

FRONTLINE

A DEFENCE SERVICE JOURNAL

OFFICIAL JOURNAL

1ST/19TH BATTALION

THE ROYAL NEW

SOUTH WALES

REGIMENT

ASSOCIATION &

2ND/19TH BATTALION

A.I.F. ASSOCIATION.

MEMBERS OF THE

AUSTRALIAN

DEFENCE

FORCES

RESERVES

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VALE GOOD FRIENDS

NX31508 PRIVATE Donald James ALCHIN 2/20 Battalion AIF

Don was born at Temora NSW on 29 March 1920 and sadly passed away at Temora on 2 June 2009. He enlisted at Paddington NSW on 10 June 1941 – the same date as his brother NX31444 PTE Mervyn ALCHIN who also served with 2/20 Battalion AIF and who pre-deceased him on 22 August 2008. Both enjoyed a very close relationship with members of 2/19 Battalion AIF.



2/774013 PRIVATE / SAPPER Louis "Lou" Dennis THIELE 19 NS Battalion and 6 Field Squadron, 2 Field Engineering Regiment

Late of West Ryde NSW Lou sadly passed away on 24 June 2009 aged 69 years. Lou served with 19th NS Battalion in 1958 and following his initial training served with 6 Field Squadron 2 Field Engineering Regiment. Brother of NX42189 Ernest John (Jack) Thiele enlisted and served in 2/19 Battalion AIF as "William Jack BAKER" – and later as a POW with C Force Japan. Lou is survived by his loving partner Liby. Much loved brother and brother in law of Bonnie, Carol, Alan and Jenny. Fond uncle to all his nieces and nephews. Much loved by his many friends. Lou was farewelled at the Northern Suburbs Crematorium, on 29 June 2009



NX56216 SERGEANT Herbert James "Bert" DONALDSON 17 Platoon D Company 2/19 Battalion AIF

Bert was born at Temora NSW on 13 January 1919 and sadly passed away after a short illness at the Narraburra Lodge Aged Care, Temora NSW on Tuesday 11 August 2009.

Bert served as a Corporal with 56th Battalion at Temora pre-war where he won the Lewis Gun shoot and was a 2/19 Battalion AIF "original" enlisting at Paddington on 3 July 1940. Following the entry of the Japanese into the war he served in 'Rose Force' with Lieutenant Ralph Sanderson and then returned to the Battalion where he was wounded and was in hospital at the Fall of Singapore. He served as a prisoner of war in Singapore before being sent to slave on the Burma-Thai Railway where he was responsible for 200 men. On return to Changi following the completion of the Burma-Thai Railway he was then sent in June 1944 with "U" Force to Japan on the infamous voyage of the MV 'Byoki Maru' where on arrival he slaved in the Japanese shipyards and coal mines at Nagasaki until the Japanese surrender. Following repatriation to Australia at war's end he was discharged on 13 February 1946 and returned to farming in

Temora. In 1946 he met his beloved Thora at a local dance and they were married in 1948. He continued to farm at "Oakley" Sproules Lagoon until retirement, taking up residence in Temora. He had an exceptionally strong sense of loyalty and commitment to both his family and his local community throughout his life, serving with numerous charitable organisations including The Temora Show Society, Bowling Club Carnivals, Leukaemia Foundation, Rotary, Legacy (40 years) Dr Parry Homes, RSL (50 years) Pastures Protection Board, and 2/19 Battalion AIF Association.

Beloved husband of Thora (deceased). Loving father and father in law of Andrew & Margaret (Canberra), Keith & Meg (Albury), Ross & Louise (Mountain Creek, QLD) and Craig (deceased). Dearly loved grandpa Bert to Scott & Marta, Stuart & Suse, Peter, Iain & Clare, David, James and Kate. Survived by sisters Ruth & Grace, predeceased by brothers Ferg, Doug, Frank and sister Dee.

Roger Perry, Bob Pink, Allan Brideoake, Allan's son Bruce, and daughter Beryl and partner Kevin, Greg Coombs, Ray Warden, George Thomas and Ella Perceval represented the Association and the Commanding Officer 1st/19th Battalion The Royal New South Wales Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Peter Morrissey represented the Battalion at Bert's farewell at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Temora NSW 2666 on Friday 16 August 2009.

Lest We Forget

FRONTLINE

BERT DONALDSON'S FAREWELL - TEMORA 16 AUG 09



Roger PERRY-Andrew DONALDSON-Margaret DONALDSON-
John CRONIN-Joy CRONIN-Sue PENNY-Ray WARDEN-
Ella PERCEVAL-Aileen DONALDSON- LTCOL Peter MORRISSEY-
Bob PINK



Standing: Paul ELLIOTT – Bruce BRIDEOAKE – Kevin YEATES
Seated: Allan BRIDEOAKE – Beryl BRIDEOAKE



Di ELLIOTT & Ella PERCEVAL



Claire BERRIE – Iain DONALDSON – Keith DONALDSON –
George THOMAS



Roger PERRY-Allan BRIDEOAKE- Meg DONALDSON -
Louise DONALDSON - Ray WARDEN - Bob PINK



Standing L to R: Ray SANDERSON (LT Ralph "Sandie" Sanderson's
son) – Kristin REPSHEA – Ross DONALDSON – Bruce BRIDEOAKE
Seated: David HOTSON – Robyn HOTSON (SGT Stan "Bomber"
Day's daughter)



Ella PERCEVAL & Allan BRIDEOAKE



FROM THE PRESIDENT



For once I will start of this report with a small burst of self congratulation! It seems that what I write is read and not skipped over looking for more interesting material elsewhere in *Frontline*. Sometimes one might wish that not quite so much interest was taken! I mentioned, in my report on ANZAC Day in the June issue, that LTCOL Peter McGuinness MBE RFD ED was the first former CO of 1/19 RNSWR to march with the Association on ANZAC Day. No sooner had *Frontline* hit the mailboxes than I was roundly taken to task by one of our Patrons, COL Brian Martyn RFD, who informed me that he had marched with the Association on ANZAC Day 2001. Brian provided photographic evidence in support of his claim – and I must say there were some evil looking reprobates in the photos, so they had to be true. I humbly apologise for the unintended aspersion. Peter, in rebuttal, pointed out that he marched with both 2/19 Battalion and 1/19 Battalion.

The Queen's Birthday Honours saw an award of The Medal of The Order of Australia (OAM) to Association member Mrs Jan Thomas for her work in relation to the Hospital Ship Centaur Association and other charitable works. It was a great shame that Arthur did not live to see his wife recognised for her service. Well done Jan! The same list also saw an Award of the OAM to Don McNeice from 30th Battalion Association in recognition of a lifetime of service to various community groups.

Unfortunately with the good news comes sad news. While I was overseas in late June I was saddened to learn of the passing of Lou Thiele on 24 June. Both Lou and his brother Alan were staunch members of the Association and Lou with his partner Liby was in attendance at most ceremonies at the Cenotaph in Martin Place. Lou was the brother of Jack Thiele who enlisted in 2/19 Battalion AIF as "William Jack Baker" and was a POW with C Force in Japan. Neither Bob Pink nor I were able to attend Lou's farewell. I have conveyed our condolences to Liby and Alan and their families.

I was also sorry to learn of the passing on 30 June of WO1 Norm Harries MBE. While Norm was not an Association member he would be well known to many who served in the early days of 1/19 RNSWR.

Sunday, 5 July dawned fine and sunny for the Reserve Forces Day Parade and, despite serious misgivings beforehand, I have to say that it was an unqualified success. The format was different from previous years with a parade formed up on the Sydney Domain. Whether it was the fact that our own Dennis Zalunardo OAM was Brigade Regimental Sergeant Major for 5 Brigade and exercised a degree of control over an unruly crowd I am not sure, but it was an enjoyable day and Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir AC, CVO, was her usual charming self and looked very smart in her uniform as Honorary Colonel of the Royal New South Wales Regiment. The Association Banner was carried onto the ground by two Australian Air League representatives and the Association Standard was carried with great style by David Ring. Kevin Jones, who had travelled down from Maclean NSW provided a large cheer squad of watchers and over thirty members took part in the parade. The Sig PI was well in evidence yet again. After the parade we adjourned to the NSW Leagues Club for a much needed thirst quencher. It was good to see MAJ Barry Chapman ED on deck again. While Barry did not march he joined us afterwards and was looking much better after his recent bout of illness.

We have received the final print run of twenty copies of *The Grim Glory*. As I pointed out in the last issue the printers have been very generous in keeping the price so low for so long and can no longer maintain that price structure. These twenty copies will sell for \$150.00 each and a number have already been spoken for. So, if you want a copy you had best get your order into Bob Pink without delay.

Sunday, 26 July was the celebration of the 93rd anniversary of the Battle of Pozieres which commenced on 23 July 1916. In company with Bob Pink, and association member and President of Ashfield RSL Sub-Branch and Ashfield RSL Club Mr John Walsh, PSM, I was present at St Columba's Uniting Church in Woollahra to participate in the annual commemoration service organised by the Association of 1st Infantry Battalions. The Colour Party was found by 1/19 RNSWR and they paraded the 1 RNSWR Colours. The ranking guest was the Commander 2nd Division MAJGEN Craig Williams AM,. Also in attendance were MAJGEN Sandy Pearson, AO DSO OBE MC, MAJGEN Gordon Maitland AO OBE RFD ED and the CO, 1/19 RNSWR LTCOL Peter Morrissey, RSM 1/19 RNSWR WO1 Shane McPhee together with a large contingent of descendants of men of 1st Battalion AIF. The Band of Scots College generously returned early from school holidays to provide music in support of the occasion. An excellent turnout with a magnificent morning tea provided by the ladies of the St Columba's congregation!

11 August brought the sad news of the passing of Bert Donaldson. Bert lived in retirement in Temora and had, after the death of his beloved Thora, moved into a retirement care facility. Bert was a great gentleman and one of the staunchest supporters of the merger of 2/19 Battalion Association with 1/19 RNSWR Association. Along with Alan Brideoake, Joe Coombs, Jim Forbes, Alf Mansfield, and the late "Digger" Dowd, they, along with their beautiful wives were in the forefront of attendees at many of the annual reunions in the years after the merger. Sadly, age and infirmity prevented Bert's participation in recent years but he kept abreast of events through Frontline and telephone contacts with his many friends. A great Australian, Bert will be sadly missed. Bob Pink and I represented the Association at Bert's farewell at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Temora on 14 August along with Bert's lifelong friend Allan Brideoake, Allan's son Bruce and daughter Beryl and partner Kevin, Greg Coombs, Ray Warden, George Thomas and Ella Perceval, a spry and cheeky 94. 1/19 RNSWR was represented by the Battalion's Commanding Officer, LTCOL Peter Morrissey. Peter recited the Ode during the RSL ceremony. The

church was packed with an overflow congregation and the presence of hundreds of mourners was a fitting tribute to the life of a man who had lived in the Temora community for ninety years and touched many people with his kindness. Bert's large family was, I know, greatly comforted by the many expressions of condolence conveyed to them. After a life well lived, his duty nobly done Bert will be reunited with his beloved Thora.

Unfortunately, family commitments prevented me from attending the ceremonies to mark VJ Day on 15 August and Bob also had other commitments, so I am unable to report on that ceremony. Joe Coombs organised the Lidcombe RSL Sub-Branch commemoration.

I am looking forward to seeing a large number of you at the Annual Reunion/AGM weekend in Orange from 13 to 15 November. If you have not already booked your accommodation do so now as Orange is extremely popular at that time.

Until we next meet please take care of yourselves and each other.

Roger Perry

COMING EVENTS - 2009

DAY	DATE	TIME	EVENT	LOCATION	Remarks
SAT	19 SEP 09	1800	RNSWR WO/SNCO'S REGIMENTAL DINNER DINNER - OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION IN THE MESS & BREAKFAST INCLUDED IN A VERY REASONABLE COST OF \$71.00 PER HEAD	SCHOOL OF INFANTRY SERGEANTS' MESS SINGLETON NSW	Phone Bob PINK 0414 907 427 or Warren BARNES 0409 909 439 for a booking
SUN	08 NOV 09	0930	COMBINED ARMISTICE DAY COMMEMORATION & BATTLE OF FLEPPERS MEMORIAL SERVICE	ST LUKE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH cnr Arden & Varna Sts CLOVELLY NSW (Home of the 19 th Battalion AIF Pozieres Cross)	In conjunction with Clovelly RSL & Club Force
WED	11 NOV 09	1030	REMEMBRANCE DAY	SYDNEY CENOTAPH	
SAT	05 DEC 09	0900	NATIONAL & NSW LAUNCH RESERVE FORCES DAY 2010	SHORE SCHOOL NORTH SYDNEY	
FRI SAT SUN	13 NOV 09 14 NOV 09 15 NOV 09		1/19 RNSWR ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & REUNION WEEKEND ORANGE NSW	ORANGE EX SERVICES CLUB & ROMANI BARRACKS	Please book your accommodation early to avoid disappointment SEE SEPARATE EVENTS PROGRAMME & RSVP PROFORMA ENCLOSED WITH THIS NEWSLETTER
MON	15 FEB 2010		FALL OF SINGAPORE COMMEMORATION	SYDNEY CENOTAPH	
SUN	25 APR 2010		A N Z A C DAY MARCH & REUNION	MV Jerry Bailey - Sydney Harbour Cruise	

FRI SAT SUN	15-17 OCT 2010	2010 Early Warning Order for your diary	2010 1/19 RNSWR ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & REUNION WEEKEND - SYDNEY	Venue to be advised	Planned to include a Memorial Service at St Luke's Church Clovelly (Home of the 19 th Battalion AIF Pozieres Cross) on SUNDAY MORNING 17 OCT 2010
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ASSOCIATION PATRONS & OFFICE BEARERS

PATRON	Lieutenant Colonel T.C. (Terry) IRWIN, MBE, OAM, ED, ARMIT, MIR, JP
PATRON	Colonel B.E. (Brian) MARTYN, RFD
HONORARY CHAPLAIN	Lieutenant Colonel Reverend Chaplain Canon C.G. (Colin) AIKEN, OAM, RFD, ChStJ
CHANCELLOR	Philip GERBER, LL.M., M.Crim.

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ASSOCIATION WEBSITE ADDRESS: <http://www.rnswr.com.au>

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 11th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF 1/19 RNSWR ASSOCIATION INC.
 (PROUDLY INCORPORATING THE 2nd/19th BATTALION A.I.F. ASSOCIATION)
 will be held at the ORANGE EX SERVICES CLUB, Anson Street ORANGE NSW 2830
 on SATURDAY 14th NOVEMBER 2009 at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA

1. OPENING
2. ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES
3. MINUTES OF THE ASSOCIATION'S 10th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT GOSFORD RSL CLUB 26 Central Highway GOSFORD NSW 2250 ON SATURDAY 27th SEPTEMBER 2008
4. MATTERS ARISING
5. CORRESPONDENCE
6. PRESIDENT'S REPORT
7. TREASURER'S REPORT
 Presentation of Statement of Receipts & Payments Balance Sheet for the period 01 July, 2008 to 30 June, 2009.
 Form 12 Annual Statement.
 Certificate of Currency of Public Liability Insurance.
8. HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT
9. SOCIAL COMMITTEE'S REPORT
10. CONFIRMATION OF THE APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY AUDITOR
11. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS & 6 COMMITTEE MEMBERS
 (in accordance with Clause 14 of the Rules)
 PRESIDENT
 VICE PRESIDENT
 TREASURER
 HONORARY SECRETARY
 ASSISTANT TREASURER
 ASSISTANT HONORARY SECRETARY
 COMMITTEE MEMBERS (6)
12. GENERAL BUSINESS
13. CLOSURE
14. NEXT MEETING

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

Nominations are hereby called for the following positions for the 2009-2010 year.

- PRESIDENT
- VICE PRESIDENT
- TREASURER
- HONORARY SECRETARY
- ASSISTANT TREASURER
- ASSISTANT HONORARY SECRETARY
- COMMITTEE MEMBERS - 6 positions

Any member who is entitled to vote at a general meeting is eligible for election as an office-bearer. (A member is entitled to vote if all money due and payable by the member to the Association has been paid other than the 2009-2010 subscription). Subject to satisfying the voting eligibility requirement, all current office-bearers will be eligible to nominate for re-election on this occasion.

Nominations for election as office bearers must be made in writing, be signed by one or more members of the Association, and be accompanied by the written consent of the nominee (which may be endorsed on the form of nomination). A form for this purpose is available from the Honorary Secretary, but it is not mandatory to use it. Nominations must be delivered to the Honorary Secretary by Monday 9th November, 2009. They may be mailed to the Honorary Secretary at PO Box 224 INGLEBURN NSW 1890 or lodged by facsimile to (02) 9328 3319.

❖ If insufficient nominations are received to fill all vacancies, the candidates nominated will be taken to be elected and nominations for the positions remaining vacant will be accepted at the Annual General Meeting.

❖ If the number of nominations received is equal to the number of vacancies to be filled, the persons nominated will be taken to be elected.

❖ If the number of nominations received for any positions(s) exceeds the number of vacancies to be filled, a ballot will be held for that position(s) at the Annual General Meeting.

R.J. Pink

R.J. PINK
 Honorary Secretary
 31 August, 2009



Photograph of Memorial Plaque to the 19th Australian Infantry Battalion AIF ("Darwin Infantry Battalion") which is part of the Memorial on the Darwin foreshore.

Association member CAPT Mike WALDRON, OAM was in Darwin mid August 09 and our thanks for forwarding the photo Mike.

DONATIONS

It is a pleasure to once again acknowledge the generosity of the following members which is gratefully received. Our Thanks folks !



MRS	Barbara	BARDSLEY
LCPL	Geoff	BLAIR
MRS	Joy	BOURKE
MAJ	Alan	BRABY
LTCOL	John	BRENNAN
MR	Colin	BRIEN
MAJ	Robert	BUTT, RFD
MR	Joe	COOMBS
SPR	Allen	GIDDINGS
MAJ	Peter	GODFREY, B.Com.CPA.
WO1	Trevor	HAGAN OAM
MRS	Junetta	LEWIS
MR & MRS	Alf & Betty	MANSFIELD
WO1	Kev	MARSHALL
LTCOL	Peter	McGUINNESS, MBE, RFD, ED
CAPT	Lee	MONZO
MRS	June	MURDOCH
MRS	Ella	PERCEVAL
MR	Alan	POPE
PTE	Anthony	PRESBURY
MRS	Ettie	READ
MR	Gordon	RICHARDSON
MR	Jim T	STEWART



NEW MEMBERS

A very warm and sincere welcome is extended to the following new members who have joined since the last newsletter:

CPL	Trevor	ALLEN	BEELBANGERA	NSW	2680
PTE	Steven	CARR	WARWICK FARM	NSW	2170
PTE	Dale	JORDAN	MUSWELLBROOK	NSW	2333
LCPL	Bill	SAVILLE	WOY WOY	NSW	2256

SICK REPORT

Get Well Soon



Alf & Betty MANSFIELD have been having their share of hospitalisation in recent months and we are very pleased to advise that they are both on the mend.

Felicity JESS is recovering well after sustaining a small tap dancing injury.



CONGRATULATIONS

TO Mrs Jan THOMAS

On her Award of the Medal of the Order of Australia in HM The Queen's 2009 Birthday Honours

For service to the community, particularly through the 2/3 AHS Centaur Association.

Founder and Honorary Secretary, 2/3 AHS Centaur Association Inc, since 1999.

Officer, St John Ambulance Australia, from 1981.

Founder, Sydney Youth Musical Theatre, since 1978.

Founding Secretary and active Member, Hawkesbury River Writers, since 1999.

Member, Fellowship of Australian Writers, since 2000



Lauded ... Jan Thomas at her home on the Hawkesbury River. Photo: Peter Rae

Death ignited a daughter's passion

A PASSION for her children was the catalyst for Jan Thomas's prolific career in public service. But it is her work in memory of her father, who died in World War II, that has earned Thomas a Medal of the Order of Australia.

Thomas's father was a doctor aboard the hospital ship Centaur, which was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine while it was sailing north from Sydney on May 14, 1943. Only 64 of the 332 people on board survived.

The ship's wreckage is yet to be found.

In his memory, Thomas

founded the 2/3 AHS Centaur Association Inc. "For 50 years people who lost loved ones had been grieving in isolation," she says. "I returned to the memorials every year, and this inspired me to arrange a group who could meet."

"The point was to honour those who were lost and to help the healing process for those who were bereaved."

Thomas's many other public contributions include founding the Sydney Youth Musical Theatre. The idea was born when her oldest son was volunteering at a nursing

home in the 1970s, and decided to put on a concert for the residents. Thomas supervised the practice sessions.

"I could see they were talented and dedicated, and they loved what they were doing," she says.

"They wanted help to perform every year, and it seemed a pity to let their passion die."

Jan's latest passion is writing, which led her to become the founding secretary of the Hawkesbury River Writers in 1999.

Thomas Graham

CONGRATULATIONS

continued



TO

COLONEL Paul BLOOD, former 1/19 RNSWR member who went on to command 2/17 Battalion The Royal New South Wales Regiment from JAN 03 to DEC 04. Paul was promoted to Colonel on 1 January 2008 and is currently posted as DOS ARES ACSC (Staff College).



TO Fiona BRIDEOAKE – Allan Brideoake's grand daughter on her achievement of a PhD and her appointment as a lecturer at a prominent institution in the USA.



TO George FISHER on his recent award of Life Membership of The Returned & Services League of Australia.



TO CAPTAIN Kael DA COSTA 1/19 RNSWR on his selection as this year's Royal New South Wales Regiment's "Travelling Scholar" which will see him visit the UK where he will serve with 2nd Battalion The Welsh Regiment and on exercises in Canada prior to undertaking a tour of European battlefields.



TO VICE PRESIDENT Mick PASS on his becoming a grandfather again and to daughter Joanna and husband Paul on the safe arrival of their new daughter Addison Ashleigh born Monday 20th July at the Mater Hospital Townsville. All well !.



I/XIX

TO 1/19 RNSWR in winning this year's Rifle Shooting at the Australian Army's Skill at Arms Competition at Puckapunyal VIC.

SEEN AROUND THE TRAPS



Alice and Roy
SCHMIDTKE
pictured with their
latest grandson
Daarcie Ernest

JAPAN RE-VISITED

By NX 48986 Joe COOMBS

Following the publication of an article written by freelance British journalist Christopher Reed in The Australian newspaper of 4 July 2006 and subsequent articles and interviews since then regarding reparation – and an apology to former prisoners of war, particularly from Taro Aso the Japanese Prime Minister whose family coal mines used prisoners of war as slave labour, Joe was recently invited by Mr Yukihiisa Fujita of the Japanese Diet (Parliament) to visit Japan. Joe was accompanied by his sons Tony and Greg and recounts what must have been a very poignant journey and visit and our thanks to Joe for sharing his experiences with us.

Our trip will be of special interest to members of 'C' Force who worked in the shipyards at Kobe and the coal mines of Aso Mining Company camp at Yushikuma Fukuoka. Taro Aso the Prime Minister of Japan is the son of the owner of the Aso Mining Company. An election is due around September this year and all are hoping Aso's mob get the 'Aso' ! and the new crowd address the apology and compensation issue which was the main reason for the trip. Until the end of the visit, efforts were made to meet with Taro Aso and present our requests in person but were denied and instead a senior official was offered which was rejected. I was accompanied by my two sons, Tony and Greg and was joined at Tokyo by James McAnulty from Glasgow who is the son of a deceased British prisoner of war who also worked in the Aso mines via the British who came from Nagasaki. The trip was organised and paid for as far as we could make out by Mr Yukihiisa Fujita – the Chairman, Special Committee on North Korean Abduction Issue and Related Matters, Member House of Councillors Diet of Japan – Ken Arimitsu Japan Network for Redress of World War II Victims and donations of various political parties. We left Sydney on Sunday 14th June and



Joe; Yukio Hatoyama - Opposition Leader; Yukihiisa Fujita.

flew direct to Tokyo where we were picked up and taken to our hotel (first class!) and met and had dinner with Senator Fujita and Ken Arimitsu – a pleasant end to a busy day.

MONDAY 15 JUNE 09 – Was a taste of things to come. By plane to Fukuoka and was met at the airport by a crowd holding large cards “Welcome Joe Coombs”. A press conference followed in the afternoon. All interviews included Jim McAnulty who turned out to be a terrific companion who got on well with the boys, Jim had an Aussie sense of humour and a good taste for beer. From the press conference we went to a crowded dining room where everyone present stood and clapped us in. The banquet was top quality and I lost count of the courses – they just kept coming, People were coming to the table to be introduced and considered it an honour to top up your glass – a custom we did not discourage.

TUESDAY 16 JUNE 09 – We met with three members of the Aso Company re: apology and compensation. They explained that the company had been reconstructed and they could not find in their records any trace of prisoners of war being used as slave labour. Mr Fujita was not allowed in the meeting but Ken Arimitsu produced copies of documents he had obtained from the army showing the numbers and where prisoners of war had been used in their mine (“not interested” !) We left with Jim McAnulty and the senior member of the board agreeing to continue a dialogue (“maybe!”). I left with a company lapel badge  (double diamond). We then joined a crowd of local people at Yushikuma some of whom were ten and twelve years of age at the end of the war who showed us where the mine and camp had been situated – now gone with no trace. They pointed out the open area where the planes had dropped food after the surrender – now a well



Jim McAnulty son of Scottish POW Patrick McAnulty; Greg; Tony; Yukio Hatoyama; Yukihiisa Fujita; Joe seated at front

FRONTLINE

cultivated paddy field. What was a train line alongside our camp is now a main road. They had good memories of Australians and said we had been kind to them especially with presents of chewing gum. A very pleasant lunch was provided in the community hall by the local women. We then spent some time reminiscing over local maps with the villagers. A simple day which turned out to be one of the highlights of the trip. We also visited several monuments of Korean miners who had died in Japan before returning to the hotel for dinner.

WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE 09 – Caught the Bullet



Joe opposite the Kawasaki Shipyards, Kobe

Train to Kobe – to hopefully visit the shipyards and camp site, The only thing I vaguely remember was the gates and nearby buildings at the shipyards. We were refused entry ! We went to where they thought the area of the camp site was but with the bombing, earthquakes and new buildings it was a lot different than I remembered. Flew back to Tokyo via the VIP lounge at the airport. During the whole three days we were accompanied by Mark Willacy ABC correspondent in Tokyo, his cameraman and their interpreter. Away from work we had a couple of very enjoyable sessions. This report was on Sydney Lateline television on Thursday 18 June 09.

THURSDAY 18 JUNE 09 - After a series of radio interviews in the morning we had lunch at the Diet and met the Speaker of the Upper House, Leader of the Opposition, some members of the Diet and saw the Prime Minister Taro Aso in the distance while they were debating a Bill in the Diet. Afternoon tea with the Australian Ambassador Murray McLean OAM at the Embassy rounded off the afternoon. Another reception in the evening where we met Yukihsu Fujita's wife, a very charming lady. Afterwards a tour of the city lights on the way back to our hotel.

FRIDAY 19 JUNE 09 – Morning taken up with more media interviews and in the afternoon a Press Conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club. A large crowd in attendance with cameras all along the back wall – “the works” ! I received



At the Kamakura Temple, Kobe

one year's membership of the club and we enjoyed an evening meal near the club.

SATURDAY 20 JUNE 09 – Lunch with the Japanese who were ex Prisoners of War of the Russians in Siberia. We thought we did it tough – I would hate to swap ! In the afternoon we visited the British Commonwealth War Graves at Yokohama.



At the Commonwealth War Cemetery Yokohama

The Australian section is superb. It is separated by from the other nationalities by bushes and gum trees - peaceful, very emotional when you see the names such as Shorty Crittenden, Eric Davis etc., and mates from the 8th Australian Division Signals. On our return we stopped at the Kamakura Temple with the big Buddha and then had a traditional Japanese dinner (top value !).

SUNDAY 21 JUNE 09 – The meeting was listed as an “Open Forum” which turned out to be a large crowd of academics and seemed to be anybody who was interested enough to attend and ask questions, followed by all attending a farewell lunch. A quick visit to the local markets, then out to the airport and home on Monday morning. All in all an unforgettable experience – two trips to Japan for free !!

Yukihisa Fujita who corresponded with Tony and finalised all the arrangements was with us practically the whole time and kept a close eye and ear on the interpreters at press conferences etc. Excellent host Ken Arimitsu was our chaperone from Go to Whoa - first thing in the morning to last thing at night. Times, transport, meals - he organised the lot. Nothing was too much trouble - he was very efficient. The various drivers we had throughout the week were all capable and helpful and deserved our vote of thanks.



At Kobe Peace Memorial
L to R (guide) - Senator Yukihisa Fujita - Joe - former Jap POW of Russians in Siberia - Greg - Tony

ARTICLE FROM THE 'ASAHI' WEEKLY

Sunday, July 5, 2009 朝日新聞

PERSPECTIVE Asahi Weekly 19

Australian POW's return to Japan brings mixed relief for his suffering

第二次世界大戦中に麻生首相の父が経営していた炭鉱で働かされたオーストラリア人捕虜らが、首相からの直接の謝罪を求めて先月来日した。面会はかなわなかったが、64年ぶりに現地を訪れ、支援者らとの交流を楽しんだ「とても報われる旅」に、「強制労働の事実をもっと知って欲しい」と注文をつけて帰国した。

By Hiroshi Matsubara
Asahi Weekly

For 88-year-old Australian Joseph Coombs, his second-ever visit to Japan last month was "a lot more pleasant" than his last stay here during World War II, when he nearly died working in the mines as a forced laborer.

This time, although he wasn't struck with rifle butts or nearly starved to death, Coombs still felt the sting of snubs from his former captors.

The former Allied prisoner of war sought a personal apology from Prime Minister Taro Aso, whose family's company enslaved Coombs and 299 other prisoners in a coal mine in Fukuoka Prefecture.

Coombs and his travel companion, James McNulty, the son of the late Scottish POW Patrick McNulty, one of Coombs' colleagues at the mine, experienced disappointment as Aso repeatedly refused to meet with them.

"It has been a very rewarding trip, and the disappointment is just we did not get to meet the prime minister. Aso is the one to apologize for his family's involvement in the mine and also as the head of the government," said Coombs before his return to Australia on June 21.

Coombs was taken prisoner in Singapore in 1942 and then sent to Kobe later that year to work at the Kawasaki shipyards. In May 1945, he was transferred to the Aso Yoshikuma coal mine in the current village of Keisen, until the war's end.

Coombs recalls working 12 hours a day in the mine, where working conditions were "very primitive, very rough." He remembers the scraps of food with watery soup, the beatings with rifle butts, the suffocating depth and the frequent cave-ins at the mine.

In his letter to Aso in February, Coombs demanded an apology for the "inhumane treatment and forced labor" and compensation for "historical injustices."

"Personally, the apology wouldn't dispel the memories of slave labor, and the compensation is no longer the most important thing now," he said.

"But the apology would ease the pain for us and make it easier for Japan's international relations," he added.

The visit by Coombs, his two sons and McNulty, was arranged by Japanese grassroots activists and opposition lawmakers after Aso acknowledged that his family's Aso Mining Co. used 300 Allied POWs, for the first time during a Diet session on Jan. 6.

The issue was first stirred up by the foreign media shortly after Aso became foreign minister in 2005. Neither Aso nor the Japanese government acknowledged it until the health ministry revealed evidence of it last December.

desire for a leadership change.

During his meeting with Coombs and McNulty at the Diet building on June 19, Minshuto leader Yukio Hatoyama said he "believes that the government should properly apologize and compensate to the enormous suffering of you or your family members."

But Ken Arimitsu, head of citizens' group Japan Network for Redress of WWII Victims, said that it remains to be seen if Minshuto can maintain such an attitude even if the party comes to power.

"The party is a mixed bag of politicians with diverse beliefs, and there is a political risk to fire up the POW redress issue, which the majority of Japanese people are not very familiar with," he said.

Coombs and McNulty agreed that Japanese should be more "educated" on this aspect of their country's history. They said upon departure that they felt a great sense of relief and reconciliation when they met sympathetic people here.

"It has been a very rewarding trip as we realized that there are people here who are trying to help us, and their apology was acceptable naturally," Coombs said.

政権交代で和解が前進？

"We gave the prime minister a political chance to improve the overseas images of him and Japan as a whole, and it is regrettable that he missed when his days are apparently numbered," said Yukihisa Fujita, an Upper House member of opposition Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) and one of the organizers of the tour.

With the general election pending in a few months, the POW's hopes apparently rest with Japanese voters'

POW (戦囚) 戦囚 (戦囚) 戦囚
prisoner of war (戦俘) 戦俘 (戦俘) 戦俘
rifle butts (銃撃) 銃撃 (銃撃) 銃撃
wet, muddy (濡れた) 濡れた (濡れた) 濡れた
beat (殴る) 殴る (殴る) 殴る
Allied (連合国) 連合国 (連合国) 連合国
remains (遺跡) 遺跡 (遺跡) 遺跡
Aso (麻生) 麻生 (麻生) 麻生
reconciliation (和解) 和解 (和解) 和解

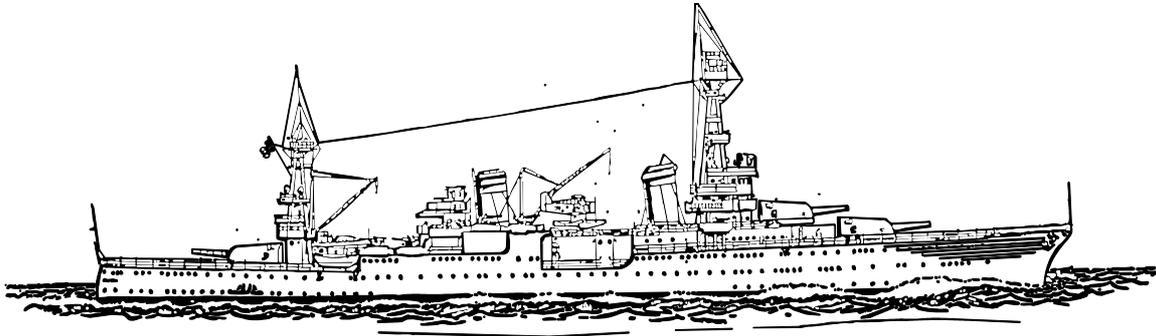
scraps of food (残飯) 残飯 (残飯) 残飯
cave-in (崩落) 崩落 (崩落) 崩落
Waged (働いた) 働いた (働いた) 働いた
war (戦争) 戦争 (戦争) 戦争
rest with (安心) 安心 (安心) 安心
reconciliation (和解) 和解 (和解) 和解

A group photo of Allied POWs at Yoshikuma coal mine, taken shortly after the end of World War II in August 1945. Joseph Coombs appears in the center of the top row.

Photograph by Joseph Coombs

BATAAN SURVIVORS OFFERED APOLOGY FOR DEATH MARCH

Date: Sun, 31 May 2009 18:18:11 -0500/ Brought to you by the HoustonChronicle.com



SAN ANTONIO -- At the Bataan Death March survivors reunion, Japan's ambassador to the United States gave his country's first in-person apology for the 65-mile forced walk of U.S. troops and allies during World War II that left some 11,000 prisoners of war dead. Ichiro Fujisaki spoke Saturday in San Antonio at the final scheduled reunion of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor, its 64th annual convention, the San Antonio Express-News reported.

Fujisaki's apology was welcomed by some of the 73 surviving Bataan Death March veterans of the Army and former Army Air Corps members in attendance. But others criticized it, saying it was long overdue, not aimed directly at Americans and didn't seem to come from the Japanese government as a whole. In 1942, Japanese captors marched about 78,000 prisoners of war -- 12,000 Americans and 66,000 Filipinos -- for six days on the Bataan Peninsula on the Philippine island of Luzon to a prisoner-of-war camp. Many were denied food, water or medical care, and some were stabbed or beheaded. As many as 11,000 prisoners died, according to the U.S. Air Force.

As former prime ministers of Japan have repeatedly stated: "The Japanese people should bear in mind that we must look into the past and to learn from the lessons of history," Fujisaki said. We extend a heartfelt apology for our country having caused tremendous damage and suffering to many people, including prisoners of war, those who have undergone tragic experiences in the Bataan Peninsula, in Corregidor Island in the Philippines and other places." Ladies and gentlemen, taking this opportunity, I would like to express my deepest

condolences to all those who have lost their lives in the war, and after the war, and their family members." Fujisaki got a standing ovation from half or so of the 400 to 500 attendees, which included relatives of the ex-POWs. "Well, we finally got the apology that we wanted", said retired Tech Sgt. Joe Alexander of San Antonio. "They ask how do I feel? ... Now we can rest at ease. We're satisfied". but while some shook hands and posed for pictures with Fujisaki, who had flown from Washington for the last-minute speech, others gave him an earful.

Former POW Hershel C. Boushey told the ambassador that he did not accept his apology, and that the atrocities and mistreatment many suffered was severe. POW survivor Tony Montoya, who lives in Woodland, Calif., said his speech seemed insincere. "This young man knows very little of the atrocities", Montoya said. "They probably rehearsed him on it." Abie Abraham, 95, of Renfrew, Pa., who was a POW for more than three of his nine years with the Army, said it was time to move on. "I was never one of those guys that worried about whether we got an apology or not", said Abraham, who is known as The Ghost of Bataan because he stayed 2½ years after being rescued so that the bodies of his fallen comrades could be given proper burial. "The way I look at it is -- Japan is now our ally", Abraham said. "Why should we get an apology from them?" Paul Ropp, a retired Air Force Reserve lieutenant colonel who is with the organizing group, noted there might be some cultural differences and nuances that made the apology seem lacking in clarity, sincerity and directness to Americans. "This is about as candid an apology as anybody's going to get", Ropp said.

CAN YOU ASSIST ?

13 August 2009

The Secretary
1/19 & 2/19 Battalion Association

I am trying to trace information about my uncle, **NX39531 PTE ROBERT WHITBY** who enlisted in July 1941 and was sent as reinforcement to the 2/19 Battalion AIF. He disembarked Singapore on 26/1/42 and was listed missing presumed dead 16/2/42. From your website and other sources I have learned of the history of the 2/19th in the "Battle for Singapore". What I am not able to find out is what company my uncle was appointed to, where they were sent,



and whether he died in action or was captured and killed by the Japanese. I have assumed that since he was listed as MIA initially that he didn't make it into Changi where presumably some kind of record was kept of all who were known to be alive at the surrender. My father who joined up in 1942 searched high and low at the end of the war for any information that would shed some light on his brother's fate. I think he believed his brother had been killed as a prisoner of the Japanese, however, I don't believe he had any information that would have confirmed that.

Do you know where I need to look to find the detailed information I am looking for? The information I have looked at so far, such as the Battalion diaries do not detail who was in each Company. Nor could I find the names of those soldiers who were brought in as reinforcements into each Company. At this point in my search, I feel as though I am honouring my father's memory to try to reconnect his brother to the family who always held out hope that one day, he would come home. I would appreciate hearing from any one who might have known Robert and suggestions for where to go next. Thank you.
Regards,

Tracey Browne

TRACEY WOULD BE VERY PLEASED TO RECEIVE ANY INFORMATION ON ROBERT AND CAN BE CONTACTED AT:

Telephone - Home: (07) 3878 5170

- Mobile: 0421 066 166

Email: tbrowne@adragon.org

P O Box 856

INDOOROPILLY QLD 4068

PATTIE WRIGHT

Author of "Men of The Line" is seeking any information on:

NX35512 Private

Douglas Andrew Love CRAIG

2/19th Battalion AIF - Murdered by Japanese on 07/11/1944 whilst Prisoner of War in Japan. Douglas is commemorated at the Yokohama War Cemetery.

Born at Sealake VIC 20 JUL 1919
Douglas enlisted on 21 JUN 1940 at Wagga Wagga. He was the son of William Andrew Love Douglas Craig and Frances Amy Craig. of West Wyalong, NSW. His father William served in WW1 with 2 Machine Gun Company, returning to Australia on 18 JAN 1919.

Research shows his father William died 15 SEP 1974 and was late of Unit 2 No. 21 Arthur Ave Cronulla NSW. The death notice records he was the loved husband of Jess (sic) and father of Vernon and Douglas (deceased). The Sydney Morning Herald of 29 JUL 1975 records the death of Jessie CRAIG of 2/21 Arthur Ave Cronulla NSW – widow of William, stepmother of Vernon and Douglas (deceased).

No further trace of his brother, Vernon has so far been found, nor of his mother Amy Frances Craig.

PATTIE WRIGHT WOULD BE VERY PLEASED TO RECEIVE ANY INFORMATION ON DOUGLAS – OR THE CRAIG FAMILY.

and can be contacted at:

Telephone - Home: (03) 9429 1401

- Mobile: 0400 882 834

Email: badaboom_pattie@bigpond.com

9 Hull Street

RICHMOND VIC 3121

ROYAL NEW SOUTH WALES REGIMENT CHURCH PARADE Holy Trinity Garrison Church SUN 21 JUNE 2009





TASCOTT NSW 2250

Mr Roger Perry
President
1/19 RNSWR Association

22 July 2009

Dear Roger

On behalf of myself and family I would like to thank you and all the members for your condolences for Lou Thiele.

Regards

Alan Thiele

YAMBA NSW 2464

31 May 2009

Dear Bob

The enclosed clipping was sent to me by a friend of Lance Crowley's who volunteers at an aged care hostel where Lance on occasions goes for respite care. The clipping may be of interest to some of the 2/19 Battalion AIF members who know him. I enjoyed the article on Bill Baird and his mail run – "Run" is the word that goes with Bill.

I remember him so well in his "milk run" days in Hay. Run he sure did. He would have been a great marathon runner. He is a much loved and admired person on the "Black Soil Plains".

Unfortunately I never knew of his association with the 2/19 Battalion AIF when I married John and lived in Hay. Didn't know of Sid Weeden's sudden passing until too late to attend his service.

Sid's daughters used to baby sit my kids in Hay. I saw him frequently when he first moved to South Grafton but lost touch over the years – we spoke a couple of times over the phone but he did not want to speak of the war years.

Best Wishes

Shirley Drum

P.S. Lance was a "mate" of one of my brothers.

Prior to ANZAC Day Tony and Beryl gave me a tin of ANZAC biscuits (Limited Edition) and inside was this verse which I thought was "spot on" and worthy of inclusion in the magazine.

Sincerely

Joe Coombs

"Riches are being restored to him, children's laughter and the sight of a small sleepy head upon the pillow. An armchair by the fire and clean sheets - tea in the kitchen and a woman's tenderness no longer edged by unspoken fears".

Almost 1,000,000 Australians served in the 2nd World War, many were young men, barely out of their teens. Most families were disrupted, the war probably changed many Australians' sense of the geography of the country as many had been stationed overseas or parts of Australia they had never seen before. Many men (and a few women) left behind small towns and saw the world. People in low paying and dead end jobs could potentially become leaders.

Every serviceman looked forward to coming home, but often it was not as he or she imagined.

They had played their part in an epic conflict. Now they were expected to return to sleepy suburbia and carry on as if nothing had happened. They were expected to "settle down" to marry and have children; they had to find their place again in families which hardly knew them and in communities which barely understood what they had been through. Yet war is not only traumatic. Many soldiers forged solid and enduring friendships in the midst of battle. In veterans associations, ex servicemen were able to socialize, exchange stories and revive memories that they could not share with their families.

With the passing of time, it is vital that we remember the enormous contributions that war veterans have made to Australia's current way of life.

War veteran recalls prison camp days



TOP TALES:
Coleambally resident Lance Crowley took some time during the week to recall his time as a prisoner of war during World War II.

LAST week *The Observer* spoke with one of Coleambally's senior residents, Lance Crowley, who revisited his time as a prisoner of war in World War II.

It was a fascinating discussion, especially reliving some of the stories through the eyes of a true down-to-earth Aussie with a great sense of humour.

Mr Crowley signed up to serve his country as a 22-year-old in 1940.

In his words, "things were getting pretty serious" in the war by then so he decided to do his bit.

After some training in Sydney each person was interviewed before being shipped off, and anyone who was a farmer was sent home to ensure Australia had a continued food supply.

Mr Crowley and his mate, who were both farmers, were waiting in the line to be interviewed.

When it came their turn, his mate told the officer that if he put down that they were farmers he would find him later and belt him.

This is how Mr Crowley got to go overseas and serve Australia.

Early on in his time overseas, Mr Crowley volunteered for a battle to try and stop the Japanese moving further south and taking Singapore.

There were around 900 Australians involved and at least 740 were killed.

The remainder were taken as prisoners of war and this is how Mr Crowley spent the next three-and-a-half years of the war.

Mr Crowley spent 12 months in Singapore, 15 months in Thailand and 12 months in Japan.

He was made to work in many areas, including kitchens, coal mines and dockyards.

The prisoners of war were forced to start work when the sun rose and keep going until sunset if their work was done.

If it wasn't completed they had to continue until finished.

When he moved between the Singapore camp and Thailand, he was forced to travel in a steel truck

for five days straight without a break.

There were so many men in the truck that there was no room to lie down so they had to take it in turns to sleep.

"If you moved your leg out of place there was not enough room for it to go back so you had to keep still in order to keep your space," Mr Crowley remembered.

On another trip between camps, Mr Crowley spent 70 days on an old burnt out cargo ship.

There were no facilities on the ship and so they were forced to use wooden crates hanging over the side for toilets. During the trip they travelled through a typhoon with the ship rolling so much they were hanging on to the ceiling.

The Japanese soldiers tried to escape on a life raft, and leave the prisoners but were frightened when the life raft was dunked in the ocean up to their necks. Mr Crowley remembers with some humour watching them all scrambling to get back on board.

He finally returned to Australia only after the war ended. He was flown home on an English aircraft carrier with around 400 other soldiers.

They were all taken to Ingleburn to be issued with new clothes before they were given leave to return to their homes, as all they had was what they were wearing. This was in October and Mr Crowley then returned to Sydney in January to be formally discharged from the army.

Although Mr Crowley remembers the experience with a good sense of humour, there is still a lot of pain and anger over the way prisoners were treated in the camps. On release they were told by a doctor their life expectancy had been reduced by ten years and that none of them would live past 57.

Obviously this did not take into account the strength of the Aussie soldiers and many, including Mr Crowley, have gone on to prove this prediction wrong.

OUR THANKS TO Association member Shirley Drum in forwarding the above article on Association member NX 52475 Lance Crowley

BONDI JUNCTION 2022
24 August 2009

Dear Bob

It is with regret that I have to inform you that I will not be able to attend the Association's AGM and reunion at Orange NSW and please tender my apologies for my absence.

On a different note my wife and I returned from France at the end of July 2009 after a guided tour entitled 'Boulevardes, Battlefields and Chateaus'. We were fortunate that two outstanding events occurred purely by coincidence, which to my mind made this tour one to remember.

Firstly we were in Paris on 14 July 2009 - Bastille Day, so we independently went to the Champs Elysees to watch the Bastille Day Military Parade. The parade and aircraft fly past were most extensive and the troops of the French Foreign Legion being the most impressive in the parade. The Paris TV media estimated the crowds watching the parade at over one million people (actually one million plus 2 two !) and where we were standing the crowd was over twenty deep.

Secondly our tour group of 18 (14 Australians and 4 New Zealanders) plus a British tour guide, arrived to visit the 'Cobbers Memorial' at Fromelles to find preparations well underway to conduct a 93rd anniversary Memorial Service, this being the 19 July. The Mayor of Fromelles invited us to join the ceremony – about 200 or more people being gathered there. Among the dignitaries were the Ambassadors of Britain, Australia, Belgium, and Germany with their Service attaches, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Canberra, representatives of Returned Service Organisations including the RSL and two large Colour Parties. The ceremony and wreath laying was simple but very moving, the majority of the crowd were French citizens, several families with young children being noticed.

At the conclusion of this ceremony everyone then adjourned to the 'V.C. Corner' Cemetery, about 300 metres away, where a second ceremony and wreath laying took place. 'V.C. Corner' has no headstones, 424 rose bushes were in bloom (red roses), each bush representing a known or unknown soldier buried there, including two Victoria Cross winners.

The entire following then went to the Pheasants Wood mass grave where exhumations are currently underway to recover British and Australian soldiers buried there. Due to the restricted area at the site our group went to Fromelles and then walked to a location overlooking the area and watched the third ceremony from there.



It was fortunate for us that by pure coincidence of timing we were at the right place at the right time for both of the above events. I have included three photographs. I took two at the Memorial and one at the 'V.C. Corner' Cemetery.

Wishing you all the best for the reunion

Regards

Bob Lidden



Fromelles – FRANCE SUN 19 JULY 2009 'COBBERS MEMORIAL' ANNIVERSARY CEREMONY – Ceremony about to commence



Fromelles – FRANCE SUN 19 JULY 2009 'COBBERS MEMORIAL' ANNIVERSARY CEREMONY – Official Party facing the Memorial



Fromelles – FRANCE SUN 19 JULY 2009 'V.C. CORNER CEMETERY' 424 Known & Unknown soldiers buried here including 2 V.C. Winners. No headstones – a rose bush for each soldier

FRONTLINE

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY HOLSWORTHY NSW 15 AUG 09



LONG TAN DAY COMMEMORATION SYDNEY CENOTAPH 18 AUG 2009



RESERVE FORCES DAY PARADE SYDNEY DOMAIN SUN 5 JULY 2009



FRONTLINE

RESERVE FORCES DAY SYDNEY RE-UNION SUN 5 JULY 2009



RESERVE FORCES DAY CANBERRA SAT 27 JUN 09



FRONTLINE

POZIERES COMMEMORATION SUN 26 JULY 2009



Sean McMANUS – President 1/19 RNSWR Association Roger PERRY –
Commander 2nd Division MAJGEN Craig WILLIAMS AM – John WALSH PSM



Bob PINK OAM – John WALSH PSM – Regimental WO RNSWR WO1
Warren BARNES – Roger PERRY



1/19 RNSWR COLOUR PARTY
Queen's Colour LT Brendan DOWELL, SGT Steve WINDSOR
Regimental Colour LT Ben BIDDINGTON SGT Dave MORLEY
Senior Escort WO2 Scott BRADSHAW
WO2 Wayne SKINNER PTE Alastair XEROS PTE Ryan BROWN



Scots College Pipes & Drums at rear
MAJGEN Craig WILLIAMS AM – French Marine – Drum Major &
Reverend Dr Alan RUSSELL, Dip Theol, BTh, D.Min.



RSM 1/19 RNSWR WO1 Shane McPHEE & Association President Roger PERRY

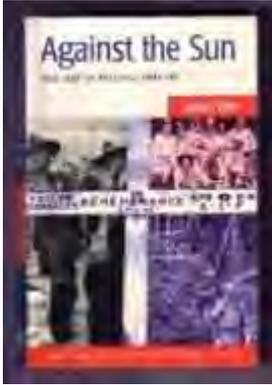


Commanding Officer 1/19 RNSWR LTCOL Peter MORRISSEY –
Roger PERRY – Wally THOMPSON OAM – John WALSH PSM



Patron, Association of 1st Infantry Battalions MAJGEN Sandy PEARSON AODSOOBE MC
& Parishioner & Roger PERRY

BOOK REVIEWS



AGAINST THE SUN THE AIF IN MALAYA, 1941-42

Janet Uhr

Published by Allen and Unwin 1998, \$29.95

This book is both interesting and annoying.

It is interesting in the deeper perspective that it gives to the AIF campaign in Malaya in 1941-42 and in the descriptions of

many individual members of the AIF, a force now largely forgotten by Australian society. Janet Uhr gives more emphasis to the operations of the AIF on the East coast of Malaya than the Official History does, and I found these parts of the book extremely interesting. Although I had previously read both the Official History and Major General S. Woodburn Kirby's 1971 book Singapore The Chain of Disaster, I had not previously understood the intensity of the operations carried out there. For this insight alone, I would recommend this book to those with an interest in Australia's military history.

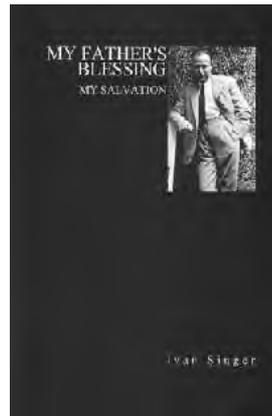
To an extent the book falls between two thematic positions, involving as it does both discussion of the broader sweep of the campaign and an intimate description of the actions of junior participants. That said, I found the battle descriptions, which switch between the perspective of commanding officers and the "worm's eye" view of the men on the ground, gave me an understanding of the events of the Malayan campaign as they were recalled by the participants at both levels.

The book is annoying, however, in a number of essentially minor ways. The writing style does not flow as smoothly as it might, largely because the author has a habit of mixing tenses. Quotes from participants describing particular incidents come in the expected past tense, but descriptions of actions are sometimes given in the present tense and sometimes in the past. While this might be a stylistic artifice of the author, I found it distracting.

I also feel that the author missed some opportunities to give an insight into the make up of the AIF (in many ways quite different to the peacetime force with which we are more familiar). Many family relationships get a mention, with several pairs of father and son, including the Varleys (one the CO of the 2/18th Battalion, and later Comd 22 Bde, the other a platoon commander in the 2/19th Battalion, with a second son serving in the Middle East). The fate of the senior Varley (lost in the sinking of the Rakuyo Maru in September 1944) is detailed, but that of his son (who survived the prison camps to

return to Australia) is not, while other "characters" such as Ringer Edwards of the 2/26th Battalion, said to have been the model for the character played by Peter Finch and Bryan Brown in the two film versions of Neville Shute's novel "A Town Like Alice", pass but briefly across the pages.

Overall, worth reading, as the insights provided more than outweigh the stylistic annoyances.



MY FATHER'S BLESSING, MY SALVATION

Ivan Singer

Singer Consulting Pty Ltd,
2002, 2004, 456pp, rrp
\$32.00

Ivan Singer is a Jew of Hungarian ethnicity, who lived in Vrsac, near Belgrade, when Germany invaded Yugoslavia in 1941. He and his family

were removed to Belgrade, where the men were separated from the women and children, and placed in a camp. Soon, batches of about 100 began to be taken away, supposedly for work parties, actually to be murdered. After Singer escaped to Italian occupied territory, where Jews were treated leniently, the women were also murdered. Virtually all of Singer's family, and most of the other Jews from his hometown, died in the pogrom.

Singer was deported to a concentration camp in Italy, and liberated by the Allies. He joined an American mission to Yugoslavia, and later Tito's forces. There are interesting descriptions of operations with the partisans, and cynical comment on the recorded 'history' of those operations. Late in the war he was sent to the Soviet Union, to train as a pilot for the Yugoslav air force.

The tragedy of the Holocaust, and Singer's nascent disenchantment with communism, become clear as the book concludes. It is a stark reminder, if such were still needed, both of the rightness of the Allied cause in the war against Hitler's Germany, and the need, when threats of a future Holocaust are made in some quarters, to ensure that history is not allowed to repeat itself. Ivan Singer now lives in Australia.



REVIEWED BY JOHN DONOVAN

John Donovan worked in the Department of Defence for over 32 years, principally in the fields of intelligence, force development and resource management.

He also served for several years in the Australian Army Reserve (Infantry).

THE TOCCHINI TALES

Reminiscences of a Halifax Bomber Pilot.

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT Sydney Alberto TOCCHINI, D.F.C.

Royal Australian Air Force who served with his Australian crew in 51 SQUADRON RAF

Contributed by his nephew – Association member Troy THOMAS



Continued from the June 2009 newsletter:

Remember that at the moment that call went out to Charles we were almost down. Then right across our nose in a flat skidding turn came Charles' aircraft; down went the wheels, down went the flaps, down went the aircraft and Charles was on the ground. We were on our way round again. Next we were told Charles thought conditions were too bad to continue with further landings and that we were all diverted to a drome in the south of England.

I spoke to Blue (Harry Copley our wonderful engineer) and asked him how much fuel we had left. Blue always answered with the prefix of "according to my computations", and on this occasion according to his computations we had about half an hour left in which to get Easy on to the ground. The diversion drome was at least fifteen minutes flying time away, so if there were delays in getting to that airfield we were history. This weather was all over Yorkshire and there were bound to be delays. I called the tower to say we did not have enough fuel to go to the diversion drome. They repeated the diversion instructions and wished us luck. It was a matter for my decision.

When we were cut off by Charles I flew straight down the runway and set the gyro compass to zero, the intention being to fly a left-hand circuit turning to 270 degrees, 180 degrees, 90 degrees and back to zero, which theoretically would have lined us up with the runway again, I said theoretically because in our current situation, there was no way of knowing the wind strength and direction inside that fog. On the 270 and 180 legs the landing lights and runway were completely obscured. When we turned onto the 90

degree leg, after a minute or so the runway lights became visible for a moment through a gap but we were right on top of them and at an angle of about fifteen degrees to them; no chance of getting in from that position. No option but to go round again. I lined up on the runway as best I could from such a quick glimpse and re-set the gyro from memory to zero and went round the circuit again. Once more on the crosswind leg we picked up the lights but this time the angle was even worse - we were about thirty degrees to the runway and right on top of it. No chance! We were in touch with the tower from time to time. They kept telling us they could hear us but couldn't see us. There was really not much they could do to help us.

Things were looking grim, fuel was at the critical stage. One more try, I would give it one more try. If I failed this time we would have to abandon the aircraft. But how? We were down under 1000 feet; the only way to get the crew out would be to climb to about 2500 feet heading for the coast, get them out while still over land, set George (automatic pilot) on a course to take Easy out to sea, then get out myself before we crossed the coast. These thoughts were going around in my head at light speed as we made this final circuit. There was still room for a little more drama. There was no panic in the aircraft, those boys were not like that, but while I was going through my private form of worry obviously they were going through theirs, and theirs would have been worse than mine because they could see even less than I could and there was not a thing they could do to help themselves.

And the little extra piece of drama! It was during those tense moments that Tug (Tug Wilson our wireless operator) chose to stand up and put on his parachute. That did not do a lot to help things. We turned on to the 90 or crosswind leg, not a thing to be seen, we were still in dense fog - so it was out to sea, the decision had to be made now or it would be too late for any decision making at all, then ... miraculously through a gap in the fog there were runway lights slightly ahead and almost at 90 degrees. I'm sure that Halifax did things it was never designed to do. Instantly it was standing on its left wingtip, the wheels were going down, the flaps were going down, the power was pulled off and the aircraft was dropping like a

stone. At about 300 feet I caught her again with the motors; still a bit high and a bit to the right but we could get in. A bit of left rudder, back on the stick, a bump, we were down. We were down! What a feeling of relief. All through the drama I was plagued by worry of whether I had made the right decision in not diverting to the alternate drome, but I was sure then and I'm sure now that we wouldn't have made it on the fuel we had left. We ran to the end of the runway but still could see nothing but fog, and the tower could not see us, so I called them up for taxiing instructions.

"Go to the end of the runway and turn left". So I went to the end of the runway and turned left and nearly ran into a big black hangar! I reported this to the tower. They told me I was wrong, that there was no aircraft hangar there. Now, we could not see much in the fog, but we could see this hangar, and had only just seen it in time. The argument was getting us nowhere so I decided to leave the aircraft there, close it down, and wait until the fog cleared. We then went over to the tower to tell them where the aircraft was. The tower looked a little bit different as we approached it, but then everything looked a bit different in the fog. We went inside and told them we were the crew of E Easy and could not understand their taxiing instructions. They told us that they hadn't given us any instructions; they had heard an aircraft land, they hadn't known who it was, but now knew it was us, they were pleased to have helped us, but this station was not Snaith, it was Burn. a station only a few miles from Snaith. We had landed at Burn but had been getting our taxiing, instructions from Snaith! Burn control let Snaith know we were down and well, Snaith sent a truck for us and we attended debriefing a bit late but quite happy to be there. What a night, but all in a day's work, and we were back, everybody was well, and we had another one in the log book.

Some things make a bigger impression on you than you realise for reasons that are not at the time apparent, and sometimes for reasons that never really become apparent, and this incident is one which comes back to me from time to time, perhaps it is not too difficult to see why. It concerns an incident on the squadron where people were coming and going all the time; some leaving happily because their tour was over and they could look forward to perhaps six months of the relative security of "screening"; some for reasons of one kind or another, not the least of which was the obvious reason. This day we were briefed for a daylight raid. Takeoff time was shortly after lunch so we were to have an early lunch. We always lunched together when we could and on this occasion found ourselves at a table with an English crew who had arrived only a

few days earlier and were on their first trip this day. I was seated beside their pilot and naturally he was a little excited and wanted very much to be friendly. I remember this boy because of his shock of red hair, his friendly reserved manner, and his obvious desire to fit in and be part of the team. We got on well together, Bert had a word to his bomb aimer and Frank spoke with his navigator, we had lunch and wished one another good luck. Takeoff time being in the afternoon we did not get back until well into the night; from there on it was the usual debriefing which took some time, a bit of a snack if you wanted it, then into bed which you really did want. There would be a late breakfast in the morning and all the night's experiences would be shared there, and it was quite common that you would occupy the same seat at the table as you had the time before.

So it was this time. We took our usual seats at the table and I was hoping to see our new crew and find out how they went on their first op. Time dragged on and I became ominously aware of the vacant seats where just hours before this very friendly young English pilot and his crew had made such a good impression. I had to ask the question, but I think I knew the answer before I asked it. He had not returned. They were posted Missing in Action ! This was nothing new. It had happened before and no doubt would happen again. What puzzles me and saddens me is not only the great waste and loss of lives of these wonderful boy men, but also the way it returns to my mind with the sight of those empty chairs in the mess, and their sad, silent message.

The Night We Were Nearly Baked

After briefing, the crew were taken out to the aircraft, by tender, about half an hour before takeoff time because each member of the crew had to test his particular equipment - the wireless op to test his wireless gear, the gunners to ground-test their guns, etc. These tests couldn't all be done at the same time. so while the first of the tests were being carried out the remainder of the crew would join the ground crew in their dugout for maybe a cup of tea or a yam and to warm themselves at the fire that was usually going in the always cold weather, There was always a very strong bond between the crew that kept the aircraft in condition to fly and the crew that flew it, and there certainly was a strong bond between the two crews of E Easy. Before the aircraft was bombed up part of the armourers' check was to test the jettison equipment which consisted of two bars which operated individually and when slid across into the jettison position allowed the bomb load to be jettisoned in two halves.

To be continued.....

Bill LOWCOCK'S WAR STORY

**NX10682 PTE William Mackenzie LOWCOCK
2/19 Battalion A.I.F.**

Bill's story continues
from the June 09 Newsletter:

We were there for about a month, I think, and nothing special happened at that camp although one thing I do remember. We were walking out one morning to work and we walked past the edge of a cutting. It had been cut through the normal soil and it had banks on either side of clay. I suppose from the top of one bank to the top of the other was 35 – 40ft. It rained the night before and the banks were all quite smooth except on the far bank opposite us where I was walking, there was one footprint of a tiger. How the hell that tiger got across that 30ft jump and left only one footprint, I never could figure out.

We moved back to Tha Muang about the middle of 1944 and in June of that year, the parties going to Japan were chosen out. Newton and Sanderson went together with about 1500 men, of which a couple of hundred were 2/19th. I was on the sick list at the time with dysentery and I stayed behind. Our officer left behind was Captain Westbrook and I think Frank Ramsbottom of the 2/20th stayed behind with us. Our working parties in the camp were still kept up. We went outside the camp occasionally to work at the Japanese store dumps and particularly the Japanese petrol dumps which was an enormous area of 44 gallon drums of aviation fuel. What it was wanted for up there we never found out because they didn't have an awful lot of trucks, the trains burnt wood and there was no airfield nearby.

One job we had at Tha Muang was to build an enormous moat right around the camp. This was about 12ft deep and about 20ft wide and its object was not clear to us at that time although subsequently we found out it was going to be used to exterminate the entire camp. They had machine gun nests set up all around the perimeter overlooking this trench and we were quite sure that had the order been given later on, as the war got closer to an end, prisoners were to be eliminated completely and the trench would have held them all and nobody would have known anything about it. Or that was what the Japanese thought anyway.

By now June/July 1944, the line was virtually finished and all the camps had been brought back down to the low country. Tha Sao was the hospital camp. Tha Muang was partly hospital, partly another camp. Nakhon Pathom had been

established as a hospital camp not far from Bangkok. Maintenance teams were being sent up the line from time to time to carry out repairs and about September, a team of us, probably 100, went up to Niki. This was almost onto the Burma border, not far from the Three Pagoda Pass. We travelled by train, lying on flat tops with all the other merchandise that the Japs were sending up there. The trip took about, I think, two to three days. We were up there to cut wood for the locomotives. There wasn't any coal so teams were all over the place, cutting timber and packing it on the side of the line at various sidings. The camp we took over was standard bamboo hut with attap roofs and bamboo beds. We had platforms. Only trouble was, it had been previously occupied by Chinese or other natives and it wasn't terribly clean and it was crawling with bugs of all sorts. But the work wasn't too bad there, the Japs weren't hard to get on with. Food was fairly plentiful.



Each man had to cut a pile of one cubic metre of firewood per day, cut into half metre lengths. There were teams out in the jungle, felling the trees. The Thais had the elephants, which would bring them in. It was amazing to see how the elephants could handle these gigantic logs. They would pick them up like matchsticks and pile them exactly where they were supposed to be. We had teams sawing them into lengths and other teams splitting. I was with a team of three. I think Snow White was one of them and it was quite cold up there. We were very high up in the mountains, terribly rugged country. At night time, we would light fires in the alleyway down the centre of the hut to keep ourselves warm. At this time of the year, the rainy season had finished and with winter coming on, the weather was pretty dry, but at night time quite cold. We even had frosts some times.

We had been there for perhaps three weeks when the Sergeant sleeping in the bunk opposite me suddenly became ill with a fever. The next afternoon I helped bury him. All of a sudden the camp was overtaken with this illness and nobody knew what it was at the time, but we found out later it was typhus. Typhus was a pretty serious thing and without proper medication (we had a doctor in camp with us and a few medical orderlies, but not much in the way of drugs). Typhus can be very deadly and it was almost as bad as cholera.

I can remember getting up in the middle of one night to go outside to the toilet and the next thing I remember, I was lying back on my bunk. I'd apparently passed out. The boys brought me back in and laid me down and I got the fever. I can remember it was far worse than malaria and I became disoriented and I didn't know where I was or what I was doing. The last thing I can remember was Macky Watts coming up and giving me what we called quinine bombs. Macky had some quinine wrapped up in a little piece of cigarette paper and you swallowed it - vile tasting stuff. I don't really think that quinine does much for typhus, but Macky was trying anyway.

After that I passed out and I learned later that I had become delirious and unconscious and I was like that for two to three days. When I woke up, I was in a different hut, the fever's gone, head's fairly clear. I was lying on the bamboo bed and I got up on my elbows and looked around and there was half a dozen dead bodies lined up near me and at that moment, an orderly walking past and said "hey that one moved". That one was me and I found that I was in the camp morgue. Anyway the orderly said "look sport, there's a train down at the siding waiting to go south, if you can get down there, get on it". So I took my pack and water bottle, which was all I had. That was the point where I lost my blanket, because somewhere along the line, my blanket disappeared. I crawled most of the way, a couple of hundred yards down to the siding. There were the usual steel rice trucks there and fellows sitting in them and somebody grabbed me and got me into the truck.

After a while the train took off. I wasn't in the mood to care what it did, as long as I was doing something. We travelled most of that day and that night we stopped of at Hin Tok. There were still some maintenance crews around and we spent the night at Hin Tok and the following day got on another train and we went for a couple more days down to Tha Makham. Tha Makham was a camp which was then almost next door to the bridge which they call 'the bridge on the River Kwai'. The steel bridge which runs across the lower reaches of the Kwai Yai River. At the present time, it is quite a tourist attraction, they tell me. But there was a fairly large camp there and mainly hospitals, sick people and I got in there and the MO came around, had a look at me and not much he could do. I was over the fever and lucky to be alive and that was good. The food in the camp was quite good. There were no working parties. The Japs didn't worry us very much. That night I heard some of our own fellows were there and those who had been up the line with us - Bill Saunderson and Sweetie and Macky Watts etc. They had all come back. I wandered over to another hut and there's Bill Saunderson and Ken

Sweet playing cards with an oil lamp between them. Bill Saunderson was a very dark chap (I think he had some aborigine in him) and has very dark skin. I walked up and I tapped him on the shoulder and I said "Hi Bill". He looked up and I swear he turned white. He dropped his cards and he said "shit, I thought you were dead". Next to the bridge at Tha Makham there were about three Jap anti-aircraft guns. I presumed they realised the bridge would be a prime target for bombs. Planes used to go over every night on their way down south somewhere to bomb somebody, we didn't know what. They were British planes of course, very high up. The Japs would always let off half a dozen rounds from the ack ack guns. They never hit anything cause they couldn't see what they were shooting at and after they had let off half a dozen rounds, they would all scream out "bamzi bamzi - back to bed".

Late one afternoon, a plane came down. It was very difficult to bomb that bridge because it is in between two very tall mountains and the only way they could do it would be to come down the river which wasn't all that wide. That's what this plane did. We didn't hear it. It came down with its engines switched down low and probably only 500-600ft up. It was a Liberator and it dropped, I think, three or four bombs. They wiped out the ack ack guns, but unfortunately one bomb dropped into our camp, right on top of a tent and about 25 of the guys bought it - pity. This happened in November 1944.

Of course there is always something funny happening in war and I could remember the Jap guard who was wandering around the compound. He was very sloppily dressed. He had a pair of thongs and a rough old uniform with the normal cap they wear and he was carrying a .303 rifle. After the bombing was over and we had all got to our feet again you could see on the ground, first of all the rifle, then his cap and then his thongs and he was long gone. He shot through. I don't know where he went to but I can imagine he would have been in a bit of trouble with his officers after that one.

We stayed at Tha Makham I suppose about two weeks. The food was fairly good there and I built up a bit of condition again and then we were sent back to Tha Muang. The 2/19th and 2/20th the new battalion boys were starting to be recalled to make a unit again. We had all been split up all over the place and now we were back in one heap. Apart from those of course, who had, in June, been sent to Japan. We had lost our officers as they had been taken away from us earlier in the year. Five officers were in charge.

To be continued.....

NOR ALL THY TEARS

NX45804 Driver Herbert James McNAMARA, Carrier PI, HQ Coy, 2/20 Battalion A.I.F.

Continued from June 2009 Newsletter

The reason that the wide gap usually found between "egg cooked" and "egg no cooked" in western countries was absent lay in the fact that you had to be a little more broad minded about the "egg cooked". After eighteen months in Thailand we learned to distinguish about ten categories of eggs in place of the usual division between good eggs and bad eggs. There were good eggs, fair eggs, eggs that were inclined to cling to the shell, eggs that were losing their smooth texture, eggs that were turning an unpleasant colour, eggs that were developing an unpleasant odour, eggs that had developed an unpleasant odour, eggs that had developed an insufferable odour, eggs that were decaying away a bit, and lastly (extremely rare) eggs you couldn't possibly eat.

They lined us up in a huge column each night for roll-call, and here we first became really acquainted with Roaring Reggie. His efficiency had made itself on the way up, but he was still a character vague and misty to us until we made his acquaintance here.

Can you hear me in the rear, his great voice would roar, and I doubt if there was any place in Thailand where he couldn't be heard.

Up till now you've been getting it easy. You're getting it easy now, but you won't get it easy for long. Before long you will be moving up the Line, and from what I can hear conditions up there are bloody, terrible. Men are dying like flies. This is cholera county and dysentery country and malaria country.

Most of these things you can keep down to a minimum yourselves, and I'm here to see that you do it! I'm in charge of five hundred men, and I want to be in charge of five hundred men when we get back home. Tonight several men were admitted to hospital as probable dysentery cases. Asked what they had been drinking they said 'iced coffee. "Ice in coffee won't kill dysentery germs! The only things safe to eat here are things that haven't been touched since they have been cooked and things with the skin on them. If you see a man with iced coffee, knock it out of his bloody hand!"

Save that the rainy season had started and caught us without adequate shelter, things were good in this early camp. We had little time of our

own, but work was not unduly hard, and besides our trading, the official ration was the best they had ever given us.

There was much about Kamburi that reminded us of Australia. Vegetation was often like our own; the ground

still stretched out in wide plains, with low, purple hills breaking the horizon; the goanna darted out occasionally; the undergrowth had an Australian bushiness and the dusty ribbon of road stretched out through the trees into the distance.

But here and there something eastern would give an air that belonged to that place and that time. Sometimes it was the elephants in their long trains dragging heavy loads, their huge muscular bodies bending to the contours of the track. Sometimes, it was an occasional monkey, larger or more grotesque than the common chatterer. Sometimes it was the people.

One of the most vivid early memories was the kapok trees with their giant, thin branches spreading out in planes parallel to the ground, devoid of leaves and hung with heavy pods. The vultures used to sit in these, grim and hideous, their dark forms silhouetted against the sky. There were many vultures in Kamburi and they sat unmoved, even when we came near the branches their grim bodies weighed down. They were always still and watching. When they were flying they were watching too, circling round and round, always ravenous. They would fly to great heights and then glide down slowly, buoyed up by the eddies in the air, rigid and almost motionless. Then the sudden swoop of one would call the others from all round to dive rapidly down or fly to a common centre and drop in a vertical pancake. And the spoil, however small would bring them crowding for miles, to fight and struggle for the satisfaction of their one craving.

I remember thinking how strange was the irony that these omens of all that was grim and terrible, these birds that lived on death, should be so prominent in this place where their existence was so out of keeping. It seemed strange that they should come so prominently into our lives just as the greater menace of death from hunger was taken from our shoulders.



CHAPTER IX NORTHWARDS

The rain spared us most of the trip, and the parched soil had soaked up the greater part of the heavy downpour, so we made our way along the villainous road with only a few holdups. The road was now a vicious black mud, and tunnelled under the greenery, fresh and glistening. It seemed that most of the country was new to human life. Strangest of all were the butterflies that started up before us, filling the air like snowflakes, their lightly-spotted wings fluttering among the vines, almost dominating the green background. We crossed a weird bridge of bamboo and moved up into the steeper country. The mountains now began to tower and their sky-blue melted into a deep purple. By early afternoon we made a large camp of attap huts fenced with bamboo. This was Tarsoa. We were told to clear a space and erect our tents and they said that work would commence that afternoon. Hardly a promising start, but Reggie lodged a protest and we were given the afternoon off to clear a space and erect our tents. We had a few more tents now, and after perfecting a new method of lying down, found that we could all fit in them.

Conversation with the older hands brought us small comfort. Work was pretty hard and the hours long. There were many sick in the camp and the Nips had a habit of dragging men from the hospital to make the numbers up and this used to shock us a good deal. We learned quite early that the Nips had a new enthusiasm for saluting and a new technique of punishment, and this was a discomfort not yet dwarfed by greater things. They worked us from the beginning and they worked us all the time but the food was still sufficient, and although we no longer had the Thai bazaar, they brought a few things for us to purchase through our canteen and the huts didn't leak much when they finally made room for us, so that we felt that things could be worse. Tarsoa was once "up the river", but it scarcely counted as that now. The line was due to reach it before long, and it was really a centre of civilisation. We heard lurid rumours of Kanya, Rintin and Tonchian.

In a modest way we sampled the slavery that was to be our lot henceforth. Guards were constantly on the job of speeding us up and we often came home in the dark, but few lashings were in any way outstanding by later standards, and serious injuries from punishments were mainly "accidental". But we sampled the Thailand illness for the first time, and the sick began to mount. However they allowed us a fair measure of sick, in response to a bit of wrangling, though they would often have blitzes and drag men out of hospital. Disquieting to us was the growing toll of grim little funerals that we would see on our return to work. Thin bodies were borne quietly away to the

cemetery in numbers mounting daily, and it was little comfort to be told that they comprised mainly the "hopeless" cases from up North, when we knew that we would go there later too. The "hopeless" cases crowded the huts set off for the hospital, and it was most pitiful to see those whom the Japanese Army finally considered unfit to work. Skeletons whose shrunken skin set off their teeth and bones in incredible horror, they were borne in the arms of orderlies who would step from the bamboo platforms on which they slept, as unburdened by the little weight as if they were empty-handed. And dysentery we learnt was not merely a polite name for diahorrea, but a disease that under these conditions would lead to almost certain death. And the name "tropical ulcer" took on a new frightfulness, here too. No longer the name of a green and sickening sore, but a huge festering, rotting away of the flesh to expose bone and sinews in a foul odorous gap. Among ourselves we saw tiny bamboo scratches turn to dangerous poisoning in a few days, and we learnt with a daily horror how this man and that was battling to save an arm.

Work was mainly the digging of the railway cuttings and the making of an embankment with the most primitive tools. Our axes were nothing but smith forged wedges with holes to take the rough green wood handles. Shovels still had the corrugations of the oil drums from which they had been cut, and picks were as soft as putty. All transport was done in primitive bamboo baskets, and stretchers made by thrusting bamboo poles through holes in rice-bags. Wearying and monotonous work, especially when you are hounded by bellowing guards to "speedo" all the time. If our masters did not practice the barbarity of their rivals up north, they had a genius for making themselves loathed with a great intensity. More than anywhere else they spared no pains to make our position as hateful as possible. But we felt that we had little cause to complain when we heard tales that came down from "up country".

Now and then parties of very thin men would come down from up north; entire parties whose joint labour was not worth the guards to rule them, and we knew that each of them brought nearer the day when we would take our turn "up country". Their stories were frightful. The small remains of what had once been large parties, they were all broken in health. They told of barbarities and callousness that amazed us - men buried up to their necks and left to die; sick men kicked to death; starvation, torture and neglect. One party had with it a blind man who could scarcely walk about when led, and yet he had been made to work right up to the last. Others had left dead along the path as they moved down.

To be continued.....

FRONTLINE

DOWN MEMORY LANE



MORTAR PLATOON 2/19 BATTALION AIF - AUGUST 1941

*Rear: Redfern, Hearn, McRitchie, Doyle, Perfect, Ryan, Ford, Fitzsimon, Carnegie, Flint, Stephens, Thomas
Second Row: Sgt P Heydon, Wright, Sgt Douglas, Lieut Bennett, Capt Fallaw, Sgt Pascoe, Hodgson, Sgt J Heydon
First Row: McGuffin, Overs, Adler, Brett, Morgan, Welsh, Freeman, McCarthy, Craig, Martin, Bowditch
Front: Kennedy, Bolton, Bathurst, Fullerton, Scully, Lewis, Ison, Nolan, Craig.*



MORTAR PLATOON 1/19 BATTALION RNSWR SINGLETON COURSES CAMP - SEP 1978

L to R Standing: LT John FOGARTY (MLO), CAPT Terry EVANS (OC), PTE Matthew BOYS (Medic), PTE Terry KEEP, CPL Dave TONKS, PTE Richard DAVIES (obscured), PTE Alan LOWE, PTE Bob LAVINGTON, PTE David DAVIES, PTE Ken SCHOFIELD. Kneeling: CPL Bob COLLIGAN, PTE Dale JORDAN, PTE P WRIGHT, PTE David SMALL, PTE Tim MIDDLETON, PTE CANNAN (3 RNSWR).

(PHOTO COURTESY OF LTCOL John FOGARTY)