins (the senior non-commissioned officer) were professional pre-war soldiers, but the rest were volunteers. The 2 I/C Captain Macdonald was the owner of a private construction company who shut up shop to join the 2nd AIF, and brought most of his employees along with him. Another of the Officers, Ray Watts, was an architect in civilian life. Lt. MJ Flynn, a civil engineer, was to join the Company later.

Jobs allocated included a Transport Sergeant, Workshop Sergeant, clerks, cooks, blacksmiths, mechanics, painters, electricians, plumbers, draftsmen, surveyors, storemen, bricklayers, concreters, carpenters and joiners, a tinsmith, a waterman, drivers and motorcyclists, but otherwise a classification known as ‘Pioneers RAE’ covered most on the manning detail. Sappers Frank Scott and Jimmy Russell had not joined the Company at this stage, as they were still

on the ship bringing them, with their bushman and powdermonkey skills, from Darwin. No doubt they would have fitted into the ‘Pioneers RAE’ vehicle.

Note. All members of the Company, irrespective of rank or job allocation, were in fact (as identified by Robbie in TGIB) Combat Engineers. However this official classification did not occur until the 1990’s.

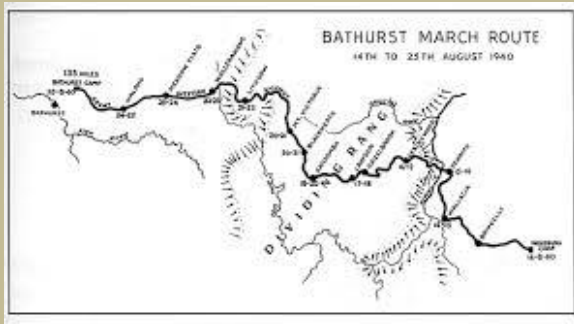
Since then there are now established specialised Combat Engineer Regiments and Squadrons based in Darwin, Brisbane and Townsville, with the ‘super sappers’ of the Special Operations Engineer Regiment based in Sydney at Holsworthy, not too far from the site of the old Ingleburn camp of the Seventh Division.

LISTA NO	ARMY NO	RANK	NAME	CLASSIFICATION	GROUP	VEHICLE	STATION	REMARKS
1				OFFICERS (O)				
1		MAJOR	WALSH I.M. CALDER	OC			VSI	
2		CAPTAIN	CAPTAIN W.D. MACDONALD	SAC	WARRANT OFFICER (O)		VSB	
3				CSM	SECTS & STAFF		VB	
4							VB	
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The Initial HQ Manning Detail (Source: The Robertson Papers, courtesy Dawn Holden)

THE MARCH TO BATHURST 1940

After about two months initial training at Ingleburn, the 7th Division soldiers of all Corps were route-marched 130 miles (208km) over the Blue Mountains to Bathurst, for further field training prior to embarkation to the Middle East theatre of war.



Credit: Alec Crisdale

The Queanbeyan Age of 30 July 1940 reported a "spectacular march of about 6500 fully equipped troops of the 7th Division from Ingleburn across the Blue Mountains to Bathurst by the Western Highway is planned for early August. It will be the biggest road movement ever undertaken in Australia. The march will be part of the training of the 7th Division Troops who are entering an advanced stage the men will be in full battle dress, with rifles, kit bags and packs the men would leave Ingleburn in units each of about 1000."

The ranks of the 2/6th included a number of experienced bagpipers and drummers and, using donated instruments, the Company marched to Bathurst to the rousing skirl of the pipes. The band thus formed, went on to the Middle East, North Africa and Syria, then back to Java. With typical Sapper humour, they called themselves "The Free Scotch Pipe Band".



Photo: The "Free Scotch" Pipe Band. Source: 7th Division Engineers Association

"Townfolk gathered on route to shower these brave boys with cheers, gifts, places to sleep and eat, free movies and plenty of evening concerts and dinners." (Marie Klein2010)

In post-war ANZAC Day marches in Sydney, the 7th Division Engineers would always march to pipes and drums, never to a brass band.

The RAE officially marches to the words and music of the well-known piper's tune 'Wings'.

To hear this tune, go to the Youtube link below.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zy7fr4Y2KB
Y



(AWM P0245.001)

Once at the Bathurst camp in the pretty hills of the Lime Kiln Road, the Company undertook more drill and route marches to improve their fitness and blend the men into a unit. They attended classes on military engineering, and then field practised the tasks of their new trade, including bridge and road building, and laying and removing land mines. (Marie Klein, UBD).

After a week's pre-embarkation leave, the Sappers were ready to join the war against

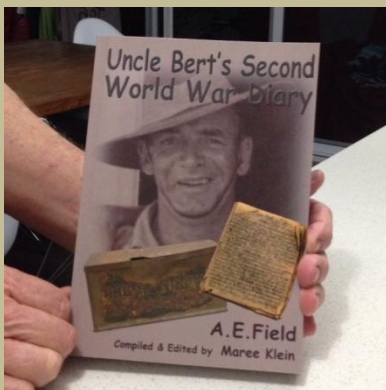
the Axis forces in the Middle East and North Africa.

It is at this stage that one of the Sappers, Bert Field, started a diary which he kept until the end of the war. Sapper Albert Edward Field had signed up giving his age as 37, so as to beat the 40 year old cut-off for soldier volunteers (he was actually 43).

Bert was a former WWI British Soldier in France and Belgium who, in 1914 as a 17 year old stretcher bearer, was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal at Hill 60; In 1917 he was awarded the Military Medal for his bravery, as well as the Mons Rosette.

Bert was one of the Icons of the 2/6th. As an old Sapper myself, I am filled with pride to see old photos of him wearing, much against Army protocol, a brass collar dog of the flaming grenade on his shirt sleeve above his Sergeant's stripes. In doing so he is proudly stating to all and sundry – "I am a Sapper!"

The story of Bert's war is told by his niece Maree Klein in her 2010 book *Uncle Bert's Second World War Diary*. Maree's work has assisted me greatly, especially in establishing facts and a time line for the 2/6th movements up until their arrival in Changi. I thank the Klein family most sincerely for their great work.



Note: When I quote from Maree's book I use the notation "UBD" to denote 'Uncle Bert's Diary'.

10. OFF TO WAR – THE MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA & SYRIA

(Ship No.2)

There is no better place to start this section than with **Bert Field's first two diary entries:**

UBD Sat 19 October 1940 Left Bathurst camp 5am. Departed Kelso railway station 7am. Boarded Queen Mary at 2.30 pm.

Sun 20 October 1940 Sailed 10am from Sydney Harbour. Wonderful send off.

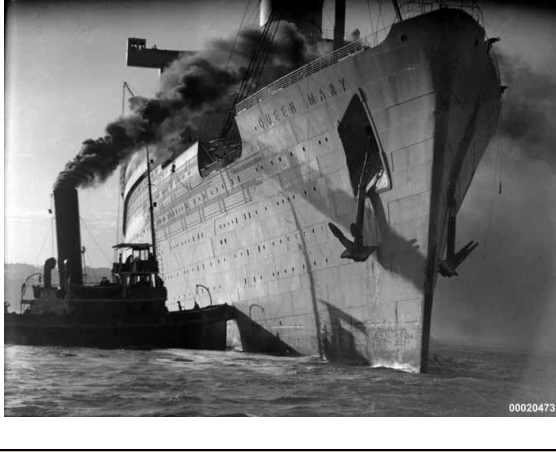
Maree Klein notes: *Sydney Harbour this sunny spring day looked its sparkling best – bands played, residents cheered and waved from vantage points and from small boats as the imposing Queen Mary moved from her Neutral Bay anchorage down the harbour and out the Heads, her colourful bunting and streamers finally trailing into the sea.*



Sydney Heads on a sunny day. Looking South from North Head (NSW NPWS). A fine day to sail off to war.



(AWM 004298) 20 October 1940 Sydney Harbour. Embarkation point H (Neutral Bay) The Queen Mary at anchor, about to transport Troops to the Middle East.



(AWM 00020473) The bow of the Queen Mary showing portholes on each deck



(AWM 006029) Sappers of the 7th Division arriving at Pymont for embarkation on the Queen Mary for the voyage to the Middle East



(AWM 004 764) Sappers of the 2/6th Field Company RAE marching to the Ferry to be taken out to the Queen Mary at anchor in Sydney Harbour.



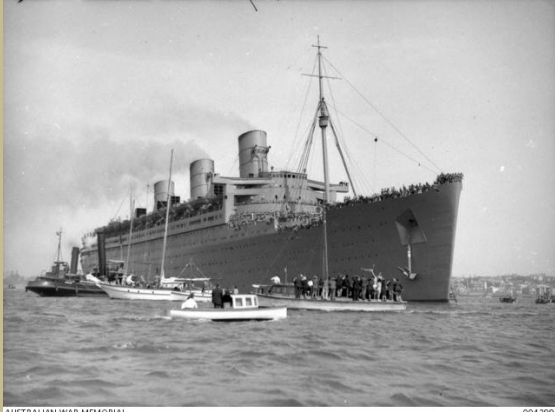
(AWM 005542) Nursing sisters of the 2/6th Australian General Hospital boarding a ferry for transport to the troop transport 'Queen Mary' for embarkation prior to leaving for the Middle East.



(AWM 005565) The Governor General of Australia, Lord Gowrie, accompanied by Matron J Abbott inspecting nursing sisters of the 2/6th Australian General Hospital embarked on board the troop transport Queen Mary



(AWM 006012) Troops of the 7th Division gathered on the deck of the troop transport Queen Mary shortly before departure from Australia for the voyage to the Middle East.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL 004299

(AWM 004299) The Queen Mary ready to leave Sydney Harbour for the Middle East. It will be 5 years, if at all, before the passengers will see Sydney Harbour again.

IN TRANSIT – BOMBAY

The **Queen Mary** (1936-1967) had been the largest and fastest luxury liner on the Atlantic run between America and Great Britain; she could outrun the dreaded German U-Boats and Hitler offered \$US250,000 and the Iron Cross to any of his commanders who could sink her.

In Sydney she was converted to a troop transport; the Officers occupied the luxurious 1st Class areas, while the Other Ranks were crammed into airless cabins, some below the waterline where most suffered seasickness. (UBD)



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL 004290

(AWM 004290) The Officers Lounge (literally) aboard the Queen Mary.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL 004788

(AWM 004788) Troops Quarters, Queen Mary. Probably mostly Engineers in this photo (Purple Diamond colour patches)

Recommendation: Get a Commission if you can!

Earlier ship loads of Australian soldiers (the 6th Division) on the way to the Middle East transited through Colombo in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). There they were given shore leave and caused mayhem among the local population. (Mark Johnston 2013, *Anzacs in the Middle East – Australian Soldiers, their allies and local people in World War 2*).

UBD tells us that the 2/6th went via India, arriving at Bombay Monday 4th Nov 1940, but didn't berth until Thursday 7th when they went ashore and marched 2 miles to Colaba Camp near the British Garrison Barracks.

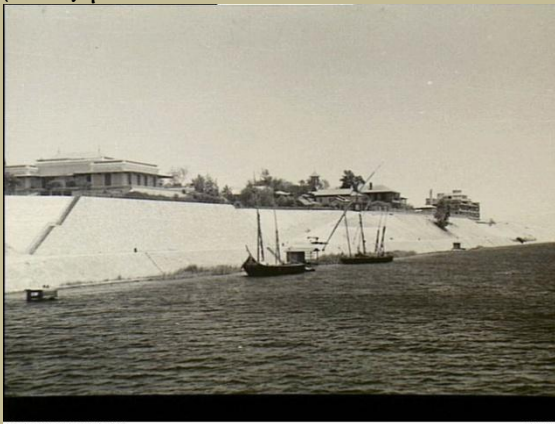
UBD: Fri 8 Nov 1940. *Were paid fifteen rupee and went into Bombay on leave at 4pm.....saw some sights in Gharri, had two bottles of beer, bargained for goods in usual eastern style...*

The following Monday, the 2/6th transferred to a Dutch ship the *Slamat* (Ship No. 3), part of a large convoy going to Suez in Egypt. UBD reports "quarters less crowded than the Queen Mary".



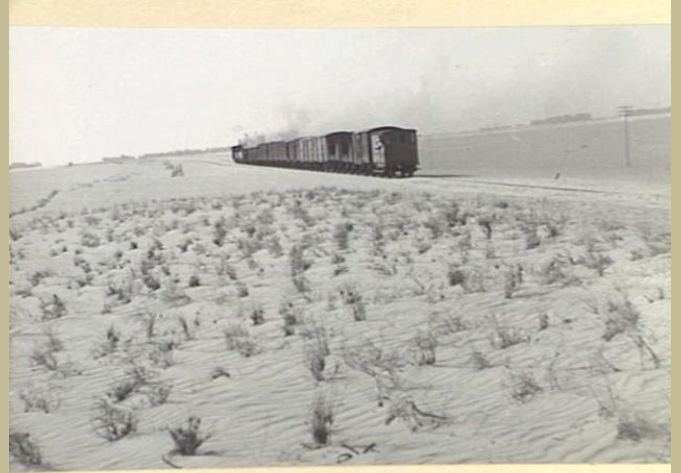
Photo: (AWM 303942) Dutch Passenger Vessel *Slamat* en route to Suez. She was bombed and sunk a few months later as part of the Allied evacuation of Greece.

The *Slamat* entered the Suez Canal on 23rd November, and on the following day reached El Kantara, 70 miles along the Canal, where the 2/6th unloaded to waiting goods trains which would carry them on a tortuous overnight journey to their base camp at Quastina in Palestine. Bert Field notes “Our Mob very much angered by treatment of native boys by (Arab) police”.



(AWM 041437) Suez Canal, Egypt. A typical village scene

For those interested in more detail about Australian Troops in the Middle East during WW2, I thoroughly recommend Mark Johnston's book.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL 023292
(AWM 023292) A goods train heads out across the desert from El Kantara. The railway was built by 2nd Railway Construction Company RAE.

QUASTINA was a holding camp, just outside of a Palestinian village of the same name (which was demolished about 1948 as part of the establishment of the state of Israel). It was here that the 2/6th spent Christmas Day 1940, before moving on to Haifa.

Sir Archibald Wavell, the British Commander in Chief of forces in the Middle East had previously welcomed Australian troops on their arrival in Palestine, but said that wanted to speak ‘frankly and freely’ to them. He spoke of the magnificent work of the Australian Light Horse during WW1, and of their great reputation as soldiers, which, he said, he was sure that the latest arrivals would maintain and increase.

However, said Wavell, the WW1 Diggers also left behind a reputation of another kind, (according to him) a lack of restraint and discipline which, he said, he hoped that the latest arrivals would not wish to maintain but remove. Wavell's talk was considered a lecture and did not go over well with the Australians.

The 6th Division had set a pattern for wild behaviour in Palestine, especially on leave, so Wavell's fears were justified; Colonel George Vasey complained that after the Division's first leave in Tel Aviv, about 500

troops went AWOL on the basis that 'donning the slouch hat went with an expectation, even an obligation, to play up. (Johnston 2013)

UBD:

Wednesday 25th December 1940 Christmas Day
Off guard at 7am. Visited beer garden in morning, spread eagled, back to bounteous dinner of turkey, pork, veg and Christmas pudding also a bottle of beer per man. Spent a very nice Christmas and listened to the Palestinian Orchestra in the evening. Received a (Australian Comforts Fund) Xmas hamper.



HAIFA. At the end of December the 2/6th started a fortnight's **intensive bridge building school at Haifa**, on the coast north of Gaza, and not too far from Nazareth. Their bridge building skills would later prove vital, especially during the Syrian campaign at the Litani and Damour Rivers.

The sappers had to learn quickly to build and dismantle, in daylight and at night, all sorts of bridges prefabricated steel, cable suspension, timber, pontoon and folding boat bridges until they could do it blindfolded (UBD). They then returned to Quastina to await further orders.



Photo: Building a pontoon bridge (AWM 000826) (this photo in Australia)

INTO THE THICK OF THINGS – THE NORTH AFRICAN DESERT WAR

The war in North Africa against the fascist dictator Mussolini's Italian Army was now on, and more Engineers were needed for the Allied push.

BACKGROUND.

Egypt in 1882 became a de facto British colony. This remained until 1922, when Britain gave Egypt its independence. However, British troops had the right to stay in Egypt to protect the Suez Canal from any invasion, and this enabled Britain to continue dominating Egypt's political life and to interfere in every aspect of Egyptian life until they were finally ousted in 1952.

But in 1940, the British troops were supreme in Egypt. Since the British knew very well the importance of Egypt and its geographical significance, the British army moved the headquarters of their Mediterranean fleet from Malta to [Alexandria](#) in North Egypt in the 1930s.



Italian Dictator Benito Mussolini

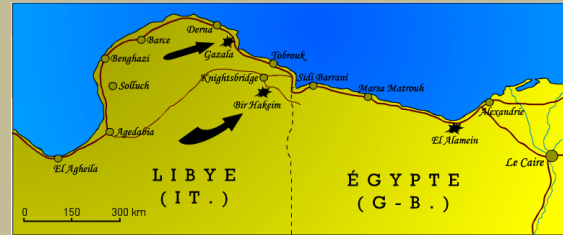
At the beginning of World War II there was no Rommel in Egypt, and only the Italians in Libya. Mussolini had, so far in the war, thoroughly embarrassed himself, and he was looking for both a way to improve his image with the Germans and to find a way to get a larger slice of territory as the spoils of war. Therefore, he ordered his supreme commander in Libya, Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, to attack the British in Egypt. On paper, it should have been a sure thing. His army of 250,000 faced a British force* of barely 30,000. Italy fielded 400 guns to the British 150, and he had 190 fighter aircraft to the British 48. Furthermore, only 150 British tanks faced 300 Italian tanks. This is why Mussolini wrote to him saying, "It is not a question of aiming for Alexandria or even Sollum, I am only asking you to attack the British forces facing you".

In all fairness to our Italian friends, and as most people already realize, many of the Italian people during World War II were as much victims of their government as were the enemies of Mussolini. It is true that, in North Africa at least, they did poorly in battle, but they did poorly because they had not the

equipment or the leadership to do otherwise. It should be noted that, while the most decisive battle to take place in North Africa was fought at El-Alamein, most of the early fighting actually took place in Libya, though after Italy attempted to invade Egypt. Source:

www.touregypt.net/featurestories

*At the time the Australian Army was seen as part of, and was integrated into, the command structure of, British Commonwealth forces

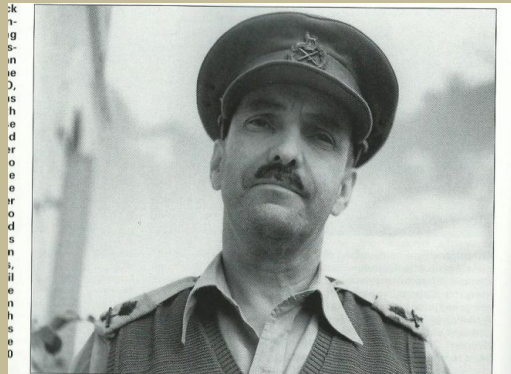


Source: desertwar.net

UBD: *Enemy bomber dropped bombs close... machine gunned our Field Park (heavy stores). Lt Hall hit.*

The next day they went up to Alexandria on the Mediterranean coast.

UBD: *Passed through Cairo, halting near foot of Pyramids for road-side lunchnatives much more sociable than in Palestine.... passed herds of camels and hundreds of planes parked in open.... blinding dust storm blew up and buried equipment.... worst weather conditions ever experienced.*



Tobruk

Wavell placed the Australian Major-General John Laverack, the commander of the 7th Australian Division, in temporary command of all forces in Cyrenaica.

A great informal photograph of Major General John Laverack, Commander, 7th Australian Division, North Africa. Laverack would later 'go into bat' for the 7th Division troops put ashore on Java. He was a soldiers' soldier.

On 17th January 1941 the 2/6th was on the move, in the vanguard of the 7th Division, down through Gaza and Beersheba and across the Sinai Desert and via punt over the Suez Canal again to Ismailia in Egypt .



Source: www.combinedrops.com



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

030005/01

Pyramids near Cairo (AWM 030005/01)

After being trained how to use gas masks and avoid enemy dive bombers (Stukas), the Company proceeded west along the Mediterranean on a good road to the British fortress at Mersa Matruh.



Previous photo: A German Junkers Ju87 Stuka dive bomber attacking a British supply depot near Tobruk, Libya, in October of 1941. (AP Photo). A Stuka such as this attempted to strafe a 2/6th despatch rider Sapper Frank Scott on his motorcycle in the north African desert.

UBD: Westward travel continued on bad roads through blinding dust to Sidi Barrani and Bardia, where an Allied attack (including the Australian 6th Division) on 15th February resulted in 40,000 Italian Troops being captured.



PHOTO: (AWM 005858) 1941-02. TOBRUK - "IT IS NOT THAT YOU HAVE COME HERE TO CAPTURE THIS DESOLATE LAND BUT YOU HAVE PLAYED A GLORIOUS PART IN HELPING TO SMASH THE ITALIAN EMPIRE" - SAID MR. MENZIES DURING AN ADDRESS TO THESE MEN OF THE 1ST ANTI TANK COY. (NEGATIVE BY DAMIEN PARER).

UBD: 25th January.... into Tobruk (previously an Italian fortress) ... very little damage.... spend evening on the scrounge.... cognac in abundance, also food of all descriptions.

The Engineers then started work clearing the dockside and repairing wharves.

Tobruk was particularly important as the safest port in 1600 km of coastline; whoever controlled it controlled supply through this area if the Mediterranean. Captured by the Allies in just two days of hard fighting with the surrender of 25,000 men by 22 January (The Australians had 400 killed, wounded and captured), its useful harbour was now available to serve our advancing Army.

Happily the Italians had done little to demolish the port equipment, even the power station was working, with coal stored for use. By 27th, (thanks to the work of the 2/6th Engineers) the first Allied ship was able to unload stores, and

two days later four ships simultaneously could unload. Gavin Long, *The Six Years War* (1973)

Of course, more was to come for Tobruk, with the 'Rats of Tobruk' etching their name into Australian military history during the Siege of Tobruk (and subsequent forays into the desert to destroy German forces led by General Erwin Rommel) from April to November 1941.

The Rats consisted of consisted of the 9th Australian Division (20th, 24th, and 26th Brigades), the 18th Brigade of the 7th Australian Division, four regiments of British artillery and some Indian troops.

But for the Sappers of the 2/6th, Tobruk still held challenges. Frequent German air raids occurred, and magnetic naval mines were dropped into and just outside the harbour.

Burning Ships. The Sappers of the 2/6th were put to work as stevedores, unloading ammunition and drums of petroleum from ships in Tobruk Harbour, enduring air-raids and sand storms and exploding naval mines.

UBD: Saturday 8th February *Went aboard (ship) Rodi to unload ammunition Out of the corner of my eye I caught sight of a terrific explosion ... the (ship) Adinda was coming in with a load of ... 200,000 gallons of petrol struck a magnetic mine and in an instant was a blazing furnace forward and the harbour was a sheet of fire.*

.... The Adinda hit the Rodi amidships and our deck was soon ablaze The second officer told us to take to the boats several of our chaps were in the water drifting towards the burning, floating oil There was a danger of the ammo going up.

Sapper Frank Scott was one of those in the water; the only way for him to escape the fire on blazing deck had been to take the long jump into the blazing Tobruk harbour.

PM visits Tobruk – sees the ships on fire



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL 005853
(AWM 005853) 1941-02. TOBRUK HARBOUR - THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. MENZIES SECURES A "HOT SHOT" WHEN A DRAMATIC SUBJECT WAS PRESENTED TO HIS CAMERA IN THE FORM OF A FIRE ABOARD AN OIL TANKER. (NEGATIVE BY D. PARER).

As a result of their brave actions in saving lives during this incident at Tobruk, two members of the 2/6th, Corporal Wally Bowman and Sapper Jack Gleaves, were awarded the George Medal (see photos of later medal presentation by General Blamey).

ON TO BENGHAZI

After success at Tobruk, the Allied forces pushed on west to Benghazi, and the 2/6th went along to provide Engineer close support to the Infantry Brigades. After about five weeks of garrison duties and training in bomb disposal and mine warfare, the Company handed over to the 2/5th Field Company RAE, and headed back east, back towards Mersa Matruh.

It was at Benghazi, according to his service record, that Sapper Scott, LF, first went AWOL, from 1300 hours 1.3.41 to 10000 hrs 2.3.41. For this he was awarded a punishment of 1 day confined to barracks (CB) and 1 day's loss of pay.

GERMANY ENTERS THE DESERT WAR.



German General Erwin Rommel with the 15th Panzer Division between Tobruk and Sidi Omar. Photo taken in Libya, in 1941. (NARA)

The 2/5th Engineers had a tough time of it fending off the determined German advance guard from entering Benghazi by laying mine fields and blowing up any water points, bridges, aerodromes and other services that could aid the enemy.

This vital rear guard action allowed their comrades to withdraw in haste, often in complete darkness, across the desert wastes, in what became known as the *Benghazi Derby*, in which many soldiers were killed or captured.

Back to the 2/6th. After four days on rough roads through the desert, they arrived at Mersa Matruh. On the way they stopped at Derna, where UBD says: *...pitched camp on the coast.... had a swim in the Mediterranean and was it good!*



Sergeants of the 2/6th Field Company RAE in the North African Desert. Bert Field far left

Mersa Matruh. The Company spent the next six weeks here and dug in, awaiting further orders. Blinding sand storms were frequent.

Their tasks at Matruh included building defence posts, erecting barbed wire, assembling mines, laying minefields, and building and maintaining tank traps, all as defences against Rommel's advancing Africa Corps. It was at Matruh in early April that Sapper Scott, LF was again up before the OC, this time on a charge of "conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline", a good old catch-all that could have been for anything, but was probably for reacting to some perceived injustice to his Irish-born persona. Fined £1 and 3 days CB.



WESTERN DESERT, EGYPT. 1942-07-18. CONSTRUCTION OF TANK TRAP ON THE MERSA MATRUH-ALEXANDRIA ROAD IN ORDER TO OBSTRUCT USE OF THE ROAD BY ENEMY FORCES, A CONCRETE CAUSEWAY IS MADE WITH HOLES PROVIDED INTO WHICH STEEL OR CONCRETE STUMPS ARE PLACED WHEN ENEMY PENETRATION IS IMMINENT. (AW/M)

Shattering News: Mine Incident. Laying and activating mine fields is always a highly dangerous task, and at Mersa Matruh a Section of the 2/6th, including Frank Scott was involved in a mine laying incident caused by accidental discharge of one of the mines.

UBD: Sat 19 April 1941. *Mersa Matruh. Assembling and laying mines. Jack Daniel, McLure, and Lafferty killed. Maloney, Leslie, Holland, Burns and King wounded the latter three badly. At 5pm buried the three killed.*

Sun 20 April 1941. *Burns died at midnight... Assembled mines and experimented with same as to distance etc.... Burns' funeral at 5pm.*

UBD: Monday 21 April 1941. *In charge of party laying mines. Experiments have shown that the large casualties on Saturday were caused through accidental discharge of one mine laid on a rock formation; the blast evidently flew along a fissure in the rock, thereby jumping adjacent mines to the number of 80 or 90 mines. Now placed further apart and more care exercised.*

The Sappers killed at Matruh lie at the El Alamein War Cemetery, Libya.

**SAPPER
JOHN DANIEL
NX22992**

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 31 AUGUST 1914
PLACE OF BIRTH BUNGENDORE, NSW
NEXT OF KIN DANIEL, LILIAN
DATE OF DEATH 19 APRIL 1941
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**SAPPER
IRVINE BERNARD MCCLURE
NX23150**

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 19 JULY 1914
PLACE OF BIRTH NEWCASTLE, NSW
NEXT OF KIN MCCLURE, JOHN
DATE OF DEATH 19 APRIL 1941
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**SAPPER
PAT LAFFERTY
NX26814**

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 7 JANUARY 1906
PLACE OF BIRTH DONEGAL, IRELAND
NEXT OF KIN LAFFERTY, JOHN
DATE OF DEATH 19 APRIL 1941
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**SAPPER
JONATHAN MATTHEW RUBIN BURNS
NX25045**

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 23 MAY 1900
PLACE OF BIRTH ADELONG, NSW
NEXT OF KIN BURNS, ELSIE
DATE OF DEATH 19 APRIL 1941
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY



Previous photo: The El Alamein War Cemetery contains the graves of over 7,000 Commonwealth troops who died at all stages of the North African campaign and whose bodies were brought in from surrounding areas (CWGC)

The survivors of the mine incident were sent on five days leave to Alexandria.

FRANK AS A DESPATCH RIDER. It may have been after the mine incident that Frank answered a call for experienced motor bike riders to become Despatch Riders, or 'Don R's'. With his teenage motorcycle riding and repair experience in England, he was ideal for that job, and seemed to have kept this role until his unit left for the Batavia. Perhaps the OC could also see that this was a job that might keep his recalcitrant Sapper Scott, LF out of trouble.

Once, while riding his BSA motorcycle across the North African desert, Frank was attacked by a strafing Luftwaffe Stuka, but was able to ride off the road and into roadside cover to avoid being hit. Another case of the luck of the Irish.

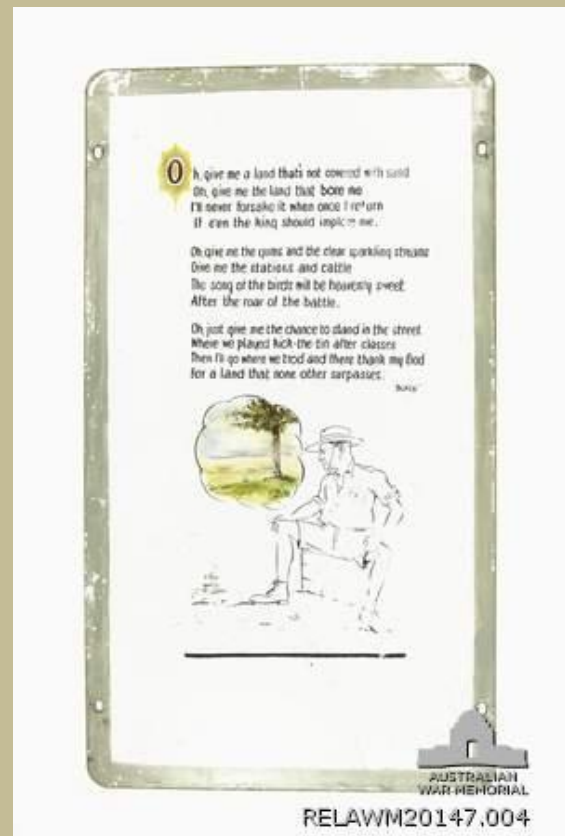


Front of photo: Despatch rider on BSA motorcycle Egypt 1940 (Source: Department of Veterans Affairs Australians at War Film Archive No. 1847) Frank Scott would have looked very much like this.

Work continued for the Sappers at Mersa Matruh with the building of a new 7th Div. HQ in a mineshaft, as well as gun pits for the Artillery.

During this time they experienced the worst desert sandstorms ever. Bert Field wrote *Instead of sand or dust, it seemed to be gravel being hurled through the air Kerosene tins hurled over our dugout like galloping cavalry Tuesday's storm was a baby compared to today's We saw the phenomenon of a huge wall of dark red sand Set against the clear vista of the sea coming towards us.*

The Diggers became so sick and tired of the sandstorms that one of them, Sapper DG Black, 2/3rd Field Company, with thoughts of home, was moved to write a Poem on the back of a local street sign. This item (photo below) is now in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.



Enameled steel sign with a white face and blue reverse, hand painted in black with a poem and image of an Australian soldier seated on a box. In a cloud shaped 'vision' by the soldier's head is a portrayal of an Australian rural scene (AWM)

The poem reads:

*Oh, give me a land that's not covered with sand
Oh, give me the land that bore me*

*I'll never forsake it when once I return
e'en if the King should implore me.*

*Oh, give me the gums and the clear sparkling
streams Give me the stations and cattle*

*The songs of the birds will be heavenly sweet
After the roar of the battle.*

*Oh, just give me the chance to stand in the
street Where we played kick-the-tin after classes*

*Then I'll go where we trod and there thank my
God For a land that no other surpasses.*

About this time the Seventh Division Engineers received a message of appreciation from the British LT GEN Neame VC, a Royal Engineer, expressing his highest appreciation for their work while attached to his Cyrenacian command (the eastern coastal region of Libya) in North Africa. General Neame was captured by a patrol of Rommel's Panzer Group Africa, and was POW in Italy.

The company continued with garrison works at Matruh until 21 May, experiencing regular enemy (German) bombing and strafing but, protected as they were in their dug-outs, they suffered no casualties.

Leave was still made available for nearby Alexandria, where the Sappers had the opportunity to see all of the historical and cultural sites, including the notorious Sister Street ("I have lovely sister mister, you want zig a zig?")



Alexandria during WW2

ON THE MOVE TO SYRIA

Towards the end of May 1941 the 2/6th was on the move east, back through Cairo, back across the Suez Canal, and back into Palestine to Affula, just south of Nazareth, where the whole Australian force was concentrating.

It was here that Frank again went AWOL, probably into Nazareth, from 2000hrs 29.5.41 until 2300hrs 30.5.41. By this time the OC, Major Calder, was obviously becoming tired of DX 561 Sapper Scott appearing before him in the Orderly Room, and issued a severe award of a £3 fine, 7 days CB and 2 days loss of pay.



(AWM 023141) SYRIA. MAJOR J.E.M. CALDER OBE, (THEN) OFFICER COMMANDING THE 2/6TH FIELD COMPANY, AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS (and later the Engineer Training Battalion)

I can imagine that Frank would have enjoyed his time while AWOL, but like most bushman soldiers and wild colonial boys, and in the context of having already lost a number of his mates killed in the mine-laying incident, would have just shrugged off his punishment.

Regarding the question of the behaviour and discipline of Australian Troops in the Middle East (and North Africa), the following is a comment an un-named British Tank Corps Officer, which is said to be echoed by the great majority of UK Troops:

*Most things one hears about them {the
Australians} when they are bored or on*

leave are probably true. Two or three of them gathered together are a considerable menace. But meet a lone Australian on a railway journey, and you will probably like him at once. Be associated with an Australian formation in action and you will not only like them but really respect them. They are not merely fierce fighters, though they are all that, but they lay a show on, think of all the snags, and carry it off in a way that convinces me that they are the best fighting troops in the world. As regards to discipline in the field, that is also excellent; they obey orders correctly given with alacrity, they are respectful to seniority, they maintain their vehicles and weapons very much better than most. Their discipline under fire is immense. If they have these qualities it occurs to one that it does not matter a lot if they shave irregularly and like to go about their duties wearing underpants and no trousers. Perhaps the Aussies' most striking characteristics are intense practicability and genius for friendly co-operation.

(Mark Johnston, *ANZACS IN THE MIDDLE EAST Australian Soldiers, their Allies and local People during World War II*, p.209).

IN ACTION IN SYRIA

Background. After the Nazi German invasion, a government under Marshall Philippe Petain, sympathetic to the Nazi cause, was set up in France, and applied control to France's then mandates (overseas territories) including Syria. This government was known as the Vichy French, and was opposed by the Free French who sought to overthrow German occupation.



The Vichy French Marshall Philippe Pétain (left) shaking hands with Adolf Hitler.

Syria, which included modern day Lebanon, was included in the mandates controlled by the Vichy French. Regional politics dictated that the British maintain control of the area to protect their oilfields and the Suez Canal. The 21st Australian Brigade was part of a three pronged attack that sought to wrest control from the Vichy French.

THE INVASION OF SYRIA TO DRIVE OUT THE VICHY FRENCH, AND THE INVOLVEMENT WITH MOSHE DAYAN.

So, in June 1941, the British Allied Forces (including the Seventh Australian Infantry Division including the 2/6th Field Company RAE) sought to push the Vichy French military out of Syria. In a short and decisive campaign they were successful and took control of Damascus, the French headquarters at the time.

The Vichy French resisted initially, and a tough fight ensued.

The first of the Allied forces to cross the border into Syria were two small parties of Australian infantrymen and sappers, including Bert Field. (I have been unable at this stage to find out which Section/Sections of the 2/6th were involved, but I think it may have been LT Mick Flynn's section, as Frank Scott mentioned Moshe Dayan (see below) at home in the 1970s, and seemed to have good knowledge of the action.)

The sappers were essential to the task because of their expertise with minewarfare and ability to neutralize enemy explosive devices set up to kill or maim the advancing Allied troops.

Johnston (ibid 2013) tells of how the infantrymen and sappers, after enjoying a good meal the previous evening in 'a communal dining room of a Jewish farm colony (a kibbutz) at Hanita', went to their task of cutting telegraph lines and removing enemy demolition charges on the road near Iskantroun.

UBD : *The Brigadier visited us this morning, stressed the importance of the mission and wished us luck. The job is to cross the frontier (with Syria) several kilometres inland and travel cross country to a point near Iskantroun, cut telephone wires, overpower guards on road with help of 2/14th (infantry) party, defuse their road mines (then wait until the time set for the invasion)*

Four local guides accompanied the Australians – **Moshe Dayan*** and **Zalman Marte**, both of Haganah, the Jewish self defence force, and two Arabs, **Yitzak the Druze** and **Rashid Tahir**. While the Australians were looking for the enemy explosives they came under fire from the Vichy French troops holed up in a stone building. The 2/14th infantrymen under **Lt. Jim Kyffin** successfully attacked the building and took 50 prisoners and a mortar.

UBD: It developed into a ding dong fight ... we were surrounded on three sides ... a tough tussle saw us the victors.

**During this action Moshe Dayan was hit in the head by a sniper's bullet and lost an eye. Dayan was later to become the post-war Israeli Defence Minister, noted for his eye patch.*



Bert Field: *“Every time I see his photo I remember him with his eye hanging down his cheekbone. He just went right on scrapping. Afterwards all he was thinking about was collecting captured rifles and ammunition. The Jews were short of them.”* (Maree Klein)

The Litani River presented a considerable obstacle to the Australian 21st Brigade (which included the 2/6th Engineers) as it

advanced along the southern Lebanon coast in June 1941. Like many natural obstacles, the Litani had been incorporated into the Vichy French defensive plan, and strong, well-sited positions had been sited in the hills to the south of the river. Realising how critical it was to a rapid advance, the plan for the Allied invasion of Syria included a seaborne commando landing to seize the bridge that carried the coastal road across the Litani. On the first day of the invasion - 8 June - heavy surf prevented the commandos landing and their operation was postponed until the morning of 9 June. By this time the 2/16th Battalion was advancing towards the bridge along the road. The commandos were to land and capture the bridge; the 2/16th would attack at 5.30am if they were unsuccessful.

The commando operation was unable to achieve its objectives and thus the 2/16th Battalion were committed to the attack. A plan to rush the bridge was forestalled when its defenders blew it up, leaving the 2/16th with no option but to cross the Litani, under fire, in a single canvas assault boat. The boat could carry no more than eight men so the crossing was slow, but a bridgehead was established on the north bank, east of the bridge, and progressively enlarged. By early afternoon sufficient troops were across the river to allow the main Vichy French positions on the ridge above it to be tackled. A series of attacks, supported by artillery, steadily cleared the ridge throughout the afternoon and early evening. Communications difficulties, however, resulted in a breakdown of the co-operation with the artillery and two naval vessels providing fire support, and the infantry had to withdraw from some of the positions they had captured to avoid being shelled by their comrades. Nevertheless the ridge was firmly in Australian hands by the night's end.

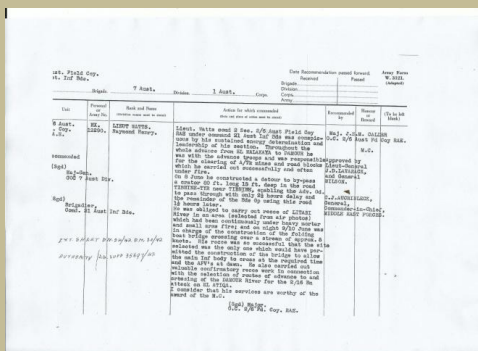
West of the bridge, another fight had been going on throughout the day. C Company of the 2/16th and a party of commandos that had been incorrectly landed behind

them had advanced towards the river under heavy fire from Vichy French redoubts on the north bank and suffered grievously. It was not until early afternoon that they were able, also using a single canvas boat, to gain a foothold on the far bank. Due to determined French resistance, progress here was much slower than along the ridge - it was not until late that night, when a company of the 2/27th Battalion had been ferried across the river, that Vichy French resistance was finally subdued.

With the Vichy French positions north of the river destroyed, the 2/6th Field Company were able to construct a temporary bridge across the river, and at 5am on 10 June the first vehicles and men of the 2/27th Battalion crossed it to resume the advance along the coast.



Temporary bridge across the Litani River built by the 2/6th Engineers



Above. The Citation for the Military Cross for Lt. (later Captain) Ray Watts, giving details of clearing of enemy land mines and road blocks, as well as reconnaissance of the Litani River area carried out by the 2/6th sappers under heavy enemy and small arms fire. (Ray Watts was to die a prisoner in Burma, looking after his men until the bitter end. Such was the esteem in which he was held, 2/6th Sappers near death crawled on their hand and knees to his

memorial service at the Kilo 100 Camp near Three Pagodas Pass)



DAMOUR AREA, SYRIA. 1941-07. PART OF THE DETOUR CONSTRUCTED AROUND THE DEMOLISHED BRIDGE ACROSS THE DAMOUR RIVER ON THE BEIT ED DINE ROAD BY 2/6TH FIELD COMPANY TO TAKE ANTI-TANK GUNS



LEBANON - SYRIA BORDER. GROUP PHOTOGRAPH OF MEMBERS OF THE 2/6TH AUSTRALIAN FIELD COMPANY

AS the fighting took place 15th to 29th June, the 2/6th Engineers, true to their Corps motto, were everywhere, attached to Infantry, building bridges and culverts, laying mines, taking up French mines, being attacked by enemy aircraft and being shelled by off-shore enemy ships.

On 21st June the Allies took control of Damascus, and the 7th Division then garrisoned the northern coast zone near Tel Aviv.

The 7th Division had taken a leading part in the Syrian Campaign, had conducted themselves well and earned respect as military professionals.

Australian casualties of 416 killed, 1136 wounded were far greater than combined British, Indian and Free French casualties.

It was a real stoush, but oddly, no medal was ever struck for this campaign.

Campaign deaths from the 2/6th were Sappers Griffiths, Hehir, Lester (John Bradshaw), Muirson, WA Murray, Rooke, Rowley, Titmus, and Corporals Paton and Redpath.

SAPPER
ROBERT WILLIAM GRIFFITHS
NX33564

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 17 SEPTEMBER 1918
PLACE OF BIRTH BRISBANE, QLD

NEXT OF KIN GRIFFITHS, MAISIE
DATE OF DEATH 10 JULY 1941
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

SAPPER
THOMAS HECTOR HEHIR
NX29051

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 4 MAY 1904
PLACE OF BIRTH MELBOURNE, VIC

NEXT OF KIN WOOD, MAY
DATE OF DEATH 20 JUNE 1941
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY



TOM HEHIRS GRAVE KHAYAT BEACH WAR CEMETARY, HAIFA, ISRAEL PHOTO: DANI ZEE 2015

SAPPER
DANIEL JOHN LESTER
NX16607

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 23 JUNE 1916

NEXT OF KIN HUGHES, WILLIAM
DATE OF DEATH 9 JUNE 1941
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

SAPPER
HECTOR GEORGE MUIRSON
SX397

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 18 JULY 1917
PLACE OF BIRTH LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

DATE OF DEATH 9 JUNE 1941
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

SAPPER
WILLIAM ALBERT MURRAY
NX36807

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 8 NOVEMBER 1908
PLACE OF BIRTH HAY, NSW

NEXT OF KIN MURRAY, MARY
DATE OF DEATH 14 OCTOBER 1941
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

SAPPER
CLIFFORD AUBREY ROOKE
NX22605

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 20 JULY 1903

NEXT OF KIN ROOKE, GLADYS
DATE OF DEATH 27 JUNE 1941
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

SAPPER
STANLEY EDWARD ROWLEY
NX15798

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 29 MARCH 1912
PLACE OF BIRTH WYONG, NSW

NEXT OF KIN ROWLEY, MILLICENT
DATE OF DEATH 3 AUGUST 1941
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

SAPPER
WILFRED LEONARD TITMUS
NX29103

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 26 JULY 1911
PLACE OF BIRTH HOBART, TAS

DATE OF DEATH 8 JULY 1941
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

CORPORAL
JOHN BINGHAM PATON
NX13985

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 31 MAY 1914
PLACE OF BIRTH BALMAIN, NSW

NEXT OF KIN PATON, MILLAR
DATE OF DEATH 27 JUNE 1941
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

CORPORAL
RONALD NICHOL REDPATH
NX27691

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 4 FEBRUARY 1914
PLACE OF BIRTH LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

NEXT OF KIN REDPATH, JEAN
DATE OF DEATH 27 JUNE 1941
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

On 28th June 1941, on his 34th birthday, Sapper Frank Scott was evacuated to the 1st Australian General Hospital with malaria and a relapsing fever.

(Gavin Long: *malaria is awful – chills and shakes, racking fevers and splitting headaches often with hallucinations and debilitating depression; carried by mosquitoes and recurring*).

It was not until November, after spending time in a convalescent hospital and the Engineer Training Battalion, that Frank rejoined his unit the 2/6th Field Company, but this did not prevent him meeting up with his Sapper mates in the meantime.

Garrison Duties in SYRIA

By January 1942 the Company was winding up its operations in North Africa and the Middle East. It had been in the Western Desert, on to Benghazi, and back to Mersa Matruh. It had had lively combat experience against the Vichy French in Syria and Lebanon.

By this time the raw recruits who had trained at Ingleburn had changed into proficient combat engineers adapted to modern warfare.



Bert probably with Tuft & Scott

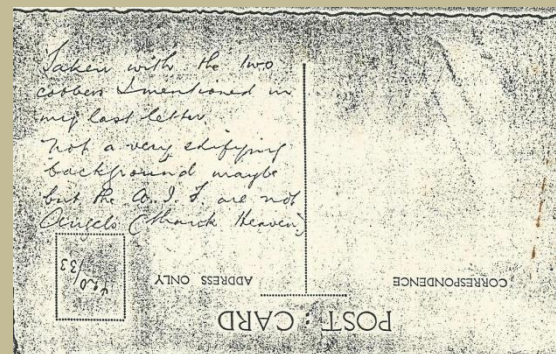
4 to 18 September 1941 Tel Aviv Leave. Met Tuft and Scott in morning so decided to spend the next two days with them. Had two enjoyable days then down with high temperatures. Bert probably with Tuft & Scott

(Maree Klein UBD) 14 September 1941.

L to R Bert Field, Frank Scott and Alan Tuft on leave in Tel Aviv. Note Frank's driver's cap denoting him as a despatch rider. Larrikins.



Photo: Postcard Photo of 'The Old Blokes' of the 2/6th Field Company RAE on leave in Tel Aviv September 1941, sent by Bert Field to his sweetheart Hulda Klein. Shows L to R Sapper Frank Scott, Sgt Bert Field DCM MM, L/Sgt Alan Tuft. Note: GOLDSTAR beer (on the table) is still produced today.

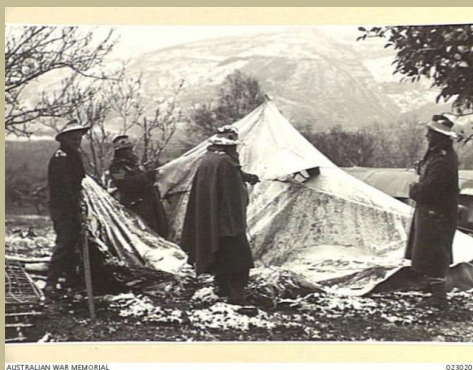


Note from Bert on rear of postcard: 'Taken with the two coppers I mentioned in my last letter. Not a very edifying background maybe but the A.I.F are not Angels (Thank Heaven)'

Christmas 1941 saw them on Garrison duties, in a state of, to quote *The Gap is Bridged*, 'bucolic ambience'. They were camped in the rustic countryside in an olive grove at Miriata (Miryata), about 10km east of Tel Aviv, and relaxing with sports and visits to local villages. The exception was Lt Purves' 2 Section which was further north constructing obstacles, destroying river crossings etc. that might be used by any advancing Axis forces.

The snow of winter descended upon their camp and on the night of 3rd/4th January, so much snow fell that tents collapsed.

The local population stated that this was the first instance of snow in the area since Australian soldiers had been there during WW1; Victory had ensued then, so victory would come again, according to the omens.



TRIPOLI, SYRIA. THE HEAVY SNOWFALL WAS TOO MUCH FOR THIS TENT OF THE 2/6TH FIELD COMPANY, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS. IT COLLAPSED UNDER THE WEIGHT. (AWM)

On 9th January, a movement warning was received, followed by the Company moving south to Acre (in current day northern Israel). It was here at Acre that the Company witnessed an amazing parade, the (British) "North Somerset Yeomanry Regiment, all horsed, and the entire Regiment advanced in a line" (*The Gap is Bridged*).



British Yeomanry water their horses in the Litani River

This spectacle is said to have stirred admiration and pride in the breasts of the Australians, particularly those whose relatives had been Australian Light Horsemen during WW1.

The Company then moved back to Qastina, 38 km north of Gaza City.

It was here that Lt Appleby and 17 other reinforcements joined the Company.

It was also in this area that the Company was reviewed by General Blamey, Officer

Commanding the AIF (Middle East), prior to presentation of the George Medal to Corporal Wally Bowman and Sapper Jack Gleaves.



(AWM 023525) Gaza. Palestine. February 1942. General Sir Thomas Blamey inspects a Guard of the 2/6 Field Company Royal Australian Engineers prior to presenting the George Medal to Corporal W L Bowman and Sapper JW Gleaves in recognition of "acts of bravery at Tobruk."



The George medal



GAZA, PALESTINE. 1942-02. PRESENTATION OF THE GEORGE MEDAL TO CORPORAL W.L. BOWMAN OF THE 2/6TH FIELD COMPANY, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS, BY THE GENERAL-OFFICER-COMMANDING A.I.F (MIDDLE EAST) GENERAL SIR THOMAS BLAMEY. (AWM)



GAZA, PALESTINE. 1942-02. A SCENE DURING THE PRESENTATION OF THE GEORGE MEDAL TO SAPPER J.W.G. GLEAVES OF THE 2/6TH FIELD COMPANY, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS, BY THE GENERAL-OFFICER-COMMANDING A.I.F. (MIDDLE EAST) GENERAL SIR THOMAS BLAMEY. (AWM)

It is here that we see what is thought to be the only photo of DX561 Sapper Frank Scott (3rd from the left in the Honour Guard – enlargement below) in the records of the Australian War Memorial.



The 1st February 1942 found the 2/6th boarding the Troop Ship SS Orcades (Ship No 4) at Port Tewfick at the southern end of the Suez Canal, bound for somewhere, destination unknown.

The Fall of Singapore

The Fall or Capture of Singapore to the Empire of Japan occurred on 15th February 1942 after only a week's fighting. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called it the "worst disaster" and "largest capitulation" in British military history. It marked the end of the British Empire.



The British Army's Lieutenant General Arthur Percival, led by a Japanese officer, walks under a flag of truce to negotiate the capitulation of Allied forces in Singapore, on 15 February 1942. It was the largest surrender of British-led forces in history.

About 80,000 British, Indian and Australian troops became prisoners of war, joining 50,000 taken by the Japanese in the earlier Malayan Campaign.

The Japanese Army invaded Malaya from Indochina, and then moved into northern Malaya and Thailand by amphibious assault. This was virtually simultaneous with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which was meant to deter the US from intervening in Southeast Asia. Japanese troops in Thailand coerced the Thai government to let the Japanese use their military bases for the invasion of other nations in Southeast Asia and then proceeded overland across the Thai-Malayan border to attack Malaya. At this time, the Japanese began bombing strategic sites in Singapore, and air raids were conducted on Singapore from 29 December onwards.

The battleship *HMS Prince of Wales*, the battle cruiser *HMS Repulse* and four destroyers reached Malaya before the Japanese began their air assaults. This force was thought to be a deterrent to the Japanese. Their aircraft, however, sank the capital ships, leaving the east coast of the Malayan peninsula exposed and allowing the Japanese to continue their amphibious landings. They advanced down the Malayan peninsula overwhelming the defences, despite their numerical inferiority. The Japanese forces also used bicycle infantry and light tanks, allowing swift movement through the jungle.

Although more Allied units—including some from the Australian 8th Division—joined the campaign, the Japanese prevented the Allied forces from regrouping, they also overran cities, and advanced toward Singapore. The city was an anchor for the operations of the American-British-Dutch-Australian Command (ABDACOM), the first Allied joint command of the Second World War. Singapore also controlled the main shipping channel between the Indian and the Pacific Oceans.

From 3 February, the Allies were shelled by Japanese artillery and air attacks on Singapore intensified over the next five days.



Above. The aftermath of one of the Japanese bombing raids on Singapore. The Chinese civilians who had no shelters suffered the most.

The artillery and air bombardment strengthened, severely disrupting communications between Allied units and their commanders and affecting preparations for the defence of the island. Singapore was subjected to aerial bombing for the first time by long-range Japanese aircraft, such as the Mitsubishi G3M2 "Nell" and the Mitsubishi G4M1 "Betty", based in Japanese-occupied Indochina. The bombers struck the city centre as well as the Sembawang Naval Base and the island's northern airfields



Singapore buildings damaged by Japanese Air Raids

The treatment they meted out to the Chinese was worse. Lance Corporal John Roxburgh, 2/29th Battalion:

Once on the wharves (in Singapore) I saw a (Chinese) kid of about 8 or 9 throw a cigarette over the fence to anyone, not a packet, just one cigarette. A Jap guard saw this, got the kid and started to belt him, fists first, hands then eventually the rifle butt to the back of the head, to the side of the head: that poor kid was lying there just bleeding, the poor little bastard unbelievable I thought that they (the Japanese) were just bloody animals. (Brune p.565)

The Alexandra Hospital massacre

On 14 February, Japanese soldiers advanced towards the Alexandra Barracks British Military Hospital. A British lieutenant—acting as an envoy with a white flag—approached the Japanese forces but was killed with a bayonet. After the Japanese troops entered the hospital, a number of patients, including those undergoing surgery at the time, were killed along with doctors and members of

nursing staff. The following day about 200 male staff members and patients who had been assembled and bound the previous day, many of them walking wounded, were ordered by the Japanese to walk about 400 m to an industrial area. Anyone who fell on the way was bayoneted. The men were forced into a series of small, badly ventilated rooms where they held overnight without water. Some died during the night as a result of their treatment. The remainder were bayoneted the following morning.



Imperial Japanese Army atrocity in China (source worldwar42.blogspot.com.au)



The Japanese General Yamashita, commander of the troops that committed the Alexandra Hospital Massacre

By the morning of 15 February, the Japanese had broken through the last line of defence; the Allies were running out of food and ammunition. The anti-aircraft guns had also run out of ammunition and

were unable to repel any further Japanese air attacks which threatened to cause heavy casualties in the city centre. Looting and desertion by Allied troops further added to the chaos in this area.

General Percival held a conference at Fort Canning with his senior commanders. He proposed two options: either launch an immediate counter-attack to regain the reservoirs and the military food depots in the Bukit Timah region and drive the enemy's artillery off its commanding heights outside the town; or capitulate. All present agreed that no counterattack was possible. Percival opted for surrender.

A deputation was selected to go to the Japanese headquarters. It consisted of a senior staff officer, the colonial secretary and an interpreter. They set off in a motor car bearing a Union Jack and a white flag of truce toward the enemy lines to discuss a cessation of hostilities. They returned with orders that Percival himself proceed with staff officers to the Ford Motor Factory, where Yamashita would lay down the terms of surrender – that it was unconditional. A further requirement was that the Japanese Rising Sun Flag be hoisted over the tallest building in Singapore, as soon as possible to maximise the psychological impact of the official surrender. Percival formally surrendered shortly after 17:15 hrs. (Collated from Wikipedia)



Japanese troops celebrate the Fall of Singapore

'By mid-February 1942, after Pearl Harbour, the Japanese had defeated the British in Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore and Burma. Most of the Netherlands East Indies was occupied. The Allied Far East naval units were virtually destroyed and their air forces reduced to remnants. Disaster followed for the Americans at Corregidor and Bataan.

The might of Japan was about to descend on Java and the Australian continent beyond.

Steaming to the doomed island, the troopship Orcades came bearing some 2000 Australians from the Middle East, including a combat engineer unit: 2/6th Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers. These Troopswere about to face the Japanese Divisions massing for their attack'.

(LJ Robertson and AE Field DCM MM, *The Gap is Bridged*, 1982)



SS Orcades, converted to a Troop Ship, transported the 2/6th Field Company RAE from Suez to Batavia, Java, in February 1942. The Orcades was sunk by German submarine U-172 off South Africa October 1942, just nine months later.



HM TROOP TRANSPORT SHIP ANDES SEEN FROM THE DECK OF HM TRANSPORT ORCADES DURING THE VOYAGE FROM THE MIDDLE EAST TAKING MEMBERS OF THE AIF (supposedly) HOME TO AUSTRALIA.



Java was the place where the second largest group of Australians was captured. Here troops from the 7th Division are photographed on the HMT Orcades arriving at Batavia from the Middle East in early 1942 in a last-minute effort to defend the Netherlands East Indies from Japanese attack. [AWM 011779/08]



BATAVIA, JAVA. 1942-02-19. AUSTRALIAN TROOPS ABOARD THE TROOP TRANSPORT SHIP HMT ORCADES WHICH WAS BRINGING THEM FROM THE MIDDLE EAST. THE PIPE BAND IS THAT OF THE 2/6TH FIELD COMPANY RAE, KNOWN (with Sapper humour) AS THE 'FREE SCOTCH PIPE BAND'

AUSTRALIAN PRISONERS OF WAR

11. CAPTIVITY – BECOMING PRISONERS OF WAR OF THE JAPANESE

Introduction

Much of the information contained in this introduction is taken directly from the website of the Department of Veterans Affairs' History and Research section. www.dva.gov.au/commems_oawg/commemorations/history_research/Pages/index.aspx

More than 30,000 Australians became prisoners of war (POWs) between 1940 and 1945. The Germans and Italians captured Australians during the Mediterranean and Middle East campaigns, and also at sea in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans. Members of RAAF aircrews, who had bailed out during operations over Germany, occupied Europe or North Africa, also became POWs. **Of the 8,174 Australians taken prisoner by the Germans and Italians, 265, or about 3%, died during their captivity.**

During the Pacific war, the Japanese captured around 22,000 Australians: soldiers, sailors, airmen and members of the army nursing service, as well as some civilians.

They were imprisoned in camps throughout Japanese-occupied territories in Borneo, Korea, Manchuria, Hainan, Rabaul, Ambon, Singapore, Timor, Java, Thailand, Burma and Indo China (now Vietnam) and also Japan itself. **At the end of the war only 13,872 of the POWs were recovered: about one-third had died.**

Peter Brune: "After three years and five months, one in every three prisoners of the

Japanese lay buried or their ashes scattered across an appalling trail of slavery, deprivation and torment."

PRISONERS OF WAR ACCOUNTED FOR HALF OF THE SACRIFICE OF AUSTRALIA'S WW2 WAR DEAD.

THE BURMA RAILWAY

About 9,500 Australian prisoners died while being forced labour of the Japanese Army, building a railway through the jungle from Bampong in Thailand to Thanbyuzayat in Burma. Prisoners were split into two groups and work started at each end and joined up just south of Three Pagodas Pass on 16 October 1943. By that time, 2,646 Australians had died working on the railway.



The Japanese moved many thousands of Allied prisoners from their original place of capture to work on the Thai–Burma railway. Transport was either by train from Singapore, in cramped railway trucks; or via sea in equally crowded and primitive cargo vessels, known to the POWs as 'hell ships'. Once in Thailand and Burma POWs were either trucked or marched to their worksite on the railway. (Department of Veterans Affairs)

Betrayed by Wavell and the Australian Government: How 7th Division Troops on the *Orcades* were thrown into the hands of the Japanese.



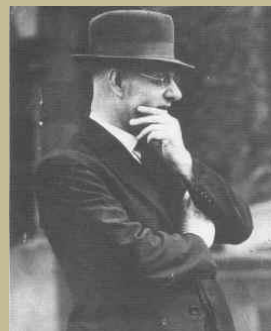
Tanjong Priok Port, Java. 18 February 1942. Australian Troops dis-embarked from the troop ship *Orcades* by British General Archibald Wavell, who himself ran away from Java a mere four days later.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had had appointed his monacle-wearing General Archibald Wavell the commander of ABDA (American, Dutch, British and Australian) area which included Singapore, Malaya and the East Indies, based in Java. **Australian General Laverack reported back to Canberra his belief that with the fall of Singapore imminent, the landing of troops on Java was out of the question, but was told by his political masters to 'obey Wavell's orders'** (Peter J. Dean, *The Architect of Victory: The Military Career of Lieutenant General Sir Frank Horton Berryman*, 2011)

Wavell insisted that when the Australian troops arrived in Java on the *Orcades* from the Middle East, they should be disembarked and used in the defence of Java. Laverack lacked the authority to order the troops to re-embark, but referred Wavell's decision back to Canberra; The Australian War Cabinet considered the *Orcades* issue on 16th, 18th and 19th February 1942 ('Rome Burns while Nero Fiddles' said Berryman).



Wavell with his monacle



Australian Prime Minister 1941-45 John Curtin, who's War Cabinet dithered over the 7th Division men on the *Orcades* until it was too late to save them from being offloaded at Tanjong Priok port and taken Prisoner of War within weeks.

The Australians were disembarked at the port of Tanjong Priok on the 18th; Four days later ABDA was dissolved and Wavell and his staff disembarked themselves from Java (i.e. ran away) and left its' defence to the local Dutch self defence force (the KNIL) and the poorly armed Australians.

The *Orcades*, back loaded with ABDA staff, was ordered to leave Tanjong Priok on 21st February.

The 2,920 men of Blackforce under Australian Brigadier Blackburn VC, with meagre arms and ammunition, were abandoned to their own fate.

Less than three weeks later, after **the Dutch had capitulated to the superior Japanese invaders**, and the **proud Soldiers of the Australian 7th Division**, veterans of the Middle East and North Africa Campaigns, were **ordered to surrender**.

They had been betrayed not only by Wavell and his vanity and stupidity, but

also by the Australian Government of John Curtin by its indecision and acquiescence to the British.

Wavell and Curtin had consigned the *Orcades contingent* to 3½ years brutal imprisonment, and for many, death. Those who survived and returned home would never be the same.

I will not detail here the activities of the 2/6th in West Java prior to surrender, as they are told with great detail in *The Gap is Bridged*. They were kept busy with airfield defence and reconnaissance at Tjampea, Tjileungsir and the Tjisadane River near Roempin, and then went on to Buetzenzorg and the tea area at Arinem in the mountains south-east of Bandung, where they surrendered as ordered.

I will however note that a further four of the 2/6th were lost on 4th March 1942. They were Corporal JM Michie and Sappers LE Boardman, T Robertson and DG McIntyre, killed in action in a firefight with the Japanese; They had, as in the Sapper's code, been called on, when required, to act as infantry, and paid for that with their lives.

CORPORAL
JAMES MITCHELL MICHIE
NX27566

DATE OF BIRTH 30 DECEMBER 1907
PLACE OF BIRTH ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND
DATE OF ENLISTMENT 20 JUNE 1940
LOCALITY ON ENLISTMENT NORTH AINSLIE, ACT
PLACE OF ENLISTMENT PADDINGTON, NSW
NEXT OF KIN MICHIE, PATRICIA
DATE OF DEATH 4 MARCH 1942
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

SAPPER
LANCE ERROLL BOARDMAN
NX36727

DATE OF BIRTH 30 OCTOBER 1916
PLACE OF BIRTH GANMAIN, NSW
DATE OF ENLISTMENT 28 AUGUST 1940
LOCALITY ON ENLISTMENT WEETHALL
PLACE OF ENLISTMENT WAGGA WAGGA, NSW
NEXT OF KIN BOARDMAN, JAMES
DATE OF DEATH 4 MARCH 1942
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

SAPPER
THOMAS ROBERTSON
NX73022

DATE OF BIRTH 10 SEPTEMBER 1919
PLACE OF BIRTH BEGA, NSW
DATE OF ENLISTMENT 3 APRIL 1941
LOCALITY ON ENLISTMENT BEGA, NSW
PLACE OF ENLISTMENT PADDINGTON, NSW
NEXT OF KIN ROBERTSON, THOMAS
DATE OF DEATH 4 MARCH 1942
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

SAPPER
DOUGLAS GORDON MCINTYRE
NX53786

DATE OF BIRTH 21 SEPTEMBER 1917
PLACE OF BIRTH GUNNEDAH, NSW
DATE OF ENLISTMENT 9 JULY 1940
LOCALITY ON ENLISTMENT EPPING, NSW
PLACE OF ENLISTMENT PADDINGTON, NSW
NEXT OF KIN MCINTYRE, JOHN
DATE OF DEATH 4 MARCH 1942
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

Bicycle Camp, Batavia, Java

Note: Information in this section is compiled from *Java Rabble* by Fred Skeels OAM; *Slaves of the Son of Heaven* by RH Whitecross; and *The Gap is Bridged* by LJ Robertson and AE Field DCM MM.



Pre war street scene in Batavia (www.ibiblio.org)

The Japanese set up a collection point and staging camp in Batavia (modern day Jakarta) for allied POWs captured in the Java region, in a barracks of the former 10th Battalion of Wheel Riders, a bicycle mounted unit of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (*Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger* or KNIL).

This became known to the POWs as Bicycle Camp.



AWM 123661 Prisoners of War at Bicycle Camp

Allied forces brought to, and imprisoned in, the camp from March 1942 included the troops put ashore from the transport ship *Orcades* by the Australian Government to defend Dutch assets (including Frank Scott and his 2/6th Engineers who had spent some time at nearby Glodok Jail), the survivors of Allied ships sunk in the sea battle of the Sunda Strait (**HMAS Perth**, **USS Houston**, **HMS Electra** and the Dutch ships **De Ruyter** and **Java**), some RAAF personnel and a Texan Artillery unit. Also held there was the surgeon Lieutenant Colonel ‘Weary’ Dunlop and his Army hospital group captured in **Bandung**, and later a group from Sparrow Force captured on Timor.

For the first 3 months of captivity, things were relatively easy for the prisoners. Food was short, mainly rice (3 meals a day), but hygiene was maintained. **The Javanese people were a lifeline and either gave or sold food to the prisoners, and the camp cooks learned how to cook local dishes including nasi goreng.**

The camp was run under the command of **Brigadier AS Blackburn VC**, who passed on the Japanese orders.

Sport was encouraged to keep the prisoners fit and well, and Frank Scott and his good mate George Scott from Manly in NSW, were keen participants in the popular International volleyball tournaments introduced by the Americans. Robbie noted that Sapper Frank Scott was one of the selectors for members of the Australian teams (see reference to volleyball later in Robbie’s letter to Mavis Scott).

At the same time Robbie noted that Frank’s little Darwin mate Sapper James Russell was a competitor in the Bridge tournaments.

The start of their time as prisoners at the Bicycle Camp coincided with the 2nd Anniversary of the establishment of the 2/6th Field Company at Ingleburn; the **OC Major LJ Robertson** reflected on this in 1982 in *The Gap is Bridged*:

“Much had happened during those two years: much to be proud of. Now the real testing years were starting. More than three were to elapse before the Company passes the tests; years of terrible trials and experiences that were never envisaged in those terrible training days. But the skills and conduct learned in those times stood them in good stead, and the Company beat the enemy in the end, although at the cost of some 25 percent of its strength. Those left behind in the seas and the soils of South East Asia, remain in lasting memory of a Sapper unit that never forgot that they were Sappers! “

The Nippon jail commander at the Bicycle Camp was an elderly Lt Suzuki (correct title ‘Suzuki Shochan Dono’ or Suzuki Commander Sir in English), the 2 i/c a younger Lt Katagiri (‘Katagiri Fookan Dono’, whose ‘fookan’ title was a source of great amusement to the Australians), while *‘the Glamour Boy of the Nip orderly room, Kitamura San (mister), often minced about in a pair of women’s white suede high-heeled shoes that struck a contrast to his drab uniform. These three soon became known to the prisoners as Susie, Katie and Kitty.’*



AWM 066337 Batavia, Java. 1942-04-25. Allied prisoners-of-war (POWs) with members of the Japanese Camp staff at the Bicycle POW Camp. Left to right: Back row: Warrant Officer 1 MacKenzie, AIF; Captain Suzuki; Captain Henry, AIF; Captain Tarui; Lieutenant Katagiri; Major Keirnan, AIF; Lieutenant Mauratani; Lieutenant Colonel Russell, East Surrey Regiment. Front row: Kanasiru; Nisina; Okomato; Osano; Ohama.

To the prisoners, the Japanese were collectively known as the Japs, the Nips (derived from Nippon) or, with a touch of irony, ‘The Management’.

Rations issued to the prisoners *comprised rice of low quality, some pig and vegetables. It was rumoured that the Americans were cooking and eating cats.*

Not all of the company were accounted for at the Bicycle camp, as about 40, including Lt Appleby, Sgt Field and Sappers Gartner, Lum and Zinn had ‘taken to the bush’ in an effort to escape capture. These were referred to as ‘the bush brigades’, and stayed at liberty for various periods of time; Unable to survive, some eventually surrendered, while some others like Lt Appleby were eventually betrayed by locals.

John Appleby joined the Dutch Resistance with a local, **Tom Powell**, and others including a young Dutch woman, **Hanny Hilgers**. It is said in Dutch articles that Tom and Hanny were lovers.

Appleby and Powell carried on activities to aid guerrilla operations in anticipation of an Allied landing. They were hidden in the home of **Mr PM Mulder** in Buitenzorg, Batavia, when their contact Hanny Hilgers was betrayed to the Japanese Kempeitai (secret police) by women in her office, who also proffered information about Appleby and Powell.

The result was that all three, plus a KNIL Sergeant named Bechtholt, were captured, convicted by a Japanese summary military court, and sentenced to death for conspiring to harm the Nippon power.

Major Katsumura, the local Kempeitai chief, ordered **Sgt Major Hamada** to lead four NCOs to act as executioners. The four were taken to a place near the Chinese cemetery at Batoe Toelis, overlooking the River Tjisadane.

Here, the four were led blindfolded, then executed by beheading, LT Appleby and Sgt Bechtholt firstly, then the lovers Tom Powell and Hanny Hilgers together.



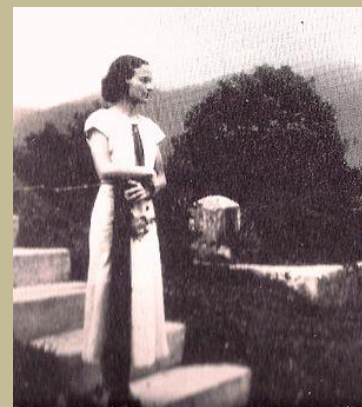
Lt John Appleby, 2/6th Field Company RAE
Executed by beheading, 6th September 1943

LIEUTENANT
JOHN LESLIE APPLEBY
NX76266

SERVICE	AUSTRALIAN ARMY
LOCALITY ON ENLISTMENT	MOSMAN, NSW
NEXT OF KIN	PULBROOK, BERYL
DATE OF DEATH	6 SEPTEMBER 1943
POSTING ON DEATH	2/6 FIELD COMPANY

”

The executioners recalled Hanny Hilgers as being ‘a slight girl, about 5feet 1 inch in height, some 23 years of age, dressed in a blouse with skirt’.

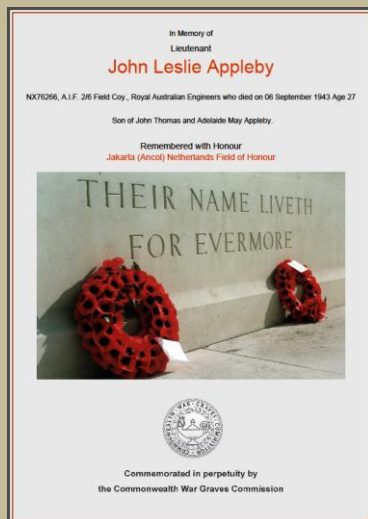


Miss Hanny Hilgers, Dutch Resistance, Japanese Occupied Java.
Executed by Japanese by beheading on 6th September 1943

Posthumous Award. In 1982 the Netherlands Government announced the Posthumous Award of the **The Cross of Resistance (Verzetskruis) 1940–1945**, the second highest decoration for valour in the Netherlands. I have made contact with the Netherlands Government to ascertain unconfirmed reports that LT Appleby was included in the list of recipients.



The Dutch Cross of Resistance



"LEST WE FORGET JOHN APPLEBY AND HIS COURAGEOUS FRIENDS"

While in the Bicycle Camp, 2/6th Officers were hauled in for questioning by the Nippon secret intelligence police, the Kempeitai. **Lts. Flynn and Mullins** were able to convince them that they were not engineers, while some Pioneer and RAAF officers received rough treatment and up to 40 days of torture, including water torture (as betrayed in the 2013 film 'The Railway Man').

The POW Camp commander **Brigadier Arthur Blackburn VC** (Commander 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion, 7th Division) was **viciously beaten** after refusing to order his men to sign a document that they would not try to escape. The useless document was eventually signed under duress.

Blackburn's 'Blackforce' was multinational and included survivors of **USS Houston** and **HMAS Perth** sunk in the battle of the Sunda Strait off Java,



PAINTING: BATTLE OF THE SUNDA STRAIT. HMAS Perth

as well as the British **B Squadron, 3rd Kings own Hussars** (ex Tobruk) and the US Army's **131 Field Artillery (Texas National Guard)** under Lt Colonel Blucher S Tharp. All of men from these Navy and Army units became 'brothers of The Line'. The United States Navy's Chief Petty Officer Bandmaster 'Bandy' Galyean was to become a particular and close friend of the 2/6th Field Company RAE as they moved along the Railway.



LTCOL Blucher S. Tharp, US Army

Bashings Begin in Earnest. Korean guards had been brought in by the Japs, and these guards were held in contempt and despised by everyone, including the Japanese private soldiers.

The Koreans would storm through the barracks, bashing any and every prisoner who did not acknowledge them by bowing or saluting; they would stand the prisoners at attention then slap or punch them across the face until they fell down. Then they would then kick the prisoners or prod them with a stick or rifle butt to ensure that they scrambled to their feet immediately. Fred Skeels said that the bashings with fists, rifle butts and hunks of wood continued until they became a way of life.

This behaviour by the Koreans was a foretaste of what was to come for the captives once they reached Burma and (for the unlucky ones) the slave labour camps in Japan.

Like many prisoners, Frank Scott's spine was battered, twisted and deformed by years of beatings, especially towards the end in the Mitsui Coal Mine at Omuta Camp 17, Fukuoka.

It is beyond my comprehension how the POWs survived the coal mines such as Camp 17 and Camp 22.

Returning our story to the Bicycle Camp, Sapper ingenuity was always at the fore, and such items as operating theatre lighting and a bakery were manufactured from scrap at the Bicycle Camp. **Sapper John Prendergast** made

medical instruments and **Sapper Bob McQuarrie** a system to make much needed cooking salt by evaporating sea water.

Manufacture of items such as these once more demonstrated that, to a Sapper, the impossible is not.

But, little did any of the captives know what Nippon had in store for them.

During October 1942 to January 1943, the Japanese sent a number of parties (groups) of men to Changi Jail in Singapore, in transit to the Burma- Thai Railway.

Among the first of these parties shipped out of the Bicycle Camp were some 362 Australians (including some Pioneers, Machine Gunners, Sailors and Airmen), under the command of the 2/6th OC Major Robertson. They were taken to the docks at Tanjong Priok, where they were bashed by Jap guards as they were herded aboard a dirty-looking steamer, the **Dai Nichi Maru (Ship No 4)** which would take them to Singapore. This was the first of the "hell ships" used to transport both prisoners and IJA soldiers. It was later sunk by the submarine USS Gurnard in 1943, with the loss of over 2000 Japanese soldiers.



Hell Ship Dai Nichi Maru

Peril at sea

Ray Parkin in *The Sword and the Blossom*: *The ship was like a wreck; ragged, rusted gear, broken casting, bits of plating and junk, winch cylinders almost rusted through, great cankers of rust as if the ship had leprosy, the lagging of the steam lines rotted and gapped like ulcerated limbs. Because of the crowding, some*

of the men had found billets among the heaps of coal ... they were quite exposed to the rain.



Hold accommodation, en route Java to Singapore, 1943. This sketch by Australian POW Ray Parkin shows the cramped nature of sea voyages for the prisoners [AWM ART90933.012]

Fred Skeel: *The conditions in the hold (of the Dai Nichi Maru) were appalling; hot, humid, suffocating and it was impossible to lie down. After the guards herded us into the intolerable confines, they stood at the top of the only ladder to prevent us escaping ... for five days we sat on hot steel and tried to survive.*

Thousands of prisoners of war were transported by ship across Japan's newly conquered Asia-Pacific empire in 1942-45. Travelling on these 'hell ships' was acutely uncomfortable and very dangerous. During World War II perhaps 15 000 prisoners of war and civilian internees of all combatants died a result of being sunk at sea by their own side. Some 1515 Australian prisoners died at sea in the Pacific.



Photo: Australian prisoners struggle in the water after their Japanese transport *Rakuyo Maru* was sunk by US submarines. The unrestricted submarine campaign and the refusal of all belligerents to mark POW transports led to the death of thousands of Allied prisoners. The photograph was taken from the USS *Sealion*. [AWM P02018.326]

R. H. Whitecross, *Slaves of the Son of Heaven*:

Voyages by sea were used by the Japanese either to concentrate prisoners after their capture or to transport them to work sites around South East and North Asia. Those captured in places like Singapore and Java, for example, were shipped in 1942-43 to Burma to construct the Thai-Burma railway. More than 4000 Australians were also sent to work in Japan. The ships used to transport prisoners were cramped, old, dirty and in poor repair. Many of them were cargo vessels, only roughly converted into troop transports. Prisoners were crammed in every available space in the holds, forced to sit and sleep on crudely constructed and small wooden bunks. With poor ventilation the atmosphere soon became stiflingly hot and putrid. While at times the prisoners were allowed to sit on deck, they were forced into the holds at night or, on some ships, not allowed to go on deck at all.

Latrines were little more than wooden structures suspended over the edge of the ship. These were inadequate for the needs of prisoners and dangerous in rough seas. Since many prisoners were suffering from dysentery, conditions in the holds of the ships became foul.

The poor food aboard the ships also exacerbated the suffering of the prisoners who usually received only rice and watery stew.

Although the US offensive against Japanese shipping took some time to gather momentum, even voyages early in the Pacific War were subject to attack. In January 1943, for instance, a two-ship convoy carrying Dutch and Australian prisoners was attacked by Allied aircraft. Over 40 Dutch prisoners died when one ship was sunk and the other ship damaged. From 1943 on, as the Allies gained the initiative in the Pacific, increasing numbers of Japanese ships were sunk.

The loss of life among prisoners being transported by ship was attributable to the fact that, despite the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross,

none of the belligerents in World War II agreed to mark ships carrying prisoners. They assumed that their enemies could not be trusted and would use prisoners as a cover for contraband goods. The United States also believed that its highest priority was to sink Japanese shipping, regardless of the risk to POWs, and thus bring the war to an end as quickly as possible.

The Japanese, in turn, did not provide life vests or rafts for the prisoners. Locked in the holds during an attack the prisoners were almost doomed if their ship were hit.

Not surprisingly prisoners felt mixed emotions during these sea voyages. Some rejoiced at the sinking of Japanese ships and the superiority of the Allies that this represented. Others, having experienced the horrors of Thailand and Burma, approached the dangers of their voyages resignedly. Roy Whitecross, bound for Japan on the Awa Maru [on board which was Lt Flynn's 2/6th Japan Party – note by PS], remembered an attack by American submarines:

In the hold there was silence and a deep calm. No man deluded himself about his chances of escaping if a torpedo struck the ship. Five hundred men and one steel door, which would have to be opened anyway ... So this was it. No fuss, no shouting. Just quiet resignation.

NOTE: Roy Whitecross went to Omuta Camp 17 with Frank Scott and his party in early 1945.

LEARNING ABOUT THE ENEMY: WHAT THE JAPANESE ARMY WAS REALLY LIKE.

Peter Brune, *Descent into Hell*: The conscript for Imperial Japanese Army service was used to subservience to his father his older brothers and this was instilled and demanded of him. The concept of dutiful service was then transferred to the Emperor; He became one of the 'already dead' and was taught that 'dying was as light as a bird's feather'. And that death brought honour to the Emperor, the nation and to family. Correspondingly, surrender to an enemy

brought disgrace to not only himself but to the emperor, the nation and his family.

The Japanese officer saw himself as a latter day samurai and his reverence for his sword held an almost spiritual bond over him The sword was used to blood or test officers just arrived from officer training school, to see if they were 'qualified to be platoon leaders'.

Brune cites an oral history interview given to Haruko and Theodore Cook by **Second Lieutenant Tominaga Shozo** of the IJA: *....twenty emaciated Chinese prisoners were brought to an area where a large pit had been dug. Present were the IJA Regimental commander, the battalion commanders and the company commanders - obviously an important occasion and an equally important test. The officer presiding over the demonstration was a **Second Lieutenant Tanaka**, who proceeded to unsheath his sword, pour water over both sides of the blade, then with a shout of 'Yo!' as he removed a prisoners head with a clean cutShozo passed his test by decapitating his victim with one swift slice. He claimed that something inside him changed - he no longer felt uneasy in his men's eyes, but now felt 'I was looking down on them'.*

No less ritual was used for new 'unblooded' private soldiers who were required, in front of peers and superiors, to run at blindfolded prisoners of war tied to poles, and bayonet them. The empowerment was the same, except the privileged and powerful officers used swords, while the soldiers used bayonets.

The Japanese believed in racial superiority and that they could, and should, do anything to win a war. They did not think about humanity. "Killing a Chinese person was just like killing a dog" "When we found (Chinese) women hiding we raped them. After that the soldiers would kill the women. (Shiro Azuma, cited in Brune).

Peter Brune again: Such behaviour was embedded into the Japanese male psyche. He came from a society where the Japanese mother was subservient to her husband and sons, as were any daughters. So, women from what the Japanese considered 'racially inferior' countries were at great risk when uncontrolled troops descended on them to confiscate, loot, pillage and burn rape and murder where often the final acts of disgrace and when alcohol and (pack mentality) came into play, as at Nanking, the result was horrific. And in another appalling display of their contempt for women, around 250 000 Korean, Chinese, Formosan, and some European women were pressed-ganged as 'comfort women' into cruel prostitution across the lands of Japan's conquests.

JAPANESE BARBARITY DEMONSTRATED BY THE MASSACRE OF AUSTRALIAN NURSES AT BANGKA ISLAND.

On 12 February 1942 the yacht *Vyner Brooke* left Singapore just before the city fell to the Japanese Army. The ship carried many injured service personnel and 64 nurses of the 2/13th Australian General Hospital. It was bombed by Japanese aircraft and sank. Two nurses were killed in the bombing; nine were last seen drifting away from the ship on a raft and never heard from again; and the rest reached shore at Bangka Island, in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia).

These nurses joined a group of men and injured personnel from the ship. Once it was discovered that the island was held by the Japanese, an officer of the *Vyner Brooke* went to surrender. A small group of women and children followed him. The nurses stayed to care for the wounded. They set up a shelter with a large Red Cross sign on it.

At mid-morning the ship's officer returned with about twenty Japanese soldiers. **They ordered all the wounded men capable of walking to travel around a headland. The**

nurses heard a quick succession of shots before the Japanese soldiers came back, sat down in front of the women and cleaned their bayonets and rifles.

A Japanese army officer ordered the remaining 22 nurses and one civilian woman to walk into the surf. A machine gun was set up on the beach and when the women were waist deep, they were machine-gunned.

All but one, Sister Lt Vivian Bullwinkel, were killed.

Wounded soldiers left on stretchers were then bayoneted and killed by the Japanese.

Shot in the diaphragm, Sister Bullwinkel was unconscious when she washed up on the beach and was left for dead. She evaded capture for 10 days, but was eventually caught and imprisoned. She survived the war and gave evidence of the massacre at a war crimes trial in Tokyo in 1947. (Wikipedia) – see photo below.



To the nurses of this world who give unstintingly in war and peace. There is no nobler profession. (Norman G. Manners, inscription in the front of *Bullwinkel*, Hesperian Press, 1999).

“The barbarity and atrocity visited upon those poor souls at Bangka Island, and upon the Doctors, Nurses and patients at the Alexandra Hospital massacre in Singapore in 1942 by the Imperial Japanese Army has never been exceeded, in my opinion, in the annals of warfare, and demonstrated the true nature of the Japanese militarist character.

That anyone would callously murder those who have sworn to tend the sick, the wounded, the dying, is beyond all comprehension in civilised society”. Peter Russell Scott

□

Nurses victim of the Vyner Brooke sinking, presumed lost at sea, were:

Matron O.D. Paschke, RRC - and Sisters L.M.J. Bates, E. Calnan, M.D. Clarke, M.H.M. Dorsch, C.M. Ennis, K. Kinsella, G.M. McDonald, L.J. Russell, M. Schuman, A.M. Trenerry, M.M. Wilton.

Victims of the massacre were:

Matron I.M. Drummond and Sisters E.L. Balfour-Ogilvy, A.M. Beard, A.J. Bridge, F.R. Casson, M.E. Cuthbertson, D.G.H. Elmes, L.F. Fairweather, P.E. Farmaner, C.I. Halligan, N. Harris, M.I. Hodgson, E.L. Keats, J. Kerr, M.E. McGlade, K.M. Neuss, F.A. Salmon, E.S.J. Stewart, M.M.A. Tait, R.J. Wight, B. Wilmott

There was also one civilian woman (un-named) who chose to remain with her husband, was present when he was butchered nearby and who walked bravely into the water with the nurses.

Other nurses also became prisoners of war in Sumatra, where they were humiliated, ill-treated and starved.

Those who died there:

W.M. Davis, R.D. Freeman, D.S. Gardam, P.B. Hempsted, G.L. Hughes, P.B. Mittelhauser, W.R. Raymont, I.A. Singleton.

Those who returned home in 1945:

J.C. Ashton, K.C. Blake, J.J. Blanch, V. Bullwinkel, V.R. Clancy, C.E.M. Delforce, J.G. Doyle, J. Greer, J.P. Gunther, E.M. Hannah, I. Harper, N. James, A.B. Jeffrey, V.I. McElnea, S.J. Muir, W.E.F. Oram, C.S.M. Oxley, E.M. Short, J.E. Simons, V.E. Smith, A.C. Syer, F.E. Trotter, J. Tweddell, B. Woodbridge.

Source: Angellpro.com.au



The few surviving Sisters of the sinking of the Vyner Brook arrive at Singapore after three and a half years as POWs. THEY WEAR THEIR ORIGINAL UNIFORMS, INCOMPLETE AND OIL-STAINED. [AWM 044480]



Sisters Betty Jeffrey and Jean Greer recovering from malnutrition in hospital in Singapore. Sister Jeffrey weighed just 30 kilograms and was suffering from tuberculosis when she was liberated. [AWM 305369]



A prisoner of war in a seriously emaciated state being treated by a British nurse in a military hospital. This soldier's condition is typical of the many POWs who suffered harsh treatment from their Japanese captors AWM P01433.030

The Java Rabble arrive at Singapore

Robforce unloaded at Singapore and went, not to the main Changi jail building, but to the adjacent Roberts Barracks Hospital Complex. It was here that they received a visit from Lt Colonel Frederick 'Blackjack' Galleghan, the arrogant and dictatorial tyrant who was in charge of the 8th Division POWs.

As recorded by Lt. Purves of the 2/6th: *Galleghan welcomed us in the coldest manner possible ... referred to us as the 'Java Rabble' and said how good the 8th Division were ...he treated us like outcasts ... and we had to fight to get our share of the Red Cross foodstuffs that had come into Singapore ...the more he said the less we liked him...*



Roberts Barracks, part of Changi Prisoner of War (POW) camp AWM P04485.007

Galleghan was an artillery officer, the spit and polish type that some combat troops, including Engineers, often find an irritation and annoyance. As former Sappers have said to his type on many occasions "I was a Field Engineer mate. We didn't do much marching up and down."

Fred Skeels reported on Galleghan in a similar manner from the Navy perspective: "We marched past Galleghan and gave him our best 'eyes right' ... but he summoned our two officers and tore shreds off them ... our salute was wrong ... he said that we were dressed disgracefully and did not portray Australian forces in the proper manner ... but our disrepair was not our fault ... we didn't have proper uniforms after being captive in Bicycle Camp ... and he called us 'Rabble'.

So it spread around the camp that the 'Java Rabble' had arrived, but we were not ashamed of our appearance and bore the tag proudly. We saw our rags as symbols of freedom and bravery ... and besides, did clothes distinguish one prisoner from another when we were all POWs?"

Another Commanding Officer of a Java party arrived in Singapore, Lt. Col. Edward "Weary" Dunlop, recorded in his diary his own tense dealings with Galleghan. With a steadfast determination to see Changi's men as soldiers, not defeated prisoners of war, Weary said that Galleghan "talked to me about the movement of my lads – straggling on the march, irregular movements etc. In truth I think they look pretty dreadful, but it is hard to put up a good show in rags." Yet what was worse than the lack of concern from Changi's command regarding the health and clothing of the Java parties was their lack of respect for their fellow soldiers. Weary wrote in his diary that "we seasoned veterans of three services suffer the term 'Java rabble' ...

Weary didn't suffer this criticism of his men lightly. *Peter Brune, Descent into Hell:*

When someone at a referred to Dunlop Force as 'Java Rabble' within Dunlop's hearing, he rose and rattled off the exploits of the 'Java Rabble' –Western Desert, Greece, Crete, Syria and Java, then finished with "and now we, the Java Rabble, salute you, the 8th Division, who have fought so gallantly in Malaya."

The men of the HMAS *Perth* had served with distinction in the Mediterranean, as had the units of the 7th Division in the Middle East before their redeployment to Java. In their eyes, the "soft, pampered and over-publicised" 8th Division had performed badly in the Malayan Campaign.

This resulted in an intense rivalry in Changi, with the disappointment and

humiliation of defeat causing the prisoners of war to turn on each other. Mocked by their fellow soldiers for their lack of clothing and sneered at for their lack of military discipline, the Java parties left Changi for labour camps that promised even less assistance.

As Dunlop's forces prepared to leave Changi for the horrors of the Burma–Thailand railway, **Weary Dunlop presented Galleghan with a final message of defiance:** *Two weeks ago my men arrived in a pitiful condition in this camp from Java. You have done nothing to alleviate their needs – tomorrow at 8.30 they leave in the same pitiable condition: bootless and in rags. You have done nothing.*

The experiences of the Java parties in Changi reveal that while the steadfast enforcement of discipline may have contained crime in the camp, Galleghan's lack of empathy and understanding for his fellow soldiers caused unnecessary hardship for many men. (Discipline in Changi, Lucy Robertson, 2013)

Galleghan may have held the top rank in Changi, but he failed to demonstrate the leadership qualities needed to look after the welfare of his troops in dire circumstances.

While at the Roberts Hospital Barracks, the 2/6th Sappers were quickly put to work on all manner of maintenance and repair tasks, especially at the Hospital, but with very little equipment or spare parts. In true Sapper tradition, their ingenuity resulted in most everything needed being 'borrowed' from somewhere, or fabricated from bits and pieces lying around.



'Roberts Hospital, Changi' 1942, painting by Murray Griffin. All three men clearly show the effects of malnutrition, although far worse was to come in the years of captivity ahead. The men are silent and withdrawn, enveloped in their own private suffering. The unhygienic conditions, the chipped mugs on wooden boxes and the soiled bedding are carefully recorded. The tropical heat and humidity in the ward are palpable. AWM ART24491

In the Selarang Theatre (at which the PoWs presented live shows), the Sappers provided props, scenery, dimmers, transformers, lamps and furniture where none existed before.

Christmas 1942 for the 2/6th at Changi, saw Robbie, LTs. Flynn and Purves, Company Sergeant Major Jackson and some 70 Sappers as a happy occasion, well lubricated with a special brew concocted by Sapper RHV 'Vic' Lalor BEM, the Company's champion chef.

Lt Purves recorded " it will be remembered always by those who survived ... a feeling of great comradeship ... of unjustified optimism ... created by ourselves" They felt that by next Christmas they would be home.

Little did they know what the Japanese had in store for them, and that it would be three more long arduous years before those who survived would see their home.

Peter Brune: While life in Changi was no picnic, it was arguably one of the best places in the Greater Asian Co Prosperity Sphere to be a prisoner of Nippon.

LEAVING CHANGI: BOUND FOR BURMA

In early January 1943, the Japanese issued orders that the Australians from Java were to be sent out from Singapore, overseas to another destination.

Even 'Blackjack' came to wish them well as they left, and he thanked the Sappers for their work at Roberts Hospital.

Starting at the Singapore Railway Terminal, they were put in a train of metal box trucks, thirty men to box; the train then "chuff-chugged" across the repaired Causeway, firstly to Johore, then up to Kuala Lumpur and further northwards.

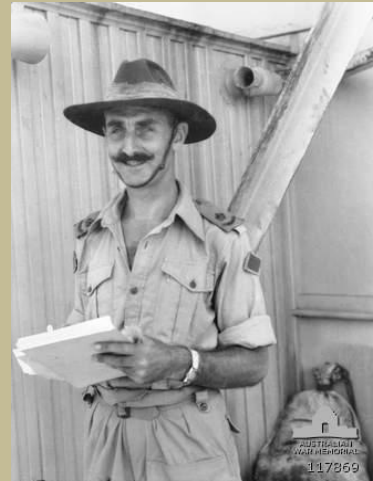


PoWs being transported in a train of metal box trucks.

Lt Purves recorded "two nights and one day we were stuck in these railway trucks ... sleep was possible only when maximum fatigue was reached ... Major Robertson was perched in the doorway ... preventing me from falling out ... One morning I awoke to see a tiger staring at me ... it was in a cage in a Circus train halted next to us.

We were put off the train at Prai, just opposite Penang Island ... then deposited in the hold of another hell-ship, the *Moji Maru*" (Ship No 5).

Also on the *Moji Maru* with the Australians were Dutch and Americans.



ROBBIE. 12 October 1945 At Sea. MAJOR L. J. ROBERTSON, OFFICER COMMANDING, 2/6TH FIELD COMPANY, EX-POW OF THE JAPANESE, ABOARD THE BRITISH TROOPSHIP MV HIGHLAND BRIGADE DURING HIS JOURNEY BACK HOME TO AUSTRALIA. (AWM)

At this stage the food rations provided by the Japanese were meagre, based on weevil-infested rice, but included a few vegetables, a small quantity of meat, tea and a little sugar. The ship's fresh water was suspected of being contaminated so the prisoners stuck to tea made from boiled water.

By departure on 13 January, the destination of the Japanese convoy of ships including the *Moji Maru* was known to be BURMA.

Also in the convoy was another hell-ship, the *Nichmei Maru* (with 1562 Japanese soldiers and mostly Dutch PoWs on board), as well as two auxiliary ships.

POWs BOMBED BY THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE.

On 15th of January, after the prisoners enjoyed a breakfast of canned beans (1 can between 5 men), the convoy was unexpectedly and suddenly attacked by a group of six long-range American B-24 Liberator Bombers, flying at high altitude. The Americans had no way of knowing that there were Allied PoWs on board.

On 15th January 1943, at 1530 hrs (Japanese time), the convoy was attacked by Allied long-range aircraft. At least one Liberator was sighted. The MITMEI MARU (NICHIMEI MARU) was sunk with

the loss of some 400-500 Japanese and about 40 Dutch PoWs, of about 1,000 on board. MOJI MARU was twice near missed by bombs. 7 PoWs killed, and many others wounded. Many Japanese (on MOJI MARU), killed and wounded. Aft gun blew up, killing its crew, forward gun, trained aft, narrowly missed blowing the bridge to smithereens. Aircraft departed... MOJI MARU circled round for three hours picking up survivors from other vessel. Sunday, 17th January 1943, MOJI MARU put in to Moulmein.

Diary of Major L J Robertson, RAE. OC Australian personnel of the Thai POW Branch 5A (working in) Burma 1943-44. AWM PR87/0158



A United States Air Force B-24 Liberator releases its bombs

Here is what is written in the book "7th Bombardment Group/Wing, 1918-1995", by Robert F. Dorr:

"On 15 January 1943, seven B-24s of 9th BS, 7th BG, took off from "Panda" (Pandasewar air base, India) airfield at 5.30 a.m. to search for Japanese shipping south of Rangoon. One bomber aborted, and six pressed on. Each bomber carried nine 500-lb demolition bombs. The crews sighted two merchant vessels and a sub chaser and made runs on the three ships, sinking one and damaging another. Antiaircraft fire was described as "... low and ineffective...", no Japanese aircraft were seen, and no B-24s were lost. This was a typical trip to Rangoon, lasting twelve hours thirty minutes, with the bombers recovering at 6:00 p.m."

The book continued by saying that the attacked ships were carrying prisoners and that 'Tokyo Rose' admitted some days later the loss of the ship but also said to the American pilots that they had killed scores of POWs. Truth is, there were Japanese troops and POWs on board.



The Nichimei Maru

Here is a little of the bombing incident from the Sappers perspective, taken from the pages of 'The Gap is Bridged':

The sea was calm and things were reasonably relaxed on Moji Maru with the clanking of the engines and the sea soft shuffling by ... when we heard the sound of approaching aircraft – bombers ... the first stick of bombs landed just off our port quarter, causing the hull to shudder and showers of rust to fall from the ship ... the ship's rear gun began to fire and a hellish chorus of yells and shouts began, with the Nip guards screaming "Bomba! Bomba!"

The rear gun was ablaze and its' ammunition exploding dangerously ... a chain of our men, assisted by the Nips, trying to put out the fire. I noticed our companion ship (Nichimei Maru) had been badly hit, was listing heavily, with many heads bobbing in the sea.

In trying to shoot at the Americans, the Jap forward gunners of the Moji Maru were trained too close to the inside of the ship and nearly blew off the bridge ... that, combined with the damage cause by the high explosive in bombs falling right alongside the hull, saw the rear end of the ship in tatters ... with significant casualties, some dead and many wounded by shrapnel ... many lives has been saved by the men 'hitting the deck'.

The wounded were tended and the dead gathered under a canvas ... as the Moji Maru circled towards its' sinking companion.

We saw the end of her (Nichimei Maru) ... she took a lurch towards the bows ... slid her stem under ... her foc'sle disappeared, then the bridge, and then, very swiftly, the smokestack went under ... leaving only the stern standing high, with rudder and screw clearly visible.

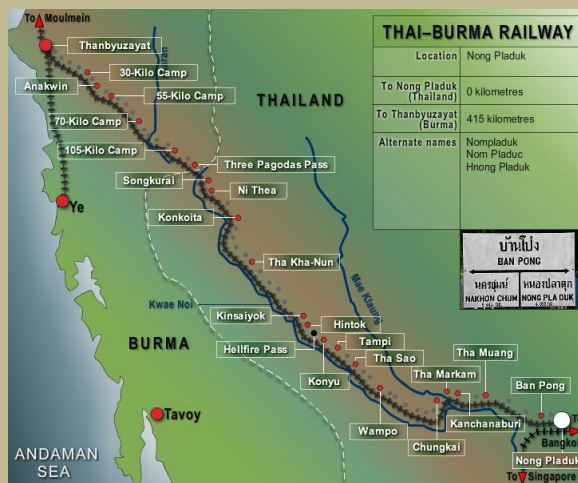
Then, with a rush and flurry of the sea, she was gone! All that remained was a sea surface littered with black dots and floating wreckage.

For two hours we stood at the rails of the Moji Maru and hauled aboard the survivors from the ocean ... both Hollanders and Nips ... many of the latter still in their massive top boots and wearing their great swords and satchels. The Nips were hauled up in a perfunctory manner, but the Hollanders were handled with welcoming care. Of the 1000 PoWs on the Nichimei Maru, 960 were saved.

It was later learned that the US Air Force had dropped 54 x 500pound bombs on the convoy, and the failure to cause a direct hit the Moji Maru was put down to the considerable bomb-dodging experience of its' Skipper.

The place where the Liberator attack took place was just off the (present day holiday resort) island of Phuket.

I can only imagine that the survivors of the attack, limping into the Salween estuary at Moulmein on an overloaded boat, would have felt great relief. I'm sure that, on that day, Sapper Scott, LF, would have thought that the luck of the Irish had still not deserted him.



MAP SHOWING THE ROUTE OF THE RAILWAY

12. THE BURMA-THAILAND DEATH RAILWAY.

THANBYUZAT: THE START OF WORK ON 'THE LINE'

Introduction. Thanks to the valuable work of Robbie and Bert Field in *The Gap is Bridged*, I have a framework around which to build what was the experience of my father and his 2/6th mates, working as a 'slave of Nippon' on the Burma Thailand Railway (or 'The Line' as it became known to the prisoners) and in the coal mine near Nagasaki.

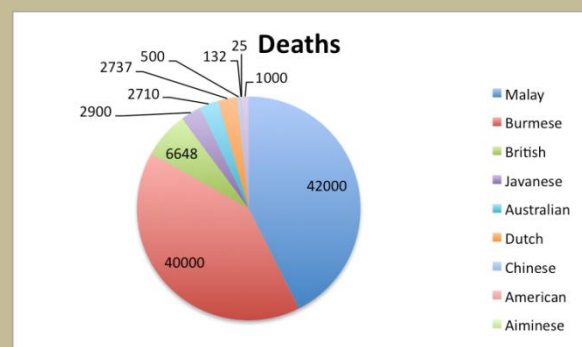
I have endeavoured to mention the names of all of the 2/6th prisoners on the Line, and have put out a request through the Purple Diamond for a photo and short biography of each man. These will be added to this publication as received.

Frank's reticence to talk of his POW experience was no doubt due to the mental and physical scars he carried after the War, and the fact that the Government, through the Army, told the men to forget about their experience and 'just get on with life'. That of course was impossible.

Imprisonment in Java and Changi was inconvenient and the prisoners suffered some deprivation, but nothing compared to what was to come on 'The Line'.

Approximately 12 800 of more than 60 000 Allied prisoners of war, including 2710 Australians, and up to 90 000 *romusha* (Asian forced labourers) died between 1942 and 1945. Malnutrition, disease and overwork – mostly attributable to the brutality, neglect and indifference of the Japanese – contributed to this death toll. (AWM)

The Japanese Emperor had issued orders that the railway be built, and that was all that mattered.



Rōmusha had the highest death rate. Of the Australians, 21 per cent died on the railway. While this was slightly less than the British rate of 22 per cent, it was higher than the Dutch and the Americans. [Data from Rod Beattie, *The Death Railway: A brief history of the Thailand–Burma Railway*, TBRC Co., Kanchanaburi, 2009.] (AWM)



This iconic drawing by British artist Jack Chalker shows prisoners of war at the dysentery latrines at Konyu River Camp, Thailand. An image of compassionate mutual support, it also depicts the terrible conditions during the monsoon when latrines would overflow, posing a serious health risk to the prisoners. [AWM ART90855]

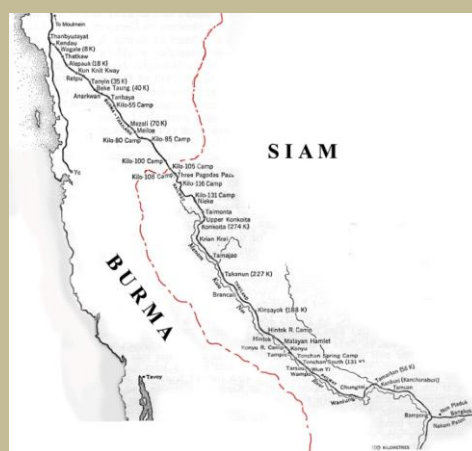
South of Moulmein lies **THANBYUZIAT** which, in 1943, was at the southernmost end of the existing railway in Burma. There had been plans over many years to connect it to Nong Pladuk in Thailand, north of Bangkok, following a survey line by British interests along the time-honoured track through the Three Pagodas Pass, but the high cost of labour made the project commercially unviable.

The Japanese wished to build the railway to support speedy delivery of men and materials to support their proposed attack on British India, and the sea route was longer and subject to submarine attack. In contravention of the Geneva Convention, labour costs were not an issue to the Japanese, as they had assembled thousands of Prisoners of War for the task, as well as

tens of thousands of Asian labourers including Burmese and Tamils.

Emperor Hirohito issued an order that the project start at the end of the monsoon, and two Nippon Railway Regiments were raised for the technical direction of the work. They were the 5th, based at Thanbyuziat, and the 9th, based at Kanchanaburi (known as Kanburi) in Thailand.

Thanbyuziat became the northern origin, or Kilo Zero, of the Railway, and all PoW Camps became known by the distance in kilometres south from that origin.



Map of Camps on the Burma - Siam (Thailand) Railway

Source: www.perthone.com/ppow.html

Robbie:

Each (Regiment) was commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel, had a few more or less competent officers and NCOs, but later contact showed that many of the ORs seemed not to know the difference between the ends of a dogspike.

Captain Ray Watts 'Wattsforce' group had arrived earlier at Thanbyuziat, in October 1942, and were put to work clearing the 50 foot (15 metre) wide route of the railway, following the line of survey pegs.

Prior to starting work, the group was harangued by **LT COL Yoshitada Nagatomo**, 'Chief of War Prisoners Branch 3', who spoke in French but was translated by some Nippon staff:

Robbie:

The contents were too verbose but a few 'pearls' (of Nagamoto) can be quoted

1. *It is a great pleasure to me to see you at this place as I am appointed Chief of War Prisoners in obedience to Imperial Command ...the war has broken out due to the rising of the Eastern Asian nations ... due to the intrusion of the British and Americans*
2. *You are all only a few remaining skeletons ... pitiful victims ... but until your Government do not wake up ... you will not be released ... the Emperor has been deeply anxious about the War Prisoners ... the Imperial thoughts are unestimable and the Imperial favours are infinite and, as such you should weep with gratitude at the greatness of them*
3. *I have heard that you complained about the insufficiency of various items ... even our respectable Imperial Army is not able to get items freely. How can you expect me to treat you better?*
4. *I shall strictly manage you all ... according to the rules of the Nippon Army ... you are merely rabbles ...*
5. *My biggest requirement here is the rules for escape shall be severe ... extreme penalty*
6. *I shall require you to work as nobody is permitted to do nothing and eat ... there will be countless difficulties and suffering , but you shall have the honour to join in this great work ... I say to you "Work Cheerfully" and be guided by this motto*

These specifications were quite clear to all: countless difficulties and suffering ... except those really unable to work. But Nagamoto did not mention that when a PoW became really unfit for work, he would be dead.

Robbie again:

The preparatory work of felling trees, building embankments and forming cuttings over the fairly easy 40 kilometres, had led to camps being established at Kilo 4.8, Kilo 18, Kilo 35 and Kilo 40. Beyond this, the coastal plain became more hilly and gave way to mountains, thickly clad in jungle. Thus the members of the Company who arrived on the Moji Maru first experienced the Burma-Thai Railway at Kilo 40, with the tree encrusted mountains forming an ominous background.

At each Camp site the PoWs had to build everything, and out of local materials. They were all primitive – barracks, huts, cook houses and latrines known as 'benjos'.

Barrack blocks were up to 100 metres long and 10 metres wide, no floors, just

bamboo accommodation platforms held together with wood dowels and vine lashings. Roofs were made of attap thatching common all over south-east Asia.

Hot winds whipped clouds of dust through the buildings, but to the 2/6th veterans of the Western Desert, this was no hardship.

Very soon, illness began to break out – malaria, dysentery, tropical ulcers.

To make matters worse, a particularly low grade of Koreans took over guard duties on the railway construction site, and immediately commenced bashing the work force for the slightest violation of discipline or work ethic. Rifle butts, pieces of wood or anything else that came to hand, soon rained down on the bodies of the prisoners.

So, the Company sappers went forth daily under the command of Lts. Flynn, Purves and Ley to build the railway.



POWs laying railway sleepers (AWM)

Robbie:

Here then was a really first class engineer project ... a railway complete with cuttings, fills, bridges, culverts, sidings, transition curves, super-elevation at the curves; up mountains, across valleys and large rivers; water supply, accommodation, stores and equipment.

The only problem was that the tools and equipment supplied were primitive, and that most of the engineer stores had to be improvised from the jungle.

The OC impressed on the sappers that they should in no way appear to anyone to be expert in anything they were trained for, but as opportunity arose, they would sabotage their own work. So, the railway bed was under-packed with material likely to rot away quite quickly so that the rails would collapse, and

white ant nests were placed next to the wooden bridges.



Hell on earth: prisoners of war on part of the Thailand-Burma railway.

Photograph: George Aspinall/Tim Bowden/AAP

A good understanding of Japanese philosophy and attitude to the Prisoners can be gained from Richard Flanagan's Mann Booker Prize Award winning novel (2014) *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, which has a heavy factual base.

"The Japanese engineer in charge, Major Nakamura, went to the prison camp's Japanese officer's hut where the visitor Colonel Kota was waiting.

I have new orders said Kota, pulling a damp typed sheet and a technical drawing out of his oiled japara folder.

The latest cutting that the prisoners are digging must be enlarged by a third to help with gradient issues on the next sector.

That will entail a further three thousand cubic metres of rock being cut and carried away thought Nakamura, and the prisoners only had hammers and chisels and not enough coke for their forges to sharpen their chisels when they blunted.

They didn't even have enough axes and saws to clear the jungle. Drilling machines and compressors would help said Nakamura.

Machinery? There is nothing to spare said Kota, and here is my second order: the railway completion date is brought forward from December to October.

Nakamura was overcome with despair. His task was now impossible, but he felt shame in having asked for machinery.

Kota said there will be no increase in tools, but we already have a quarter of a million coolies and sixty thousand prisoners working on this railway. The Burmese or the Chinese coolies keep on running

away or dying but the Tamils thankfully have too far to run back to Malaya.

Nakamura then read the next part of his new orders: one hundred of his prisoners were to be sent to a new camp near the Three Pagodas Pass on the Burma border. The hundred men are to march there.

In the monsoon? Nakamura and Kota knew that many would die there. Perhaps most. But the railway demanded it, the Emperor had ordered the railway, and so the railway would be built.

Understand me, Nakamura said. My problem is practical. With no tools and fewer men every day as they die, how do I build the railway?

Even if most die of exhaustion you are to complete the work, Colonel Kota said, shrugging his shoulders. Even if everybody dies. The Emperor's wishes must be realised.

What was a prisoner of war anyway? A shameful captive, less than a man, just material to be used on the railway, like the teak sleepers and the steel rails and the dog spikes.

Kota was telling Nakamura that no matter what adversity, no matter what lack of tools and manpower, the railway would be built, the war would be won, and all this would be because of the Japanese spirit.

Last night I was talking to the Australian doctor, said Nakamura, and I explained to him about how we were liberating Asia from European colonisation. He didn't understand and kept on about freedom; his ideas made no sense.

Freedom? Colonel Kota said. They both laughed. The Australians have no spirit; if they had spirit they would have chosen death rather than the shame of being a prisoner."

One commentator has said that Flanagan's book is a grand examination of what it is to be a good man and a bad man in the one flesh and, above all, of how hard it is to live after survival.

But most of all, Flanagan's narrative is a howl into the silence of returned servicemen, who were often told that it is better to forget, to return to life as if nothing has happened – despite the "lest we forget" refrain.

Of about 75,000 Malay and 90,000 Burmese forced labourers (Romusha)

enslaved by the Japanese to work on the Railway, about 42,000 Malay (56%) and 40,000 Burmese (44%) are estimated to have died. They endured conditions worse than the Allied PoWs, if that was possible.

In order to counter the Regime imposed by the Japanese in the world that was the railway, the Australians relied upon their national characteristic known as mateship, where the stronger would help the weaker, the healthier would tend the sick.

Peter Brune:

Life on the Railway was another world, not this world nor the world you know, or that anybody who wasn't with us knows (Sergeant Frank Baker, 2/20th Battalion)

You couldn't survive without a mate. You had to have someone there who could help you (Warrant Officer Bert Mettam)

See....if a bloke got crook, and he just lay there, if no bastard came near him, mate, he was curtains! You've got to go and speak to him, you've got to go and sort of buck him up. 'How are you going, mate? You'll be right, keep getting that bloody rice into you!' 'Come on, get it into you!'

'Oh Jesus, I can't eat it!'

'Eat it!'

It is said that no Australian POW ever died alone on the Railway.

As the railway construction progressed, true to their Corps Motto 'Ubique', the Sappers of the 2/6th Field Company were everywhere along 'The Line'.

Note: FROM *The Gap is Bridged* I HAVE EXTRACTED THE NAMES OF SAPPERS MENTIONED, AND REFERENCED THEM HEREUNDER. If I have missed any, please let me know and I will add them to the text.

Those in Burma went forth daily from their jungle camps under the supervision of **Lieutenants Flynn, Purves and Ley**, to work on cutting and filling land, and building culverts.



Remnant of the Railway, Hellfire Pass Memorial

LT Purves: The routine was 10 days on, 1 day 'yasumay' (rest). Reveille and breakfast before daylight, tenko (check parade) as dawn was breaking, issue of tools, then marching off to the job.

They dug out soil, filled it into hessian sacks, and carried it slung one on each end of a stout bamboo pole. The worst job was carrying the soil to the embankments, with resultant bruises, cuts and sores, especially to bare feet. These injuries soon turned to tropical ulcers, with the worst cases resulting in amputation of limbs.

The day ended with the march back to camp and a tool tenko (counting).

Among the prisoners, the Australians were the first to reach their initial daily quota of earth dug (1.5 cubic metres per man), carried and filled, followed by the Americans (the sailors from USS Houston, and the Texan artillerymen) and then the 'Nederlanders' (Dutch). The further the railway progressed, the higher the daily quota got.

All the time, the Sappers used their knowledge and experience to sabotage the work they were being forced to carry out, simultaneously 'making and breaking' (Facimus et Frangimus).

For example, they set the superelevation (banking) of the rails deliberately less than that required to keep a speeding train on the track on a curve. The result: engines fell off the track on a number of occasions. The only trouble was that the Sappers then had to then physically retrieve the engine, and once out of a creek, get it back on the tracks.

Another trick used by the Sappers was to secretly place white ant nests in the soil next to bridge piles. They also hid bad filling material under the track bed, and this soon resulted in slumping of the rails and slowing of construction progress.



Burma – Thailand Railway Era Engine on display at Kanchanaburi Photo: Peter Scott

Food supplies were initially poor, comprising rice soup or rice stew, sometimes with a suggestion of meat, cucumber, onion, eggplant or sweet potato.

Robbie: *Some of the prisoners were employed from time to time on camp duties including food preparation. These included Sprs Marshall and Dews, and also Sprs Prendergast and McGee who managed to keep hold of a number of emaciated local cows who wandered into camp, fatten them up a bit, butcher them and distribute the meat between “the management” (Nips) and the prisoners; the latter two, using their Sapper ingenuity, also produced the occasional pig, ‘obtained by methods that did not bear investigation’: the agreed split was 50:50 with the Japs.*

On the earlier of sections of work, the prisoners used their meagre pay to purchase food from local native markets, including native sugar, duck eggs and rough cigars.

The Texan Colonel Blucher S. Tharp remarked to Robbie that upon his return home he would recommend to Congress that the Eagle be replaced on the US flag by the Burmese Duck, on account of the good that duck eggs were doing for the health of his men.

The further the men got into the mountains, the poorer the food got. Eventually they ended up with just rice ‘pap’ (sludge). There was always the Burmese melon but, as described by Spr Paddy Reid, these were just ‘water standing up’.

Morale was relatively high in the early months on the line and the Company continued to operate more or less as an Army unit. Due to a shortage of senior NCOs, there were ‘jungle promotions’, for example Lance Corporals Wallace and Hopwood were promoted to Sergeant and Company Quartermaster Sergeant.

Staff Sergeant CT Sellers, Sergeant CM Walsh and Lance Sergeant EB Allen were at one time at Kilo 30, tasked with rounding up and transporting local cattle along The Line as a meagre food supplement to rice, for both the Nips and the Koreans, with a proportion going to the prisoners at base camps and ‘hospitals’. These men later marched down along the line to Kilo 105.

Christmas 1942 found the three Sergeants, along with Corporal Buderus and Sappers Evers and McKay at Kilo Zero, at a makeshift hospital, and suffering from malaria, dysentery and tropical ulcers.

Charlie Sellers struggled on until early 1945, but eventually he too succumbed.

STAFF SERGEANT
CHARLES THOMPSON SELLERS
NX16391



SERVICE	AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH	15 JUNE 1905
PLACE OF BIRTH	ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND
NEXT OF KIN	SELLERS, MARGARET
DATE OF DEATH	28 JANUARY 1945
POSTING ON DEATH	2/6 FIELD COMPANY



Charles Thompson Sellers' Gravestone, Kanchanaburi War Cemetery, Thailand

The Hands across the Sea probably refers to his birthplace of Aberdeen, Scotland. Photo: Peter Scott 11 November 2006

Corporal RL Savidge fell foul of some guard and suffered a very severe blow to the back, resulting in (jungle) hospital treatment under medico **Major EL Corlette**, Australian Army Medical Corps, and then evacuation to Weary Dunlop's group at Chunkai.

As the Railway rolled southward, death rode with it.

Brune: *There were many ways of dying on the Railway (mostly due to illness):*

dysentery (a type of gastroenteritis which contains blood), **beriberi** (vitamin deficiency causing weight loss, emotional disturbances, impaired sensory perception, weakness and pain in the limbs, and periods of irregular heart rate) **pellagra** (another severe vitamin deficiency disease), **malaria** (mosquito-borne disease whose symptoms typically include fever, fatigue, vomiting and headaches. In severe cases it causes yellow skin, seizures, coma or death), **oedema** (fluid causing swelling under the skin) and **diarrhoea** (infection of the intestine caused by food or water contamination, resulting in dehydration caused by watery bowel motions).

*And then there's the seemly harmless scratch that becomes (an **ulcer**) a creeping, foul, pus-ridden nightmare that envelopes the leg or foot, sometimes causes an amputation and sometimes death but the mere mention of the word '**cholera**' was the ultimate form of terror for both the POW and his guards.*

Sergeant Frank Baker worked in the cholera tent: You can have a mate who is here now but unrecognisable and gone within hours. With the loss of fluid .. they cramp up .. gaunt, shrunken faces with eyes sticking out, in pain and with fluids exuding from both ends – it's the most frightful disease! ..

At a number of Camps along the Railway, especially the southern section, the cremation pyres burnt all night, during the next day, then all night again ... the distorted, wasted corpses burnt in their dozens ... and the men who had to throw their mates on

the fire would be haunted long after their captivity ended.



Emaciated and starving Prisoners of War in their bamboo living quarters (AWM)

Sappers WC Gray, P Wilkinson, TC Williams, KGS Dwyer, GW Renals and HWR Belcher died at Kilo 55, and **Sgt Rex Doyle** did not survive a leg amputation. **Lance Sergeant Jamieson** was reported gravely ill at Kilo55 and later passed away.



Amputees Section in a 'Hospital' along the Burma-Thailand railway, 1943. The POWs mostly had legs amputated because of uncontrollable tropical ulcers. All the hospital camps had these wards. (AWM)

NX15885 SAPPER WILLIAM CHARLES GRAY

DATE OF BIRTH	11 JANUARY 1908
PLACE OF BIRTH	GLEBE, NSW
NEXT OF KIN	GRAY, ALICE
DATE OF DEATH	7 SEPTEMBER 1943
POSTING ON DEATH	2/6 FIELD COMPANY

NX18910 SAPPER PETER WILKINSON

DATE OF BIRTH	5 AUGUST 1918
PLACE OF BIRTH	SYDNEY, NSW
NEXT OF KIN	WILKINSON, ERNEST
DATE OF DEATH	10 SEPTEMBER 1943
POSTING ON DEATH	2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**NX25155 SAPPER
TERENCE CHARLES WILLIAMS**

DATE OF BIRTH 9 AUGUST 1918
PLACE OF BIRTH LIVERPOOL, NSW

NEXT OF KIN WILLIAMS, SYDNEY
DATE OF DEATH 18 SEPTEMBER 1943
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**NX10572 SAPPER
KENNETH GEORGE SYDNEY DWYER**

DATE OF BIRTH 1 MARCH 1915
PLACE OF BIRTH BUNDARRA, NSW

NEXT OF KIN DWYER, AGNES
DATE OF DEATH 19 AUGUST 1943
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**NX67032 SAPPER
GEORGE WILLIAM RENALS**

DATE OF BIRTH 3 JUNE 1920
PLACE OF BIRTH MIDDLESBOROUGH, ENGLAND

NEXT OF KIN RENALS, VIOLET
DATE OF DEATH 1 SEPTEMBER 1943
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**NX17559 SAPPER
HENRY WALTER RAWLINSON BELCHER**

DATE OF BIRTH 17 DECEMBER 1917
PLACE OF BIRTH ABBOTSFORD, NSW

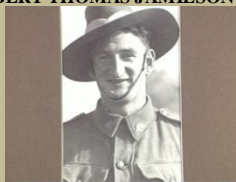
NEXT OF KIN BELCHER, MADELINE
DATE OF DEATH 11 OCTOBER 1943
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**NX14809 SERGEANT
RICHARD WILLIAM DOYLE**

DATE OF BIRTH 26 NOVEMBER 1904
PLACE OF BIRTH GEELONG, VIC

NEXT OF KIN DOYLE, WILLIAM
DATE OF DEATH 23 SEPTEMBER 1943
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**NX22103 LANCE SERGEANT
ROBERT THOMAS JAMIESON MM**



DATE OF BIRTH 9 JUNE 1917
PLACE OF BIRTH OBERON, NSW

NEXT OF KIN JAMIESON, INEZ
DATE OF DEATH 18 NOVEMBER 1943
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

Cemetery or memorial details: Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery,
 Thanbyuzayat, Mon State, Myanmar

died at Kilo 80, **Sapper JW O'Donnell** at Kilo100, **Sapper CR Gigg** of fever at Kilo75, while **Sapper HO Daines** died at Kilo30 after being ill for a long time.

**NX52920 SAPPER
HAROLD CHARLES HIGGINS**

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 11 DECEMBER 1919
PLACE OF BIRTH NORTH SYDNEY, NSW

NEXT OF KIN HIGGINS, CHARLES
DATE OF DEATH 24 SEPTEMBER 1943
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**NX15922 SAPPER
WILLIAM JAMES ANDERSON**

DATE OF BIRTH 1919
PLACE OF BIRTH GUILDFORD, NSW

NEXT OF KIN ANDERSON, EDNA
DATE OF DEATH 11 OCTOBER 1943
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**NX30499 SAPPER
ALLAN SHEPHERD GRAHAM**

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 2 AUGUST 1908
PLACE OF BIRTH STOCKTON

NEXT OF KIN GRAHAM, HERCULES
DATE OF DEATH 14 AUGUST 1943

**NX20946 SAPPER
WILLIAM HENRY LEECOUNT**

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 14 MAY 1906
PLACE OF BIRTH GOULBURN, NSW

NEXT OF KIN LEECOUNT, MARY
DATE OF DEATH 15 AUGUST 1943
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**NX42575 SAPPER
JOHN WALTER O'DONNELL**

DATE OF BIRTH 13 JANUARY 1903
PLACE OF BIRTH SYDNEY, NSW

NEXT OF KIN O'DONNELL, MARY
DATE OF DEATH 22 AUGUST 1943
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**NX31498 SAPPER
CHARLES RICHARD GIGG**

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 12 DECEMBER 1917
PLACE OF BIRTH ANNANDALE, NSW

NEXT OF KIN GIGG, JOSEPH
DATE OF DEATH 8 MAY 1943
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**Sapper HC Higgins, Sapper W Anderson,
 Sapper AS Graham and Sapper WH Leecount**

**NX27378 SAPPER
HARRY OSWALD DAINES**

DATE OF BIRTH 7 NOVEMBER 1908
PLACE OF BIRTH SYDNEY, NSW
NEXT OF KIN DAINES, DOROTHY
DATE OF DEATH 14 JULY 1943
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

Common factors in all deaths were the ulcers, malaria and dysentery, and despite the increasing deaths, the brutality against prisoners continued unabated. Among the worst of the guards was Hirahara, a brutal sadist, executed post-war as a war criminal.

Kilo100 camp was the longest established, about 8 months, and from here Sappers came and went on various tasks, but mainly on the building of the railway.

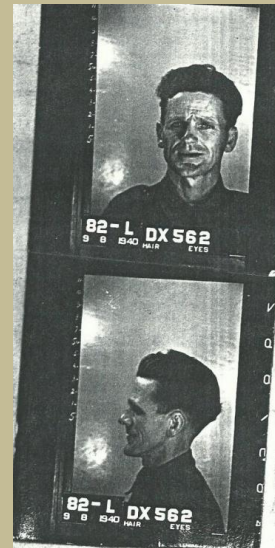
It must have been a dreadful day for DX561 Sapper Frank Scott when, on Tuesday 21st September 1943, at the Kilo 100 Camp cemetery, he buried his Glasgow-born mate from Darwin, DX562 Sapper James Russell, 'Jimmy', 'Scottie' or 'the little bloke'.

Frank could never have imagined that this would be the way that they would part company after almost three years serving together for Australia, the Country to which, like so many economic and political refugees from Europe in the 1920s, they had chosen as their home.

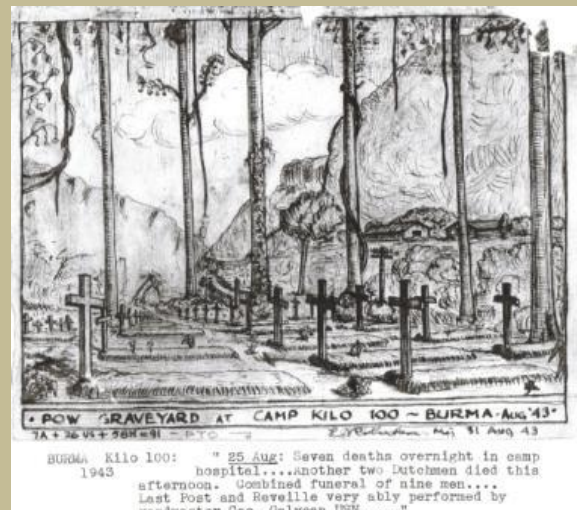
Robbie: *Sapper Russell died at Kilo 100, after a brave fight against all of the usual ailments, plus a sort of premature old age that soon intervened.*

**SAPPER
JAMES RUSSELL
DX562**

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 10 NOVEMBER 1915
PLACE OF BIRTH GLASGOW, SCOTLAND
DATE OF ENLISTMENT 15 JUNE 1940
LOCALITY ON ENLISTMENT DARWIN
PLACE OF ENLISTMENT DARWIN, NT
NEXT OF KIN RUSSELL, THOMAS
DATE OF DEATH 21 SEPTEMBER 1943



Sapper James Russell, paybook photo



POW Graveyard at Kilo 100. Sketch by Robbie

Sapper RW Murray fell ill and was evacuated to Kilo 80, as were L/Cpl GI Gilbert and Sappers WJ Anderson, RG Betteridge, GA Heterick, J Kennedy, RK McQuarrie, DJ Scadden and DJ 'Digger' Wells. L/Cpl Gilbert survived amputation of a leg and eventually made it home. (Personal note: I remember as a small child going into Sydney with my father Frank and visiting George Gilbert who operated a 'legless soldiers kiosk' near Central Railway, selling newspapers, cigarettes etc.; As young as I was, I could sense the deep friendship and understanding between the two men.

Robbie: *I was able to visit Kilo80 for a memorial dedication and visit L/CPL Gilbert and Sapper 'Digger' Wells who were in a serious state, with the former likely to lose a leg. Digger Wells, a wizened, brave and spritely little man, said he was OK, and with eyes shining brightly, said that he would get through. But, far gone with malaria, dysentery and ulcers, he died a few days later.*

**SAPPER
DOUGLAS GORDON WELLS
NX24110**

SERVICE	AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH	10 APRIL 1905
PLACE OF BIRTH	NEWCASTLE, NSW
NEXT OF KIN	WELLS, MILLIE
DATE OF DEATH	2 DECEMBER 1943

As the wet season approached, the incidence of illness increased. **Sapper JW Fletcher** died of dysentery, and **Sappers J Anderson, Coles, Daines, Dawson, Dixon, Forbes, Heterick, Hill, Lawler, Notley-Smith, O'Donnell, Sinclair, Willett and Wilson** were moved from camp to camp while ill. In another group of walking sick, **Sergeants Walsh and Allen** were moved, along with **Sapper Daines**, who was cared for by **Corporal KD Murray**, himself sick.

**SAPPER
JOHN WILLIAM FLETCHER
NX39364**

DATE OF BIRTH	24 NOVEMBER 1912
PLACE OF BIRTH	STANTHORPE, QLD
NEXT OF KIN	FLETCHER, ARCHIBALD
DATE OF DEATH	20 MARCH 1943
POSTING ON DEATH	2/6 FIELD COMPANY

Robbie: *Shortly after arrival at Kilo 80, a fever of unknown origin stated up, complicating the existing bowel disorders and other ailments. Sapper LJ Pass died of this fever (which added to his existing jaundice and malaria) along with 2 US Navy sailors and a KNIL soldier.*

13 April 1943: *Sapper Pass was buried in his blanket, at a funeral service attended by the OC, LTS Flynn and Purves, Sergeants Hopwood and Wallace, and Sapper Phillips. Chief Petty Officer Galyean, USS Houston, sounded the Last Post.*

**NX15845 SAPPER
LESLIE JOHN PASS**

DATE OF BIRTH	11 JUNE 1919
PLACE OF BIRTH	SHEPPARTON, VIC
NEXT OF KIN	PASS, WALTER
DATE OF DEATH	13 APRIL 1943
POSTING ON DEATH	2/6 FIELD COMPANY

At this Camp, Robbie noted that the Japanese commandant was 'the very brave officer from the Moji Maru ...who had thrown blazing ammunition overboard after the USAF Liberator bombing attack; he also seemed to be trying to improve conditions for the prisoners by supplying sugar and very welcome duck eggs'. His name was **Lieutenant Seizuo Wakamatsu**, and was one of a few Japanese jailors who showed some consideration for the prisoners. Another was **Captain Totaro Mizudane**.

Following the post-war War Crimes trials, Wakamatsu was sentenced to life imprisonment; however Robbie considered that, on the Railway, he was not a really bad man, just a worried one....

When the Company moved to Kilo 100 Camp, 14km from the Thai border at Three Pagodas Pass, things got very much worse.

Difficult railway work, low nutrition rations, the lack of medicines and the monsoon led to a marked increase in sickness; small scratches soon turned into puss- filled ulcers which, despite primitive methods of treatment such as packing the wounds with maggots to clean them out, resulted in the deaths of some of the Sappers, their legs almost rotting away.

Beri-beri caused initial bloating of the body, then shrinking to the skeletal stage, often resulting in death.



Emaciated Prisoners of War (AWM)

Added to disease and sickness, there was the matter of the brutal treatment the prisoners received from the Japanese and Korean guards, ranging from slaps across the face to punches, kicks or beatings with pieces of wood, rifle butts or anything that came to hand.

As the numbers of sick men grew, the numbers of men available for work grew less, thus putting more pressure on both the captives and their jailors.

After the more fit men (including 'light sick') were marched off to work, a sick parade would be called, with the 'heavy sick' either crawling or being carried out for inspection.

When Robbie refused to provide the more men for work out of the 'heavy sick', conflict arose.

On one such occasion the small bespectacled Jap orderly room clerk, Hirano San, put on a face-saving performance by slapping MAJ Robertson's face. The only trouble was that Robbie was six feet tall, while Hirano San was five feet two inches, and in order to do this he needed to stand on a small stool.

Face saving having been achieved, Hirano moved back to his orderly room and Robbie returned the sick to the hospital hut.

The worst of the cases including **Sappers A. Graham, Garner and Higgins** were sent back to Kilo 80 which contained a rough 'base hospital'.



Robbie's drawing of the Kilo 80 Camp
Source: The Robertson Papers

During this time it was not uncommon for some of the Sappers to be detached on special tasks away from the railway camps. Robbie mentions **L/Corporal George Scott** (from Manly in NSW, and Frank Scott's erstwhile drinking mate), and **Sappers Nicholson, Coulter and Mather**.

In July 1943 the Company was shattered by the news of the death of Captain Ray Watts MC, who died at Kilo 105 Camp from amoebic dysentery.

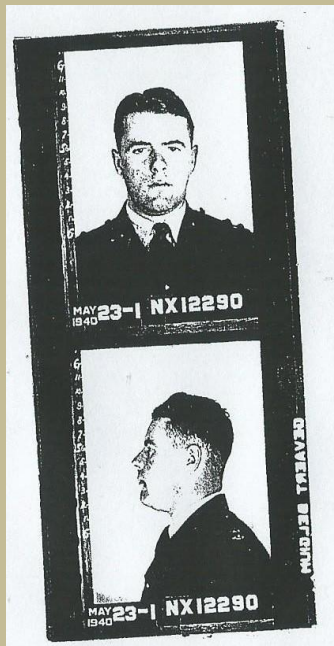


The Three Pagodas Pass area near where Captain Ray Watts died Photo: Peter Scott July 2006

CAPTAIN
RAYMOND HENRY WATTS MC
NX12290

SERVICE	AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH	24 OCTOBER 1916
PLACE OF BIRTH	CROYDON, NSW

NEXT OF KIN	WATTS, HENRY
DATE OF DEATH	14 JULY 1943
POSTING ON DEATH	2/6 FIELD COMPANY
WW2 HONOURS AND GALLANTRY	MILITARY CROSS



A promising young architect in civilian life, Ray Watts was respected and admired by all ranks. As a true leader, he never set any task for his Sappers that he could not do himself, and never spared himself physically or mentally on The Line. In the dreadful march in the rain to Kilo 105, he ended up carrying gear for others.

Robbie: It was Ray Watts' continued work for his Sappers, without proper rest or medical care, which finished him. He refused hospital treatment as he considered that there were many more with greater need.

A memorial parade to honour Captain Ray Watts MC RAE, was held at the Kilo 100 Camp on 16 July 1943. Sick Sappers hobbled or crawled from the hospital to pay their respects, and Company's Dutch liaison officer Pieter Feij KNIL, would say decades later that this parade was one of the few things that he wished to remember about those days.

The Sappers were often at risk from Allied bombing, the USAF being apparently not too concerned that there were prisoners working on the railway that they were trying to destroy. **Staff Sergeant Sellers and Sapper Firth** were wounded in such a raid.

Mentioned later in movements from Kilo 100 Camp were **Corporals Flynn and Patterson, L/CPL Ekin, Sappers McMahon and Parkinson**, as well as **SGTs Brosnan, Ashby, Lascelles and Tuft**.

Also mentioned at various times are **Sappers Wicks, Cavanagh, Brydges, Laughlin and Mather**

The Watts group at Kilo 105 included **Sappers Brydges, Evers and Woodhead**, all suffering from very bad ulcers, requiring the spooning treatment for removing the pus.



Tropical Ulcer as drawn by Jack Chalker
 Source: hellfire-pass.commemoration.gov.au

Sapper O'Keefe died of illness and malnutrition, but not before his mate Sapper Collis risked his life by attempting to get food out of the Jap larder to try to save him.

SAPPER
THOMAS CHARLES O'KEEFE
NX21141

SERVICE	AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH	18 SEPTEMBER 1908
PLACE OF BIRTH	MACKAY, QLD
NEXT OF KIN	O'KEEFE, THOMAS
DATE OF DEATH	25 DECEMBER 1943
POSTING ON DEATH	2/6 FIELD COMPANY

LT Mullins reported that Sapper Hardman died at Kilo 55.

SAPPER
 FREDERICK CHARLES HARDMAN
 NX39076

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
 DATE OF BIRTH 6 FEBRUARY 1919
 PLACE OF BIRTH NARRABRI, NSW
 NEXT OF KIN HARDMAN, HAROLD
 DATE OF DEATH 28 NOVEMBER 1943
 POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

At Kilo 100 in October 1943 the Jap Commandant, Lieutenant Wakamatsu, instructed that the Graveyard be spruced up, because, as it turned out, the railway would soon become operational and passing dignitaries should see a neat and impressive cemetery.

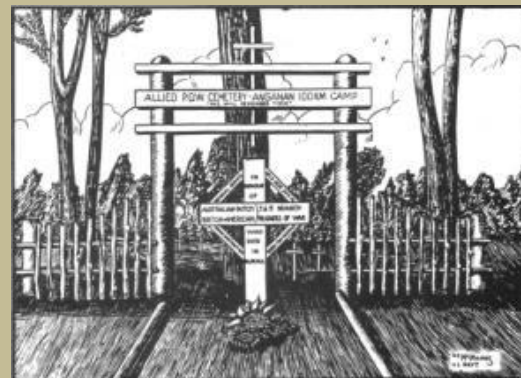
Major Robertson, being the nearest thing to an architect available, produced a simple gateway structure with a large teak board across it, inscribed with the words "Kilo 100 ANGANAN – We Will Remember Them"

Anganan was the name of site of the camp and the words had double meaning: not only would their dead mates be remembered, but also those responsible for their deaths. Wakamatsu heartily approved of the design and rendered every assistance with construction.

The Doctors. *Albert Coates was the senior surgeon at the Burma end, working under Lt-Col Thomas Hamilton, SMO. 'Weary' Dunlop, was a senior surgeon and CO for the first group of Australian POW to reach the southern end in Thailand in January 1943.. Some 2646 Aussie POW died among the 13,000 POW deaths in total, and at least 80,000 Asian labourers. The lower rate of deaths amongst POWs can be attributed to the presence of about 150 doctors, many British, 43 Australian, with some Dutch and one or two Americans, and the many medical orderlies, mostly volunteers, who worked on the railway, spread from Thailand to Burma, and who treated the injured and sick, and gradually developed systems for minimising infectious disease.* (Peter Winstanley, grandson of Sir Albert Coates)

On ANZAC Day 2015, Roy Lascelles, the last surviving 2/6th POW, told me that the food hygiene measures implemented by

the Australian Doctors on the Line, such as dipping mess gear into boiling water prior to meals, saved many lives.



Kilo 100 Cemetery Gateway and Memorial Cross -- 1943
 Drawn by O.C.McManus, USS "Houston"

UNLOPPED:	Spr HG Lee	Spr HD Sale (ex Robforce)
ROBFORCE:	Spr WJ Anderson	Spr WH Leacount
	Spr HO Daines	Spr JW O'Donnell (ex Watts)
	Spr AS Graham	Spr LJ Penn
	Spr HC Higgins	Spr J Russell
	Spr GT Hill	Spr DG Wells
WATSON:	Spr HW Belcher	Spr E. Murphy (Thai. 1944)
	Spr WH Clifford	Spr TC O'Keefe
	Spr HW Doyle	Spr DW Renals
	Spr ED Dwyer	S/sgt CT Sellers (Thai.1945)
	Spr JW Fletcher	Spr JW Thomsinson (Thai.1944)
	Spr CB Gigg	Capt RH Watts MC
	Spr WC Gray	Spr FB Wilkinson
	Spr FC Hardman	Spr TC Williams
	L/SgtT Jamison RM	

Gateway to Kilo 100 Cemetery; Drawing by OC McManus, USS Houston. Source: The Robertson Papers

At Kilo100 itself, there were 89 burials: 7 Australians, 25 Americans and 57 Netherlanders, with average deaths two per day at one stage.

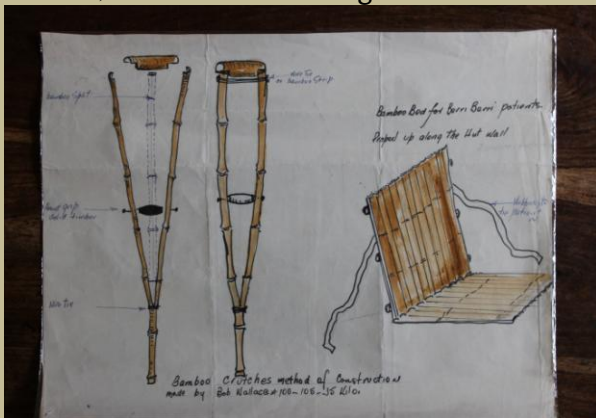
Robbie: *At the Dedication of the Cross, the Nippon commander LTCOL Yoshitada Nagatomo said: 'It is a virtue since ancient times to pay homage to the souls of those who have died in wareven enemies. I have always done my utmost to discharge my duty ... for you all Now you have passed on to the other world owing to unavoidable disease and epidemics. I cannot see you in this world any longer I will try to console your souls and pray for you by dedicating a Cross in your cemetery. Please accept my deepest sympathy May you sleep peacefully and eternally.'*

At the time, these sentiments induced hollow laughter in the POWs, and feelings of disgust at the apparent hypocrisy, but three decades on, and knowing the Nippon make-up, it is

probable that the Colonel was quite sincere in his remarks.

Sergeant Bob Wallace shaped and carved the wood for the cross, while (the Dutch) carpenter Van Ort (KNIL) carved the inscription. Padre Cunningham from Kilo105, sent for especially, presided over the dedication, with the US Navy's CPO 'Bandy' Galyean (USS Houston) sounding the Last Post and Reveille for the American and Australian dead, and a Dutch trumpeter producing the appropriate notes for his compatriots.

Bob Wallace was an accomplished carpenter and, with the assistance of Sapper Coles, produced many crutches for the 'ulcerated leg men', an adjustable bed back-rest for the beri-beri cases so that their chest fluid would not flood their breathing; He was also adept at making day-to-day camp utensils such as water 'buckets', food scoops and carrying handles, all made out of king-size bamboo.



Source: The Robertson Papers

Sapper Vic Lalor is often referred to as the Company's champion cook, able to create meals sometimes out of next to nothing. A former shearer's cook in the Australian Outback, his ingenuity was unsurpassed either in North Africa and the Middle East, or on the Burma Railway.

Sapper Ted Shepley was one of the Line workers, but on yasumay (rest) days would be hard at work on repairs and improvements around the jungle camp.

At Christmas 1943 a sack of mail arrived for the prisoners, most of it more than two years old, none less than 18 months. This deliberate Japanese deprivation of contact with home and family was torture most cruel.

LT John Purves, in his narrative of life on The Line, observed how the men's health deteriorated rapidly; Whereas in February 1943 he could raise 50 men for his work party (kumi), by September he could seldom raise 15, sometimes less, such was the extent of illness among the prisoners.

He recorded how work on the line was a monotonous slug, especially in the mud during the monsoon season, and how that hard slug would become better or worse depending on the nature of the Korean guards allocated to a kumi each day.

LT Purves: 'If we saw 'Mukkan', 'Snakes Eyes', 'Pockface', "My-friend-ted-james' or 'the Dirt Mechanic' coming our way, we would be in for fireworks Bashings If we saw 'Smiler' or 'Baby-face' coming, we were in for a good day".

We were put on bridge building over very deep ravinesevery bridge log had to be cut from the jungle If you were lucky you had an underfed elephant to bring haul the timber to the line, otherwise it had to be manhandled. Piles 10 to 15 inches diameter and 20 to 30 feet long were driven in by a solid iron driving monkey hauled up on a rope through a pulley by 50 or more men, then dropped. Piles were driven until they struck hard rock, then a sill placed on top The

Nips were always shouting "Speedo!" but as a bridge developed, the men could not climb about the structure without danger of falling, so far gone were they with malaria or diarrhoea. Work might go on until midnight under a portable electric light, then we would carry the tools 2 ½ kilos to one camp, and then walk another 5 kilos to our own camp"

The Branch Chief, Captain Mizudane, was good to us during the four week bridge building period, personally supervising the issue of a egg for every man at least twice But the onset of the monsoon made conditions atrocious. Also issued by Mizudane was some Burmese brandy, to which some hardened drinkers said they preferred sulphuric acid."



Bridge Building under the Japanese
(Sketch by Major LJ Robertson)



Mealtime on The Railway – Rice, rice and more rice
(Sketch by Major LJ Robertson)

Discipline among the Company of Sappers was, to their credit, fairly well maintained. Despite being in captivity, they were still a unit of proud sappers who looked after their mates. Sometimes there was conflict brought about by national or Corps jealousies, or by group punishment inflicted by the Japs.

Some Dutch did not like having to work with the Australians, particularly those of lower rank.

Robbie talks of a Sapper being formally charged with being rude (after much provocation) to a Dutch sub-Lieutenant; the OC heard the evidence, and handed down a punishment of 50 Guilders – to be paid after the War- recorded as evidence on a scrap of paper, which, the OC then said, he would use on his next visit to the 'benjo' (toilet). No one was going to get anything over his Sappers!

Corporal Ted McLoughlin worked on the Thai side of the border with **Sappers LJ Berthold, JF Bott and RH Lum**. At the Hintok cuttings he was put in charge of the work party by **Major Woods**, even though there were more senior NCOs from outside of the engineer company. Ted knew how to achieve results with the least effort, thus conserving the energy, health and spirits of the prisoners, not to mention their lives.

Robbie: *In a post-war citation Major Woods recommended CPL McLoughlin for a decoration 'for his devotion to duty under conditions of severe strain He was in charge of the hammer and tap gang engaged in drilling rock cuttings through the limestone his impartiality, tact, intelligence and attention to his men protected them from overstrain and overwork where possible, and proved an admirable buffer between them and the Nipponese brutality ... he continued working even with severe tropical ulcers which refused to heal Ted McLoughlin is one of many men who deserved a decoration but did not receive one, while others who caused an increase in prisoners work loads are now lauded in civilian life.*



Peter Scott pauses to remember Ted McLoughlin and his men in Hammer and Tap Cutting at Hintock 2006 Photo: Rob Scott

Prisoners tempers understandably frayed under the constant pressure, and from time to time frustrated soldiers no doubt insulted their captors; In LT Mick Flynn's kumi, Sapper Frank Scott caused some displeasure to the Japs, and, rather than the normal bashing response from the Korean guards, the Japs forced the Lieutenant to put Frank in an underground 'punishment hole', apparently for a number of days. That way, both the officer and the soldier were punished.

Frank's Irish-born sense of injustice over this incident no doubt caused some ill-feeling towards Mick Flynn throughout the remainder of their captivity: Happily, rapprochement occurred between the two men in Sydney one ANZAC Day not too long after their return home.

The use of punishment holes and bamboo cages was common place for recalcitrants of all ranks including Weary Dunlop.

LT Flynn was later to suffer more group punishment on behalf of his men at Omuta Camp 22 in Japan, being forced to kneel for 12 hours in the snow after the Japs accused his men of stealing from the stores.

On the Thai side of the border were **Sappers GA Kelly, ARJ Goodwin and CT Morpeth**, and **Sapper RG Lee**, who died when cholera came to Hintock.

**SAPPER
ROBERT GEORGE LEE
NX21982**

SERVICE	AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH	17 FEBRUARY 1919
PLACE OF BIRTH	GOULBURN, NSW
NEXT OF KIN	LEE, JAMES
DATE OF DEATH	31 JULY 1943
POSTING ON DEATH	2/6 FIELD COMPANY

By December 1943, construction of the Railway was wrapping up and work had gone into maintenance mode, and repair of damage caused by frequent USAF bombing and strafing.

Despite the deaths of some 15% of their Company members throughout construction of the Railway, the Sappers maintained a high spirit throughout all of their difficulties.

FAREWELL, SAYONARA AND GOOD RIDDANCE TO BURMA

The scattered elements of the 2/6th Field Company gradually made their way south out of Burma, past the Three Pagodas and down the Kwai Noi valley to Kanburi (Kanchanaburi).

Robbie's words from the following passage from *The Gap is Bridged* inspired me to go to Burma and visit "that great craggy mountainirradiated by the red glow of sunset".

" as the sun set we crossed the border from Burma into Thailand ... close by the Railway the Three Pagodas standing about 4 metres apart and 4 high, grimy and evidently centuries old. In the darkening distance irradiated by the red glow of sunset, that great craggy mountain stood, dominating Kilo 100 in the Pass below. Soon it was lost to sight as the train of metal boxes rumbled into the dimming Thailand bushland."

Passing out of Burma jungle was not the end of the deaths of the men, rather a slowing, but did herald a return to the relative civilisation of Thai towns and

villages, to a better food supply and to better medical treatment.

It was if the POWs had come in from the wilderness.

Robbie: *The final movement into Kanburi on 26 March 1944 will not be forgotten by the sappers the desperately built tiered trestle bridges at Hintock and Wampoh shook and wobbled in a fearsome manner, even with the train speed being reduced to 4kmh, walking pace.*

Compared with the jungle, the food and ambience at Kanburi seemed positively princely, with the basic ration being supplemented with items from a canteen: duck eggs, peanut butter, fried pies and an old Java touch – satay babi (satay pork on skewers). Rice could finally be avoided!

The sun shone, there were wide open spaces, no jungle and a nearby town, but despite all this, the POWs still had to contend with ongoing malaria, ulcers, dysentery and avitaminosis (vitamin deficiency disease), and often all four conditions together.

13. DRAWING THE SHORT STRAW: POWs SELECTED TO GO TO JAPAN AS SLAVE LABOUR, VIA SAIGON

But not all of the POWs were so fortunate as to go to and remain in Kanburi then go to the Valley Camp in Singapore: Part of the Company was held 3km short of Kanburi at Tamarkan, where food and conditions were much poorer. They included Lt Flynn's group including Sapper Frank Scott.

These were the men who had drawn the shortest of the short straws. For some reason known only to the Japs, they were selected were to be loaded onto ships and sent as slave labour to Japan itself.

Perhaps they were the fittest of the unfit, the healthiest of the unhealthy.

They were to go from the tropics to a freezing hell-hole on Fukuoka Island; they were to go from being a part of a group of Sappers who, for nearly three years, had supported each other through thick and thin, through life and death and who, despite everything, could rely on each other they were to go to a situation where they were split up and placed into round-the-clock work kumis with other nationalities who knew nothing of mateship and were only interested in their personal survival.

They were to go to the gates of Hell itself.

One hundred 100 POWs were in the group, and were under the command of Lt Michael Flynn 2/6th Field Company RAE.

Thirty seven (37) those were Mick Flynn's own Sappers:

Japan 1945: Most of the Company unit that departed from Thailand at end of March 1944, after being held up at Saigon and Singapore, proceeded to Japan at end of 1944, arriving at Moji mid January 1945. Nine others, departed from Singapore September 1944, were sunk off Hainan, only one surviving: Spr Henderson RR, ultimately arrived in Japan, but apparently did not join up with any of Lt Flynn's party:-

Lt Flynn MJ	Spr Lonie JL
Cpl Bentley FJ	Spr McGeer EM
Spr Booth SC	Spr McKay R
Sgt Brosnan J	Spr Mather RG
Spr Colliss J	Spr Mawson WJ
Spr Coulter E	Spr Moore AC
Spr Dews IL	Spr Murray GF
Spr Ferguson DC	Spr Nicholson RA
Spr Forbes FG	Spr O'Loughlin JJ
L/Cpl Herd AC	Spr Phillips TV
L/Cpl Hopwood C (A/S/Sgt-POW)	

(ix)

Spr Phillips WA	Cpl Wallace RC (A/Sgt-POW)
Spr Russell AM	L/Sgt Wilde RF
L/Cpl Scott GE	Spr Williams TA
Spr Scott LF	Spr Williams WL
Spr Shepley EB	Spr Wilsor CH
Spr Simpson AE	Spr Wilsor TS
Spr Spiers JB	Spr Young D
L/Sgt Tuft A	Spr Yunker TW

Source: *The Gap Is Bridged*

Due to US Navy submarine activity in the South China Sea, the Japanese decided to send the Flynn Party by train, in open rail trucks, from Tamarkan to Phnom Penh (Cambodia) via Bangkok. They were then transferred to the *Tiong Guan*, a 'native' motor powered 'steamer', for the last leg to Saigon in French Indo China.

The idea was that they would be then shipped northwards to the Land of the Rising Sun.

Robbie: *The voyage down the Mekong River was notable for the yellowness of the fast flowing stream and the vast flotillas of Khaki Campbell ducks, which provided mouth-watering sights for the hungry POWs from the Railway.*



Ducks on the Mekong River

On the way Sapper Mawson found his way into the hold of the vessel where he found and 'requisitioned' a supply of cigarettes for his Sapper mates.

At Phnom Penh, LT Flynn remonstrated with a notable Korean thug known as 'The Storm Trooper', about a bashing meted out to one of the POWs.

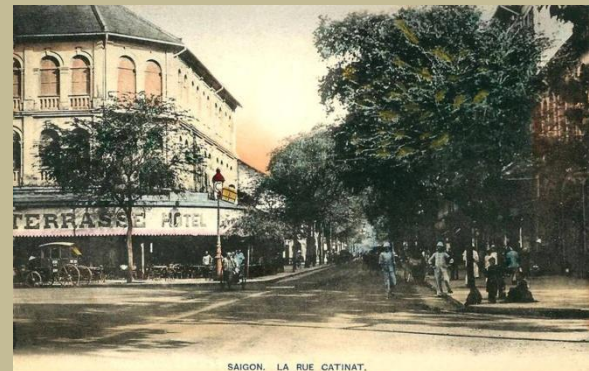
The Storm Trooper at once turned his fury on the Officer, starting with a face bashing, but LT Flynn was too quick and adroitly executed a withdrawal across the parade area, the thug following with ineffective blows he believed were lethal. The incident ended with the guard out of breath and seemingly satisfied.



Early 20th Century Phnom Penh

At Saigon, the POWs were quartered in a French Army Barracks and were put to work loading ships in the River, and at the airfield (perhaps this was at Tan Son Nhat, the airport that, twenty something years later, would become the entry and exit point for thousands of Australian Vietnam War soldiers, including one Sapper Peter Russell Scott in 1969/70).

Sapper Ted Shepley remarked how very good the local (Vietnamese) people were to the POWs, "producing all kinds of desirable food, and cigarettes were plentiful".



Historic photo: La Rue Catinat, Saigon (now Dong Khoi Street)

All in all, the Flynn unit spent a pleasant time in Saigon, but on 28 June 1944, Frank Scott's 37th birthday, they were on the

move again. The Japanese had not been able to get a ship out of the river at Saigon, presumably due to American submarines waiting offshore.

The group was therefore ferried back up the Mekong to Phnom Penh, then taken by train to Singapore via Bangkok, arriving 7 July 1944.

At Singapore they stayed at the River Valley Camp or were used on one of the Singapore harbour islands, Puloe Damar Laut, excavating a large graving dock know as 'the submarine pen'.



Previous: Historic aerial photograph of the graving dock and POW camp on Damar Laut Source: chuashuyi.wordpress.com/the-lost-islands-of-singapore-2/

At this stage, nine of the company were selected to go to Japan on the ill-fated Rakuyo Maru.

Sinking of the SS Rakuyo Maru . This Japanese troopship was transporting 1317 Australian and British prisoners of war (POWs) from Singapore to Formosa (Taiwan), when it was torpedoed and sunk of Hainan by the submarine **USS Sealion** on 12 September 1944.

A total of 1159 POWs died as a result of the sinking. On 15 September, the Sealion and other submarines who had

participated in the attack returned to the area and rescued 63 surviving POWs; four died before they could be landed at Saipan, in the Mariana Islands.

Included in those lost in the sinking was Brigadier Arthur Varley, who had been in command of 30,000 POWs in Burma.



Submarine USS Queenfish rescues a POW from the Rakuyo Maru sinking in the sea off Hainan (AWM)

Members of the 2/6th Field Company lost at sea in the Rakuyo Maru sinking were: Sapper JH Bourke, Cpl JL Flynn, L/Sgt VL Kelly, Sappers JV Lewis and JF Mears, Cpls R Mulford and J Munro and L/Cpl LR MacFarlane.

**SAPPER
JOHN HENRY BOURKE
NX42014**

SERVICE	AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH	18 SEPTEMBER 1917
PLACE OF BIRTH	TWEED HEADS, NSW
NEXT OF KIN	BOURKE, JAMES
DATE OF DEATH	14 SEPTEMBER 1944
POSTING ON DEATH	2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**CORPORAL
JAMES LEONARD FLYNN
NX15815**

SERVICE	AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH	24 MARCH 1914
PLACE OF BIRTH	HENTY, NSW
NEXT OF KIN	FLYNN, JOSEPH
DATE OF DEATH	12 SEPTEMBER 1944
POSTING ON DEATH	2/6 FIELD COMPANY

**CORPORAL
VICTOR LESLIE KELLY
NX21980**

SERVICE	AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH	13 APRIL 1912
PLACE OF BIRTH	TRANGIE, NSW
NEXT OF KIN	KELLY, ADA
DATE OF DEATH	12 SEPTEMBER 1944
POSTING ON DEATH	2/6 FIELD COMPANY

SAPPER

JACK VINCENT LEWIS
NX21633

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 14 MARCH 1915
PLACE OF BIRTH PARRAMATTA, NSW
NEXT OF KIN LEWIS, FREDERICA
DATE OF DEATH 12 SEPTEMBER 1944
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

SAPPER
JOSEPH FRANCIS MEARS
NX15879

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 14 MAY 1917
PLACE OF BIRTH RANDWICK, NSW
NEXT OF KIN MEARS, JOHN
DATE OF DEATH 12 SEPTEMBER 1944
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

CORPORAL
RAYMOND WILLIAM EDWIN MULFORD
NX13948

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 29 SEPTEMBER 1913
PLACE OF BIRTH COFFS HARBOUR, NSW
NEXT OF KIN MULFORD, JOYCE
DATE OF DEATH 12 SEPTEMBER 1944
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

CORPORAL
JAMES MICHIE MUNRO
NX30299

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 24 MARCH 1905
PLACE OF BIRTH SCOTLAND
NEXT OF KIN MUNRO, MARION
DATE OF DEATH 12 SEPTEMBER 1944
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

SAPPER
LESLIE ROBERT MACFARLANE
NX36754

SERVICE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
DATE OF BIRTH 28 OCTOBER 1915
PLACE OF BIRTH ST LEONARDS
NEXT OF KIN MACFARLANE, EILEEN
DATE OF DEATH 12 SEPTEMBER 1944
POSTING ON DEATH 2/6 FIELD COMPANY

ON Boxing Day 1944, Lt Flynn's Japan Party, steamed out of Singapore on the Awa Maru (**Ship number 6**). They had been loaded prior to Christmas and had spent days sweltering on board in the harbour, waiting to leave.

Robbie: *The Awa Maru was a large ship which seemed to be considerably better than the decrepit hulks that previously transported the Company it displayed*

large white cross insignias indicating that it was a Red Cross craft.

There seemed to be a number of VIPs on board, but the POWs drew the usual 'non-luxury' straw.

Sapper AM 'Ginger Mick' Russell described the voyage north: " what a nightmare aboard the stinking lousy thing they called a boat! Only two toilets on board and we all contracted diarrhoea after a few days long waits for the toilet in the freezing cold we had no warm clothes; the guards were just as jumpy as us, waiting to be torpedoed; It was hard to say which was the most nerve-wracking – sitting waiting for the explosion, or the old vessel full steam ahead nearly rattling to pieces. I would not have wished the journey on my worst enemy, unless he happened to be a Jap



Hellship Awa Maru on which Frank was transported to Japan as part of Lt Flynn's 'Japan arty'. Painting by Japanese naval artist Kihachiro Ueda

After depositing its' cargo of POWs at Moji in January 1945, the Awa Maru made another run from Singapore to Japan in late March. It was sunk by the Submarine USS Queenfish on 1.4.45, with the loss of life of most of the 2007 Japanese passengers on board.

Sapper Ted Shepley recorded that the ship arrived in the harbour in Moji, Japan, on 15 January 1945, four years and three months since they had left Sydney Harbour on the Queen Mary.

"When we arrived it was snowing, and we still had our tropical clothes on ... we sat

on the wharf all day in a large fibro-cement warehouse, where they split the group into 2, one going to Omuta Camp 17, across the bay from Nagasaki, the other under LT Flynn to Izaka and Camp 22. I was in this latter group with SGT Tuft and Sapper Collis the rest of the 2/6th Sappers were sent to Camp17 at Omuta.



1945 STUDIO PORTRAIT OF NX37971 SAPPER E. (TED) B. SHEPLEY, 2/6TH FIELD COMPANY, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS, ON HIS RETURN FROM THE PRISONER OF WAR CAMP AT ISUKA, JAPAN (AWM)



LT Flynn: *Life was rough in Camp 22 and bashings continued in the coal mine my physical activity comprised gardening, protecting the troops, acting as Chaplain (church parades, cremation of deceased POW's) and providing a punching bag for the sadistic Japanese sergeant Irio.*

Omuta Camp 17



OMUTA, FUKUOKA PREFECTURE, JAPAN, 1945-09. THE MAIN ENTRANCE TO FUKUOKA CAMP 17 AT Omuta, A PRISONER-OF-WAR CAMP (AWM)

THE STORY OF Omuta (or FUKUOKA) CAMP 17 is best told in the words of a Sapper who was there, and the Camp doctors:

FIRSTLY: SURVIVAL – A MIRACLE

Extract of a 1982 Narrative by former Lance Corporal Alan Herd, 2/6th Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers, Seventh Division, Army, Australian Imperial Force. Prisoner at Changi, Burma-Thai Railway and in Japan:

“After Saigon....we were sent back to Singapore to await embarkation to Japan. Of the first 2000 prisoners sent on the Jap Hell Ships, only about 300 were to survive, after being torpedoed by American Submarines “Barb”, “Queenfish”, “Pampanito” and “Sealion”. The full account of this hell at sea can be found in Return from the River Kwai.

Subsequent ships got through to Japan when the American submarines were withdrawn for the attack on the Philippines.

Entering Camp 17 was like a journey through the Gates of Hell itself; it was freezing cold with inches of ice underfoot and sleet ice blowing over the ice and snow into the camp 24 hours a day, week in and week out.

The camp was set up on a cliff edge, with electric wires and sentry boxes all around; with the constant sleet and ice adding to the isolation and desolation. . There were no birds, no grass, nothing alive; the fumes from the nearby zinc works had killed everything.

God had forgotten this place on Earth, for to know it was to know death.

The camp could have been Satan's own; The Camp commander and Japanese and Korean guards were the most cruel and sadistic you could ever find, for they revelled in torture, and death was metered out for the most trivial things; the average person in Australia cannot comprehend and does not believe the suffering of the prisoners.

After the Japanese, the camp was controlled by the Americans, who had been there for some time, being survivors of the Philippines campaign at Bataan and Corregidor. Outside of a small minority, the bulk of them were the lowest form of white men you could find – treacherous racketeerswho became like animals in order to survive. Men hardly spoke to each other, only snarled..... The Australians found it particularly hard to be put into different rosters or shifts from their comrades who had supported each other under adversity since 1940.

*I will not tell of the terrible torture, of death and sadism practiced by the guards and the Japanese Commandant, for this is told in such books as *Slaves of the Son of Heaven*.*



Omuta Camp 17 POW Camp. Source: Linda Dahl

There were a number of groups of Australians put to work in this Mitsui coalmine, and after the War in the late 1950's it collapsed with great loss of life.

Alan Herd: *"It was the biggest and oldest in Japan ...where death would reap a bountiful harvestamong the miners. Every man had his quota of trucks to fill before he could finish 12 hours each shift.....the last two where he would be belted and driven by his "Joe" (Korean Guard) to finish on time.*

Men's lungs collapsed from the terrible cold and they died in terrible agony and there was nothing anyone could do. Prisoners were fed a starvation diet of millet (birdseed), which passed through the body in less than an hour, and the hunger then worse than ever. There was no laughter, no joking or horseplay that characterized the Australian character, just terrible cold, and starvation, and work in the bowels of the Earth. After a while we did not even speak, we knew we were doomed, and death would be a welcome release."

Towards the end the Lance Corporal had been too sick to go down the mine: *"I knew my days were numbered, for I was living in another world, the twilight world where there was no hate, nor fear of death, no wanting to go home, only a peace so complete that it cannot be described. Then it came, on a bright clear day – thousands of bombers and fighters that the sky was black with them the ground and the buildings shook ...the fighter escorts swooped so low and must have realized we were prisoners No bombs fell on us.*

A few days later no shifts went to the mines ... we realized the War was over. So terrible had been the suffering, so far gone were the men, so exhausted and spent ... there was not one cheer ... just nothing. If anyone spoke, he was snarled at and abused.



Nagasaki: the day after the bomb
Photo credit: Yosuke Yamahata

SECONDLY: THE HEWLETT REPORT ON Omuta Camp 17

In 1978, a retrospective medical report covering Omuta was written by the former American doctor in charge of POWs at Camp 17, Colonel Thomas H Hewlett, and included input from Captains Ian Duncan and Richard Parker, Australian Army Medical Corps.

This report, available at

http://www.mansell.com/pow_resources/camp_lists/fukuoka/Fuku_17/hewlett_report.html

refers to the poor medical supplies available to treat the extensive range of sickness and injuries caused by work in the mine.

Illnesses included food diarrhoea, enteritis and acute colitis

The Allied Medical officers considered the basic problem to be total dietary

deficiency while the Japanese considered it as beriberi, the so-called classic patterns of Vitamin B deficiency. The first case of deficiency edema (swelling) that appeared in the camp in Dec. 1944, this patient literally wasted away. Within 10 days after the polished rice was introduced into camp, edema was noted in increasing number of prisoners, as polished rice eliminated our only source of Vitamin B and reduced the major nutrients.....

The real killer however at Camp 17 was pneumonia resulting from the starvation diet, continuous exposure to extremes of temperature in the mine, some men worked in water, persistent upper respiratory tract infections in the miners resulting from irritating gases found underground, and, the freezing conditions in the camp accommodation.

Dec. 1978. THOMAS H. HEWLETT, M.D., F.A.C.S., COL. U.S.A. (Ret)

Dr. Hewlett: *Deficiency diseases were a continuing medical problem and despite repeated pleas to the Japanese command we were never able to obtain any dietary improvement.*

Those of us who remained at Camp 17 following the exodus of the guard detail in Aug. 1945, set out to scavenge the city of Omuta. Early in the exploration we found several warehouses packed with Red Cross food and medical supplies. The dates of receipt and storage indicated that these items had reached Japan prior to August 1943. Thus while we suffered from lack of food, essential medicines, surgical supplies, and x-ray equipment, these items, gifts of the American people, were hoarded in warehouses during our two years in Japan. The reason we were denied these essentials remains a top secret of the Imperial Japanese Army.....

The philosophy of the prisoner of war is a strange one, individually developed to make survival possible in the most hostile environment. He first learned to laugh at the tragedies that comprised the everyday life. He completely obliterated the pangs of hunger.

The starving man would willingly trade his meagre ration for a few cigarettes. In many instances he would risk his rations gambling with professionals who pursued their trade without compassion for any life except their own

As POW's, we worked in the mine and foundry.....

I have chosen to review with you factual material from a medical report on Camp 17 which was compiled by the Medical Staff: Capts. Ian Duncan & Richard Parker, Australian Army, Lts. Harold Proff and Theodore Bronk, U.S. Army, and Lt. Gerit Bras, Royal Dutch Army.

It is ironic that this report was accepted into the Australian Army Museum for its historical value. Our meager records including the death list were not acceptable to a U.S. Courts Martial since they were not typewritten. I was young and inexperienced with the system in those years so at this late date I apologize for not keeping a typewriter with me. The medical report was completed Aug. 25, 1945 while the medical staff was still together in a complete state of recall to review the period, utilizing our private records as concerned each nationality group.....

As the camp increased in population, doctors who joined us were assigned to work in their field of interest. We were young and not fully trained. As an example, Dr Bras, interested in laboratory work, arrived in camp with a crude microscope constructed of bamboo tubing and field glass lens. Thus we gained an additional capability in diagnosis and it became possible to cross match blood.

Medical supplies for the camp was a joint responsibility shared equally by the Mitsui Corporation and the Army. Eventually hospital space increased from a combined dispensary and ward building to one adequately large clinic building and 6 ward buildings: 1 isolation ward of 9 beds, 3 medical wards of 30 beds each, 2 surgical wards, 1 of 30 beds, 1 of 58 beds, to a total of 187 beds or mats. Thru the humaneness of Baron Mitsui, a 1919 Dartmouth graduate, we did have bed space for the sick and wounded.

The Allied Medical officers considered the basic problem to be total dietary deficiency while the Japanese considered it as beriberi, the so-called classic patterns of Vitamin B deficiency. The first case of deficiency edema (swelling) that appeared in the camp in Dec. 1944, this patient literally wasted away. Within 10 days after the polished rice was introduced into camp, edema was noted in increasing number of prisoners, as polished rice eliminated our only source of Vitamin B and reduced the major nutrients.....

GASTRO-INTESTINAL DISEASES: There was a consistently high disability rate from diarrhea. To clarify one point, amebic dysentery was never a problem in Camp 17, only 7 cases were diagnosed by microscopic exam and 3 of these were under treatment in Aug. 1945. Medically we used 4 classifications for gastro-intestinal diseases:

1) FOOD DIARRHEA (HIROHITO'S CURSE): On at least 3 occasions 75% of the prisoners were struck by an epidemic, in the fall of 1943 following questionable fish soup thru the mess hall, whale blubber, or the rare issue of clams always produced such a temporary epidemic, usually these outbursts tended to recede in 48-72 hours. These patients always demonstrated undigested food in the stool. Purgation and total abstention from food were effective in handling such epidemics.

2) ACUTE ENTERITIS (BENJO BOOGIE): These patients gave a history of 3-4 days of diarrhea, with as many as 15 stools per day. They did not respond to an aniline purgative available in small amounts from the Japanese Army. Bed rest was our only successful mode of treatment.

3) ACUTE COLITIS: This condition was undoubtedly bacillary dysentery, it was prevalent during the summers of 1944 and 1945, at which time 30 hospital beds were constantly utilized for its treatment, during both periods Japanese denied the existence of the disease outside camp bounds. Yet prisoners employed in the mine reported Japanese miners suffering with it. One Japanese civilian employed in Camp 17 died of the disease in the early summer of 1945. Sanitary public health measures within the camp were instituted, but no public health measures were taken in the Japanese guard housing area and none in the surrounding civilian areas.

4) *CHRONIC INTEROCOLITIS*: Required long hospitalization and bed rest and a strict diet of lugao with warm tea enemas. This could be a terminal disease in severe malnutrition cases.

RESPIRATORY DISEASES: PNEUMONIA: Our most dreaded killer, pneumonia continuously maintained the highest mortality rate of any of the infectious diseases. In the winter of 1943-44, among the men of the first detail, the morbidity rate was 8%. The same group, during their second winter in Japan, showed a morbidity rate of 3%. Both the Australian and Dutch details who arrived in camp for the second winter showed the higher morbidity and mortality rates. It should be noted that the second Australian detail which arrived Jan. 1945, showed the highest morbidity and mortality of any group in this camp. They arrived from the tropics during the wintertime. In considering the pneumonia in this camp, one cannot ignore certain living conditions which contributed to the development of this disease:

Total pneumonias for the period reached 250 cases and were classified as follows:

1) Broncho-pneumonia-----20%

2) Lobar-pneumonia-----80%.....

Due to the limited supply of drugs available, treatment was not instituted in any patient until positive consolidation could be demonstrated. X-ray was never available.

Total deaths from pneumonia were 48, of these, 10 were in a state of extreme emaciation when they contracted this disease. The highest incidence of the disease occurred during the winter of 1944 and spring of 1945. During these periods 50 to 60 were in the hospital. In March of 1945, there were 14 deaths from pneumonia. This was the highest total for any month. The average period of hospitalization was 20 days, followed by 30 days of convalescence in quarters.

TUBERCULOSIS: Most Americans with even minimal tuberculosis died early in Philippine Island prisons. Pulmonary tuberculosis first appeared in the first detail of this camp in March 1944, after 7 months of mine work. It was impossible for this prisoner to have had contact within the camp bounds with a case of active tuberculosis. One of the Japanese overmen assigned to his group apparently was

troubled with a chronic productive cough. This overman stated that he was troubled with consumption. This case was diagnosed by stethoscope and later confirmed by x-ray. There have been in the camp a total of 11 proven cases and 4 suspects. Of the 11 cases, 8 were from the American group and 3 of the 8 lived in the same room during the first winter in Japan. Treatment of these patients was limited to hospital bed rest. Six of the 11 proven cases died prior to Aug. 23, 1945.

FUKUOKA FEVER: Dengue-type fevers are endemic in all Far Eastern countries. Navy personnel will remember Caute Fever of the Philippines. For want of a better name a local endemic fever encountered in this camp was termed "Fukuoka Fever". Very little satisfaction was ever obtained from the Japanese concerning this condition although the disease ranged from 60% to 70% of the entire camp. It may be described as an atypical aching, profound malaise, loss of appetite, and profound weakness. There is no rash and the length of the disease varied from 6 to 15 days. The prevalence of the disease coincided with the mosquito season. The temperature showed a tendency to run high the first 2 to 3 days of the illness returning to a low level for a period of 5 days, to rise again for 2 to 3 days prior to cessation. The severity of the symptoms varied with the temperature, the response to salicylates and codeine was only fair. The disease conferred no immunity and 1 recurrence was likely during the season. It was impossible to keep these patients from duty status except when temperature was demonstrable. Subjective symptoms had to be ignored. This condition was developing a high morbidity rate during August 1945.

MALARIA (BLACK WATER FEVER): Of the population in this camp, 88% had suffered from malaria in the tropics. Increased numbers of malaria cases were noted within 2 to 3 months following the arrival of the respective details from the tropics. It was noted that the Estivo-autumnal type died out after about 3 months in this climate. The tertian type was persistent but was rare after 2 years. Many patients received their first complete course of malarial therapy in this camp. No treatment was instituted without positive blood findings. Quinine-Atabrine routine was used in this manner; 7 days of 30 grains followed by 7 days of 20 grains with 3 tablets of Atabrine per day.

A severe form of malaria in which the urine is black with blood is termed "Black Water Fever". Three patients developed Black Water Fever within 3 months after their arrival from the tropics. During the period they were hospitalized with Black Water Fever, no parasites were demonstrable in the blood. The treatment consisted of rest and support with intravenous fluids and transfusions. Recovery was complete in each instance. Dr. Bras from Java had great knowledge of malaria and took personal care of the Black Water patients.

Although from time to time the morbidity rate for malaria was high, the only fatality from this disease was one patient with cerebral malaria.

SURGERY: Just prior to the departure of "A" detail from Cabanatuan, instruments were requested from the senior American medical officers. Having spent a year on Corregidor with a 500-man labor detail I was well aware of the need for surgical instruments, and the fact that the Japanese did not furnish instruments for use on prisoners. My requests were refused by the senior American officers; they were naive enough to believe that all essentials would be supplied once we reached Japan. The instrument kit that I had put together on Corregidor was minimal at best. My friendship with certain enlisted men working in medical supply at Cabanatuan made it possible to supplement my kit to the point that at least we would be able to handle emergency surgery while en route to Japan. The individual instruments were placed in the baggage of a number of prisoners; thus they escaped detection during the inspections we were subjected to. The instruments were reassembled after we settled in Camp 17.

Our only available anesthesia consisted of several vials of dental novocain tablets. Two of these tablets dissolved in a small amount of the patient's spinal fluid, and injected into the spine gave about 45 minutes of anesthesia, giving us time to perform most operations that had to be done.

Dutch torpedo technicians, who eventually came to Camp 17, were able to make surgical knives out of old British table silverware.....

As a general rule if a prisoner suffered an injury in the mine, some physical punishment was administered underground before he was brought to the surface. This punishment was

handled by the civilian Japanese overmen. If the patient suffered a broken bone in the mine, x-ray examination might be carried out at the mine hospital. We might get to see the films 2 to 3 weeks later, so we treated fractures without x-ray.

Japanese surgeons operated in cotton gloves, since rubber gloves were not available. We operated barehanded. The fingernails of the surgical team stayed black as a result of our using bichloride of mercury and 7% iodine in preparing our hands before surgery. Despite our primitive equipment and environment, our infection rate in surgical patients never exceeded 3%.

During our first 2 months in Japan several prisoners underwent surgery in the mine hospital, these operations were done either without anesthesia or with very weak local anesthesia and the patients were returned to us in rather severe shock.

Hand injuries which were repaired at the mine dispensary required thorough exploration as soon as the patient returned to camp, usually such wounds were filled with coal dust and severed tendons had to be repaired. Eventually after a number of these mismanaged wounds were demonstrated to the Camp Japanese Army doctor, he ordered that injured prisoners be returned immediately to the camp hospital.

Sharpened bicycle spokes were used as traction wires in the treatment of hip and leg fractures. Plaster of Paris was never available. We observed that simple fractures healed in approximately 2 months in the first year, by the second year in Japan the same type fractures required 4 to 5 months healing time, this we attributed to our worsening nutritional state.

PSYCHOLOGIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS: I am troubled that the V.A. can recognize a broad range of psychologic and social problems in our current society, and not be cognizant of the fact that some of the patterns they encounter in former P.O.W.'s are long term results in individuals who had no help available when the emotional or psychic traumas occurred

The language problem was ever present. Interpreters, either Japanese or English-speaking, tended to put themselves in a

command position so they created an atmosphere of distrust.

One prisoner of the A detail was executed for attempting to learn to read Japanese. He was utilized as the target for a bayonet drill by the guard detail. His body when examined showed over 75 stab wounds.

Early in the course of starvation hunger is overwhelming and the theft of food by such a person is not a criminal act. The Greek "Pavlokos" was starved to death in the guardhouse for stealing food. It took them 62 days to accomplish this execution; benefit of trial was denied.

For a minor infraction of rules a 19-year-old Australian soldier named David Runge, was forced to kneel in front of the guard house for 36 hours. During the period he developed gangrene of both feet; bilateral amputation was carried out 10 March 1945. He was carried on the backs of comrades to keep us reminded of the benevolence of the Japanese.

In camp the prisoners' life was subject to the individual whims of the guard on duty. The prisoner could be aroused from rest to undergo punishment or humiliation, whichever met the sadistic needs of the guard.

Underground the prisoner was faced with falling walls and ceilings, blast injuries and entombment. He lived each day with the possibility of sudden death or permanent disabling injury.....

MORTALITY: Our mortality is recorded, and I might comment that it is lower than Dr. Proff and I predicted it might be after our first two months in Camp 17. One hundred twenty-six men died in the 2-year period; 48 deaths attributed to pneumonia, 35 to deficiency diseases, 14 to colitis, 8 to injuries, 5 to executions, 6 to tuberculosis, and 10 to miscellaneous diseases.

MORTALITY RATE (in percentage points)

Total population 1859 (126) 6.7%

American 821 (49) 5.9%

Australian 562 (19) 3.3%

British 218 (17) 7.7%

Dutch 258 (41) 4.2%

("A" 500 (21) 4.2%)

What has just been presented to you is not documented elsewhere in the medical annals of this country, the proverbial land of plenty. Certainly no human would knowingly submit to a controlled laboratory study aimed at duplicating this experience. I believe, along with Dr. Jacobs, that we survivors still face disabling physical and emotional problems which can be traced to our experience. Medical computers and the young physicians of the V.A. are, I believe, completely confused when called upon to evaluate our problems. Medicine is not an exact science -- it has chosen to deem the profession an art and a science. Our hope must then lie with those physicians who evidence art in dealing with the whole patient. There is no summary to a nightmare that was permanently tattooed in our brains, but that is how it was for those who were "expended".....



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P01662.013

OMUTA, FUKUOKA PREFECTURE, JAPAN, 1945-09. A PARTY GIVEN BY BARON MITSUI FOR ALLIED OFFICERS HELD IN FUKUOKA CAMP 17, A PRISONER-OF-WAR (POW) CAMP AT OMUTA LEFT TO RIGHT: CAPTAIN RICHARD PARKER, AUSTRALIAN ARMY MEDICAL CORPS; PADRE C. HAMEL, ROYAL NETHERLANDS ARMY; LIEUTENANT (LT) THEODORE BRONK, UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL CORPS (USAMC); SCOTTY HOWELL, AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY FORCE; LT GERIT BRAS, ROYAL NETHERLANDS ARMY MEDICAL CORPS. BARON MITSUI HEADED THE MITSUI CORPORATION, OWNER OF THE COAL MINE IN WHICH MOST OF THE CAMP'S POWS HAD BEEN PUT TO WORK. (AWM)

GOODNESS AND COMPASSION vs. TED LEWIN

In *Prisoners of The Japanese* (1994), Gavin Daws tells of how in early 1945 some American survivors from the *Oryokku Maru* stumbled into Omuta 17, ninety-five skeletons and one fat man. The fat man was Ted Lewin the gambler, a 'rice trader' who bought and sold anything he could among the prisoners for his own profit and to his personal advantage, a classic example of American free enterprise capitalism at work, even in prisoner of war camps.

Daws: "The first time Lewin was named in a work detail he waived a thousand yen note (at the Japanese) He never worked at Fukuoka 17, any more than he had at (other camps).

Lewin had everything. Hewlett heard he had morphine. (Dr) Hewlett had nothing. At the hospital, men were forever being brought in from the mine in agony – hurt by a rockslide or cave-in, a slip with a jackhammer, a runaway ore car, or beaten by a gang boss with a piece of timber. Hewlett asked Lewin for morphine for a man screaming in agony, Lewin said he would have to pay. Hewlett told him, *Okay, keep your morphine, but for as long as the war lasts you won't get any medical treatment, your friends either, and you don't know how long the war is going to last.* Lewin gave the doctor five vials; it was one of the few times anyone beat Lewin."

The Typical Australian Philosophy. Frank Scott shared a hut at Omuta Camp 17 with a young Australian Artilleryman and boxer from Balmain called Tommy Uren (later to be the Hon. Thomas Uren AC, Minister of Urban and Regional Development in the Whitlam Government).

As the direct opposite to the Lewin philosophy, Tommy once said:

.... I've travelled a long way in politics but still stand by those basic fundamentals of life that it is the right of the strong to

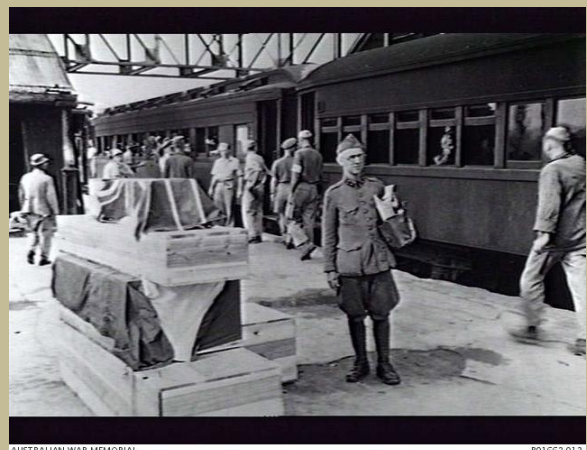
look after the weak and the young to look after the old and the fit to look after the sick That's what life is all about and is the simple philosophy that I drew out of my experience working under Weary Dunlop (on the Burma – Thailand Railway).

Tommy passed away on Australia Day, 2015.

Chaplain Carel Hamel - the practical Man of God at Camp 17.

Daws: *Hamel was a Protestant, but he was not a narrow tribesman of religion. Working among all the tribes of prisoners on the railway had turned him into a Christian who crossed hostile frontiers between creeds as if they were not there. He was the only chaplain at Fukuoka 17 until John E. Duffy came in. Duffy was a Catholic, one of the Oryokko Maru skeletons, and he was flat on his back; he could not go around to the dying faithful and hear their confessions. Hamel said to him: I will be your ears. He would listen to the dying Catholic, carry the message to Duffy, whisper it to him, carry the absolution back. Then Hamel got the idea of carrying the dying man to Duffy, on his own back: no load was too heavy for Hamel.*

Hamel was such a good man that he even had Ted Lewin's admiration; Lewin even volunteered to bring hot water bottles from the cookhouse to Hamel to distribute to sick men shivering with cold in the camp hospital.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P01662.012

OMUTA, FUKUOKA PREFECTURE, JAPAN, 1945-09. PADRE C. HAMEL, ROYAL NETHERLANDS ARMY, ON THE RAILWAY STATION AT OMTA, AFTER HIS LIBERATION FROM THE NEARBY ALLIED PRISONER-OF-WAR (POW) CAMP, FUKUOKA CAMP 17. BEHIND HIM IS THE RELIEF TRAIN THAT IS ABOUT TO TAKE HIM AND OTHER FORMER INMATES OF THE CAMP TO NAGASAKI, ON THE FIRST LEG OF THEIR JOURNEY HOME. BESIDE THE PADRE IS A STACK OF COFFINS CONTAINING THE BODIES OF POWS WHO HAD RECENTLY DIED (AWM)



NX25969 Sapper (Spr) William Jenkins Graham of Bega, NSW. Spr Graham served in the Middle East and Pacific campaigns with the 2/6 Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers. He died of illness in captivity in Japan on 21 January 1945, aged 30. (AWM)

14. SALVATION: RELEASE AND RETURN TO AUSTRALIA

Returning to L/CPL Alan Herd's narrative:

A few days later (after the dropping of the Atomic Bomb) no shifts went to the mines ... we realized the War was over.

The Japanese disappeared from the Camp after about a week and we were found by American War Correspondents, who parachuted into the camp and contacted MacArthur's Headquarters; bombers the dropped food into the camp.

After about four weeks the Australians were moved by train. *"We came to the site of the city of Nagasaki ... the atom bomb meant nothing to us, but if the human race could all see what we saw ... no life, be it human, bird, insect, no nothing, just desolation and destruction for hour after hour as the train stopped and started ... there would be no more war."*

We were put aboard a hospital ship, the USS Haven (a name so appropriate), in the harbour. The Americans cheered us and gave us coffee and donuts. However they did not touch us or shake our hands, for we were not human to look at. We were more like animals, with lice and coal dust ground into our shaven scalps and eyes, with our starved bodies in rags"

As for Sapper Frank Scott, he told his wife Mavis some years later that it was in Camp 17 that he almost gave up: he felt that he was just a few weeks away from death. It was the dropping of the atom bomb that saved him and his fellow prisoners.



OMUTA, FUKUOKA PREFECTURE, JAPAN, 1945-09. ALLIED PRISONERS-OF-WAR (POWS) AT FUKUOKA CAMP 17 AT OMTA, LINING UP TO COLLECT THEIR TICKETS HOME, AFTER BEING LIBERATED BY AN AMERICAN RECOVERY TEAM (AWM)



FUKUOKA PREFECTURE, JAPAN, 1945-09. SICK AND INJURED ALLIED PRISONERS-OF-WAR (POWS), RECENTLY LIBERATED FROM FUKUOKA CAMP 17 AT OMTA, IN A HOSPITAL TRAIN EN ROUTE TO NAGASAKI, ON THE FIRST LEG OF THEIR JOURNEY HOME. (AWM)



US Hospital Ship Haven that took on board released Prisoners of War in Nagasaki Harbour, September 1945



HMS Speaker in Nagasaki Harbour to collect POWs and return them home. Source: northchinamarines.com

HEMCOMING TO SYDNEY HARBOUR.

On the morning of 15th October, HMS Speaker (**Ship number 7**) finally moved through Sydney Heads and up the harbour, under Sydney Harbour Bridge, to berth at No14, Pyrmont Docks- ... they had made it! ...the city turned on its best weather ... the harbour was crowded with ships, ferries, boats and warships of all shapes and sizes, and many carried a banner, a white sheet or even a painted sign on the side, bearing the name of a particular POW; was he onboard, did anybody know?

It took a couple of hours to move through the vessels, and, once ashore, even more hours to pass through the thousands of people who had come to wish them well and find a son or husband or father. The disembarking men were often stopped and asked if they knew of this fellow or that, women in particular searching for a face that they had not seen in many years among the emaciated prisoners of Japan. There were many tears.

Some of the men ... found it hard to part from mates who had nearly died as they

nearly died lying next to a jungle latrine, or shared with them their rice rations when they too were starving, or carried them back from a beating. How could families at home know or understand any of this? There were stories of ex-POWs renting rooms in Sydney or Melbourne inner-city pubs where they stayed in upstairs rooms just so they could all stay together ... close to men who understood. Many men who returned were not yet well, most were very sick ... they carried bacteria and parasites such as tapeworm, roundworm and hookworm ... recurrent diseases such as amoebic dysentery and malaria, and most had heavy residual infections ... their eyes, their teeth, their bones, their hearts, their capacity to have children, were often ruined .. and their terrible body smell lingered for months. (Pattie Wright)

POST WAR report from The Sydney Morning Herald 3 Oct 1945

Returning P.O.W.s To Go To Ingleburn; 7,000 Due

A.I.F. prisoners of war returning to Sydney from now on will be taken to Ingleburn camp for examination and other formalities instead of to the 113th Australian General Hospital at Yaralla, Concord. Released men will be kept at Ingleburn only for 48 hours after their arrival.

The expected arrival of about 7,000 prisoners of war by ship alone in the next ten days is the reason for the change, an Army spokesman said yesterday. Neither Yaralla nor any other establishment near to Sydney could handle that number of men.

The first men to go to Ingleburn will be 100 officers and 13 other ranks due on the escort carrier Vindex this afternoon. Vindex is also bringing a number of civilian ex-prisoners. No matter where ships berth, returning men will drive through the city before going out to Ingleburn by road.

Arrivals scheduled for the next few days are:

To-day: Vindex, 100 officers and 13 other ranks, from Japanese camps. Friday. Dominion Monarch, 145 R.A.A.F. men from Europe. 71 A.I.F. men from the Middle East.

Saturday, Arawa, 731 all ranks, from Singapore.
 Sunday, Duntroon, 747, from Singapore. October
 9, Esperance' Bay, 913, from Singapore.

October 16: Largs Bay, 635, from Singapore.

October 11: Highland Chief, 761. from Singapore.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL 117867

AT SEA. 1945-10-12. PERSONNEL OF 2/6 FIELD COY, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS, EX-POW'S OF THE JAPANESE, ON THE DECK OF THE BRITISH TROOPSHIP, MV HIGHLAND BRIGADE, DURING THEIR JOURNEY HOME TO AUSTRALIA. (AWM)

Others due within the period are H.M.S Formidable and H MS. Speaker, bringing a total of 1,708 The Wanganella is due about October 11, with 560 hospital cases, and about 10 other prisoners of war.

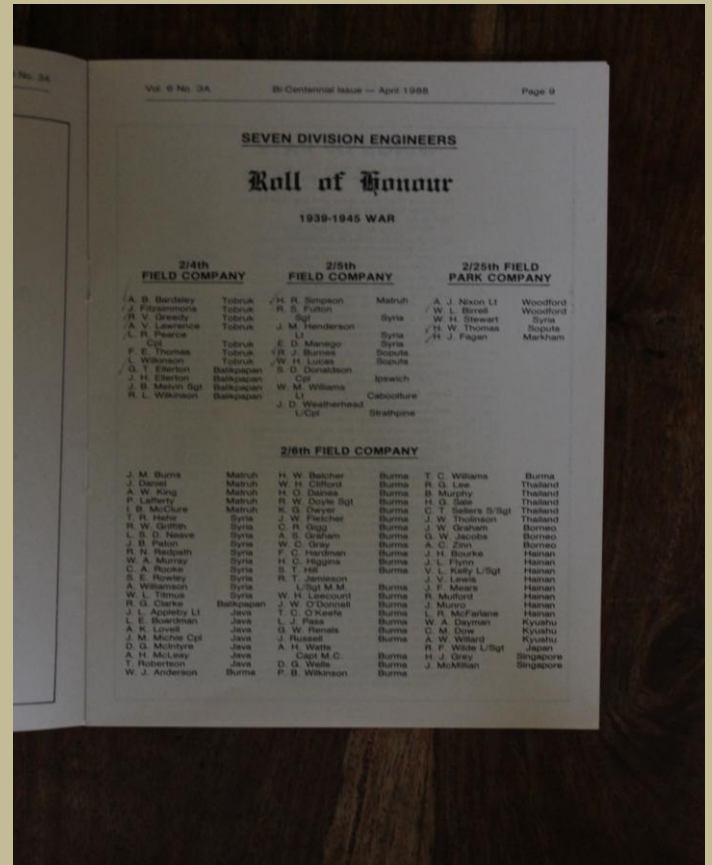
During their stay at Ingleburn the men will have beds and mattresses, and there will be tablecloths for the mess tables and full sets of table china Different menus will be available each day, and the men will also be given morning and afternoon teas and supper.

An entertainment programme has been arranged, including motion pictures not yet shown in city theatres

Next-of-kin will be free to visit the camp daily and their needs will be looked after by the Red Cross. Twelve Voluntary Aids are already in residence and the Red Cross has been given four Church Army huts and three big marquees.

Additional trains will run to Liverpool, from which point special buses will go to the camp.

Ingleburn will handle men from all States. Those from other States will be sent home as soon as transport is available



AUSTRALIAN EX PRISONERS OF WAR WHO HAVE HAD LIMBS AMPUTATED ARRIVED AT KALANG AIRPORT, SINGAPORE. SOME OF THE 'LEGGIES' ON ARRIVAL AT KALANG CIVIL AIRPORT FROM BANGKOK. MANY MEN ARE STILL CARRYING 'SWEAT RAGS' OUT OF FORCE OF HABIT. THIRD FROM THE RIGHT IS SAPPER G I GILBERT, 2/6TH FIELD COMPANY.

15. MEETING MAVIS, MARRYING AND STARTING A FAMILY.

At some time during his overseas service Frank corresponded with a single woman from Sydney who was a friend of Mavis' family and who apparently had expectations of 'taking up' with Frank on his return home. While visiting the woman's family at Bexley, Frank met Mavis and the rest, as they say, is history. They were married within three months.


Frank had elected to 'serve on' in the post-war Army and was posted (ironically) to the Australian POW camp at Cowra, where he guarded Italian prisoners of war. The idea was that he would be part of their escort back to Italy and from there would travel to England to see his family.

He was the worst possible person to be made a prison guard as he immediately identified with the Italians, their love of life and their drinking. No doubt the drinking led to a further Army charge of 'conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline' (though this is shown as struck through in his pay book) and helped his decision to leave the Army and get married almost immediately.

He had served 2197 days (more than six years) of Continuous Full Time War Service, including 1823 days (five years) overseas on Active Service.



Mavis and Frank at 'Ormiston' Nemingha 1946

	
Certificate No 445969	
Australian Military Forces Certificate of Discharge	
This is to Certify that D2561 Sapper Lewis Frank SCOTT 2/6 Australian Field Company	
Served on Continuous Full Time War Service in the Australian Imperial Force from 13 Jun 1940 to 18 Jun 1946	
for a Total Effective Period ¹ of <u>Two thousand one hundred and ninety-seven</u> Days which included Active Service	
In Australia for <u>246</u> days Outside Australia for <u>1851</u> days Decorations and Awards during that Service	
--NIL--	
War Badge	R.A.A.F. NO. A.252683
This Soldier has been discharged from the <u>A.I.F.</u> taking effect on and from the <u>Eighteenth</u> day of <u>June</u> 19 <u>46</u>	
Place	<u>Sydney</u> <u>Quartermaster</u> for Lt. Col.
Date	<u>18 Jun 46</u> <u>Quartermaster</u> Officer in Charge Command Ech. & Rec.
Description of the Soldier on Discharge	
Height	<u>5 ft 8 1/2</u> ins. Eyes <u>Hazel</u> Complexion <u>Fair</u> Hair <u>Brown</u>
Marks or Scars	<u>NIL</u>
Trade Group in which employed during Army Service	<u>NIL</u>
Specimen Signature of Soldier	<u>Lewis Frank Scott</u>

¹ "EFFECTIVE PERIOD" MEANS THE PERIOD OF SERVICE, LESS ANY CONSECUTIVE 21 DAYS OR MORE FOR WHICH THE SOLDIER WAS NOT ENTERED TO PAY
² "AUSTRALIA" MEANS THE MAINLAND OF AUSTRALIA AND TASMANIA. ³ DOES NOT INCLUDE WAR MEDALS.

16. AT EASE - LIFE IN WEST TAMWORTH

Early post-war years at Rydalmere and at Leppington south west Sydney proved challenging, with Frank holding a number of positions in the poultry industry. In 1955 the young family moved to Tamworth where Frank found varied employment, lastly as a process worker at the local 'starch factory'.



Nana Johnston with the Scott, Hazell and Woolner families at Nemingha about 1956

As Frank's physical and mental health deteriorated there were occasional periods where he would go 'out on the grog' for days at local hotels, sometimes to be returned home, much to the embarrassment of his wife and family, and by his brother-in-law police sergeant Stan Johnston and a detective sergeant, the father of my then girlfriend.

Situations of this nature were, I am sure, commonplace with the families of former prisoners of the Japanese, and often lead to thorny relationships, particularly in their children's teenage years.

Fortunately one of Frank's ex-POW mates (Don Scadden I think) urged him to apply for the TPI pension, which after some difficulties he was granted in 1963. The sad thing was that, despite having a battered and twisted body (especially his spine) and serious mental scars, Frank was embarrassed at having to accept what he saw as a 'government handout'.

With the regular income of the TPI payment and a war service home loan, Frank and Mavis were able to settle down to an easier life and provide a reasonable

standard of living and education for their family. For that we were all very thankful.

I believe that towards the end of his life Frank reached a state of relative contentment and after nearly 40 years was able to let go of many of the demons of his imprisonment and brutal treatment. He was particularly proud of and loving towards his grandchildren Hamish, Simon, Cameron, Alister, Caly, Amanda, Brendan, Natalie, Nathan and Andrew.

The names Lewis and Lewi continue to appear entwined in names of his male descendants.

17. TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE MIND OF THE FORMER PRISONER OF WAR.

There were times for many ex-POWs when life within the family became quite unbearable and full of anxiety. Despite bearing a load of physical and mental injuries, they were told by the Army and the Australian Government to 'just forget about it' and 'get on with life'.

Eric Lomax's *The Railway Man* (2014) has been helpful to me in understanding how former POWs really felt on return home, and their coping mechanisms.

Sudden rages contrasted with lengthy periods of docility and withdrawal, where not talking much became a fixed habit, a way of shielding themselves from the memory of those terrible years.

Their psychological problem was never acknowledged for decades, and anyway few ex-POW would ever talk about their experiences with anybody other than those who had been there: No-one much knew what had been done to them. If someone had listened to their testimony when they came home it would have given the POW the recognition that their experience deserved.

Lomax: *Many people could not accept the reality of our injuries after the war because*

they had not been there and they could not make the leap of imagination out of their comfortable lives.

As I have said, life for many of the children of former POWs was at times quite difficult, particularly in their teen-aged years.

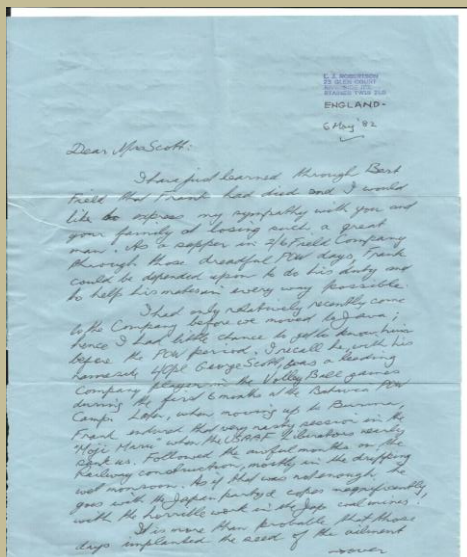
Richard Flanagan coined the phrase 'Children of the Railway', and it has taken me half a century to realise this and that I am only one of them.

18. FRANK'S PASSING and LEGACY

Frank suffered a stroke while celebrating St. Patrick's Day 1982 with a neighbour from Gipps Street, Johnny Paull, and passed away two days later on 19th March 1982.



A short time later Mavis received the following airmail letter from Robbie at Staines just outside London.

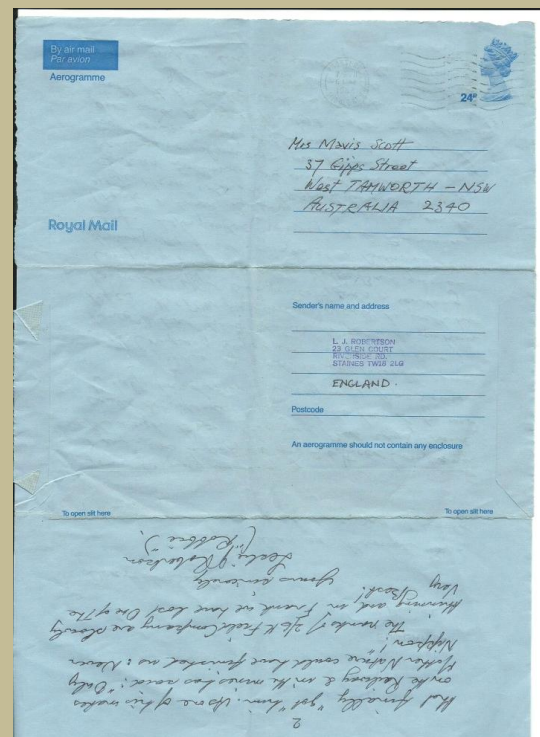


Transcription:

Date: 6th May 1982 Dear Mrs Scott : I have just learned through Bert Field that Frank had died and I would like to express my sympathy with you and your family at losing such a great man. As a sapper in the 2/6 Field Company through those dreadful POW days, Frank could be depended upon to do his duty and help his mates in every way possible.

I had only recently come to the Company before we moved to Java; hence I had little chance to get to know him before the POW period. I recall that he, with his namesake L/Cpl George Scott, was a leading player in the Volley Ball games during the first 6 months at the Batavia POW Camp. Later, when moving up to Burma, Frank endured a very nasty session in the 'Moji Maru' when the USAAF Liberators nearly sank us. Followed the awful months on the Railway construction, mostly in the dripping wet monsoon. As if it was not enough he goes with the Japan party and copes magnificently with the horrible work in the Jap coal mines.

It is more than probable that those days implanted the seed of the ailment (over)



Transcription continued:

that finally "got" him. As one of his mates on the Railway and in the mines has said "Only Mother Nature could have finished us: never Nippon!" The ranks of the 2/6th Field Company are slowly thinning and in Frank we have lost One of The Very Best. Yours sincerely, Leslie J Robertson ("Robbie")

Frank was one of the generation of Australian WW2 Service Men and Women who through sacrifice and service ensured that fascism and militarism were defeated in both Europe and Asia, thus preserving

the freedom that Australians continue to enjoy today.

He was one of a generation who, as Robbie said, could be depended upon to do their duty and help their mates in every way possible, even unto death.

That sense of duty and support for their fellow Australians is a Legacy that I hope will endure.

On a more personal level, Frank and Mavis' descendants all display a love of life and a love of travel and adventure, and I am sure that this will continue in coming generations, as will the sense of fairness in all things, and the value of family life.

DONEGAL, IRELAND or THE PRICE THAT

YOU PAID (Frank's Song)

Words© Peter Russell Scott, Burleigh Heads, Queensland,
Australia 1995,

Tune and format approximately after that of *Kilkelly Ireland* ©
Peter Jones USA 1988

Donegal, Ireland, in Nineteen and Twenty,
Partition had brought to an end
A happy childhood with no thought of sadness,
as you fished on the banks of the Finn.
Your family is forced to find work in England,
in the grey fields of Aylesbury Town
and life it is tough near the start of Depression,
to emigrate offers a plan.

Fremantle, Australia, Nineteen twenty seven,
and you've only nineteen
You've a job in the east but you head up on
northward to try the Australian bush scene.
and you find work in Broome and the
Murchison Goldfields, 'round campfires, by
billabongs green
Then on through the Kimberley, on up to
Darwin, in an old truck piled high with
benzine.

Sydney, Australia, in Nineteen and Forty,
you've volunteered for khaki
The Army needs miners to train them as
Diggers, to farewell from Circular Quay.
and a minefield goes up, in the sands of
Matruh, four Sappers lie dead as can be
and you think of old Ireland and the bush of
Australia, where you and your cobbers roamed
free.

Back on a troopship, laying off Java, to stem
the threat of Japan
Sent back to Australia to save the East Indies,
but thrown into Japanese hands.
and thousands are cast into prison in Changi,
with little idea what's to come,
And the Japs keep on planning their overland
railway, the Diggers loom large in their sums.

**18B. Major Leslie Joseph 'Robbie'
Robertson**
A short biography by
Michael Hitchens, God-son of Robbie



"There are no circumstances, however unfortunate, from which clever people don't extract some advantage."

Christmas greeting by Lts Flynn and Purves for 2/6 Field Company, RAE, Roberts Hospital, Changi, Singapore, 1942.

Leslie Joseph 'Robbie' Robertson was born on the 19th January 1904 and grew up in Melbourne, Victoria.

I don't know anything about his schooling but do know that he and his cousin Colin, used to sneak into the council yard at the back of the Town Hall and play on the machines {steam rollers} kept there, while his summers were spent at Portsea, a seaside place on Port Phillip Bay.

At some point when he was about thirteen, he enlisted as a cadet in the Royal Australian Navy but was ejected after a day or so once they discovered his true age {I think his mother tipped the Navy off}. He later claimed that during his life he had served in all three services, for in 1925, aged 21, he enlisted in the RAAF {Reserve?}. He completed his pilot training in 1926 with No1 Squadron at Point Cook near Melbourne {now home to an airbase and the RAAF Museum} flying a variety of aircraft mostly Avro 504s and DH 9s. His last operational flight was on his return from the UK in a Westland Wapiti.

He left the RAAF in order to study engineering in London and it is during this time that he first joined Staines Sailing Club situated on the River Thames. Once his studies were completed, he returned to Australia, working as a lighting engineer, I believe in the theatre in Sydney, for it was his knowledge of lighting effects and the illusions that light can create, that singled him out as an ideal camouflage specialist later on. At some point during this time he married his first wife, but I have no information about her, not even her name.

In about 1938 he joined the Army Militia {I'm not certain if this was at the insistence of one of his theatre colleagues who had already joined up and saw Robbie's skills as useful for camouflage. I know he once mentioned a Captain Peter Proud to me but this could have been later} training part time until the outbreak of war in 1939, when he volunteered for service overseas. There is no information on this period but in May 1940 he was one of the volunteers who formed 2/6 Field Company at Ingleburn. Their C/O, Major John Calder and CSM, George Mullins, were the only professional soldiers.

The 2/6 arrived at Benghazi in 1941 and was then moved to Syria, to support fighting against the Vichy French and it was here that they came under fire for the first time. At some point Robbie was promoted to Captain and became 2 i/c of 2/6 {this could actually have been 2/4 Company as I can't find reference to 2/6 being at Tobruk, unless it was a detachment or Robbie was seconded to 2/4} during the siege of Tobruk. Here 2/6s {?} role was mostly the camouflage of important installations such as water treatment plants, from German air attack, although Robbie did tell me that on one occasion they were tasked with camouflaging one of "His Majesty's River Gunboats" {Ladybird or Gnat} to look like a cliff, while it was moored in a wadi for repairs. He also told of another occasion where five gallons of Worcester sauce was mixed with sand to produce crude camouflage paint. Appropriately, 2/6s {?} unofficial mascot was a chameleon, which by all accounts would change colour quite happily to blend in with the red and blue covered Army manuals that lay on a desk.

In the new year of 1942 the company were encamped in snow at Miriata near Tripoli, embarking for Java on the 1st February at Port Tewfik on the troopship 'Orcades'. On the 22nd Feb, having arrived in Java, Robbie was promoted to Major and took command of 2/6. The situation on the island rapidly disintegrated under the Japanese invasion and the bulk of 2/6 were captured. They spent these months in a camp on the island adjusting to life as POWs under the Japanese. In one incident Robbie was struck across the face by the flat of a Japanese officer's sword for refusing to bow to a Japanese Colonel.

On the 9th January 1943, 2/6 embarked on the Moji Maru, sailing at sunset on the 12th in company with the Nitimei Maru and escorts. Three days later at 15:30 hours, six, long range, B 24, Liberator bombers of the 9th

Bombardment Squadron USAAF, attacked the ships, sinking the Nitimei Maru. It was in rescuing the survivors that Robbie was re-aquainted with Pieter Feij, 2/6's Dutch liaison officer, who had been on the other vessel. Totally naked apart from a shirt, he told Robbie that he remembered some advice he had been given once, about ensuring that you had a shirt with you if you were going to be shipwrecked! The survivors arrived at Moulmein, Burma, at 15:00 on the 17th January before moving up-country on the 25th.

For the next two and a half years 2/6 along with other allied POWs, Dutch and American {notably USN survivors from the sinking of the USS Houston in the Battle of the Java Sea} built the railway from Burma into Thailand, occupying various camps along the way. Robbie was senior allied commander in at least one camp. He had an 'Orderly Room' made of various found pieces which could be transported like a suitcase and when stationary converted into a desk. Company papers were secreted in a bamboo water carrier. As you are aware, some members of 2/6 found themselves in other parts of the Nippon Empire, so full company records could not be kept and the experiences of these sappers only came to light after the war.

On the 17th August 1945, 2/6 had been brought by the Japanese to Bangkok, whereupon they notified Robbie as the senior allied officer that Japan had surrendered. He then set about billeting the men until allied troops could reach them. When they were finally liberated, the survivors underwent periods of hospitalisation before being flown to Singapore in September. The remnants of 2/6 then embarked on the 'Highland Brigade' and sailed for Australia, arriving in Freemantle on the 15th October. There then followed stops at Adelaide and Melbourne, before finally tying up at Sydney on the 24th October, where the 'Orderly Room' was closed for the last time.

Robbie's return home, rather than being a joyous occasion, I would guess, must have been one of great sadness and despair for him, for in his absence his wife had remarried. The ruling at the time {and this may still apply} was that if a combatant was posted as Missing In Action, because no communication had been received from either the enemy or a third party such as the Red Cross for two years, then it was deemed by the authorities that they were dead. And so it was in Robbie's case. The Japanese did not follow the Geneva Convention and any mail/telegram sent by a prisoner home or by a loved one to a prisoner, was either

vindictively destroyed or lost through allied action, so failed to reach the intended recipients.

A civil divorce followed but as a devotee Catholic, {Robbie carried a St Christopher with him throughout his Army career and celebrated Mass when he could. In many ways it was his faith along with his sense of duty to his men that got him through his POW experience} Robbie tried to have the marriage annulled by the Catholic Church, even writing to the Pope in Rome, citing the extenuating circumstances, but to no avail. From then on he refused to take the sacrament at communion {?}.

His career path directly after the war is not known other than at some point he joined the General Electric Company {GEC} as a lighting engineer based in Singapore. {Always an avid sailor, it was at this time Robbie joined the Singapore Yacht Club}. It was while on a business trip to GEC's London HQ that he met Betty, who along with my mother, Wendy, worked as a secretary there. Romance blossomed and they were married in Singapore in 1957 but chose to settle in the UK after Betty secured a job as the PA to the Director of KLM's UK operations based at Heathrow Airport, literally a few miles from Staines, where Robbie promptly re-joined the Sailing Club. A little later they moved into a second floor flat which overlooked the river a few hundred yards upstream from the club house. They remained there for the rest of their lives.

Despite living across the other side of the world, Robbie maintained his links with old comrades through the Seventh Division Association and through correspondence with friends and acquaintances across the world. I remember one occasion at their flat, talking to Robbie about Laurens Van Der Post {?}, the South African author of 'Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence', a story based on his FEPOW experiences, who at the time was Prince Charles's unofficial guru. "Oh yes", says Robbie, "I had a letter from him just last week!"

It was in the late sixties/early seventies, that he was asked/cajoled to write the history of 2/6 Field Company's experiences as POWs. During his research which took him to the USA and back to Thailand, he discovered that one of their guards a Captain Wakamatsu had been tried and executed for war crimes by the allied victors. Robbie had always thought Wakamatsu to have been {unlike many other Japanese and Korean guards} an honourable and professional soldier who had not deserved this fate. He took it on himself to locate Captain

Wakamatsu's surviving family and wrote to them expressing his remorse at what he saw as an unjust verdict {the letters and papers regarding this will be sent to the 7th Assoc}. This coupled with the research and writing of the book took its toll and he became ill with depression. The book, 'The Gap, Combatants and Captives 1942 – 45', only had a limited edition print run of about five copies, one of which is with the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. The original manuscript will be sent to the 7th Division Assoc.

By this time he and Betty were enjoying retirement and had an active social calendar, chief amongst which were their Sunday curry parties, where friends from far and wide gathered to enjoy one of Betty's Malay curries and discuss old times. It was at one of these events that I met Pieter Fiej. Every Boxing Day, Betty and Robbie would come to our home or we to theirs, a tradition which continued when our family moved from London to Norfolk in 1990.

Sadly illness and old age crept up on him and Robbie died on 17th December 2002. His funeral, complete with a Purple Diamond wreath on the coffin, took place in early January the following year and he is buried in a cemetery near to Staines. Betty continued to live in the flat and continued to join us for Christmas and summer. Following a series of mini-strokes leading to dementia, she died in August 2013.

18C. LT Michael John Flynn.



LT Michael Flynn Photo: Flynn family

The 24 year old Civil Engineer from Sydney was one of the 2/6th originals at Ingleburn, and went to the Middle East and North Africa. He was captured by the Japanese on Java, and went on through Changi Prison to the Burma – Thailand Railway; In early 1945 he was selected to take a party of 2/6th prisoners by ship to Moji, Japan. He was sent to Fukuoka Camp 22, while the majority of his men, including Sapper Frank Scott, were sent to Camp 17 at Omuta, just across the bay from Nagasaki.

In the early days, Mick Flynn (as he was known to Robbie and the men), like any other newly minted junior officer, faced some challenges maintaining discipline with his worldly and spirited Sappers, but with combat experience and through the forge of captivity, his real leadership qualities emerged.

While prisoner in Japan he took many punishments on behalf of his men at Camp 22, at one stage being forced to kneel in the snow for 12 hours and, in the process, earned the respect of, not only his men, but also a number of his Japanese jailors - the type who had shown some humane treatment to the prisoners, not the thugs.

Michael Flynn's exceptional humanity was shown after the end of the war when he arranged for food parcels to be sent to eight of his former jailors, through his brother LCPL Jim Flynn who was in Japan with BCOF.

One of the guards, M. Kajiyama (who had been an English Teacher prior to the war), wrote a remarkable letter, in impeccable English, in response to Flynn's kindness. This letter, a copy of which is now in the RAE

Museum at Holsworthy.

After the war, Michael Flynn went back to Sydney University to study Medicine and, after graduation as a doctor, pursued his interest in public health, becoming the Chief Medical Officer of the Sydney Water Board.

In 1978, Dr Michael John Flynn was invested a Commander of the Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John by the NSW Governor Sir Roden Cutler VC. Sir Roden was an old 7th Division comrade, an officer in Artillery, and they would have been in the same locality at Mersa Matruh and in Syria in 1941.

18D. THREE PAGODAS PASS

Personal note. I have been fortunate to be able to travel to the Three Pagodas and experience for myself the landscape described so evocatively by Robbie. So, with the encouragement of my wife Julianne, and joined by my brother Rob and his wife Jill, we set out for the border hill-tribe region of Thailand in 2006 – Kanchanaburi, Nam Tok railway station, Songklaburi and the Three Pagodas, as well as Hell Fire Pass and the Hammer and Tap Cutting.

Rob and I hired a *songthaew* and driver in Songkla(buri) and drove up to the Three Pagodas market area on the Thai side of the border, where we then hired a Burmese/Thai/English speaking guide, and secured a day pass to cross into Payathonsu on the Burmese side; This is not an international border crossing.

The plan was to try to drive 15km north to Anganan, the site of the 100 Kilo Camp where so many PoWs had died, including Frank's mate DX 562 Sapper Jimmy Russell.



The Three Pagodas, with Robbie's 'Great Craggy Mountain' in the background Photo: Peter Scott



Rob and Peter Scott at the Burmese-Thai border checkpoint at the Three Pagodas Pass 2006. The old Railway bed and rails are immediately to the right of the sign



A remnant of the Railway running through Payathonsu/Three Pagodas villages 2006

We were, however, only able to travel a few kilometres from the border crossing when we reached a checkpoint manned by the Myanmar Army, who prevented from going further. The soldiers were mean-looking individuals who looked like they meant business; our guide warned us not to take photographs or get out of the vehicle while he tried to get us through to Anganan. Still, we got a closer look at Robbie's 'Great Craggy Mountain'.

As an alternative activity, our guide took us to the Buddhist Temple of 100 Logs in Payathonsu, where he secured for us an audience with the local Buddhist Abbot, who looks after the affairs of the stateless Karen and Mon hill-tribe people who live in the region. When asked about Anganan, the Abbot warned that it was a 'bad place' and it was unwise for foreigners to travel there. People can disappear off the streets, he said.



THE GHOST PHOTOGRAPH. The Buddhist Temple of 100 Logs in Payathonsu, Myanmar (Burma) with the mysterious ghostly images on the polished teak logs – interpreted by my normally sceptical self as the ‘wandering souls’ of the *Romusha* (Asian forced labourers) who died while building the Railway which ran past the front of the temple. These mysterious images, definitely not painted onto the logs, appeared on a number of photos I took in the temple. Peter Scott

Quote:

I am deeply conscious of the Buddhist belief that all men are equal in the face of suffering and death. EE Dunlop



18E. USS CAPE GLOUCESTER

After a period covering minesweeping along the Japanese coasts, and just two weeks after the Japanese formally surrendered on board the U.S.S. *Missouri* in early September 1945, the *USS Cape Gloucester* sailed into Nagasaki, stripped of her planes, to serve as an early participant in the celebrated “Magic Carpet” fleet that returned thousands of ragged and half-starved prisoners of war from Australia, New Zealand, Britain and Holland, together with a handful of Americans, to their homes.

Frank Scott was at one time on the *Cape Gloucester* and it may have been on this ship that a US Marine presented him with a Marine’s fighting knife as a souvenir. I still have his cardboard ‘*Gloucester*’ boarding tag and the knife. PRS

18F. THE DEATH RAILWAY – A DUTCH VIEWPOINT

The most cost-effective genocide
Japanese Forced Labour Camps at the
Burma Railway

QUOTE From the Geneva Convention 1929, co-undersigned by HRH The Emperor of Japan

CHAPTER 2. Organization of the Labor.
Labor furnished by prisoners of war shall have no direct relation with war operations.

ARTICLE 29.
No prisoner of war may be employed at labors for which he is physically unfit.

ARTICLE 30.
The length of the day’s work of prisoners of war, including therein the trip going and returning, shall not be excessive....

Lilian Sluyter (Holland) based this short story on the manuscript of **Adrian Kannegieter** (b.1920), former Royal Dutch Navy junior seaman, who by sheer chance arrived in the former Dutch East Indies, because their vessel was unable to sail back to her home port in the Netherlands, due to the German occupation (1940-1945). Her excellent account from the Dutch viewpoint is available at www.mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/death_rr/dutch_view_death_railway.html

18G. AUSTRALIAN UNIONS EXPOSED AS WAR SABOTEURS

Miranda Devine

Sunday, November, 03, 2013

AS the Abbott government begins to take on union power and corruption, a timely new book reveals the union movement's role in one of the most shameful periods of Australian history.

What the wharfies did to Australian troops - and their nation's war effort - between 1939 and 1945 is nothing short of an abomination.

Perth lawyer Hal Colebatch has done the nation a service with his groundbreaking book, [Australia's Secret War](#), telling the untold story of union bastardry during World War 2.

Using diary entries, letters and interviews with key witnesses, he has pieced together with forensic precision the tale of how Australia's unions sabotaged the war effort, how wharfies vandalised, harassed, and robbed Australian troop ships, and probably cost lives.

One of the most obscene acts occurred in October, 1945, at the end of the war, after Australian soldiers were released from Japanese prison camps. They were half dead, starving and desperate for home. But when the British aircraft-carrier HMS Speaker brought them into Sydney Harbour, the wharfies went on strike. For 36 hours, the soldiers were forced to remain on-board, tantalisingly close to home. This final act of cruelty from their countrymen was their thanks for all the sacrifice.

18H. 70th Anniversary of the sinking of the Rakuyō Maru

Thursday 11 September 2014 by Lachlan Grant.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL P02651.005

Former Australian prisoners of war are rescued by the crew of USN submarine USS Pampanito (SS-383). These men survived the sinking of two Japanese troop transports, the Kachidoki Maru and the Rakuyo Maru by Pampanito and USS Sealion II (SS-315) on 12 September 1944 respectively. ([AWM](#))

Seventy years ago this week, on 12 September 1944, two Japanese ships transporting Australian and British prisoners of war from Singapore to Japan were sunk, resulting in the loss of 1,559 Australian and British lives.

The Japanese transported prisoners of war great distances across their empire. The worst and most dangerous period in a prisoner's life was travelling in captivity. Over-crowding, sickness, disease and the dangers posed by Allied submarines caused much stress and anxiety. Conditions on board these ships were severe: over a 1,000 prisoners might be crammed into spaces suitable for a few hundred and given little food, fresh water, or adequate sanitation facilities. Some journeys lasted just a few days, but the longest was a voyage from Singapore to Japan which took 70 days (this was the *Rashin Maru*, known to prisoners as the "Byoke Maru", or sick ship). The prisoners of war called these transports "hellships".

The *Rakuyō Maru* (with 1,318 Australian and British prisoners of war aboard) and *Kachidoki Maru* (900 British prisoners of war) were part of a convoy carrying mostly raw materials that left Singapore for Japan on 6 September 1944. The prisoners were all survivors of the Burma-Thailand Railway who had only recently returned to Singapore.

On the morning of 12 September 1944 the convoy was attacked by American submarines in the South China Sea. *Rakuyō Maru* was sunk by USS *Sealion II* and *Kachidoki Maru* by USS *Pampanito*. Prisoners able to evacuate the ships spent the following days in life rafts or clinging to wreckage in open water. About 150 Australian and British survivors were rescued by American submarines. A further 500 were picked up by Japanese destroyers and continued the journey to Japan. Those not rescued perished at sea. A total of 1,559 Australian and British prisoners of war were killed in the incident, all missing at sea (1,159 from *Rakuyō Maru*, 400 from *Kachidoki Maru*). The total number of Australians killed was 543 (503 AIF, 33 RAN, 7 RAAF).

Two survivors of the sinking of two Japanese prisoner of war transports, are rescued from the sea by crew members probably of the USN submarine USS *Sealion II* (SS-315). Covered in oil and clinging to a makeshift raft, they drifted in the sea for several days after the sinking of the *Kachidoki Maru* and the *Rakuyo Maru* on 12 September 1944 by the US Navy submarines USS *Pampanito* (SS-383) and the USS *Sealion II* (SS-315) respectively. These two men joined the other Australian and British survivors rescued by USN submarines who were all eventually landed at Saipan in late September 1944 and then repatriated to Australia. (AWM)

Among the dead was the senior Australian commander, Brigadier Arthur Varley. The survivors rescued by the American submarines were repatriated to Australia and provided

some of the earliest eyewitness accounts of the Burma-Thailand Railway.

The sinking of the *Rakuyō Maru* was just one of several incidents during the Second World War in which Japanese ships transporting Australian prisoners of war were sunk by Allied submarines. Others included the *Montevideo Maru* (1 July 1942), the *Tamahoko Maru* (24 June 1944), the *Harugiku Maru* (26 June 1944, also known as the *Van Waerwijck*). Over 2,000 Australian prisoners of war died in these various incidents.



Former Australian prisoners of war are rescued by the crew of USN submarine USS *Pampanito* (SS-383). These men survived the sinking of two Japanese troop transports, the *Kachidoki Maru* and the *Rakuyo Maru* by *Pampanito* and USS *Sealion II* (SS-315) on 12 September 1944 respectively. (AWM)

In all, some 22,000 Allied prisoners of the Japanese died in “hellship” disasters, 19,000 of them as a result of “friendly fire” incidents. In fact, more Allied prisoners of war were lost on the hellships than died on the Burma-Thailand Railway. In the largest of these disasters, 6,520 prisoners, mostly Indonesian labourers, were killed when the *Jun’yō Maru* was sunk on 18 September 1944.



NX68076 Sapper(Spr) Allan Reginald Baker, 2/12 Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers, of Rockdale, NSW.. Spr Baker was killed when the Japanese prison ship in which he was travelling, the Rakuyo Maru, was sunk by the United States Navy submarine USS Pampanito on 12 September 1944. He was aged 26. (AWM)

18 J. The Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo

Outside of Japan, many see this Shrine as a glorification of Japan's past military aggression.

Eric Lomax: *The Yasukuni Shrine is on one level a moving war memorial dedicated to the worship of those who died for the Emperor, yet on another level it is an unashamed celebration of Militarism.*

In the grounds there is a memorial to the Kempeitai –it is like seeing a memorial to the Gestapo in a German Cathedral – as well as an immaculate C56 class locomotive that was first to pass along the Burma Railway. Both the locomotive and Tojo are worshiped at Yasukuni.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, together with 15 of the 18 members of his cabinet, and 289 of 480 Diet members are affiliated to the openly revisionist lobby Nippon Kaigi, which advocates the restoration of monarchy and State Shinto, the negation of Japanese war crimes, and recommends the revision of the Constitution and school textbooks as well as visits by Prime Ministers to the Shrine (Wikipedia)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would not have been able to complete this work without the understanding and cheerful support of my wife Julianne who accompanied me on my research to such places as the beautiful Finn Valley in Ireland, to my grandfather's grave in Massachusetts USA, and to the Thai-Burma border.

The work of the Australian War Memorial is truly amazing and World class, particularly in providing so much valuable research material online. To actually find a photograph in the AWM collections of my father on active service was marvelous.

I look forward to more AWM material coming online as resources permit, particularly the war diaries of the OCs of the 2/6th Field Company RAE.

I also acknowledge and sincerely thank Dr Kathy Flynn PH.D, daughter of the late Dr Michael Flynn 2/6th, for her invaluable advice about the process of writing; without her guidance I may have still been floundering.

I thank my brother-in-law Duncan MacDonaldMBA from Jakarta for the benefit of his writing experience and for valuable critiquing of my text.

I especially acknowledge the late Robbie Robertson and Bert Field, two men who encapsulated everything of what it is to be a Sapper. Without their foresight, I would not have been able to write about the amazing adventures of the 2/6th Field Company RAE.

Finally I remember with affection my late father Lewis Frank Scott. It has been a amazing journey to find his story and to come to fully understand his pride in having been an Australian soldier, and a Sapper on active service, a pride which I knew and shared with him. UBIQUE. PRS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Peter Scott was born in Tamworth NSW in 1947 and was initially educated at Tamworth High School to the Leaving Certificate, then The Sydney Technical College as a Land and Engineering Survey Draftsman.

From 1968 to 1970 he served in the Australian Regular Army (National Service Supplement) and saw 12 months active service in South Vietnam as a Field (Combat) Engineer with the 1st Field Squadron RAE, attached on operations to the 5th and 7th Battalions Royal Australian Regiment Royal Australian Infantry, and with the 1st Armoured Regiment and 3rd Cavalry Regiment Royal Australian Armoured Corps.

On completion of his military service obligation he returned to his career in the NSW Department of Lands, continuing his education at Mitchell College of Advanced Education in Town Planning, and the University of New England in Natural Resources Management.

He is a foundation member of the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association Inc and has made a number of return visits to Vietnam, both with the Association, as well as with family members, in recent years engaging in a positive and open manner with former enemy, veterans of the E33 Battalion North Vietnamese Army, and various Battalions of the Viet Cong including D445.

