

**IN MEMORY OF THREE MEN FROM GRIFFYDAM & PEGGS GREEN WHO  
BECAME JAPANESE PRISONERS OF WAR DURING THE MALAYAN  
CAMPAIGN & THE FALL OF SINGAPORE 1941/2**



**4860501 LANCE CORPORAL SAMUEL DIMMOCK FROM GRIFFYDAM  
1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION – LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT  
D.O.B. – 07.09.1919.**



**4859871 LANCE CORPORAL SAMUEL HODGES FROM GRIFFYDAM  
1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION – LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT  
D.O.B. – 01.09.1918.**



**956459 GUNNER JOHN HOWKINS FROM PEGGS GREEN  
148<sup>TH</sup> BEDFORDSHIRE YEOMANRY FIELD REGIMENT - ROYAL ARTILLERY  
D.O.B. – 10.08.1919.**

**WRITTEN BY SAMUEL T STEWART – NOV 2019 – SECOND EDITION**

## PREFACE

**THIS BOOK HAS BEEN WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF THE GRIFFYDAM HISTORY GROUP & THE MEN'S FAMILIES. SHOULD ANY FURTHER INFORMATION OF INTEREST BECOME AVAILABLE FOLLOWING PUBLICATION, THIS WILL BE POSTED ON THE GRIFFYDAM COMMUNITY GROUP WEBSITE WITH A LINK TO THE BOOK.**

The reason for writing this book is to posthumously acknowledge three brave local men **Samuel Dimmock and Samuel Hodges from Griffydam and John Howkins from Peggs Green**, who, for a collective total of almost eleven years prior to the end of the war in the far east, were interned in the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) Prisoner of War (POW) camps, and used as slave labour under horrific conditions, suffering degradation, starvation, physical cruelty and mental torture by the Japanese, not forgetting the cruel and merciless treatment also handed out by the Korean guards. They, unlike many thousands of their fellow men, survived their ordeal and came back home to their villages of Griffydam and Peggs Green.

Prisoners of War of the Japanese generally chose to remain largely silent about their experiences rather than exposing themselves and others to the pain that talking about them may have generated. These three men were no different, but hopefully this book will bring to the attention of the readers the pain and suffering that they and many thousands of other comrades endured under the Imperial Japanese Army.

The question has to be asked, as to why when Britain celebrated VE day in the summer of 1945, when the survivors of the Japanese POW camps had not even returned to our shores, there were no celebrations or victory parades for them – **virtually no recognition.**

Also, it must be remembered that these men had to start their lives again, with no jobs waiting for them to go to, and only a financial pittance of £76 was provided by the Government with £49 going to civilian internees.

They had their horrific experience hanging over them for the rest of their lives, which took both its mental and physical toll, made even worse by seeing Japan in their later life go from strength to strength in the industrial world order.

At the end of the book, we will learn that only through the major efforts of others, that in **2001**, the British Government agreed to pay Japanese POWs or their widows' financial compensation. This was far too late of course, as if they had survived, they would have been at least 80 years of age with little time left to benefit from it.

**'ALL NATIONALITIES' ONLY INCLUDES BRITISH, DUTCH (EUROPEAN), AUSTRALIANS, AMERICANS, CANADIANS & NEW ZEALANDERS INTERNED IN JAPANESE POW CAMPS AND USED AS SLAVE LABOUR**

NATIONALITY	TOTAL POWs	DIED AS POWs	POW % DEATH RATE
BRITISH	50,016	12,433	24.8%
ALL NATIONALITIES	132,134	35,756	27.1%

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- Thanks to Ronnie Taylor for allowing permission to use extracts of POW diaries etc from the website [www.fepow.family](http://www.fepow.family). This has proved invaluable in the writing of this book. An acknowledgement is added to the relevant features within the book.
- A special thank you to Ken Hewitt for his contribution in providing information on the Leicesters' and the Malayan Campaign etc., which greatly assisted in providing an accurate analysis of events. Also, for his kind permission to allow information already published by himself to be used in the book. Any information provided by Ken in the form of both text, and statistics is copyright Ken Hewitt and acknowledged as such within the book.
- We are extremely grateful for being allowed to use extracts from [www.mansell.com](http://www.mansell.com) website on the basis that the book is being written on behalf of POW family members and acknowledge as the following statement appended to the website – *The site is entirely sponsored by Roger Mansell, Palo Alto, California. All information is "Copyrighted by Roger Mansell". Please acknowledge the source as Roger Mansell, Palo Alto, CA. Any material used within this book from the website is designated – source and copyright Roger Mansell, Palo Alto, CA.*

### **Roger Mansell has now sadly passed away.**

- Ex POW J.E.Whitaker's record of the Leicester' initial training at Glen Parva and the subsequent journey to India and Penang proved most helpful. This is contained within issues of the "Newsletter of the Friends of Leicestershire Record Office" in the period Nov 95 to Nov 97. The articles are entitled 'Call up 1939' and 'The Leicesters' in Penang'. Thanks to the Leicester Record office for granting permission to include a synopsis only of J. E. Whitaker's record in the book.
- A special thank you to 'Griffydam Community Group (History Group)' for their help in the promotion of this book.
- Apologies to anyone the writer may have inadvertently forgotten to acknowledge.

## RESEARCH AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Information has been combined from numerous respected publications, and research documents to ensure the information in the book is as accurate as possible at the time of writing. Where appropriate, a bibliography reference is included within the book.
- Photographs, where not stated, are either in possession of family members or in the public domain and copyright is with the originator.
- The newspaper cuttings have come from family members. Unfortunately it is not known which specific newspapers they have come from. However, the writer wishes to acknowledge, that copyright is owned by the publishers' of the newspapers.

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## TIME LINE TABLES for SD, SH & JH

### REGIMENT DETAILS, ENLISTMENT DATES & PLACE

NAME	REGIMENT	ENLISTMENT DATE & LOCATION
Samuel Dimmock	1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment	15.11.1939 Glen Parva, Leics
Samuel Hodges	1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment	15.9.1939 Glen Parva, Leics
John Howkins	148 <sup>th</sup> Bedfordshire Yeomanry Field Regiment – Royal Artillery	12.12.1939 Ipswich

### CAPTURE & FINAL LIBERATION

NAME	DATE OF CAPTURE	PLACE CAPTURED	OFFICIAL LIBERATION DATE	RELEASED FROM
Samuel Dimmock	15.02.1942	Singapore	16.9.1945	Fukuoka 25B POW Camp, Omuta, Japan
Samuel Hodges	1.1.1942	Malaya – Near Jitra / Alor Star	2.11.1945	Changi Gaol, Singapore
John Howkins	15.02.1942	Singapore	30.08.1945	Takhli Airfield, Thailand

### TIME SPENT WORKING ON THE BURMA TO THAILAND RAILWAY.

FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF THE RAILWAY IN OCTOBER 1943, SOME MEN WERE DEPLOYED ON OTHER PROJECTS SUCH AS RAILWAY MAINTENANCE, CONSTRUCTING AIRCRAFT RUNWAYS ETC.

TIME WAS ALSO SPENT IN CAMP HOSPITALS.

NAME	DATE ENTRAINED FROM SINGAPORE TO BAN PONG THAILAND	FORCE	COMMENTS
Samuel Dimmock	23 <sup>rd</sup> March 1943 Date entered on LQ wrong!	'D' (Group IV)	Late June 1944 entrained back to Singapore to go by sea to Japan POW camp Fukuoka 25B, at Omuta.
Samuel Hodges	13 <sup>th</sup> May 1943	'H' (H5 Party?)	Nov 5 <sup>th</sup> 1943 entrained back to Sime Road POW Camp, Singapore and then to Changi Gaol.
John Howkins	October 30 <sup>th</sup> 1942	Letter Party S	Worked on railway till May 1945, and then sent to Takhli, Thailand to work on airfield.

**PHOTOGRAPH GALLERY**



**JOHN HOWKINS**



**SAMUEL DIMMOCK**



**JOHN HOWKINS (LEFT) AND SAMUEL HODGES**



1939 – TRAINING AT GLEN PARVA BARRACKS (SAMUEL HODGES TOP ROW, CENTRE)



1945 – SAMUEL HODGES (2<sup>ND</sup> FROM RIGHT) AND GEORGE CHIPPENDALE FROM RAVENSTONE (2<sup>ND</sup> FROM LEFT) ARRIVING AT LEICESTER STATION AFTER THE WAR



SAMUEL DIMMOCK (1<sup>ST</sup> LEFT) IN INDIA



**THRINGSTONE GREEN 1956**  
**SAMUEL HODGES (2<sup>ND</sup> FROM RIGHT)**  
**THE DEDICATION OF THE BRITISH LEGION CEREMONY**



**SAMUEL HODGES**  
**CHAKRATA HILL STATION INDIA**  
**JUNE 1940**



**SAMUEL HODGES (LEFT) & JOHN HOWKINS REMISSING IN LATER LIFE**

## NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS

# War veterans meet up again after 50 years



● BETTY and Les Kendrick, extreme left and right, meet up with Samuel Hodges, Sam Dimmock and their former wartime pal, John Hawkins.

ACCORDING to a well-known saying, every cloud is silver lined — and so it proved for a former Japanese prisoner of war attending an old mate's funeral.

He met up with a wartime colleague he hadn't seen for 66 years but who lives only about five miles away.

Les and Betty Kendrick, from Fairfield Road, Hugglescote, went to pay last respects to Les's old pal Gerald Herry, also a former Japanese POW.

After the service, Les and Betty left but their son Michael stayed on to chat and overheard someone enquiring about 'Nick' Kendrick.

He recognised his father's old nickname and introduced him-

self to John Hawkins, of Peggs Green.

Michael said: "He asked to see my father so, with Samuel Hodges and Sam Dimmock from Griffidale, we set off for my parents' home."

It was a memorable meeting as tales of their service days were swapped and memories revisited of the time when they were all prisoners of the Japanese.

### CAPTURED

Michael explained: "Les and my father were called up in 1939 to the 14th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery. Samuel and Sam were in the 1st Leicesters.

"All four men were captured together in Singapore in 1942 — that was when John and Les lost sight of each other. They were all POWs for three and a half years and suffered slave labour, starvation diet, beatings and tropical disease.

And all four were all involved in the construction of the infamous 250-mile Death Railway in which 16,000 prisoners perished.

"No poppies grew in the fever-ridden jungle for them."

As the men enjoyed their reunion, Michael said about the incident:

"It was a privilege to be in the company of four very brave men."

# Comrades in arms

## Railway of death chums are reunited

**TWO Japanese Prisoners of War forced to slave on a notorious railway line which claimed hundreds of lives have been reunited.**

John Howkins (79), of Pezges Green, near Coalville, and Jim Gadsden (79) from Worthing, were in the 48th Field Regiment Royal Artillery.

**‘It was wonderful to see and talk to him because the time we spent was so dreadful’**

*Mr John Howkins*



**PALS:** Mr John Howkins (left) and Mr Jim Gadsden talk over old times when they were prisoners of war in Thailand - they both suffered at the hands of the Japanese 52-45291

The men laboured side by side in virgin jungle, breaking stones and laying railway lines in Thailand as POWs in the Second World War.

"It was rough going. They thought nothing of beating the hell out of you," said Mr Howkins.

"At one point after we had laid the majority

of the line they gave me such a good hiding nobody recognised me. They reckoned a life was lost for every sleeper on that line."

Against the odds the men survived but they were then separated and sent to different camps.

But more than 40 years later, Mr Howkins heard a radio appeal by Mr Gadsden's relatives and was reunited with his old 'oppo'.

The last time they met was at an Army reunion in Blackpool.

"It was very emotional. We both got a bit choked up, I can tell you. I recognised him as soon as I clocked him."

"It was wonderful to see and

talk to him because the time we spent was so dreadful."

Mr Howkins, who still runs a small holding, said despite suffering from pneumonia and malaria he never thought he would die.

"The doctor said 'John you're in bad shape and we've got no treatment' then the padre said 'you have not got long in this world. Are you ready to cross the river Jordan?' I said the only river I'm going to cross is the one at the bottom of that hill on my way back to Pezges Green."

The veterans, who have vowed to keep in touch, spoke of the how they survived the appalling conditions.

"At one point they needed a butcher and a couple of cooks so I put me and two mates forward."

"We didn't know what the hell we were doing but I said put on a pan of water, bring it to the boil, throw the rice in, put the lid on and hope for the best."

"And you know, it turned out wonderful. The Japanese ate it up."

"Then every time we would run out of water I would just widdle in the pot - well, you had to do something to level it up."

48<sup>TH</sup> FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY SHOULD SAY 148<sup>TH</sup>

**'Betrayed' over funeral decision**

# EX-PRISONER HITS BACK

**FORMER prisoner of war John Howkins says the Queen has dropped a right royal clanger by announcing that Prince Philip will attend the funeral of Japanese Emperor Hirohito.**

She is, he says, betraying all those who fought for their country in the Second World War.

And he reckons that North West Leicestershire Tory MP Mr David Ashby's support for her move is a slap in the face for people like himself who suffered or even lost their lives in squalid Japanese POW camps.

"Has he thought about all the lads from this area who were tortured and never returned?" asked Mr Howkins, 69, of Anchor Farm, Anchor Lane, Peggs Green.

"I can't bear to think of all the people from around here who we lost. Even people like myself who survived the atrocities still suffer mentally though others may not be able to see it.

"I have always voted for the Conservatives, but never again if that's how they think. It's disgusting."

And he believed the Royal family would lose a lot of support in the country by being represented at the funeral.

Mr Ashby says he thinks it is right for the Duke of Edinburgh — himself a veteran of the war in the Far East — to go to the funeral. Hirohito died of cancer

**BY BRIDGET DAKIN**

aged 87 on Saturday. He had ruled his country for more than 60 years.

But many war veterans believe he should have been tried as a war criminal long ago because of the way prisoners were treated by the Japanese in the Far East.

Mr Howkins was serving in Singapore with the 148th Field Regiment when it fell to the Japanese.

He told how he spent the next 3½ years in POW camps, working sometimes 24 hours a day on railway lines or clearing jungle. "Our treatment was terrible and the beatings too numerous to mention," he said.

"At one stage we had no food for 10 days. We had to boil up rats droppings and maggots with rice to survive."

Mr Howkins came close to death at one point when he went down with pneumonia and malaria. But when he and his fellow survivors were finally released he says he was the fittest man to come out of his camp — weighing just 7 stone.

Mr Howkins' bitter memories have made him completely anti-Japanese. He will not buy Japanese goods and refuses even to take a lift in Japanese cars.

But Mr Ashby says it's time to bury the hatchet. "I understand completely the feelings of former POWs over this, but we are now at peace with Japan and trade with them," he told the Times.

"Emperor Hirohito was the head of state and we will be paying respects to that symbol, not the man himself."

# Pain etched on memory

FORMER POW Arthur Ogden (76) limps badly because of beatings doled out to him by Japanese soldiers.

The tough bemedalled veteran gave thanks for Hirohito's death, only regretting his former adversary had not died at the hangman's hand.

Taken prisoner on January 4, 1942, at Kampur, Malaya, Corporal Ogden of the 1st Battalion, the Leicestershire Regiment, spent three-and-a-half gruelling years working on the building of the notorious Burma Railway which was reputed to have claimed a life for every sleeper.

## 'Beyond belief'

His Japanese captors' cruelty knew no bounds. "They were bestial. What happens in battle you expect, but what happened after was beyond belief," said Mr. Ogden, of Brabazon Road, Oadby.

"We were forced to carry sick prisoners on their stretchers to the side of the railway where they were made to break stones. Sometimes, by the time we got them back at night, they were dead".

Mr. Ogden said British doctors, deprived by the Japanese of medical supplies, fought to keep their comrades alive under appalling conditions. "Amputations were done on the roadside with old cookery knives. One lad had his appendix removed without anaesthetic — and he lived to tell the tale," he said.

John Howkins weighed just seven stones when he was released after being held captive by the Japanese for three years.

Captured when Singapore fell in 1942, Gunner Howkins, of 148th Field Regiment the Royal Artillery, witnessed horrific atrocities committed by his jailers.

"One group of Japanese soldiers made a 12-year-old Chinese boy drink petrol. Then they poured petrol all over his clothes and set light to him," said Mr. Howkins (69) of Anchor Lane, Coleorton.

Forced to work on the Burma Railway, he, too, suffered wanton brutality at the hands of his captors. "Once I was beaten so badly, my friends didn't know me. I couldn't open my mouth for a week," he recalled.

Pain and anger are etched on the veteran's memory, and he has vowed

Mr. Howkins said: "Hirohito was one of the most evil men alive."

Veteran George Hall's bitter wartime memories hurt even more when he heard Royal condolences had been sent to Hirohito's family.

He viewed the gesture as an affront to the memory of the men and women who died fighting the Japanese during the second World War.

"It's terrible to see what the country has done in sending condolences to the Japanese," said the president of the Leicestershire branch of the Burma Star Association.

Mr. Hall (68) went to Asia after fighting the Germans in Europe, only to find an even more cruel enemy. "We found an RAF pilot who had been left to die after the flesh between his hip and knee had been sliced from him by a Japanese officer's sword. We tried to help him. I don't know if he survived," said Mr. Hall of Falmouth Drive, off Welford Road.

# Poignant pilgrimage for a war veteran...

COALVILLE war veteran Samuel Hodges spent three terrible years living in atrocious conditions at the hands of the Japanese.

The 64-year-old retired building worker was used as slave labour and suffered permanent damage to his health as a prisoner of war.

But Samuel, of Crapston Drive, on the Greenhill Estate, has just spent two weeks re-living memories of his time in Japan many of which he would rather forget.

The ex-1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment soldier went on a special pilgrimage to the Far East with a party of old prisoners of war.

While visiting Thailand and Penang, Samuel went to two war cemeteries to see the graves of friends who died in the notorious Japanese prison camps.

He said this week: "It is obviously a place that does have some bad memories for me because of the time I spent as a PoW."

"But I certainly enjoyed the trip

and would not have missed it for the world."

Samuel was captured by the Japanese on New Year's Day, 1942, after being on the run for 17 days. He was cut off from the main battalion with a 32-strong party and they waded through the jungle before being caught.

Samuel added: "We were then taken to jail and stripped naked. All our clothes were then burnt and it was four or five days before we were given convicts' uniforms."

"The diet was simply rice and everyone suffered vitamin defi-

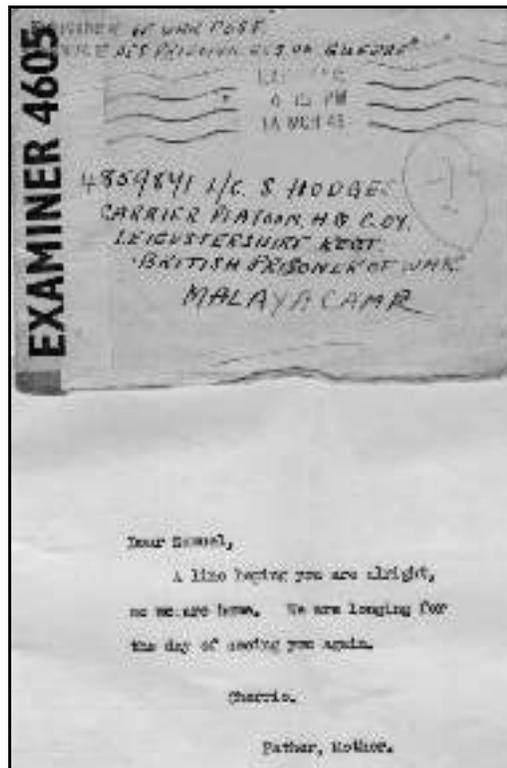
ciency. My eyes went bad and have never recovered, my stomach is ulcerated and I was advised never to drink again and at one stage I was unable to walk because my legs gave way.

"I was involved in building the Burma-Thai railway for just six months but during the whole of that time, and throughout the three years as a prisoner, I was never given any boots. I walked round barefoot all the time."

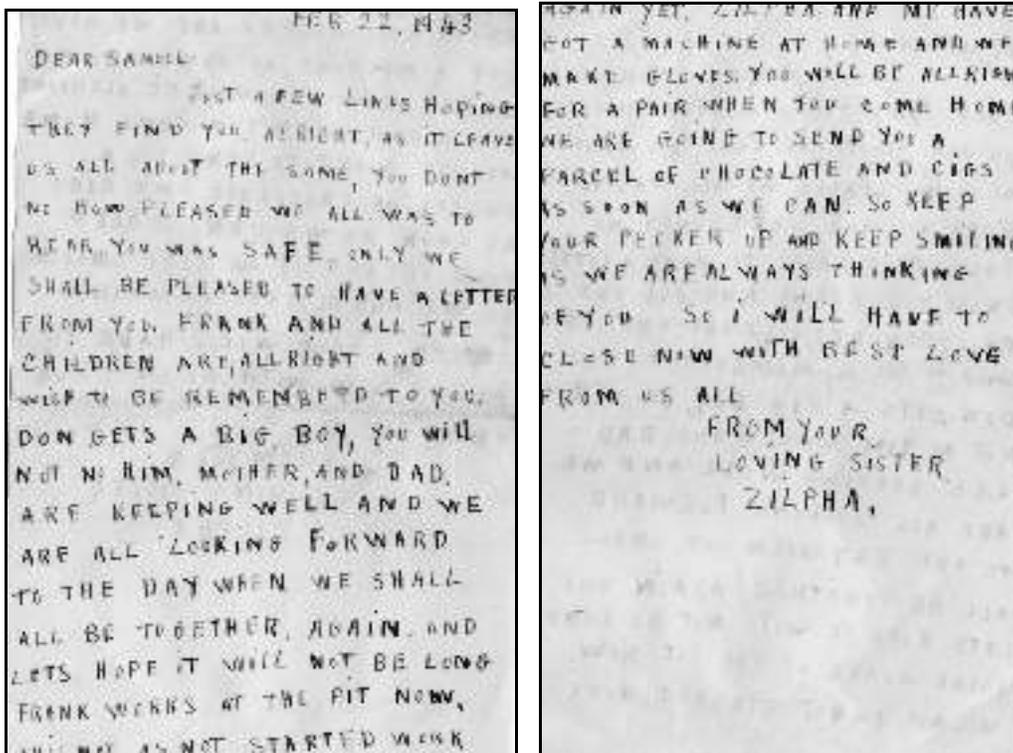
• Samuel is pictured here looking through photographs taken of his memory-jogging pilgrimage.



LETTERS SENT TO SAM HODGES FROM HIS FAMILY



LETTERS SENT TO SAM HODGES BY HIS MUM, DAD AND SISTER WHICH HE APPARENTLY DID NOT RECEIVE TILL HE WAS LIBERATED



# MEDALS

## SAMUEL DIMMOCK'S MEDALS



## DESCRIPTION OF MEDALS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

- The 1939–1945 Star - A military campaign medal, instituted by the United Kingdom on 8 July 1943 for award to subjects of the British Commonwealth for service in the Second World War.
- The Pacific Star - A military campaign medal instituted by the United Kingdom in May 1945 awarded to British and Commonwealth forces who served in the Pacific Campaign from 8<sup>th</sup> Dec 1941 to 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept 1945, during the Second World War.
- Defence Medal - Awarded to service personnel for three years service in a non-operational area (e.g. India) or six months service overseas in territories subjected to air attack or otherwise closely threatened. (Obverse) the uncrowned head of King George VI, (reverse) two lions flanking an oak sapling crowned with the dates at the sides and wavy lines representing the sea below. The words THE DEFENCE MEDAL appears in the exergue
- War Medal – Awarded to all fulltime personnel of the armed forces wherever they were serving, so long as they had served for at least 28 days between 3rd September 1939 and 2nd September 1945 were eligible for this medal. (Obverse) effigy of King George VI; (reverse) a triumphant lion trampling a dragon symbolising the Axis Powers. It was granted in addition to the campaign stars and the Defence Medal

### **SAMUEL HODGES MEDALS**



### **JOHN HOWKINS**

**MEDALS NOT AVAILABLE AT TIME OF PUBLICATION**

## **SAMUEL DIMMOCK & SAMUEL HODGES**

### **'FROM GLEN PARVA BARRACKS TO INDIA' TO JOIN THE 1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION, LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT**

At the beginning of the Second World War, **Samuel Dimmock** and **Samuel Hodges** enlisted with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment. **Samuel Dimmock** enlisted on 15.11.1939 and **Samuel Hodges** on 15.9.1939. On his war record, **Samuel Dimmock's** next of kin was given as his mother Elizabeth Dimmock at Main Street (now Elder Lane), Griffydam. **Samuel Hodges** next of kin was given as parents T & S.A. Hodges, Top Road, Griffydam. Their professions were given as Coal Miner & Worker respectively. Both achieved the rank of Lance Corporal in India.

At the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, the 1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment was in India and the 2nd Battalion in Palestine, engaged in the Arab rebellion. At home, the two Territorial Battalions, the 1/5<sup>th</sup> and the 2/5<sup>th</sup>, had been mobilised. By the time the war had ended, the Regiment's battalions had served in action in every theatre of the war, a record which is claimed to be unique.

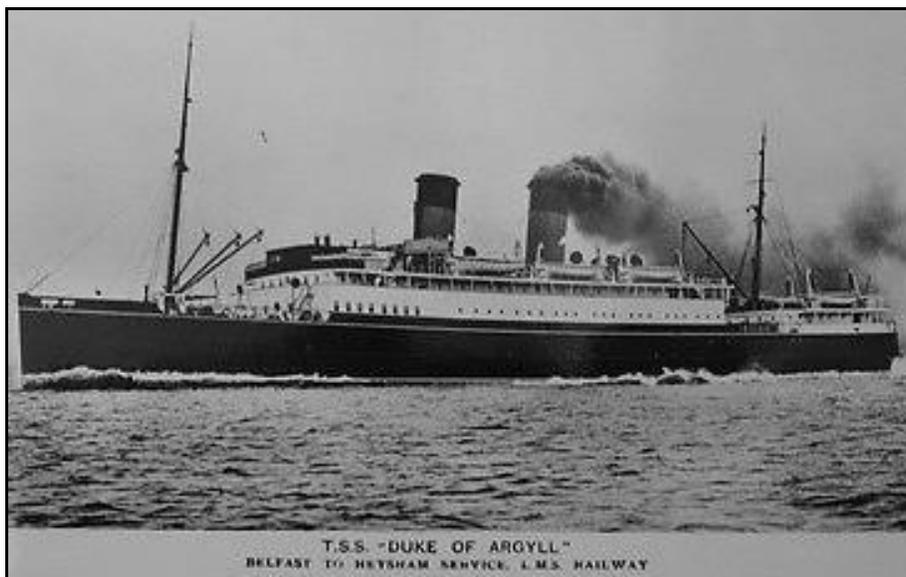
THE FOLLOWING SYNOPSIS IN ITALICS IS TAKEN FROM J.E. WHITAKERS DETAILED PAPERS ON THE 1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION, LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT IN WHICH HE DESCRIBES HIS EXPERIENCES IN DETAIL FROM ENLISTING TO TRAVELLING TO GLEN PARVA BARRACKS AND THEN ONTO INDIA AND HIS TIME THERE. J.E.WHITAKER WAS IN THE SAME DRAFT AS SAM DIMMOCK. SEE THE FOLLOWING LISTING. SAM HODGES WAS NOT IN THIS PARTICULAR DRAFT, BUT AS HE ENLISTED 2 MONTHS PRIOR TO SAM DIMMOCK HE PRESUMABLY WOULD HAVE ARRIVED IN INDIA BEFORE HIM. THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT THEIR EXPERIENCES WOULD HAVE MIRRORED THOSE OF WHITAKER. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT SAM DIMMOCK OR SAM HODGES WOULD HAVE BEEN IN EACH OTHERS COMPANY AT ANY TIME FROM GLEN PARVA TO THE END OF THE FAR EAST CONFLICT, WHICH MAY COME AS A SURPRISE TO THE RELATIVES OF THESE TWO MEN. MUCH OF THE HUMEROUS PARTS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF LIESURE TIME, OF WHICH THERE APPEARED TO BE A GOOD DEAL, BOTH AT GLEN PARVA AND INDIA, HAS HAD TO BE OMITTED DUE TO SPACE AVAILABILITY, HOWEVER, THE WRITER HAS A COPY OF WHITAKER'S PAPERS SHOULD ANYONE WISH TO READ THE FULL AND ENTERTAINING STORY AS FAR AS INDIA. BOTH SAMS WERE MADE UP TO LANCE CORPORAL SOMETIME DURING THEIR STAY IN INDIA. AFTER RECEIVING THEIR ORDERS THAT THE LEICESTERS' WHERE BEING MOVED TO PENANG IN MALAYA, THINGS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY FOR THE WORSE OF COURSE.

*Both **Sam Hodges** & **Sam Dimmock** first went to Glen Parva Depot / Barracks, South Wigston of the Leicester Regiment for basic training. Whitaker describes travelling there on an unusually full bus with young men sat in pairs or singly. Some obviously knew each other. Others had struck up a conversation, the ice broken by the anticipation of the immediate future they were about to share. Some sitting singly were set faced, perhaps reliving the emotion of a recent parting, and facing the realization that they could be on an irreversible journey! They were a mixed bunch, mainly Townies. Lads who had left their elementary schools at the age of fourteen, seeking jobs as best they could in the depression of the early thirties, to exist without much hope of a career. They had little craft training, and few acquired skills of value. It had to be so; otherwise they would not have been on their way to join their infantry at Glen Parva depot of the Leicestershire regiment.....*

*Having gone through the red brick gate posts to the Guardroom where an armed sentry paced, a red faced N.C.O. awaited us. He ordered us to follow him in a tone of voice we were to become accustomed to. We were in the army, now squaddies. We presented our call up papers for registration. A Sergeant counted us into a group of twenty one, and then formed us into three ranks, not without a little confusion. He was accustomed to giving commands which were understood and acted on instinctively. When we had conformed to his satisfaction, he gave the order 'Right Turn'. We shuffled flat footed to our right.....Basic training began on the third day. Foot drill, arms drill, care and use of a rifle*

and small machine gun, killing efficiently with a bayonet, gas warfare protection, physical training, route marches and elementary field tactics and communications.....Our pay was 2/- (10p) per day, but instead of receiving 14/- on pay day we were given 10/-. Four shillings were withheld as 'stoppages' but we never knew what they were for.....In the seventh week we fired our rifles and Bren light machine guns at Kibworth, and then received our postings. New friendships, born of shared experiences were to be broken. Two were to be promoted to Lance Corporal. Some were to go to battalions for further training. Others were selected for specialist training, signals and motor transport. Before the end of the week though, a call was made for volunteers to be posted to the 1<sup>st</sup> (Regular) Battalion stationed at Agra, India. Embarkation leave with moving farewells was followed by inoculations and a period in temporary and sparse billets in an empty factory in Blaby, where for a few days we were employed clearing county roads of snow in the harsh winter of early 1940.....

Lorries took us one evening through the blackout to the Leicester Central Station.....it was a slow halting journey to Southampton, picking up drafts from other regiments on the way, arriving dockside mid-morning. We eventually boarded our ship 'The Duke of Argyll' late in the afternoon, due to sail sometime during the night. We were crowded into a third class saloon, designed to accommodate thirty passengers. On a choppy, blustery crossing in closed blackout restrictions, with nearly everyone smoking, the deck, despite the cold and the rain, was more attractive. That is where I stayed with some necessary visits to the side, until the coast of France came into view at dawn.



We berthed at Cherbourg, our first experience of being 'out foreign'. Disembarkation draft by draft, took some time, and after further waiting at our assembly point we marched to the railway station where we were to entrain for Marseilles.....We had one more night of discomfort, to awake to a sunny luxuriant countryside getting occasional glimpses of the Mediterranean as we approached Marseilles. We alighted at the dockside where 'Neuralia' was birthed. She was a British India Steam Navigation Co, coal burner of some 9,000 tons and built in 1912. She was struck by a mine and sank on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1945.....

We sailed into the Med without escort.....We had a good view of Pantellaria. We stopped at Valetta where letters for home, censored by our Officers, were taken ashore. We saw no more land until we reached Port Said.....

We berthed at Port Said to take on coal. A procession of coolies carrying containers on their heads negotiated a perilous looking plank.....Passage through the canal provoked memories of history lessons on how important the waterway was to the defense of the Empire.....Then on to Port Suez and out into the Red Sea.....Mail was called for, to be put ashore at Aden, where the ship stopped briefly in the darkness. Then off on the final leg across the Indian Ocean.....

We approached Bombay through dull green water to see another potent symbol of Empire, the arch of the Gateway to India. It was at this moment that the finality of our break with home sank in.....After roll call, and the Captain had satisfied himself that we had left our accommodation in a satisfactory condition, we stood down awaiting our turn to file ashore. Waiting to receive us was C.S.M Meredith (later to be awarded the D.S.M. in Malaya), immaculate in crisp creased Khaki Drill, giving us the first sight of what was to be our uniform. He took charge of our final journey by train. Late in the afternoon, our train left for the long journey to Agra.....

The troop train arrived at Agra Cantonment station on a crisp dawn in the cooler season, in late February 1940. Three weeks earlier, our journey started from a frozen Glen Parva.....

We joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Leicester's, three months after their tour of duty at Razmak in Waziristan guarding the North West Frontier. It was a short journey to Akbar Barracks to be housed in a long spacious single storey building flanked by a double verandah each side.....

We began another, but longer (twelve weeks) period of basic training under regular N.C.O.s, which included educational classes and the examination for the Army's Grade 3 certificate of education.....we learned how to dress correctly in Khaki Drill Shirts, shorts being heavily starched by the Dhobi, hose tops and puttees. Solar topees (pith helmets) were compulsory in the sun.....also compulsory were slacks and rolled down shirt sleeves after sunset. Our rifles were Lee Enfield .303 but the light machine gun was the Vickers Berthia, not the Bren standard used at home.....

On completion of training we were integrated into 'D' company for full battalion duties, with all the attendant features of regular army life in India.....

Our field training included two weeks under canvas beside the walls of Fatehpur Sikri about twenty miles from Agra. Built in the mid sixteenth century it had been abandoned after fifty years. Due, it is said, to a poor water supply. We marched across country carrying out tactical exercises on the way, making a bivouac stop in the open overnight. We slept with our rifles chained to our wrists, as we did for the whole period of camp. Two officers, who still had their horses, led their platoons mounted. They later rode them to give mobility when acting as umpires on exercises. In our off duty periods we enjoyed exploring inside the city walls with its Royal Apartments, Mosque, and the huge red sandstone Victory Gate. We force marched the return journey in half a day. About this time, two of our draft were sent home as unfit for service.....

The highlight of the year was the visit to the hill station Chakrata during the hot weather, two companies at a time. It was the nearest thing to leave we enjoyed. Even then, field training and training courses occupied some of the time. A railway journey via Delhi ended at Dehra Dun. We then boarded buses to take a winding and stomach churning route up to six thousand feet in the foothills of the Himalayas, visible to the north east. It was a relaxing period with time for sport and walking in the hills, with the great pleasure of sleeping under blankets without mosquito nets!.....An unedifying spectacle amongst all our experiences was the sight of our barrack room 'Sweepers' waiting outside our dining room, sometimes accompanied by their children, equipped with a four gallon tin, into which we disposed of our uneaten scraps. This rejected food then became their food. Religious scruples did not appear to matter. Pork and beef both went into the tin.

#### **CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE**



**1940 – UP IN THE HILLS AT CHAKATRA HILL STATION IN INDIA - SAMUEL HODGES FAR LEFT**

#### **RIFLE RANGE & MACHINE GUN PRACTICE (as told by Sam Hodges to his son Michael)**

They were marched in company strength, 22 miles up in the hills to Chakrata (6,000 ft up in the Himalayas) for rifle and Vickers machine gun practice and then staggered the 22 miles back to the cantonments. Several blokes would collapse on the march back and were picked up by the 3 ton lorry following behind which had transported the ammunition and Vickers machine guns earlier. At some point, **Sam** was in the machine gun

platoon and he mentioned them having mules to carry the Vickers. They had to set off to Chakrata when it was still dark as it was cooler and then returned late as the sun was setting and the temperature was falling. They fired their weapons into the rifle butts and after completion, several men were detailed to pick up as many empty casings as possible and to dig as many spent bullets out of the dirt and sand bags where the targets had been situated. This was to prevent the locals, who were colloquially know as ‘wogs’ to the white soldiers, an unacceptable term in today’s society of course, getting their hands on them and recycling them into brass ingots etc. A great deal of chasing after the locals by the soldiers took place, but they were apparently fleet of foot, and not even caught by the top ‘regimental sprinter’.



**SAMUEL DIMMOCK IN INDIA (FAR LEFT)**

**CONTINUATION FROM PREVIOUS PAGE**

*Almost to a year, this regime ended. Orders came for a move to an unnamed destination. The Cha Wallah told us it was Penang, off the coast of Malaya. His information was correct, as it usually was, said the regulars with long service in India. The Cha Wallah always knew. We were to reinforce the defenses of Malaya and Singapore against the developing threat of the Japanese. Of that ill fated campaign, fourteen of our draft alone did not return home.*

**14 OUT OF THE 41 MEN IN SAM DIMMOCKS DRAFT (34%) WERE EITHER SUBSEQUENTLY KILLED IN ACTION OR DIED AS POWs**

**J.E. WHITAKER’S DRAFT WHICH INCLUDED SAM DIMMOCK**

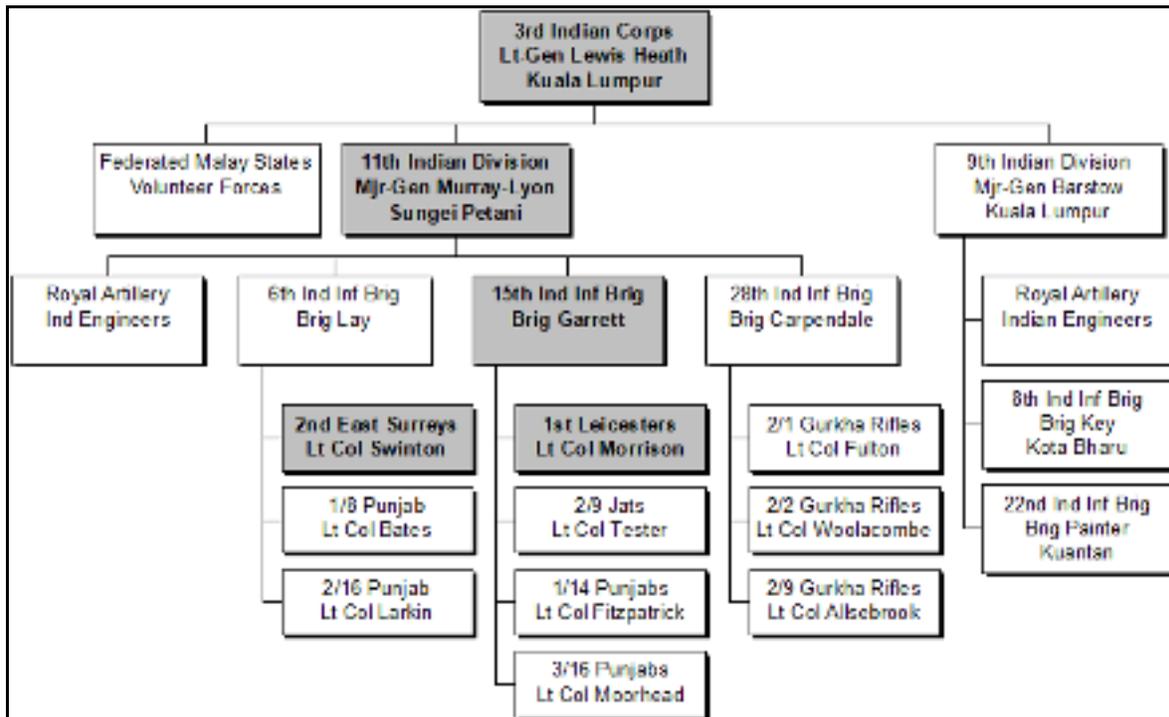
<b>NAME</b>	<b>RANK</b>	<b>FROM</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Joe Ancliffe	Sergeant	Nottingham	
Ted Orton	Corporal	Birstall	
‘Wonk’ Mansfield	Lance Corporal	Leicester	Died Sungei Patani 25.8.1941
Harry Norman	Lance Corporal	Leicester	Killed in action 14.12.1941

Frank Astill		Nottingham	Died as POW
Matt Bastow		Worksop	
Wally Barnacle		Leicester	Killed in action 1.1.1942
George Beech		Loughborough	
'Bubbles' Blowers		Leicester	
'Topper' Bown		Nottingham	
Bobby Brewin		Quorn	
Charles Carrier		Rutland	Killed in action 14.12.1941
Tom Chesson		Norfolk	Died as POW on 14.9.1943
<b>SAMMY DIMMOCK</b>		<b>GRIFFYDAM</b>	
'Dicko' Dixon		Leicester	
Tommy Eales		Leicester	
'Duke' Ellingworth		Leicester	
'Knocker' Garret		Hugglescote	Killed in action 14.12.1941
Jim Gaze		Hoby	
'Hoot' Gibson		Stapleton	
'Dhobi' Haines		Coalville	Died as POW on 2.8.1943
Eddie Hall		Whitwick	
Lennie Hamp		Leicester	
Maurice Hitchcock		Coalville area	Died as POW on Aug 1942
Johnnie Inglesant		Leicester	Died as POW
Reg Mayne		Barwell	Killed in action 10.12.1941
Pat Orton		Broughton Astley	
Frank Patchet		Leicester	
George Perkins		Rothley	
'Pompey' Portsmouth		Loughborough	
Matt Robson		Wigston	
'Nimuk' Salt		Leicester	Killed in action 12.2.1942

Tom Sansome			
Danny Simpson		Leicester	
'Chief' Spring		Melton Mowbray	Killed in action February 1942
Tommy Stanton		West Midlands	
Artur Starkey		Sapcote	
Bertie Storer			
Cyril Storer		Coalville	Died as POW on 20.7.1943
'Nanty' Whitaker		Leicester	
Joe White		Oadby	

### BATTLE ORDERS ANNOUNCED IN INDIA ON 10<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 1941

The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment reports to the 15<sup>th</sup> India Infantry Brigade which reported to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Indian Corps. See the chart below:-



THE ABOVE INFORMATION CHART WAS KINDLY PROVIDED BY KEN HEWITT ©

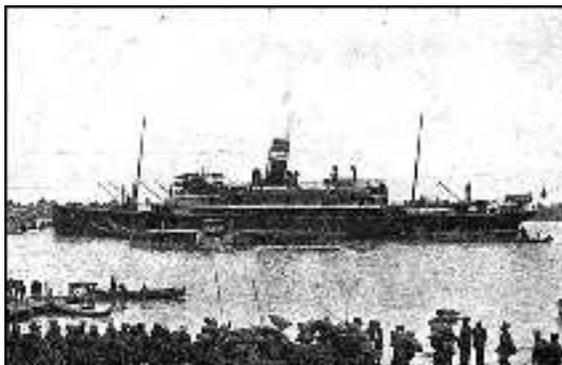
## **SAMUEL DIMMOCK & SAMUEL HODGES**

### **THE 1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION, LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENTS MOVE FROM INDIA TO PENANG AND THE ENSUING BATTLES AT JITRA, ALOR STAR AND KAMPAR ON THE MALAYAN MAINLAND**

At the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, the 1st Battalion was in India and the 2nd Battalion in Palestine, engaged in the Arab rebellion. At home, the two Territorial Battalions, the 1/5th and the 2/5th, had been mobilised. By the time the war had ended, the Regiment's battalions had served in action in every theatre of the war, a record which is claimed to be unique.

The 1st Battalion remained in India until February 1941 when it transferred to Penang. Following a period of training, the Leicesters' sailed from Penang in May 1941 to the mainland of Malaya and were stationed at Sungei Patani, where they became part of the 11<sup>th</sup> Indian Division. By June they were apparently stationed in the sunless interior of a rubber plantation. At this time, things started to get serious, as war with the Japanese was looming. Sungei Patani was not good, but there were worse places to serve one's time, as they now found out.

#### **THE FOLLOWING SYNOPSIS IN ITALICS IS TAKEN FROM J.E. WHITAKER'S DIARY ON THE 1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION, LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT IN WHICH HE DESCRIBES THE LEICESTERS' JOURNEY TO PENANG AND THEIR SUBSEQUENT EXPERIENCES**



*The S.S. Ekma, a 5,107 TONS British India Steam navigation Co., trooper, was a Belfast built old timer, of some thirty years service in the Empire and cost £100,900 to build. She had brought the battalion from Calcutta, down the muddy Hooghly, across the Bay of Bengal, to make a stop at Rangoon. There, to stretch our legs, we were taken on a march around the city on a route which skirted a picturesque lake in an area of colonial affluence. Now, at the end of our voyage, the ship was lying stationary in the Straight between our destination Penang, and mainland Malaya.....At the time of our arrival we were below strength by 243 in all ranks. We had no idea of the clear purpose of our move. Nor it seems, did our commanding officer. Lt. Col. R.G.G. Harvey (then a Major, second in command) who wrote of the transfer in the Regimental Magazine, the 'Green Tiger', of November 1948: 'This move was classified as a normal relief, and the battalion took with it its colours and a certain amount of mess silver, and quite a large weight of personal luggage was allowed'. He goes on to say "that all personal property was stored in Bombay". But, mess silver, less valuable or not, hardly suggests that a military threat to Malaya was considered to be an immediate prospect. Later in his account, he states that: "In Penang, conditions were, at that time, essentially those of peace, and we seemed no nearer war than we*

were at Agra". Even so, there was some indication that our presence was other than peacetime garrison duties as Penang did not normally have a garrison of infantry battalion strength.....We were to be equipped to U.K. establishment. Also now being stationed in a Crown Colony, we conformed to the standards of discipline and conduct required by King's Regulations particularly to the Government of India. Our light machine gun was to be the Bren, a weapon the regulars had not used in India. Two Inch Mortars, Thompson Sub Machine Guns and the Bowes Anti Tank Rifle were weapons new to all of us.....Gone were afternoons in bed, though we still had generous periods of free time. Despite the extensive retraining required, it did not appear in the early period to have any great degree of urgency. We were all no nearer war than in India.....Prowler precautions around each Company area were not posted in camp, and access through the wide perimeter would have been easy. The 'Glugor' detachment was a pleasant duty. Adjacent to the Guardhouse was a first class swimming pool, available to us during off duty hours. In the warm tropical nights, after the routine visit of the Orderly Officer, aided by the Nelsonian eye of a tolerant Guard Commander, those not on sentry would forgo sleep to enjoy the luxury of a midnight bathe.....In our field exercise briefings, the enemy we were supposedly facing became to be described as 'slits'. An indication of whom the enemy was expected to be.....Our freedom equated with army life at home. Duty hours and training rarely varied from Reveille to late afternoon, with most weekends free, but sport played a lesser part in our off duty hours.....Taxis queued near the camp entrance to take us to town where we moved freely amongst a mixture of races. Particular favourites were Swiss Café and Wing Look's. The latter ended up a flight of stairs where often there hovered a lady of uncertain age, and uncertain shape beneath a brightly coloured sarong. She appeared to have an unsteady hand with garish makeup. The soldiers with their aptitude for nicknames dubbed her 'Mexicali Rose', the title of a waltz tune popular when they left home. Some became her guests with no unpleasant results. At a small named 'Cookery Nook', the owner was a European lady. To find a very acceptable 'Melton Mowbray pork pie' on her menu was an unexpected treat.....One fondly remembered example of hospitality from European civilians was a weekend expeditions for the entire company to an estate on the mainland called Bukit Maertajam. Travelling by lorry, ferried across the straight to Butterworth, we spent a whole day being entertained in style.....Taxi drivers had a persistent habit, of choosing a route through the sleazy brothel area of Malacca Street. Some men ignored the advice given frequently by the M.O., to later spend a period of isolation in the modern civilian hospital as his warnings came true. Return to duty meant a period on defaulters (Jankers). Confinement to camp with compulsory parades at the Guardroom, fifteen minutes after Reveille, and fifteen minutes before 'Lights Out', properly dressed. During off duty periods they could also be summoned by bugle call for fatigue duties. A bugle call with the mocking words 'You can have jankers as long as you like, as long as you answer the call'. As a follow up to the warnings, routine parades known as 'short arm' inspection were held, where, one by one the M.O. made a visual examination of each man!!.....The new found freedom led to some adventures, the most notorious of which involved four private soldiers of 'D' company. They extended their off duty pleasures beyond that deemed by the C.O. to be reasonable. His judgment was that they serve a period of detention in the Guardhouse. One evening whilst being escorted to their ablutions, they made a concerted and successful dash for freedom. After a week or so the Military Police found them leading a carefree life, in a cave, in the company of the girls who had been the cause of their original misdemeanor. For this second escapade, their reward was a period in the dreaded Glasshouse in Singapore. One of the four, whilst awaiting transit, occupied his time writing a description of their idyll. Before they left, he passed it around the soldiers guarding him. The title he chose was 'The White Heart of a Black Prostitute'. In addition to their professional comforts (unpaid for), the girls, by his account, supplied their need in a caring and affectionate manner.

Japan had entered the war when Japanese carrier-borne aircraft inflicted heavy damage on the Pearl Harbour American naval base on the Pacific island of Oahu which brought America into World War II. It is a misconception that the Pacific War began with the attack on Pearl Harbour, as in fact, prior to that, the Japanese Army were already attacking British territory in Malaya. During the day and night of the 7<sup>th</sup> / 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1941, at the same time the attack on Pearl Harbour was taking place, the Japanese fleet landed its 25<sup>th</sup> Army at three ports - Singora and Pattani in Thailand (formerly Siam) and Kota Bharu in Malaysia. This consisted of 70,000 men and 211 tanks. Although the British and Commonwealth forces outnumbered them with 88,000 men, they had no tanks and virtually no air support, their most effective weapon being the artillery 25 pounder guns with a maximum range of seven miles.

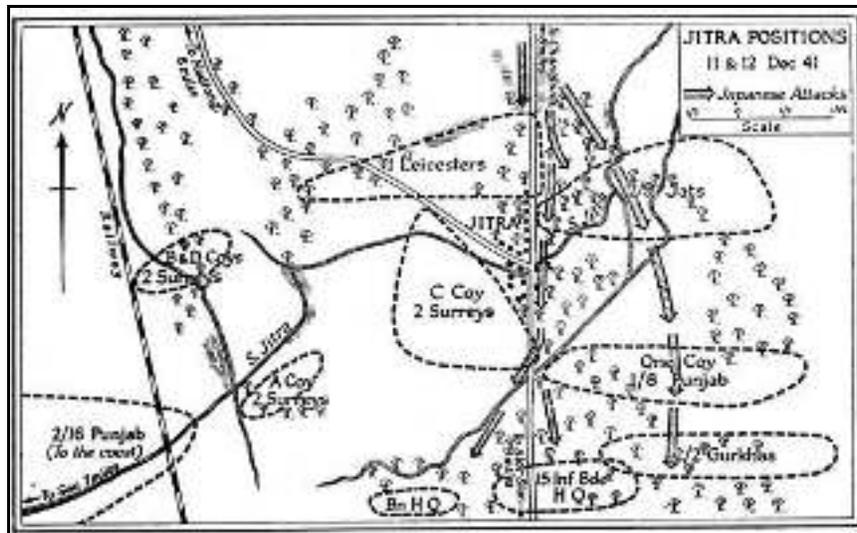
On 7<sup>th</sup> December 1941, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Leicestershire Regiment was in position at Jitra by the time the Japanese invaders had begun pushing into Malaya. In December, the imaginary 'Slits' had become a reality, and by Christmas, Penang as we knew it, the so called 'Fortress Penang', had apparently gone forever. As it turned out, the little yellow men could see in the dark it seemed.

Allied defenses at Jitra were not completed when the Pacific War broke out. Barbed wire lines had been erected and some anti-tank mines laid but heavy rains had flooded the shallow trenches and gun pits. Many of the field telephone cables laid across the waterlogged ground also failed to work, resulting in a lack of communication during the battle.

On the night of the 10<sup>th</sup> /11<sup>th</sup> December, contact was made with the enemy, and from then on, the Battalion was continually in action until the final surrender of Singapore in February 1942.

The British front line was as long as 14 miles, stretching across both roads and a railway, and far beyond on either side, from the jungle-clad hills on the right via flooded rice fields and a rubber estate to a tidal mangrove swamp on the left.

### THE BATTLE AT JITRA



**MAP SHOWING THE 1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT AT JITRA & TO THE SOUTH EAST THE 2<sup>ND</sup> BATTALION EAST SURREY REGIMENT WITH WHICH THEY AMALGAMATED FOLLOWING THE BATTLE AT JITRA, TO FORM THE FAMOUS 'BRITISH BATTALION'**

Two brigades of Major General David Murray-Lyon's 11th Indian Division held the front line. On the right were the 15th Indian Infantry Brigade, composed of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment, the 1/14th Punjab Regiment and the 2/9th Jat regiment; on the left, were the 6th Indian Infantry Brigade, composed of the 2nd East Surreys, the 1/8th and 2/16th Punjab Regiments. Batteries from the 155th Field Regiment, the 22nd Mountain Regiment and the 80th Anti-tank Regiment provided the artillery support. A third brigade, the 28th Indian Infantry Brigade, consisting of three Gurkha battalions, was placed in divisional reserve.

Lt-General A. E. Percival's GOC (General Officer Commanding) men were soundly beaten, and from this battle were in full retreat. The Japanese attack was based on speed, ferocity and surprise. To speed their advance, the Japanese used bicycles as one means of transport. During the retreat, the Leicesters' were engaged in fighting at Alor Star. Heavy losses were incurred and men were dispersed over a wide area.

Captured wounded Allied soldiers were killed where they lay. Those who were not injured but had surrendered were also murdered – some captured Australian troops were doused with petrol and burned to death. Locals who had helped the Allies were tortured before being murdered. The brutality of the Japanese soldiers shocked the British.

The battle lasted from the 11th to 13th December 1941. The resulting defeat compelled Arthur Percival to order all Allied aircraft stationed in Malaya to withdraw to Singapore.

During this time, the Leicesters' fought hard and well against a little known enemy. Groups of men were continually being cut off, but in many cases fought their way back to the main body.

### **CAPTAIN I. D. V. MITCHELL'S ACCOUNT OF 'D' COMPANY 'H.Q.' IN THE WITHDRAWAL FROM JITRA**

*Having received orders from Battalion H.Q. to withdraw to a position along the Jitra Canal at approx 16:00 hrs on Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, the company moved and were in position by 18:00hrs. Immediate efforts were made to contact the battalion Headquarters, but although every means were tried, this was found impossible and contact was never made. Contact was made with 'B' company however on our right flank.*

*During the night, a good deal of firing was heard from the direction of Jitra village and south of it. Platoons reported movement of Japanese patrols around our positions and some firing took place.*

*At dawn on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup>, I took out a small patrol from Company HQ to contact 'B' Company, but could only find two sections – I saw Japanese troops debussing by the bypass and some motorcyclists on the road. This confirmed my suspicions that the remainder of our forces had withdrawn. I immediately gave orders to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Roger to take his platoon, and Sgt. Leary's platoon (less one section). Captain Ley to take Sgt. Blake's platoon and I would take Company HQ, one section of Sgt. Leary's platoon and the two sections of 'B' Company. Their orders were to keep west and left of Elephant Hill and make our lines again either by walking or sea.*

*At 08:50hrs approx, I left my party and apart from shots from Kg Manggoi and 'B' Companies old position prior to our moving, no fire was brought to bear on the company.*

*The going was extremely hard as were moving through 'Padi', and at one point were held up some time by a deep river, where we met an Indian Sepoy (infantryman) who told us our troops were only a short distance away. This took us from our course naturally, only to find on arriving in the new camp west of the east Surreys' lines at Tanjong Pau, that the information was false. Here we found vehicles loaded, their driver's rifles, tin hats and respirators in some of the vehicles and ammunition and other arms lying about. The time then was about 13:30hrs. We had some food there. A patrol sent to the road reported Jap movement on it.*

*I then took the party west again, hoping to join our troops near the aerodrome – we crossed the river west of Kepla Batas but found Japs on the road there, so re-crossed the river again and continued west – about 18:00 hours. We met two Malays who stated that Alor Star was in our hands and would direct us back, as they were on the way to the hospital. They took us again across the river and up the main road, across the railway line at Anak Bukit and it was not till we reached the two and a quarter mile stone from Alor Star that they took fright, from no doubt on asking some other Malays on the road side, that the Japs were in front of us. By this time, everyone was dead beat having been on the move for over twelve hours, and finding we could not re-cross the river, we slept the night in some police quarters near the road. During the night we heard Jap transport moving up and in the morning saw them in our vehicles.*

*Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> – again we crossed the river and made due west for the sea giving up the idea of attempting to find our lines again – the going was all Padi, and at times we were up to the waste in water and mud. We slept the night in the Padi fields, in some cow sheds – we had bought food from the Chinese who were most helpful, but the Malays were all against us.*

*We reached the sea at about 09:00hrs on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> – here we found no sign of any boats, but as there was cover from the air and a good field of view in all directions, I decided that, owing to the men being in bad shape, I would take three volunteers and try and find some boats. I took bearings from the sheds and made arrangements with CSM Crook to keep a watch for us – I told him that if we could not get a boat for all, I would get the navy from Penang, thinking that everything would be in order – if we did not return by midnight Tuesday, they were to attempt to get back on their own.*

*We made a fishing village which I believe was Kuala Kedah about 12:30hrs but owing to the Malays and our lack of money we could not get boats for everyone that would have taken them anywhere, so we decided to go straight for Penang in a small boat; so we took one and rowed till we were picked up pretty well dead beat at about 22:00hrs that night opposite Kedah Peak, by a Chinese junk making for Penang. So we got to Penang next morning only to find them about to evacuate the island, and that the Navy, or what there was of it, had orders not to go further North than a few miles from Penang – the Brigadier told me there were no other boats in which I could go back, and I and my party were to join the volunteers.*

\*\*\*

Unfortunately, **Sam Hodges** was in one of those groups that were cut off and he was taken prisoner by the Japanese on New Years Day 1942 (not a good start to the New Year!) after being on the run for 17 days. He was cut off from the main battalion as part of a 32-strong party, after retreating in the direction of Singapore. They had waded a long distance through the jungle before being captured.

It is possible that **Sam Hodges** was in Mitchell's group to start with but got left behind at Alor Star, although Mitchell makes no reference to leaving any men behind

The group of 32 was in very poor health and at the end of their tether. Apparently, on New Years Eve, they stayed with a Chinese Christian family who fed all 32 blokes. At some point early in the following morning, a local informed on them to the nearest Japanese unit. This resulted in them being surrounded by the Japs and they had no choice but to surrender.

**Sam** was sleeping in a hut at the time with Private Hugh Pritchard (see the feature on casualties in Kanchanaburi War Cemetery at the end of the book). He was formerly in the 'Kings Shropshire Light Infantry Regiment' and had transferred to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment as the KSLI were returning to England. He was considered an old soldier at 38 by all the young Leicester lads.

After surrendering, the Japs lined all the Brits up, and **Sam** asked if he could retrieve his shirt that he had left inside the hut. On entering the hut, he saw Hugh Pritchard lying dead on the floor having been bayoneted to death, presumably for refusing to surrender!

The Japs tied their wrists together with kitchen string and were then told to get into the back of a truck. **Sam** told his son Michael, that watching the lads trying to get onto the back of the truck was like a West End farce, some getting in and then falling out etc., as they were in such an emaciated state. Eventually they were taken to Taiping civilian prison, stripped and put in cells with several other lads. All their clothes were burnt and it was not till four or five days later that they were given convicts uniforms.

When the first meal was given to them, it was a bowl of rice with all sorts of creepy crawlies in it. One bloke said "I'm not eating that" and a response to that was "well you'll not be getting ham sandwiches". After a few

days he had died, and **Sam** seemed to think that he just gave up. As POWs, their diet throughout internment over the years was nothing but rice, usually with some green liquid (marrow), and everyone suffered vitamin deficiency. **Sam's** eyes were badly affected and they never recovered. His stomach became badly ulcerated and he was advised never to drink alcohol again. At one stage, he was unable to walk because his legs gave way.

In July 1942, the POWs from Taiping were transferred to Kuala Lumpur Pudu Gaol where the number of Leicesters there totaled 76. Around that time, two Leicester POWs had died in Pudu Gaol, one apparently of malaria and the other of dysentery. Over the course of the following few months, POWs were transferred from Kuala Lumpur to both Thailand and Changi, Singapore.

**Sam** was entrained directly back to Singapore on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1942 arriving with 161 other Brits comprising 26 Officers & 135 other ranks. Records show that **Sam** went straight to hospital suggesting that he was very poorly, not surprisingly, because he even missed out on early parties being entrained from Singapore to work on the Burma to Thailand 'Death Railway'. He would have gone to either the 'Alexander Military Hospital' or the 'Civilian Hospital', where terrible atrocities were carried out by the Japanese after the surrender of Singapore (see the later feature on this).

***Sam** recorded in a newspaper article, that in all the time he was kept as a POW (3yrs, 8 months), he was never issued with any new boots and was forced to walk around bare foot for most of the time.*



**THIS IS THE IDENTIFICATION BADGE GIVEN TO SAM BY THE JAPANESE, PRESUMABLY AFTER HE WAS CAPTURED AND SENT TO JAIL. SAM SCRATCHED HIS OWN NAME ON IT**

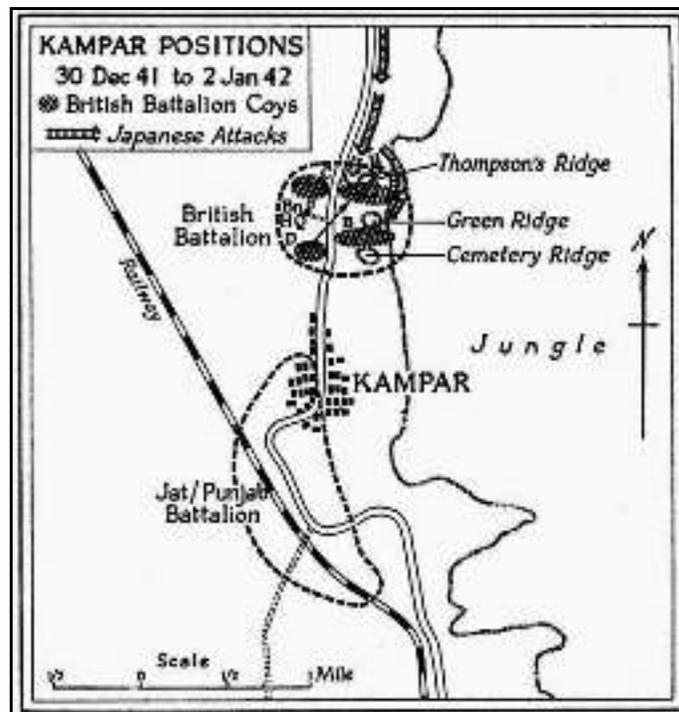
The Division was re-established at Gurun, where the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion east Surrey Regiment was in the front line. They were the only other British Battalion within the 11<sup>th</sup> Indian Division. Heavy losses were suffered when the Brigade and the Battalion HQ's were overrun by the Japanese forces.

Following a retreat to Ipoh, the decision was taken on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1941 due to the heavy losses suffered by both the '2nd Battalion - The East Surrey Regiment', and the '1st Battalion, Leicesters', that both battalions should amalgamate to form the famous 'British Battalion' under the command of the former Leicester's commander Lt. Col Morrison.



FROM SAM HODGES' ARCHIVE

## THE BATTLE FOR KAMPAR



MAP SHOWING THE BRITISH BATTALION WHICH WAS AN AMALGAMATION OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION, LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT & THE 2<sup>ND</sup> BATTALION, EAST SURREY REGIMENT IN ACTION AT THE BATTLE OF KAMPAR

The 'British Battalion' now withdrew to Kampar (see the above map) where it held a relatively strong defensive position from which they could observe the enemies advance from the hill side. They engaged in battle on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1941 and both the Japanese and the British Battalion suffered heavy losses over a three day period. Further action was seen at Batu Pahat where a large contingent of Japanese forces was coming ashore and the British Battalion was once again forced to retreat. It was decided to leave vehicles, large armaments and the wounded behind and eventually the fleeing force of approximately 1500 men was rescued under cover of darkness from Pongoor on the west coast by the Royal Navy at the end of January 1942.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> January, the Japanese reached Serendah, about 26 km from Kuala Lumpur. The following day the Japanese entered Kuala Lumpur on without much resistance, apart from small skirmishes by which time the British troops had left the city. The Japanese troops quickly took control of government and institutional buildings, such as the Sultan Abdul Samad Building, the railway station and the Pudu Jail. After the battle, the Japanese used Pudu Jail as a POW detention centre. Many Allied POWs were tortured to death there.

It has been estimated, that the strength of front line Japanese troops engaged in the battles of Malaya and Singapore by the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 1942 was 110,660. They possessed 168 pieces of artillery, 150 tanks, and 354 aircraft plus 180 naval air force support. The total number of operational air strength supporting the army amounted to about 560 aircraft, of which some 180 were fighter aircraft. There seemed no way to stop the Japanese, whose ultimate plan was to push onto India via Burma. As well as making territorial gains, the Japanese decision to strike south was made because of their need to obtain raw materials.

The effectiveness of the Japanese was shown when they captured the capital of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. Our air raid and civil defense precautions were practically none existent in Malaya or Singapore at this time. Hopefully, this explains why in the first few months of the Malayan campaign, the Japanese had such an advantage. We of course were fighting battles in Europe and the Middle East, which Japan was well aware of, whereas they were fighting on one front only, having already taken care of the Chinese. Hence, their decision to push south in order to obtain the raw materials they were desperate for, together with the territorial gains they achieved.

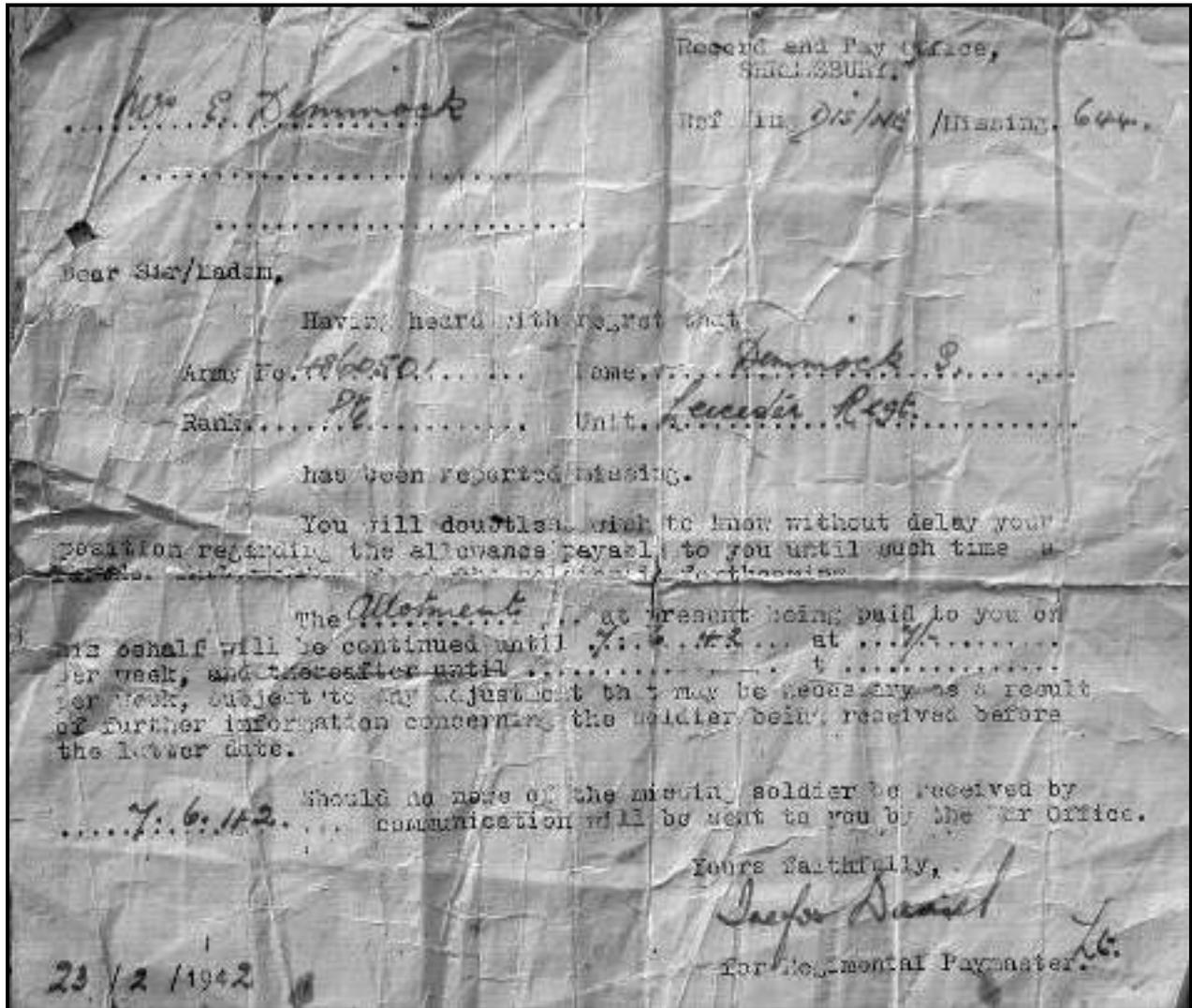
**Sam Dimmock** must have gone onto fight at the battle of Kampar with the British Battalion as he is not recorded on his war records as becoming a POW till the fall of Singapore on February 15<sup>th</sup> 1942. **Sam** also confirms on his Liberation Questionnaire that he was in Changi on that date. Many of the British Battalion men were being entrained back to Singapore from Malaya by July 1942 to prepare for the inevitable battle with the Japanese on the island. **Sam Dimmock** would have been amongst the men entrained back to Singapore.

**Sam's** mother received the following document from the "Record & Pay Office" in Shrewsbury, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1942, which must have come as a great shock as it states that **Sam** had been reported missing, but they would continue to pay her an allotment of 7 shillings per week until 7<sup>th</sup> June 1942 and should no further news be received before that date, a communication would be sent to her by the War Office. Clearly **he** had

not gone missing and there must have been confusion in communications somewhere along the line which is hardly surprising due to the chaotic situation at that time.

**Sam** was actually captured and taken prisoner at the fall of Singapore on February 15<sup>th</sup> 1942 and records show that **he** was in a work party at Changi, Singapore as a POW on the 19<sup>th</sup> September 1942.

6 Leicesters' were transferred from Kuala Lumpur Jail to Changi on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1942. A further 15 were transferred on 3<sup>rd</sup> October and 14 on 15<sup>th</sup> October. 39 Leicesters' in a party of 401 POWs were moved directly by rail to Thailand to work on the Burma to Thailand railway on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1942.



COMMUNICATION FROM THE RECORD & PAY OFFICE TO SAM DIMMOCK'S MOTHER

## A POSTSCRIPT TO THE LEICESTERS' SERVING IN MALAYA

This is a story of six private soldiers who will never leave the island of Penang. Their names and their ordeals are now written into the history of the regiment. After the Japanese breakthrough at Jitra, many of those who were cut off made for the coast where they obtained boats to cross to Penang, to then find that the island had been evacuated by Europeans. Some were imprisoned by the rapidly advancing Japanese, but others evaded capture to rejoin the battalion on the mainland. Six men, unable to travel further due to wounds and malaria, also evaded capture, to find refuge in the hills with Chinese rubber tappers, who risked the dreadful consequences of being caught. Before the year was out, four had died, to be buried somewhere in the jungle. Two survived for three years with the rubber tappers, until they were betrayed to the brutal Kempai Tai, the Japanese Military Police, in February 1945. Despite torture, neither man informed on their protectors. One died on 22<sup>nd</sup> February. The second was shot on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1945, just twelve days before Hiroshima, when the Atom Bombs dropped there and on Nagasaki helped to bring about the surrender of Japan, and liberated those of their former comrades who had survived.



**KUALA LUMPUR PUDU JAIL PRIOR TO DEMOLITION**



TAIPING JAIL – CIRCA 1900

BRITISH AND AUSTRALIAN POWs INTERNED IN TAIPING AND KUALA LUMPUR GAOLS TOTALLED 120 OFFICERS AND 1078 OTHER RANKS. IN JULY 1942, THE POWs FROM TAIPING WERE TRANSFERRED TO KUALA LUMPUR PUDU JAIL.

THERE WERE 76 LEICESTERS' IN PUDU JAIL. IN JULY 1942, TWO OF THE LEICESTERS' POWs DIED IN PUDU JAIL, ONE FROM MALARIA AND THE OTHER OF DYSENTRY.

6 LEICESTERS' WERE TRANSFERRED FROM KUALA LUMPUR JAIL TO CHANGI POW CAMP, SINGAPORE ON 17<sup>TH</sup> JULY 1942. A FURTHER 15 WERE TRANSFERRED ON 3<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER AND 14 ON 15<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER. 39 LEICESTERS' IN A PARTY OF 401 POWs WERE MOVED DIRECTLY BY RAIL TO THAILAND TO WORK ON THE BURMA TO THAILAND DEATH RAILWAY ON 14<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 1942

THE STORY OF SAM DIMMOCK'S AND SAM HODGES'S FURTHER EXPERIENCES CONTINUE IN THE FOLLOWING FEATURES ON THE SURRENDER OF SINGAPORE, THE POWs EXPERIENCES IN SINGAPORE, THE BUILDING OF THE BURMA TO THAILAND DEATH RAILWAY AND THE EXPERIENCES OF 4860501 LANCE CORPORAL SAMUEL DIMMOCK AFTER LEAVING TAIMUANG POW CAMP ON THE BURMA TO THAILAND RAILWAY, HIS JOURNEY TO JAPAN ON THE SS KACHIDOKI MARU, AND HIS INTERNMENT IN THE FUKUOKA 25B POW CAMP AT OMTA IN JAPAN.

**A VISIT TO THE LEICESTER'S REGIMENT REUNION BY  
CHYE KOOI LOONG AND HIS WIFE IN 1984**



**Leicestershire Regiment Reunion - 1984**



**L to R – Sam Hodges, Mr & Mrs Loong and  
Jock Yates**



**L to R - Phil Dixon, Chye Kooi Loong & Sam Hodges**

Chye Kooi Loong witnessed the battle of Kampar in Malaya in which the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment were integrated with the East Surrey Battalion, to form the 'British Battalion', which fought the Japanese at Kampar. By this time, **Sam Hodges** had been captured and was a POW in Taiping Jail, but **Sam Dimmock** had continued to fight on with the 'British Battalion'. Chye Kooi Loong was subsequently responsible for writing a book entitled "The British Battalion in the Malayan Campaign 1941- 42". He visited the UK in 1984 following **Sam Hodges'** visit to Thailand in 1983 with a group of senior Leicesters'. Apparently, Chye Kooi Loong visited **Sam Hodges** house and must have taken notes from **Sam** at that time, about his capture which he included in his book. **Sam's** own version featured in the previous article.

## GUNNER JOHN HOWKINS

### THE 148<sup>TH</sup> BEDFORDSHIRE YEOMANRY FIELD REGIMENT – ROYAL ARTILLERY (18<sup>TH</sup> DIVISION)

On 29 March 1939, it was announced that the size of the Territorial Army (TA) was to be doubled by the reforming of the 2nd line units. The original purpose of the TA was home defense, but a revised doctrine led to the provision of routine support for the regular army overseas.

At the outbreak of World War II, the 148th Bedfordshire Yeomanry Field Regiment of the Royal Artillery was assigned to the East Anglian Infantry Division initially commanded as two Batteries (419 & 420). The 417<sup>th</sup> and 418<sup>th</sup> Batteries remained with the 105<sup>th</sup> regiment (Bedfordshire Yeomanry Field Regiment of the Royal Artillery). They were still designated as being part of the TA, and remained so.

In 1938, Field Regiments were organized into two twelve gun Batteries. The experience of the BEF (British Expeditionary Force) in 1940 showed the problem with this organisation strategy. Field Regiments were intended to support an Infantry Brigade of three Battalions, which could not be managed without severe disruption in the Regiment. As a result, Field Regiments were reorganised into three eight gun Batteries. A third Battery was introduced into the 148<sup>th</sup> Regiment in Rochdale on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1941.

**John Howkins** was enlisted in the 148<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshire Yeomanry Field Regiment of the Royal Artillery on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 1939 at Ipswich. He was attached to Battery 420. **John's rank** was "Gunner" throughout his service. On his records **John's** next of kin was given as – Mother Eliza Howkins, Anchor Farm, Pegg's Green, Coleorton, Leics, and his profession was Farm Labourer, although apparently he was working also as a Butcher's Assistant in Pegg's Green at the time.

An extract from another recruit's diary in 1940 reads:-

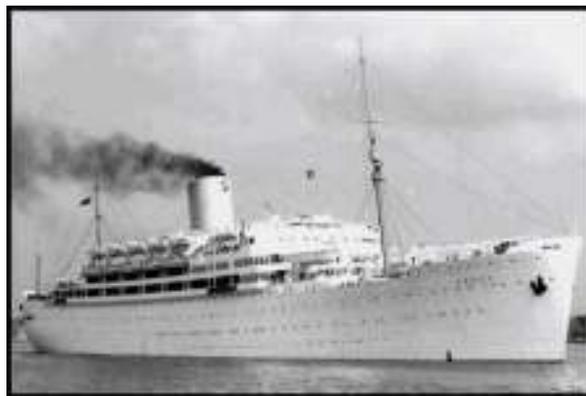
*Eventually I was posted to 148<sup>th</sup> field regiment (Bedfordshire Yeomanry) stationed in Norfolk. We had no guns and most exercises were "make belief". To repel a possible German invasion at Yarmouth there were 3 or 4 Great War 18 pounders chained to the railings on the front.*

The 148<sup>th</sup> regiment later received 25 pounder field guns and a lot of training took place to familiarise the recruits with them. Eventually, the regiment went to Larkhill to a firing camp on the range at Salisbury Plain. The guns performed well and everyone was satisfied. However, their maximum range at about 6,000 yards with 25lb shells left the regiment outgunned by the Japanese at Singapore in 1942. The regiment next moved to Hawick and Rochdale and then onto a firing range at Trawsfynydd, Wales not far from Dolgellau (see the following photograph).



**Gun crew of the 148<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshire Yeomanry Field Regiment of the Royal Artillery moving a 25 pounder gun into position onto a turntable during anti-tank training at Trawsfynydd firing range near Dolgellau in Wales 19.06.1941.**

The final move was to Monmouth, where training was intensified with further firing range exercises there. In October 1941, guns and vehicles were loaded onto boats in Liverpool. On October 29<sup>th</sup> 1941 the 148<sup>th</sup> regiment entrained for Liverpool and embarked on S.S. Andes, a luxury passenger liner, which set sail with an escort of three destroyers. The S.S. Andes was met in mid - Atlantic by a formidable escort of American ships consisting of an aircraft carrier, two large cruisers and nine more destroyers. The original 3 British destroyer escort returned home.



**S.S. ANDES**

The regiment's ship was then escorted to Halifax, Nova Scotia where it disembarked from its English ship and re-embarked onto American transport. They next anchored at Trinidad following which they went to Cape Town. During the time in Cape Town they were housed and fed on the USS Wakefield.

Apparently, Cape Town was a lovely town in December 1941 and descriptions of two memorable places are spoken about, these being the Starlit Room café where the ceiling was dark blue like the night sky with pin points of light like stars, and the Orange Grove Night Club. This was literally a bar/restaurant built in an

orange grove, the flowers scenting the air. Several of the officers were visiting it, when suddenly, Field Marshall Smuts came in. He greeted us warmly and then said he was grateful to the Japanese for bringing America into the war. Pearl Harbour had been attacked on 7th Dec '41, and perhaps the Field Marshall had not yet been advised of the devastation which had been caused.

After four days, they set sail to Bombay, and after about 14 days at sea arrived in port. The regiment was then entrained and passing through the Western Ghats reached Poonah where they stayed for about 3 weeks training

Malayan forces needed reinforcement and the only available troops were the 18th division, supported by the 148<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshire Yeomanry Field Regiment. Following a short stay in Poonah they returned to Bombay where transport took the division to Singapore.

The 148<sup>th</sup> regiment as part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Division arrived in Keppel Harbour Singapore at the end of January, **three weeks before the fall of the island**. They were equipped with 25 pounder guns but four of these were lost in Keppel Harbour, Singapore, when the support ship they were on was bombed and sank.

Major General Merton Beckwith-Smith was the General Officer Commanding, 18<sup>th</sup> division Malaya and following the surrender of Singapore he was sent to Formosa along with other officers as a POW and he died in captivity on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1942.

Because of the defensive strategy implemented by the Allied Commander General Percival, most of the 18th Division were not able to put up a serious resistance to the invading Japanese forces. They arrived during an air raid of 27 Japanese aircraft that fortunately bombed the gas works and ignored the docks.

The men were accommodated in tents surrounded by coconut trees so were well camouflaged from the air. Following the violent week-long Battle of Singapore, Lieutenant-General Arthur Ernest Percival, commander of the Singapore garrison, surrendered to the Imperial Japanese Army on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1942.

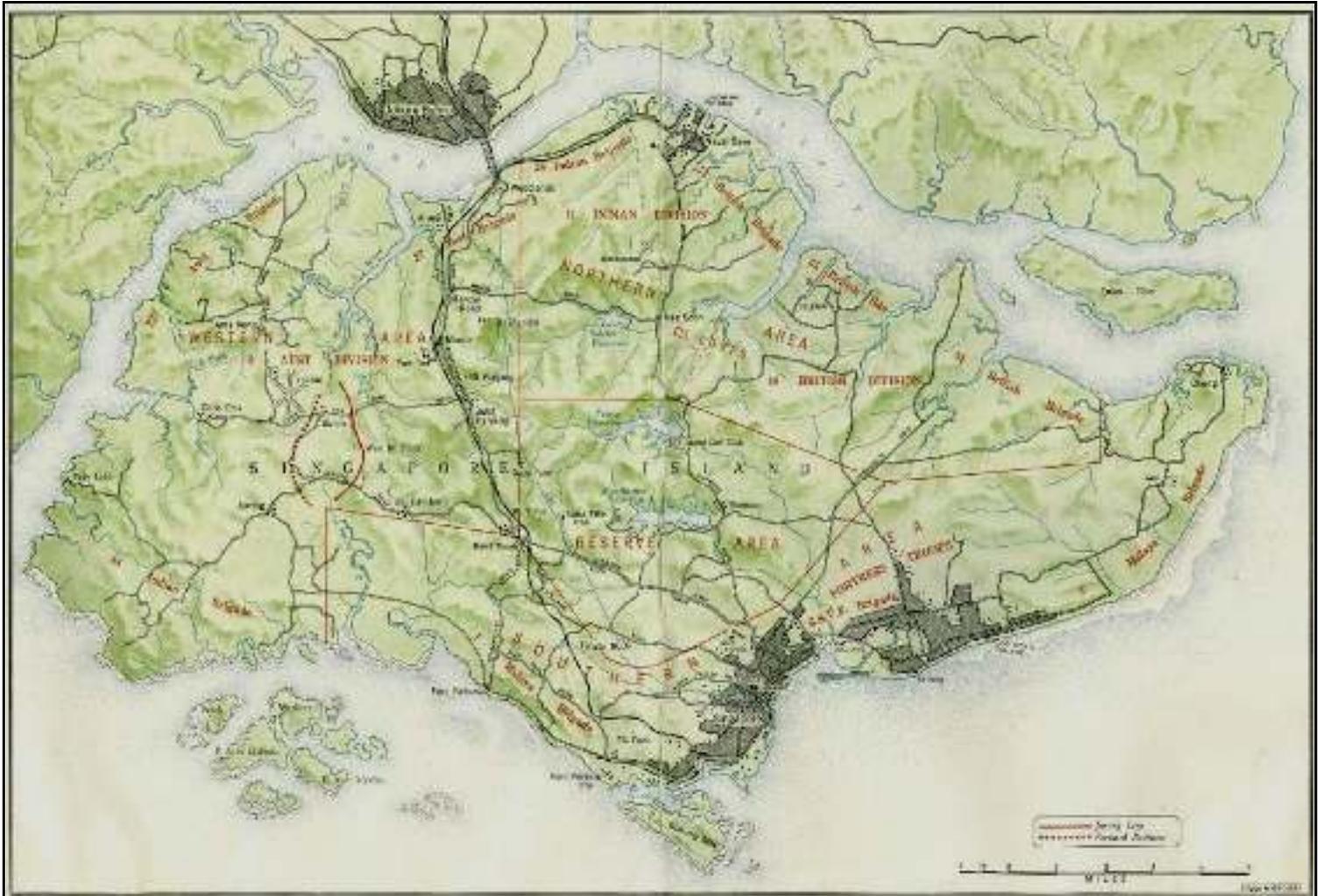
**The following extract is from a diary written by Gunner Derek Gilbert who was enlisted in the 148<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshire Yeomanry Field Regiment (John Howkin's regiment):-**

*.....We were in action for 3 weeks. Then the Japs cut the water supply and Singapore surrendered. We were lined up at the side of the road and watched as the Japanese marched in. We were marched up to Roberts Barracks at Changi and after 2 weeks I was put in a working party to clean up Singapore. There were dead bodies everywhere; the stench was awful. Our first job was to put 12 bodies at a time from a lorry into plastic sacks. The Japanese trucks were full of Chinese boys who were made to march down to the sea and then machine-gunned. 7,000 were massacred.....*

**THE 7,000 CHINESE REFERRED TO BY GUNNER DEREK GILBERT ALMOST CERTAINLY RELATES TO THE 'SOOK CHING MASSACRE' WHICH IS COVERED IN THE FOLLOWING FEATURE ON THE SURRENDER OF SINGAPORE ISLAND.**

**THE STORY OF JOHN HOWKIN'S FURTHER EXPERIENCES CONTINUE IN THE FOLLOWING FEATURES ON THE SURRENDER OF SINGAPORE, THE POWs EXPERIENCES IN SINGAPORE, AND THE BUILDING OF THE BURMA TO THAILAND DEATH RAILWAY AND THE JOURNEY HOME.**

## THE SURRENDER OF SINGAPORE ISLAND BY THE COMMONWEALTH FORCES ON FEBRUARY 15<sup>TH</sup> 1942

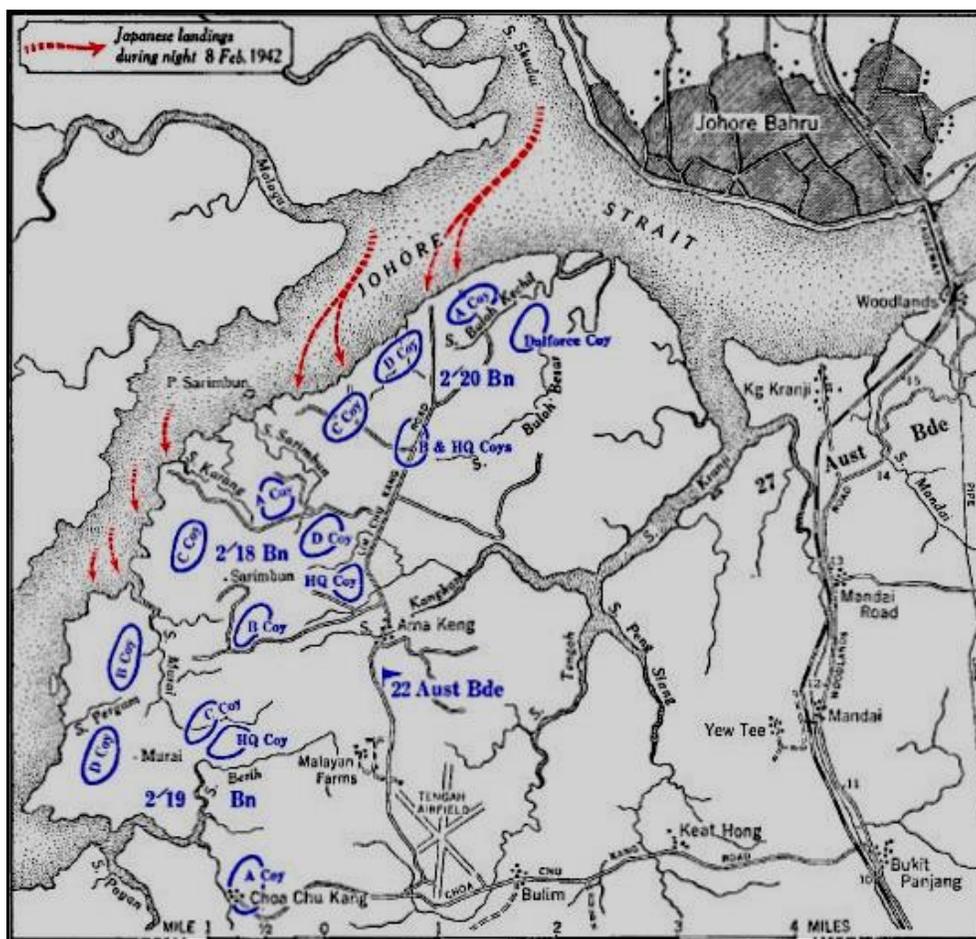


**A MAP OF SINGAPORE ISLAND JUST PRIOR TO THE SURRENDER ON FEBRUARY 15<sup>TH</sup> 1942  
THE CAUSEWAY BETWEEN JAHORE BAHRU AND SINGAPORE ISLAND CAN BE SEEN AT THE TOP OF THE MAP  
THE DISPOSITION OF ALLIED GROUND FORCES IS SHOWN IN RED**

The first attack on Singapore came on 8 December 1941 when Japanese planes dropped the first bombs on the island. On that same day, the Japanese 25th army landed troops in Singora and Patani in southern Thailand and Kota Bharu in northern Malaya. On the 10th December 1941, the Japanese sank the battleship HMS Prince of Wales and the battle cruiser HMS Repulse off the coast of Kuantan, Malaya.

The main Japanese force moved swiftly down the western flank of the Malay Peninsula with the help of motor vehicles and bicycles. Poorly trained, and lacking in experience and equipment, the Allied troops could not hold their positions and were forced to retreat.

In less than two months, the Japanese had eliminated British naval and air capabilities, and captured Malaya. The last Allied troops crossed the 'Causeway' across the 'Straits of Jahore' and withdrew to Singapore on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1942. The causeway across the straits carried rail and road links and piped water to the mainland (see both maps). Allied engineers subsequently blew a 70-ft (approximately 21 m) gap in the structure in a bid to slow down the Japanese advance into Singapore.



**MAP SHOWING THE UNEXPECTED JAPANESE SEA LANDINGS ALONG THE NORTH WEST COAST OF SINGAPORE ISLAND DURING THE NIGHT OF 8<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY.**

On the night of 8 February 1942, the Japanese began to bombard the northwestern coastline of Singapore. Subsequently, the 5th and 18th divisions of the Japanese army crossed the Johor Straits in collapsible boats and overran the Australian soldiers tasked with guarding the area. It is believed that 13,000 troops crossed into Singapore that night. The next day, the Imperial Guards division crossed into Singapore at Kranji and via a repaired Causeway.

As well as coming across the 'Causeway', the Japanese surprised us once again by attacking across the Johore Straights at the west end of the island, which, because it was all mangrove swamps inland, it was thought to be impassable and was therefore only lightly defended. The Japanese drove a wedge between the Australians defending the North West of the Island and the Brits defending the North East in the Changi Military area.

There seemed no way to stop the Japanese, whose ultimate plan was to push onto India via Burma. As well as making territorial gains, the Japanese decision to strike south was made because of their need to obtain raw materials. The British sent an extra large force of approximately 50,000 troops to our military base at Changi in the North East of Singapore (see preceding coloured map).

At the start of the Battle of Singapore, the Allied forces numbered around 85,000 men, of which about 70,000 were armed. The Allied forces had a total of 38 infantry battalions as well as artillery regiments, anti-tank regiments and anti-aircraft guns. Despite their superior numbers, many of the soldiers were either weary veterans of the Malayan Campaign or inexperienced new recruits. They were also fast running out of weapons and ammunition. Apparently, due to yet another major misjudgment by the British military, they were left with no air cover, heavy artillery, food or water.

The infantry was being supported by **the Royal Artillery, 18<sup>th</sup> Division (which included the 148<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshire Yeomanry Regiment who had marched from the harbour up to Robert's Barracks, Changi – John Howkins' regiment)** in the North East, but many men were lost in the fighting, particularly amongst the infantry who were always the cannon fodder. The regiments had to retreat and became terribly fragmented and split from their regiments, so it now became impossible to defend the island from the Japs.

Water from Johore Baharu on the mainland, was piped over the causeway to reservoirs on the NW of the island which the Japanese controlled and subsequently cut off. With the Japanese supported by tanks, our boys were completely overrun, as our rifles in the face of this offered no contest. The Japanese were in total control of the skies, and their unchallenged ability to bomb both civilian and military establishments' caused many deaths. Even our fixed heavy 15 inch guns were trained seaward at Keppel Harbour as we were expecting attacks from that direction. We had some 9.2 and 6 inch batteries but they were all trained seaward to defend the harbour.

During the battle for Singapore, the Japanese put up an observation balloon. As we had no aircraft or guns which could reach it, the Japanese were able to observe all our troop movements during the day with impunity and to bring down artillery fire or make counter attacks as necessary.

By 11<sup>th</sup> February 1942, they had advanced to within a mile of the Sime Road Camp military headquarters, forcing Percival and his forces to retreat to Fort Canning and abandon the camp. This retreat was followed by the surrender of British forces to the Japanese on 15 February 1942, at the Ford Motor factory works, Reformatory Road, thereby subjecting Singapore to three-and-a-half years of Japanese occupation.

An outnumbered and poorly equipped Japanese invasion force swept to victory against a mixed army of British, Australian and Indian soldiers, changing forever Britain's Imperial destiny and the balance between Europe and the rest of the world. It has been said, that the surrender to the Japanese at Singapore on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1942 probably saved hundreds of thousands of further losses of life, but the writer feels that this can be countered with the argument that many thousands more men died under the brutal regime of the Imperial Japanese Army as forced slave labour in their POW camps in the building of the "Death Railway" and numerous other examples of a similar nature.

The capture of around 130,000 men is also said to be the greatest and most humiliating defeat in British History, and was the high point of Japanese expansion in South East Asia. It graphically exposed the military weakness of the British Empire and its inability to defend its far eastern colonies. The defeat left Australia exposed to Japanese invasion, its protection dependant on American arms. The British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, called it the "worst disaster" in British military history. However, one must not forget our commitment to the war in Europe which obviously greatly stretched our military forces. Churchill's comments did no favour to our brave men who were not responsible for the loss of the war in the Far East. They clearly did not have the support for which high command had to take responsibility. The defence strategy for Malaya rested on two basic assumptions: first, that there would be sufficient early warning of an attack to allow for reinforcement of British troops, and second, that American help was at hand in case of attack. By late 1941, after Lieutenant-General Arthur E. Percival had taken over as GOC Malaya, it became clear that neither of these assumptions had any real substance. In addition, Churchill and Roosevelt had agreed that in the event of war breaking out in South East Asia, priority would be given to finishing the war in Europe. The east, until that time, would be a secondary priority. Containment was considered the primary strategy in the east.

**Lt-General Arthur Earnest Percival GOC (General Officer Commanding) surrendered to the Japanese at the Ford Factory in Singapore - See the following photographs.**

**Percival was born on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1887, a World War I veteran, he built a successful military career between the Wars. During World War II, in the Far East Campaign he commanded the forces of the British Commonwealth during the Malayan Campaign and is noted for his surrender to the invading Imperial Japanese Army at the Battle of Singapore. Following the surrender, Percival was held in Changi Prison for six months before he was moved from Singapore in August 1942, first to Formosa and then to Manchuria. He was held with other VIP captives including the American, General Jonathan Wainright, in a POW camp near Hsian. As the War drew to an end, he was removed from the prison in Hsian and taken with Wainright, to stand immediately behind General Douglas MacArthur as he accepted the Japanese surrender aboard USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1945. – See the article entitled 'THE FINAL SURRENDER' towards the end of the book.**



THE POINT OF SURRENDER AT THE FORD MOTOR WORKS FACTORY, REFORMATORY ROAD, SINGAPORE ON FEBRUARY 15<sup>TH</sup> 1942 – LT. GEN. ALISTAIR E. PERCIVAL GOC IS ON THE LEFT



**Yamashita:** I want to hear whether you want to surrender or not. If you want to surrender, I insist on its being unconditional. What is your answer? "Yes" or "No"?

**Percival:** Will you give me until to-morrow morning?

**Yamashita:** To-morrow? I cannot wait, and the Japanese forces will have to attack to-night.

**Percival:** How about waiting until 11.30 p.m.? *(It was then 7.30 p.m.)*

**Yamashita:** If that is to be the case, the Japanese forces will have to resume attacks until then. Will you say "Yes" or "No"?

Lieut.-General Percival made no reply.

**Yamashita:** I want to hear a decisive answer, and I insist on an unconditional surrender. What do you say?

**Percival:** Yes.

DAILY HERALD – 17<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 1942

LIEUTENANT GENERAL YAMASHITA IS SEATED AND THUMPING THE TABLE WITH HIS FIST TO EMPHASISE THE TERMS – UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER - LT.GEN PERCIVAL IS SEATED BETWEEN HIS OFFICERS



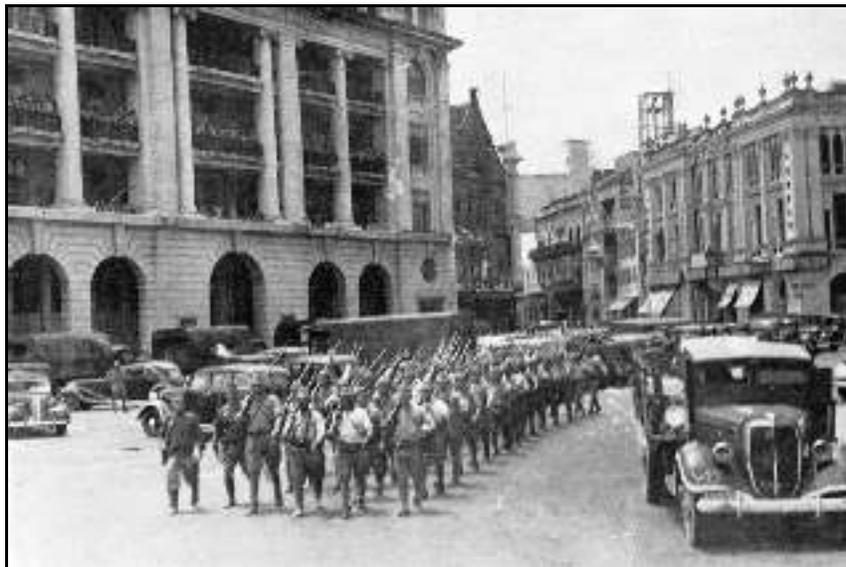
**THE JAPANESE ARRIVING ON SINGAPORE ISLAND IN EARLY FEBRUARY 1942 HAVING CAPTURED A BRITISH ARTILLERY HEAVY GUN PLACEMENT**



**THE GENTLEMAN ON THE LEFT MAJOR CYRIL WILD (INTERPRETER) HAD APPARENTLY JUST REFUSED TO CARRY THE WHITE FLAG OF SURRENDER**



Lieutenant-General Percival and his party carry the Union flag on their way to surrender Singapore to the Japanese. Left to Right: Major Cyril Wild (carrying white flag of surrender) interpreter; Brigadier T. K. Newbigging (carrying the Union flag); Chief Administrative Officer, Malaya Command; Lieutenant-Colonel Ichiji Sugita; Brigadier K. S. Torrance, Brigadier General Staff Malaya Command; Lieutenant General Arthur Percival, General Officer Commanding, Malaya Command.



**THE VICTORIOUS JAPANESE ARMY MARCHING THROUGH SINGAPORE**

## JAPANESE ATROCITIES IN SINGAPORE

### THE ALEXANDRA MILITARY HOSPITAL - OPENED IN 1938

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As British troops were wounded and fell back so the QAs (Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps) cared for them in a variety of hospitals as Japan advanced. The towns of Kulim, Kuala Lumpur and the state of Johore were evacuated and forward medical units and hospitals pulled back until they sought refuge at Singapore. Many troops, though wounded and travelling under the protection of red crosses were killed by Japanese pilots as they made their way from the overrun Malayan Peninsula.

After Singapore fell to the Japanese Army, BMH Singapore saw some war atrocities carried out by the troops of Japan. At about 1pm Japanese troops advanced with the leading soldier carrying their red and white flag. At this time, the Commanding Officer (CO), Lieutenant Colonel Craven (RAMC), was discussing the surrender with the Chaplain and the Registrar, Major H. Henderson and Major J. W. D. Bull. The building was clearly marked with a red cross but this did not save the patients and staff from the savagery of these enemy soldiers. Captain J. E. Bartlett of the RAMC went to meet them, but as he spoke, the hospital was still fired upon and a hand grenade was thrown. This started an attack upon the hospital and those within by about 100 armed Japanese troops with bayonets attached to their rifles. The Captain escaped this and rushed to the CO's office to report the advancing troops and the attack.

Major Bull held up a Red Cross flag to the window and was immediately shot at. More shots were fired at the hospital, followed by explosions. The officers made their way from the top floor to the ground floor and found many doctors, nurses and patients dead from gunshot wounds and shrapnel from the bombardment.

Their troops now entered the British Military Hospital and fired upon anyone they met. As they got closer they bayoneted patients and staff, even a patient who was still anaesthetised on the operating theatre table was bayoneted to death. As unarmed members of the RAMC tried to surrender, they were mercilessly bayoneted by the Japanese soldiers. Those who came to their aid were shot. Some of the injured, despite painful wounds, played dead. This included Captain Smiley and Private Sutton who were able to survive and tell of these atrocities.

Wounded patients and staff that did survive this massacre were taken prisoner and were bound and force marched to some buildings near to the Ayer Rajah Road. Any that fell down were bayoneted to death. The prisoners were locked into three small rooms no more than 10 feet by 12 feet. Up to 70 were crammed, still bound, into each room. Doors and windows were barricaded and there were no ventilation, food, drink or toilet facilities. They were left there till the next morning, by which time, many more died of their wounds or dehydration. When the doors were opened, a Japanese officer took some of the prisoners away telling them they were going to get water. Their screams were heard by the remaining prisoners. They had been bayoneted to death. The others tried to escape or overcome their guards and an onslaught took place where

all the British servicemen were killed other than a few that managed to escape. This included Captain R. de Warrenne Waller, Corporal C.N.C. Bryer, Corporal G.W. Johnson, Private S.W.J Hoskins and Private F.A.H. Gurd.

## **THE CIVILIAN GENERAL HOSPITAL**

The following about the hospitals in Singapore is taken from Arthur Titherington's book entitled 'Kinkaseki One Day at a Time'. He found himself in hospital following injuries sustained in an air raid or shelling from the mainland. This was just prior to the surrender of Singapore:-

...When things had settled down I could only walk with great difficulty. I managed to mount my now battered bike and got myself back to Nee Soon. Within a few hours, I was delivered to the civilian General Hospital in Singapore. A wash, a couple of injections, a medical examination, and I was put to bed. Fortunately time proved I was not too seriously hurt and in a couple of days I was hobbling around with the aid of a stick. When asked if I could return to my unit, I was told "In a couple of days".

It soon became obvious to me that the medical facilities of the 'Civilian General Hospital' were stretched to the limit, and the staff was having an uphill struggle to cope with the number of patients. As I was now considered to be 'walking wounded', it was necessary that I should lend a hand wherever possible. I befriended a Merchant Seaman and as orderlies and general dogs' bodies, we carried and served food, washed patients, dressed simple wounds and consoled crying children. We carried and fetched wherever we were needed. On two occasions we helped in the operating theatre. This consisted of holding down fractious patients whilst being operated on – a most unsavory job. We also delivered patients to the theatre for attention.

As patients died, both civilian and military, we helped to dispose of the bodies as soon as possible. For this purpose a number of large trenches had been dug in the ground just outside the ward. In the beginning we carried the bodies out as soon as they had been pronounced dead by the doctors. The sheer lack of space, with people lying all over the floor of each ward, and even two deep down the side of each corridor, demanded quick disposal. However, in the last few hours of the war it was only safe to venture outside with the bodies during the hours of darkness as in daylight snipers shot at us. This meant that one of the short passages leading into the grounds had to be turned into a mortuary. It was here that the bodies were placed until we could take them outside. On my return to Singapore in 1983, I discovered from the memorial placed near the graves, that over 300 people had been buried there.

When I eventually found my unit, they were occupying the Naval Cadet Barracks in Changi. I was surprised by the welcome they gave me....The Japanese I was now told, had overrun the area around the Alexandra Military Hospital on the 13<sup>th</sup> February, and had killed almost everyone in sight, doctors, nurses and patients. Some patients were actually on the operating table when they were bayoneted. The nurses had been raped by the Japanese military before being killed. I have often wondered whether it was fate, coincidence or simply ignorance that had led to the driver to choose the civilian and not the military hospital. After my wanderings

through the bloody streets of Singapore and then hearing of the butchery in the Alexander Hospital, I was certainly relieved to find myself safe among my friends once more.

## **THE SOOK CHING MASSACRE**

This was a Japanese military operation aimed at purging or eliminating anti-Japanese elements from the Chinese community in Singapore. From 21 February to 4 March 1942, Chinese males between the ages of 18 and 50 were summoned to various mass screening centres and those suspected of being anti-Japanese were executed.

The screening was mainly carried out by the Kempeitai (the Japanese military police) in the urban areas and by the Imperial Guards Division in the other districts. Men suspected of being anti-Japanese, were loaded into lorries and transported to remote areas such as Changi, Punggol and Bedok for execution. At these sites, the suspects were machine-gunned to death and often their bodies were thrown into the sea. In some instances, British prisoners of war (POWs) were tasked to bury the bodies.

Due to a lack of written records, the exact number of people killed in the operation is unknown. The official figure given by the Japanese is 5,000 although the actual number is believed to be much higher. Lieutenant Colonel Hishakari Takafumi, a newspaper correspondent at the time, claimed that the plan was to kill 50,000 Chinese and that half that number had been reached when the order was received to stop the operation.

In 1962, the massacre resurfaced following the discovery of mass graves in the Siglap area. Five separate war graves were found in an area dubbed "Valley of Tears" by the press. Subsequently, more than 30 mass graves were exhumed and the remains found were placed in funeral urns for reburial. Extracts taken from **'Singaporeinfopedia' - an electronic encyclopedia on Singapore's history, culture, people and events. (no reference to copyright).**

## TOMOYUKI YAMASHITA



He was born 8<sup>th</sup> November 1885, and was an Imperial Japanese Army general known for taking the British positions in Malaya and the fall of Singapore. **Yamashita's 30,000 soldiers captured 130,000 allied troops**, the largest surrender of British led personnel in history.

He became known as 'The Tiger of Malaya'. Following the end of the War, General Yamashita was tried by an American military tribunal in Manila, between 29<sup>th</sup> October and 7<sup>th</sup> December 1945, for war crimes relating to the Manila Massacre and many atrocities in the Philippines and Singapore against both civilians and POWs, such as the **Sook Ching massacre** in Singapore just after the surrender.

**Tomoyuki Yamashita** was sentenced to death, and on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1946, at Los Banos, Laguna Prison Camp, Manila, he was hanged.

**MAP SHOWING THE HEIGHT OF THE JAPANESE EXPANSION IN 1942  
FOLLOWING THE SURRENDER OF SINGAPORE**



## OVERVIEW OF POW CAMPS ON SINGAPORE ISLAND

After the fall of Singapore on February 15<sup>th</sup> 1942, there were some 80,000 British and Allied troops in Singapore with approximately 15,000 Aussies and 35,000 Brits in the Changi area. Changi POW camp was the first opened and was the main camp for the captured British & Commonwealth forces. For most of the war, Changi was one of the least brutal Japanese POW camps, particularly when compared to those on the Burma to Thailand railway. Changi was not just one camp, but up to seven POW and internee camps. Its name came from the peninsular on which it stood, named in turn after a village there for some time before British rule. The Changi Peninsular was the British Army's principal base in Singapore.

When Singapore surrendered on February 15<sup>th</sup> 1942, **Samuel Dimmock, and John Howkins** were interned in Malai 1 (also known as Changi 1) camp according to war records. At this time, **Sam Hodges** was still in Kuala Lumpur Pudu Gaol but was interned later in Changi camp from 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1942 to 13<sup>th</sup> May 1943 when he was sent to work on the Burma to Thailand railway.

**Sam Dimmock** remained in Changi till he was sent to work on the railway on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1943.

**John Howkins** had two spells in Changi – 15<sup>th</sup> February 1942 till 19<sup>th</sup> April 1942 and 8<sup>th</sup> August 1942 to 29<sup>th</sup> October 1942 when he was sent to work on the railway. In between the spells at Changi he was located at Farrer Park (see later feature on Farrer Park).

Some explanation is required here as the Japanese established 4 camps, known as Malai 1,2,3 & 4. Number 1 was the large Changi camp. The Japanese then established a number of work camps where POWs were moved to labour on projects around Singapore. Amongst these were camp Nos 2,3 and 4 known as Serangoon, River Valley Road / Havelock Road (only separated by a small canal and bridge) and Adam Road (former British Army barracks) respectively.

The Malai camps to an extent were all holding camps, but River Valley & Havelock Road camps mainly acted as transit and dispatch camps, and POWs were registered there before being moved elsewhere. At certain periods, up to 5,000 troops are recorded as being housed there.

The Changi Peninsular being the British Army's principal base area in Singapore, meant the site had a well-constructed military infrastructure, including 3 major barracks – Selerang, Roberts and Kitchener – as well as four other smaller camps. Singapore's civilian prison, Changi Gaol, was also on this peninsula. The Changi camp was in existence until May 31<sup>st</sup> 1944 when military prisoners were transferred to Changi Gaol, whilst the remaining 3,500 civilians were moved to Sime Road Camp.



**CHANGI PRISON**

Changi Prison, formerly the civilian gaol, was built for the British by American engineers in the 1930's. It had four floors, 440 metres long x 110 metres wide. In normal times it would have housed a maximum of 800 prisoners, however, in one period following the surrender of Singapore, it housed as many as 8,000 POWs.

Apparently, life in Changi and the other holding camps was not too bad initially following the surrender, and the POWs were allowed reasonable amounts of freedom whilst engaged in duties such as the cleaning up of Singapore including the removal of dead bodies. However, the rice being supplied by the Japs caused major outbreaks of dysentery and they were promised better conditions elsewhere. The final realization was that this was all lies of course, as we will see later, and the Japanese's actual plan was to ship thousands of Australians and British POWs to Burma and Thailand to work as slave labour on The Death Railway under horrific conditions of cruelty and brutality.

**At the time of the surrender, 265 men (from the Leicesters' and East Surrey regiments) were with the main core of the 'British Battalion' at Mount Echo to the west of the city. On the 17<sup>th</sup> February 1942, they received orders to relocate to Changi some 22 miles to the east.** They arrived there the next morning and found accommodation in the coolie lines of Changi village. Other men of the battalion were scattered around the island and within a short time had rejoined it. According to Major Harvey's diary, by 1<sup>st</sup> March 1942, there were over 1,000 'British Battalion' men in Changi. The battalions quickly established a chapel, officers and sergeant's messes and vegetable gardens, and organized sporting activities, entertainment, lectures and educational programmes. In the first few months, a journal was produced which was known as 'The Tiger in Irons'. This contained humorous articles, poetry, quizzes, news items and the like, which all helped to maintain morale. **See the following website for a detailed insight :-**  
**<http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=thdabooks>**

The Japanese at this time had no organisation in place to look after the prisoners. Initially they were put in the top floor of the barracks and barbed wire was put around the outside of the camp. They were then guarded to a limited extent by Indian Sikh guards. The Japs had promised the Sikhs an independent Sikh State when they took over India !!! A POW recorded that there was a steam roller in the camp, and the Japs wanted to get this working, which the Aussies managed to do. However, they kept telling the Japs more petrol was

required to keep it going, and the Japs were supplying them with 40 gallons at a time. The Aussies were selling this to the Chinese outside the fence for American Dollars which they could spend in the town whilst on working party duties. Eventually they even rigged up a pipeline to the outside.

From April 1942, work parties were being organized by the Japanese and sent into Singapore on a daily basis to work in the docks and to clear bomb damage in the city. By May, permanent POW camps were set up to accommodate men working on specific projects as follows:-

- Reformatory Road (McCarthur Camp) – Ford Motor Works.
- Adam Park / Adam Road – building Shinto Shrine at Bukit Timah. (Malai camp 4)
- River Valley Road – unloading ships / warehousing etc. (Malai camp 3)
- Havelock Road – clearing bomb damage and general clearing up. (Malai camp 3)

River Valley Road and Havelock Road camps were only separated by a small river/canal with a bridge built across it. At some periods up to 5,000 POWs were housed here: these camps acted as transit & despatch sites for POW work parties. Their tasks involved the cleaning up and repairing of war-torn parts of the city and the badly bombed Chinatown area. POWs who were allowed to remain at either of these camps were often from Changi Camp and still fit to work.

At the end of the war, the River Valley Road camp was converted into a place to house Japanese soldiers who had surrendered, in addition to other places such as Changi and Outram Prison. There were approximately 24,000 surrendered Japanese soldiers in Singapore, 6,000 of whom were held at River Valley Road camp.

**SIME ROAD CAMP** - Sime Road Camp was the site of the former combined operational headquarters of the British Army and Royal Air Force during World War II. Located along Sime Road, the 470-acre site was used as an internment camp during the Japanese Occupation. After the surrender of the Japanese in 1945, the camp was closed the following year and the buildings subsequently demolished. The National Heritage Board designated the site of Sime Road Camp a historic site in 2002. Sime Road Camp served as the headquarters of the Royal Air Force until early December 1941, when it became the combined operational headquarters of the British Army and Royal Air Force Operational Headquarters Malaya Command.

**Lieutenant General Arthur E. Percival, General Officer Commanding Malaya in charge of the Malaya Command, ran military operations from this camp.** After the fall of Singapore, Sime Road Camp was used as an internment camp for prisoners-of-war (POWs). From December 1943 to May 1944, 1,800 survivors of the construction of the infamous Burma Railway (also known as the Death Railway) stretching from Thailand to Burma were housed here. **Sam Hodges's confirmed in his Liberation Questionnaire that after returning from working on the railway, he was interned in Sime Road POW camp from 10<sup>th</sup> November 1943 to 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1944 before being moved to Changi Gaol where he stayed till his release date on September 9<sup>th</sup> 1945.**

**FARRER PARK – John Howkins was at Farrer Park from the 19<sup>th</sup> of April till the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 1942 in between his spells at Changi as described earlier.** Following the surrender of Singapore on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 1942, on the evening of the 16<sup>th</sup>, the Indian troops of the now amalgamated 1/14th and 5/14th Punjab were ordered by the Malaya command (of the commonwealth forces) to assemble at Farrer Park Field. The British officers were, in the meantime, ordered to assemble east to Changi. On the morning of 17<sup>th</sup> February 1942, some 45,000 Indian POWs gathered at Farrer Park were addressed by Col Hunt of the Malaya Command, who surrendered the troops to Japanese command under Major Fujiwara Iwaichi.

Fujiwara spoke to the troops in Japanese, which was translated into English and then Hindustani. In his speech, Fujiwara is said to have told the troops of the Japanese vision of an independent India and of the Japanese intentions to help raise a "liberation army" for the independence of India. He invited the troops seated at the park to join this army. Further, he told the troops, they were going to be treated not as POWs, but as friends and allies. Major Fujiwara Iwaichi ended his speech stating he was passing on their responsibilities and command to Major Mohan Singh. Mohan Singh spoke to the gathered troops declaring the formation of the Indian National Army to fight the *Raj*, and asking for volunteers to join the army.

This is presumably how Indian Guards became to be used by the Japanese to guard British and Allied POWs. Farrer Park was the original site of the Singapore Golf Club before it was moved to Bukit Timah. Sime Road led up to this golf course.

**SERANGOON POW CAMP (MALAI 2) -** Mostly Indian National Army POWs were held here following the British re-occupation of Singapore.

**OUTRAM ROAD PRISON / GAOL –** The Japanese military police (Kempeitai) used Outram Road Gaol in Singapore as a place of punishment for all those who broke their rules, including POWs, internees and local people. It was a place of starvation, torture and terror, a place of madness and, for many, death. Those who survived Outram Road displayed exceptional qualities of endurance, mental and emotional fortitude.

**BLAKANG MATI -** This was an island at the south of Singapore Island. The nearby beach was the scene of the infamous executions of those POWs who attempted escaped from Selerang POW camp in Changi province (**see the following feature on Selerang Barracks**). When Singapore was attacked in February 1942 Blakang Mati became a major target and the guns of were actively engaged in fighting off the Japanese attacks, even firing overland during the last three frenzied days of battle. This was not enough to keep the Japanese at bay and the British surrendered on 15 February, 1942. The gun batteries on Blakang Mati were later destroyed or deliberately broken up to prevent them from falling into Japanese hands. Once the Japanese took over Singapore, Blakang Mati was used as a POW camp during the occupation. Following the Japanese surrender in 1945, these roles were reversed and the former captors became POWs themselves on Blakang Mati, and were housed in the same barracks.

## THE SELERANG BARRACKS SQUARE INCIDENT

The Selarang barracks were constructed by the British Army from 1936-1938 and were initially used to house Australian POWs from 1942.



### CHAOTIC SCENES AT SELERANG BARRACKS – SEPTEMBER 1942

General unrest among the prisoners became a concern for the Japanese. Following an escape attempt, Major General Shipei Fukuye demanded all prisoners' sign a 'None Escape' document, which the Australian and British officers refused to do. There are several records of POWs then being moved to the "Selarang Barracks" as a result of this. Between Aug 24<sup>th</sup> and Aug 28<sup>th</sup> 1942, the Japanese moved 3,500 POWs to

Selerang Barracks, a building constructed to house no more than 1200 men. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September, a further 16,000 fit POWs were moved there. This meant many of the men had to live in make-shift tents in the square. The barracks consisted of seven blocks, made to house just 800 personnel, positioned around a large square. Armed Indian and Japanese guards were placed around the perimeter and the siege began.

The sanitary conditions were appalling, with a latrine dug in the centre of the square which was inadequate to accommodate such a large number of men. The Japanese cut off the water supply leaving the men with no toilet facilities. The prisoners had to resort to digging trenches in the parade grounds for use as latrines. Despite the heat, there were only two taps to collect water from, and each prisoner was limited to one quart of water (approx 0.95 litres) for consumption and washing each day.

Colonel E. B. Holmes and other senior Allied Officers were taken to Beting Kusah anti-aircraft practice ground to witness the execution of four escapee POWs, which took place at Changi Beach.

The following is from a report courtesy of the National Library board in Singapore 2006:-

*The four men were made to line up, 3 paces apart, with their backs facing the sea. The POWs declined an offer to be blindfolded. The firing squad consisting of four \*Indian National Army soldiers, stood some 50 yards away. Colonel Breavington made a plea to the Japanese officers to execute him alone but this was rejected. After an exchange of salutes between the POWs and their senior officers, the firing squad opened fire. The shots wounded the four but did not kill them. Breavington asked for them to be finished off and more rounds of bullets were fired into the men.*

The so-called "Indian National Army" referred to above, was an armed force formed to secure Indian independence with Japanese assistance and was largely, at this time, composed of ex Indian (British) army soldiers captured with the Commonwealth troops.

The prisoners had to feed themselves for the first four days from saved food, as the Japanese refused to supply any. With the lack of food, water and proper hygiene, disease became rife. After four days, our officers could see the men suffering and feared many deaths would occur, so Colonel E. B. Holmes issued orders to the prisoners to sign the non-escape document "Under Duress". It is recorded that prisoners signed using false names, 'Ned Kelley' being a popular choice. All the prisoners were returned to their original barracks after the document was signed.

## **ENTRAINED TO THAILAND FROM SINGAPORE TO WORK ON THE BURMA TO THAILAND 'DEATH RAILWAY'**

Permission has been granted by Ronnie Taylor ([www.fepow.family](http://www.fepow.family)) to include the above extract from the 'Report of Condition of POWs in Thailand' by Major Cyril Wild.

*In early April 1942, orders were given by the Japanese to prepare 7,000 POWs for a move by train from Changi. The order stated:-*

- a. The reason for the move was that the food situation in Singapore was difficult and it would be far better in the new place.*
- b. This was NOT a working party.*
- c. As there were not 7,000 fit men in Changi, 30% of the party was to be unfit men, unfit to march or work. The unfit would have a better chance of recovery with good food and in a pleasant hilly place with facilities for recreation.*
- d. There would be no marching except for short distances from train to a nearby camp, and transport would be provided for baggage and men unfit to march.*
- e. Bands were to be taken.*
- f. All tools and cooking gear and engine gear for electric light were to be taken.*
- g. Gramophones, blankets and clothing and mosquito nets would be issued at the new camp.*
- h. A good canteen would be available in each camp after three weeks. Canteen supplies for the first three weeks were to be brought with the prisoner's money before they left Changi.*
- i. The party would include a medical contingent of about 350 with equipment for a central hospital of 400 patients, and medical supplies for three months.*

The above turned out to be a complete tissue of lies by the Japanese of course as the reader will learn as the book progresses.

**John Howkins was entrained to the railway on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1942 and was the first of the three men to leave with Letter Party S. John was on the 6<sup>th</sup> train of the Letter Parties starting with Letter Party X (Train 1) and finishing with Letter Party L (Train 13). On that train, there were 180 men from the 148<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment (including John Howkins), 226 men from the 118 Field Regiment, 192 men from the 88 Field Regiment, 49 Royal Engineers and 3 R.M.A.C., totaling 650 men.**

**If we assume an average of 600 men per train which was usually the case, that would mean a total of up to 7,800 POWs went with Letter Party S. They would have been transferred from Changi for a journey of some 1,200 miles (2000 Kms) taking approximately 5 days.**

**Samuel Dimmock was entrained from Singapore to Ban Pong to work on the railway on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1943.**

**Samuel Hodges was sent on 13th May 1943.**

Ban Pong, was approximately 5km west of Nong Pladuk where the 'Death Railway' started. It was a transit camp from where the men were distributed to the various camps / sectors at which their labour was required. Nong Pladuk was initially a base camp. See the coloured map featured in the next article.

**In order to get a first hand description of what this journey would have been like from Singapore Station to Ban Pong, there follows an extract from the diary of Corporal Alastair K Urquhart who experienced this journey also. Permission has been granted by Ronnie Taylor ([www.fepow.family](http://www.fepow.family)) to include the following extracts from Alastair's diary:-**

*One left Changi with what belongings one still had and many misgivings. This time we were put in trucks, crammed in, as usual, but it was better than walking. On arrival at Singapore Station the trucks in which he had travelled from our POW camp went into the goods yard where there were a row of steel sided covered wagons, normally used for transporting rice. The wagons had sliding doors and no ventilation. We, the human cargo, were shepherded into the steam hot wagons, 30 to 40 per wagon.*

*Thus began a journey of hunger, stifling heat, cold nights and sheer misery and we will never forget the stench of human excrement and decaying flesh as the doors of our wagons were closed. You stood or sat if you could and it was impossible to lean on the sides of the wagons as the steelwork was blistering hot from the tropical sun. Some lads managed to force open the doors a fraction and we took turns at the gap to take air into our lungs. No water was made available and thirst became a major problem.*

*During the journey we were shunted into sidings to let other trains through and we were not allowed to get out. Around mid-day we stopped and were given a drink and allowed off to relieve ourselves and stretch our cramped legs.*

*Then the Japs produced some sloppy rice with a green liquid, but it was eat or go hungry. Even after eating the concoction we were still hungry.*

*Nightfall came, and apart from one stop for a small ladle of so called tea, we had no more food. Just one bite of food in 36 hours. The wagons were cooling down and now one started to shiver, unless you were lucky enough to still have a blanket to keep warm, otherwise, without warming food, one had a constant chill running through your body.*

*Next stop was Kuala Lumpur where some stewed rice (no salt or sugar) and a cupful of tea awaited us. Even as early as that, dysentery was taking its toll as no one had washed mess tins or hands for at least two days. Apart from the stifling heat we had to cope with sand and dust blown in through the cracks in the wagon.*

*Arriving at Penang, we were given rice and stew!! We gobbled it down as nothing else was being offered. We were fast growing "rice bellies", which belied our stomachs. It was a relief to get out of the trucks for an hour.*

*We were feeling the effects of boredom, lack of exercise, hunger, the awful stench of the crowded wagon, dysentery making it unbearable and men being struck down with malaria. The atmosphere was oppressive as we were herded back into the trucks; the heat was such that breathing was becoming difficult. In the corner a young lad was dying, his respirations laboured, and no-one could help him. Perhaps it was at that moment it came to me – if ever I get out of this mess, I will help and give the care that the sick need. Men were being sick or having to relieve themselves wherever they could and as long as I live that stench of rotting bodies, the smell of human excrement, urine and sweat will still haunt me. Like others, I had already suffered bouts of malaria and dysentery. The body was weak and undernourished. One's thoughts turned to ending it all, but strangely something held me back – probably cowardice.*

*Little did we realize what was in store for us, and the heat seemed to increase as we laboured up country into Thailand. The days and nights of this hell went on relentlessly. Men dying daily and death became part of your life. One was glad to survive.*

*After six days stuck in these wagons, we arrive at Ban Pong. It was a pathetic sight to see men, unable to walk, semi-conscious, suffering from starvation, dengue, dysentery or malaria and no medical supplies to help us. Stretchers were made from bamboo poles and blankets or rice sacks, but we were not really fit enough to lift these poor chaps who were too ill to help themselves.*

**Alastair Urquhart sadly died 7<sup>th</sup> October 2016, aged 97.**



**A TYPICAL STEEL SHEETED WAGON USED BY THE JAPANESE TO TRANSPORT THE POWs**

**(These were used to transport rice and cattle and the above is a cattle truck version. The rice trucks had sliding doors as described in the preceding article by Alastair Urquhart, with no ventilation.)**

**THE BUILDING OF 'THE BURMA TO THAILAND DEATH RAILWAY' ON WHICH SAMUEL DIMMOCK, SAMUEL HODGES AND JOHN HOWKINS WORKED WITH THOUSANDS OF OTHER POWs WHO WERE USED AS SLAVE LABOUR BY THE JAPANESE**

In early 1942, Japanese forces had completed their invasion of Burma and seized control of the colony from the United Kingdom. To supply their forces in Burma, the Japanese depended upon the sea, bringing supplies and troops to Burma around the Malay Peninsula and through the Strait of Malacca and the Andaman Sea. This route was vulnerable to attack by Allied submarines, especially after the Japanese defeat at the Battle of Midway in June 1942. To avoid a hazardous 2,000-mile (3,200 km) sea journey around the Malay Peninsula, a railway from Bangkok to Rangoon seemed a feasible alternative. Their ultimate aim of course was an offensive against India.

The railway project aimed to connect Ban Pong in Thailand with Thanbyuzayat in Burma, linking up with existing railways at both places. Its route was through 'Three Pagodas Pass' on the border of Thailand and Burma. 69 miles (111 km) of the railway were in Burma and the remaining 189 miles (304 km) were in Thailand. This included 8 miles of bridges, with a total of 688 bridges. It was estimated that 4 Million cubic yards of earth and rock were moved by hand without any mechanical aid.

Between 180,000 and 250,000 southeast Asian civilian labourers (*rōmusha*) and about 61,000 Allied prisoners of war were subjected to forced slave labour during its construction. About 90,000 civilian labourers and nearly 13,000 Allied prisoners died. It has been suggested that one man died for every sleeper laid on this railway.

The Japanese began this project in June 1942. The movement of POWs northward from holding / transit camps in Singapore began in May 1942. After preliminary work of airfields and infrastructure, construction of the railway began in Burma on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1942 and in Thailand in November 1942. The projected or goal completion date was December 1943. Most of the construction materials, including tracks and sleepers, were brought from dismantled branches of Malaya's Federated Malay States Railway network and the East Indies' various rail networks.

The initial job of the first POWs was to construct the camps at Ban Pong and Kanchanaburi in Thailand and Thanbyuzayat in Burma. The general rule all along the line was that housing for the Japanese guards was built first, followed by a cookhouse and then huts for the POW workers. Hospitals for the sick were built last of all of course. It was normal for the POWs to have to sleep in the open jungle prior to being housed in the camp huts, which of course were constructed by themselves.

The railway was completed ahead of schedule. On 17 October 1943, construction gangs originating in Burma and working south met up with construction gangs originating in Thailand working north. The two sections of the line met at kilometers 263, about 18 km (11 miles) south of the 'Three Pagodas Pass' at Konkuita (Kaeng Khoi Thai, Sangkhla Buri District, Kanchanaburi Province). Even though the railway had been completed, continual maintenance work was required to shore up embankments and strengthen bridges etc.

Ban Pong was the end of the train line for incoming prisoners entrained from the Changi camps in Singapore (see preceding coloured map). This was a transit camp from where they had to march to their various designated work areas / camps up the line, covering a nightly target set by the Japs of 50km (30 miles). The railway actually began at Nong Pladuk, 5km to the east of Ban Pong. There was a 'No.1. Branch' and a 'No.1. Detached branch' at Nong Pladuk. This was a major Japanese base and holding camp. The camps were apparently situated between a Jap ordnance depot, a big railway siding, a Japanese military camp, and a huge ack-ack site.

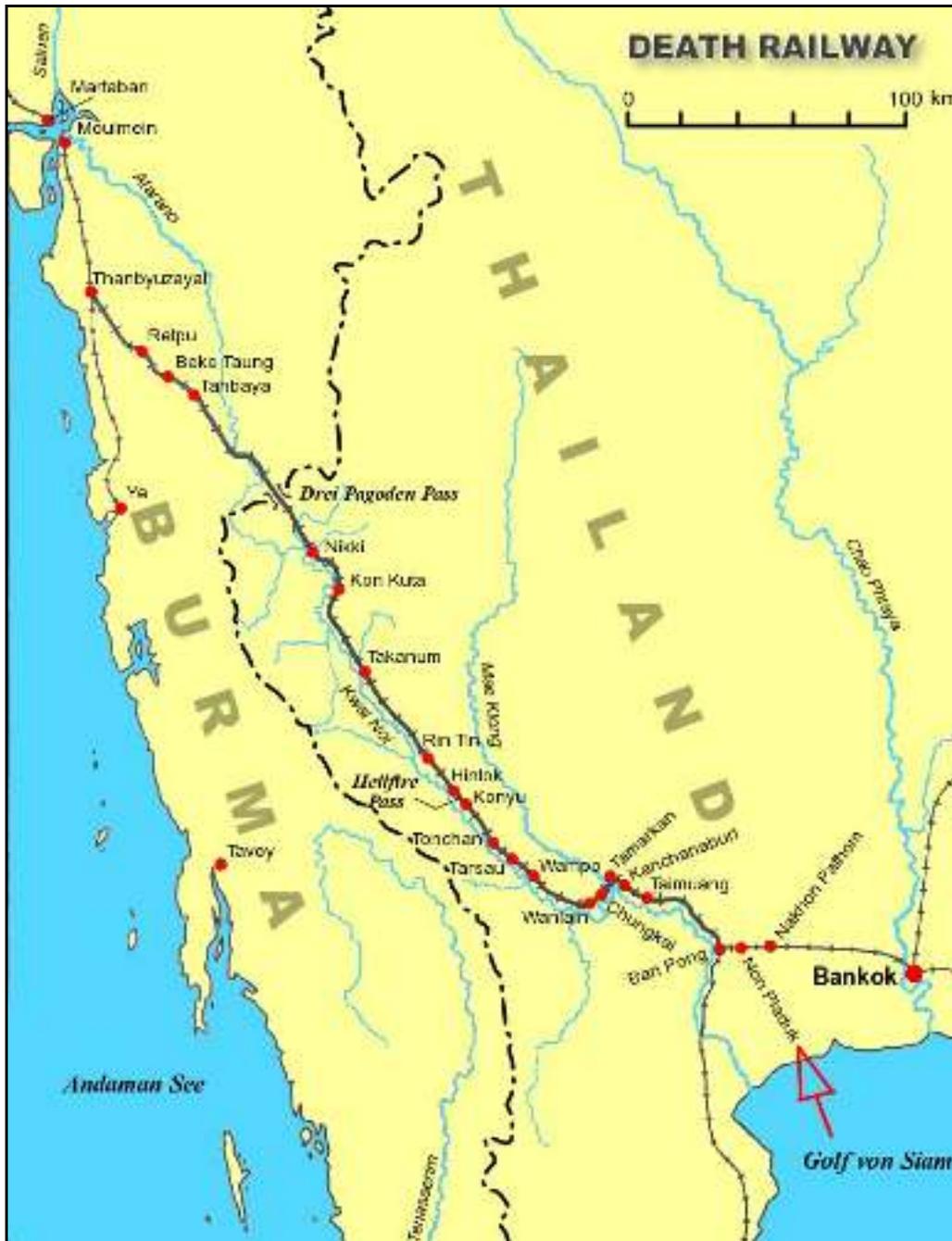
The workforce sent to Burma and Thailand was sent in parties under the officer's own administration, and once the prisoners were at their destination, the Imperial Japanese Army (I.J.A.) put them into work groups. However, officers were also made to work on the railway alongside the ranks.

**Samuel Dimmock** of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment worked on the Thailand to Burma 'Death Railway' for approximately 1 year 3 months from end of March 1943 till late June 1944 when he was taken from Taimuang camp to embark on an horrific journey to Japan, where he was subsequently interned in the Fukuoka 25B POW camp at Omuta, from where he was liberated on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1945

**Samuel Hodges** of the 1st Battalion – Leicestershire Regiment worked on the railway for 6 months from mid May 1943, before being sent back to Sime Road POW camp in Singapore. Sam was liberated on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1945. This was some 10 weeks after the end of the war, so we can only assume that Sam must have spent some time in hospital after the surrender, although so many men were in Singapore at this time that it must have taken a long time to arrange shipment back home.

**John Howkins** of the 148<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshire Yeomanry worked on the railway and Takhli airfield project for a total of 2 years 9 months. He was recovered from Takhli, Thailand on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1945.

**JAPAN ACTUALLY SURRENDERED ON 15<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 1945 (OFFICIAL INSTRUMENT OF SURRENDER SIGNED 2<sup>ND</sup> Sept 1945).**



NOTE 'NON PLADUK' POW BASE CAMP MARKED BY A RED ARROW IS WHERE THE RAILWAY STARTED. BAN PONG JUST TO THE WEST IS THE TRANSIT CAMP WHERE THE MEN WERE ENTRAINED TO FROM SINGAPORE AND BEGAN THEIR MARCH TO VARIOUS SECTORS TO WORK ON THE RAILWAY. ONLY CERTAIN CAMPS ARE SHOWN ON THIS MAP AND SPELLINGS ARE NOT NECESSARILY AS ACCEPTED BY THE CENTRE FOR RESEARCH. HOWEVER, IT PROVIDES A GOOD OVERVIEW FOR THE READER TO UNDERSTAND THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE RAILWAY. THERE WERE ABOUT 42 CAMPS ON THE THAILAND SIDE AND 26 ON THE BURMA SIDE IN TOTAL, ALL BUILT BY THE POWS. THE KWAI NOI RIVER RAN ALONGSIDE THE RAILWAY FROM BAN PONG TO 'THE THREE PAGODAS PASS' (DREI PAGODEN PASS).

## **JOHN HOWKINS – LETTER PARTY S**

Oral history recordings by Ernest William Swanton's (the well known cricket commentator) are now available on the internet (<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80004736>) from which some of the following information has been taken. He explains that he and his comrades from the **148<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshire Yeomanry Field Regiment – Royal Artillery 18<sup>th</sup> Division (John Howkins regiment)** were entrained from Singapore station to work on the railway on **29th October 1942 (recorded on Johns Liberation Questionnaire)**. Swanton was given a commission when he joined the 148<sup>th</sup>, so he was able to travel in a steel wagon with 22 officers, which was obviously far more comfortable than being with the ranks, where up to 40 could be in a wagon. Swanton relates that he opened a tin of sardines in their wagon, and they had to live with the smell all the way to Ban Pong transit camp on the railway.

This was the same **Letter Party S** group that **John Howkins** travelled with. **John** was the first of our three men to be sent to work on the railway.

As noted in the preceding feature, on that train, there were 180 men from the 148<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment (including **John Howkins**), 226 men from the 118 Field Regiment, 192 men from the 88 Field Regiment, 49 Royal Engineers and 3 R.M.A.C., totaling 650 men. The officer in charge of these men was Lt. Col. Clifford Edmond Mackeller of the 118<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment from Sidcup in Kent.

On arrival at Ban Pong transit camp on the Burma to Thailand railway (see preceding map), **John** was attached to (11) K Battalion in Group 4 under Lt. Col. Mackeller and they were force marched barefoot for 5 days some 90 miles up to the Tonchan area via Tarsau (aka Tha Sao / Tarsao - see the preceding coloured map), where he worked until October 1943 when the railway was completed.

E. W. Swanton describes having to endure really hot conditions on the march as far as Kanchanaburi (see map) but then the rains came, which reminded them of home, so the men started singing "Singing in the Rain" and whistling tunes like 'Colonel Bogey'. The Japanese were baffled by this reaction of course. Their marching in monsoon conditions took them through paddi fields and jungle tracks. Food became very scarce, and what there was mainly consisted of rice with watery marrow soup.

There are memories amongst the family that **John Howkins** told them that he found **Sam Hodges** lying on the side of the pathway unable to walk. Apparently John carried Sam on his back to safety and reputedly Sam felt that this saved his life. From the dates recorded of the sectors they were working in at different groups, this could only have occurred in October / November 1943 just prior to **Sam** being entrained back to Singapore with 'H' Group after 6 months working on the railway, presumably because he was so poorly (see the following article on **Sam Hodges**).

Following the completion of the railway, **John** was then moved south on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 1943 to camp Tarsau / Tarsao / Tha Sao just north of Wampo under Lt. Col Knight. This was Group IV headquarters hospital which **John** would have had to spend time in as he was suffering from pneumonia and gangrene in his legs.

**At camp Tarsau / Tarsao / Tha Sao), there were 850 graves in October 1943.** This was at the time **John Howkins** would have arrived there. He was interned at this camp till the 18<sup>th</sup> April 1944, when he was then sent further south to Taimuang camp (see the preceding coloured map), where he stayed until the 25<sup>th</sup> May 1945, also under Lt. Col Knight also.

**John** records in his LQ that on the 25<sup>th</sup> May he was then sent to Sara Buri (some 70/80 kms NNE of Bangkok), under RSM Chrestefor (?) where he stayed till the 29<sup>th</sup> June 1945. From there he was then sent to Takhli (Nakhon Sawan Province) in Thailand to work on an airstrip / airfield under the Japanese. His officer there was RSM Osborne. The Takhli Thai Airforce base was later established in Takhli in the 1950s.

**John Howkins** was recovered from Takhli at the end of August 1945 following the Japanese surrender.

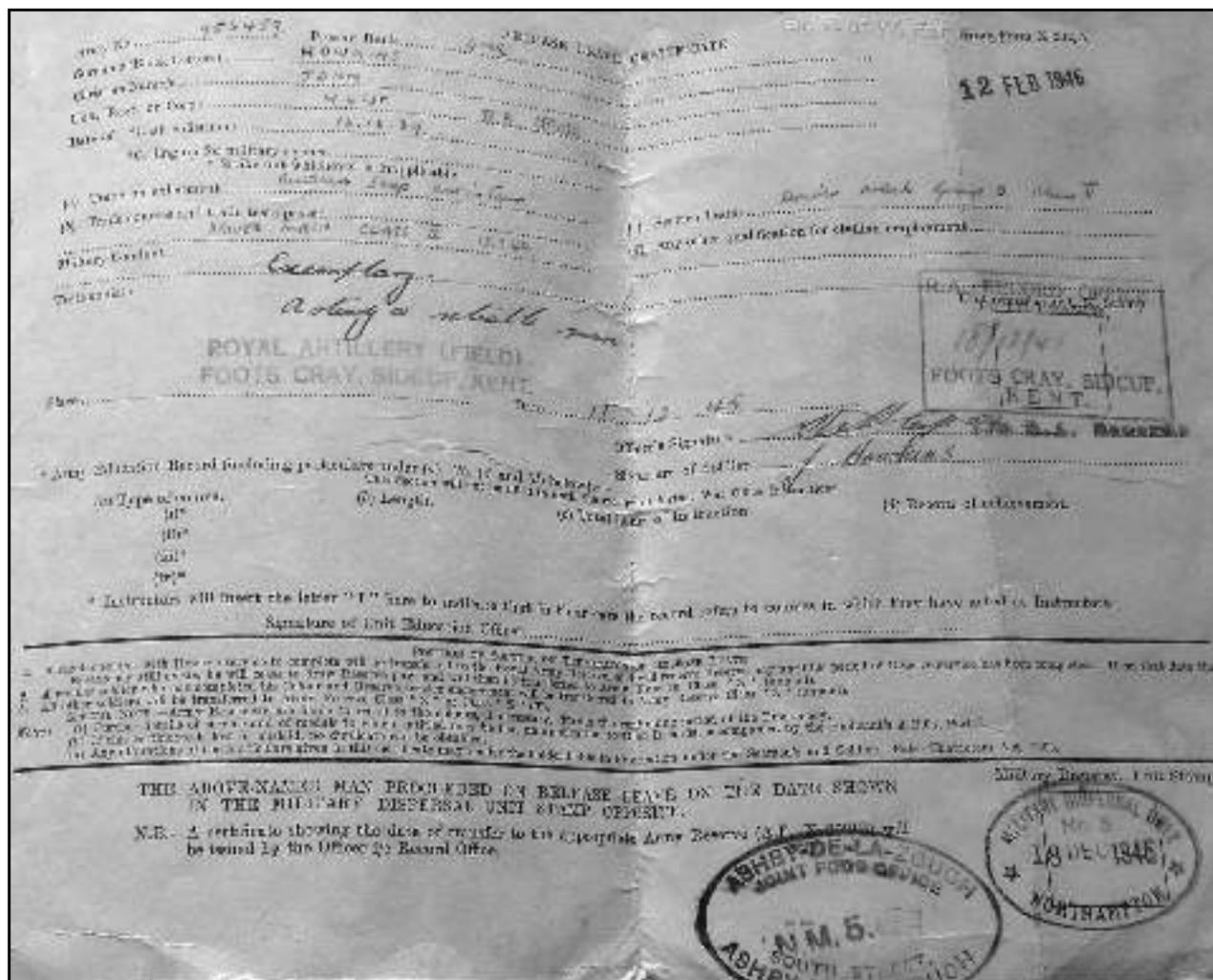


**LOCATION OF TAKHLI IS DESIGNATED BY THE STAR**

**JOHN HOWKINS STORY OF SABOTAGE WHILST WORKING ON THE RAILWAY AS HE RECORDED IN HIS LIBERATION QUESTIONNAIRE.**

12.9.44 - At Tamuan (Taimuang) POW camp Thailand. I, along with three other men were working on all night work as 'fire men' at a brick yard at this camp (Taimuang). On the night of 12.9.44. it rained very hard for five hours. During these hours we cut small drains leading from a main drain to the kilns. These kilns were dug below ground. This made it ideal to flood them when hard rains came. This we done very successful on the night of 12.9.44. The loss being 50,000 bricks and one kiln which caved in. The other men were:-

Sgt. Molyeuxe (148<sup>th</sup>), Gunner Nielsen (148<sup>th</sup>), .... ? Peters (R.M....Royal Marine?)



**JOHN HOWKIN'S RELEASE LEAVE CERTIFICATE**

When the POWs arrived back in the UK, they had to pass through demobilization centers which must have been somewhat of a logistics nightmare. The centers were of two kinds – ‘Disembarkation’ and ‘Dispersal’.

**John Howkin's** ‘Release Leave Certificate’ was actually issued from No. 3 Military Dispersal Unit, Talavera Camp, Northampton, and date stamped 18<sup>th</sup> December 1945. Examples of various dispersal camps are shown below.

MILITARY DISPERSAL UNITS.			
Command or District.	Title of Unit.	Location.	Tel. No.
Scottish	No.1 Military Dispersal Unit	Redford Barracks, Edinburgh.	Edinburgh 88221
Northern	No. 2 Military Dispersal Unit	Fulford Barracks, York	York 53621, Ext. 17
Eastern	No. 3 Military Dispersal Unit	Talavera Camp, Northampton.	Northampton 4771-5

Foots Cray, Sidcup, Kent stamps which appears on the certificate was the record office only.

The POWs that were left in Thailand after the Japanese surrendered were transferred to Rangoon, Burma for transport home by ship. The ships that the British came back on mainly sailed from Rangoon directly to Liverpool docks, taking three to four weeks. Certain ships did return to Southampton, and on the rare occasion to Portsmouth. Sometimes they were referred to as 'Mercy Ships'.

The POWs that had been transferred from the railway to work on the airfield at Ubon in the south east of Thailand (see preceding map) came back to Bangkok by train and were flown to Rangoon by DC3s etc. However **Takhli, where John Howkins was located** was much nearer to Rangoon, but he did record in an interview that he was flown to hospital in Burma, presumably at Rangoon.

There can be little doubt that John came back by ship from Rangoon, although having studied records of various ships making that journey, the writer cannot with any certainty be sure on which ship and what date it left. However, in a diary written by Billy (Biggsy) Bigg who was a 'Signalman' in the 148<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshire Yeomanry Field Regiment (**John Howkin's** regiment) there is a possibility, comparing the dates, that it was one of the ships that Billy described that John came back on. Billy was working at Taimuang camp on the railway at the time he was released. He was flown to Rangoon by DC3 and this would have been from Bangkok. He states the following in his diary:-

*At Rangoon, the 1,577 ex POWs ready to be shipped home were split between the ships, 'The Boissevain' and 'Empire Pride'. I boarded the 'Boissevain' (M.S.) on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1945 bound for Liverpool and home, arriving at Liverpool docks on the 12<sup>th</sup> October 1945.*

Both of these ships travelled together and arrived at Liverpool on the same day. There is a record stating that 853 POWs were on the 'Empire Pride' and that there were 1,742 soldiers in total on the Boissevain, but of course the latter were not necessarily all POWs and could have also come from other countries such as India or Burma. Based on Billy Biggs figure of 1,577 ex POWs in total as being correct, that would have put 724 ex POWs on the 'Boissevain' also.

**ON JOHN HOWKINS 'RELEASE LEAVE CERTIFICATE' IT STATES: -**

**MILITARY CONDUCT – EXEMPLARY**

**TESTIMONIAL – A STEADY AND RELIABLE MAN**

**SURELY HE DESERVED MORE RECOGNITION THAN THAT**

## THE WAMPO VIADUCT



**THE WAMPO VIADUCT WAS 200 METRES LONG AND 8 TO 9 METRES HIGH IN PLACES**

Although **John Howkins** did not appear to have worked on the Wampo Viaduct, the writer felt that the following should be including in order to provide the reader with an understanding of the appalling conditions other unfortunate men, **including those from his regiment** had to endure. There may be some slight discrepancies in dates etc., but that is to be expected

E. W. Swanton stated that some of the **148<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshire Yeomanry Field Regiment** group, including himself, were left at Wampo to work on the building of the three Wampo camps (main camp at Wampo, plus two north & south of Wampo) and the construction of the viaduct. The main camp at Wampo was not completed till December 1942, so the POWs working on the Viaduct prior to that, either slept in the open jungle, or possibly slept in the cave at Kra Sae (now a tourist site) which even at that time is described as having a reclining golden Buddha in it.

The Wampo rock faces which can be seen in the following photographs were removed manually with lump hammers and chisels by the men, and narrow plateaus were created for the railway support structure to be mounted on, that is, until the Japs decided to use explosives for removing some of the large rocks (see the following story under the feature on Wampo Viaduct entitled 'The Gunner's Revenge').

Trains were able to reach Wampo on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1943, and all the men at Tarsao were then moved up to Tonchan in monsoon conditions. There, they suffered greatly from the Cholera epidemic when hundreds of men died. Normally, men who contracted Cholera only lasted twenty four hours or so. For the next four months, the men were in low spirits, and due to sickness, hardly any work was done. However, the dreaded 'speedo' 'buggero' was put into operation in order to get the line finished. 24 hour shifts were instigated with the promise by the Japs of a holiday after the line was finished. Hundreds of men were now dying on the job from sheer exhaustion. The Malayan Tamils who were used as forced labour were given the best tents during the monsoon conditions, but even so, E. W. Swanton records that they were dying like flies and had to be buried by the officers. Some of their bodies went into the river which became contaminated.

In November 1943 (the 'Death Railway' was completed in October 1943), E. W. Swanton records the men were moved back down south to Group IV headquarters hospital at Tarsao (aka., Tha Sao / Tarsau) where there were 2,000 men living in squalor, with few drugs available for medical treatment. However, he explains that this camp was in a natural amphitheatre and it became possible to get various educational talks and such like going. Banter on cricket between the Brits and Aussies was particularly popular. These various activities contributed greatly to the men's morale and convalescence. The officers were apparently moved to Kanchanaburi Camp Hospital for their convalescence.



**POWs IN AN OPEN SIDED ATTAP ROOFED HUT AT KANCHANABURI. THOUSANDS OF POWs WENT THROUGH THIS CAMP AND THE HOSPITAL**

Swanton states that in April 1944, the men were moved down to Nakhon Pathom camp on a flat plain between Nong Pladuk and Bangkok (see preceding coloured map), and he stayed there till January 1945, four months after the end of the war. This camp was unusually built by the Japanese and an attached sick ward was established there in December 1944, and closed on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945. Swanton remarks how wonderful it was to see the sunset there again. However, he doesn't comment about other men including **John Howkins** being sent to Ubon and Takhli to work on airfields for the Japanese.

**Permission has been granted by Ronnie Taylor ([www.fepow.family](http://www.fepow.family)) ) to include the following extract from a report by a POW imprisoned at Wampo main camp:-**

*Conditions here were appalling, no huts, no latrines, no hospital, no cookhouses – only for the Nip railway Branch and the Korean Guards. **So POWs had to sleep, eat and stay out in the open, the open being jungle.** This had to be cleared, huts erected, latrines dug, cookhouses built, rice bags weighing 220 lbs to be carried from the river to store houses already erected, and by men already tired. Very few were not suffering from sore and blistered feet, small ulcers, acute diarrhoea or dysentery and malaria. Treatment was*

negligible, medical supplies only being what the ranks had carried. Supplies issued by the Nips were insufficient, men tore up clothing for dressings, putties used for bandages, Epsom Salts and charcoaled rice for diarrhoea and dysentery. Anti-malaria and Anti-gas ointment, Saline, Potassium Permanganate and Lysol for dressings. Two days after arrival, we suffered our first death, cause – acute diarrhoea. The life could have been saved if proper medical attention had been available. The food was insufficient consisting of half grained dirty rice and tea for breakfast with a level teaspoon of sugar if available. Dinner was boiled rice, tea and salt. Tea was boiled rice, thin watery vegetable stew made of 8 marrows, plus tea. The total number of men being fed in the camp at one cookhouse was 1,584.....

The work commenced at eight in the morning and ended at six in the evening with a break for 'dinner' of one hour. We were given one days rest every ten days, during which time, ranks erected a concert stage and a bathing beach. Concerts were allowed on our day of rest. They were of the variety type accompanied by a cornet and accordion.....

Vegetables issued in most cases were 90% water, such as marrow, mush marrow, cucumber and Chinese radish, or starch veg such as sweet potato and other tropical vegetables. So little vitamin value was obtained from the veg or rice and this was the men's main source food. No meat or oil was issued until 20<sup>th</sup> December 1942, then only a ten stone pig, which had to last two days and feed 1,584 men, and then only after the guards had taken one fifth of it.

.....Following an altercation with the Nip Commandant over issues in the cookhouse.....and finally he went to the Korean cookhouse fuming. A matter of minutes elapsed when he called me; I was met by flying hands being heavily smote on each cheek at least twenty times. He informed me that he had found a Thai bargeman with vegetable rations, and seeing that I was responsible for them, I must have sold them to him. Without being able to explain, I was ordered to kneel down and again I was smote heavily on both sides of my face. Then seeing that he did not seem to hurt me, he made me stand up again, strictly to attention, whilst he beat me about the legs with a piece of bamboo. He then made me stand to attention for four hours without headgear and facing the sun. After this I was released. After four months, I still had black and blue marks on my leg.

**Permission granted by Ronnie Taylor ([www.fepow.family](http://www.fepow.family)) to include the following report by the son of a POW at Wampo):-**

At Wampo, whilst building the Viaduct, the first task was the removal of hundreds of tons of rock from the rock face alongside the Kwai Noi River, it was here that father told me they had "The Gunner's Revenge". What happened was that some large rocks from the cliff face had to be removed, so it was decided by the Nips that rather than just use the POW's brute strength and ignorance, dynamite would be the best way of doing it. The POW's would drill the holes using the normal method of hammering into the rock with a chisel until they had made a hole deep enough to drop a charge of dynamite into, this then had a fuse placed in it and the fuses were lit, mainly from a cigarette and the lighters then ran like 'buggery'! There was a section facing across to the camp, which was allocated to the 'Gunners' as it was considered that they may be able to limit any damage caused by the explosions from flying debris. A number of POWs had already been slightly injured by stray rocks smashing into both the camp area, and where they had been working. The work was as usual tedious, hot, slippery and dangerous for the drillers as it was a matter of holding this lump of long thin steel, supposed to be a chisel, and having it struck on the end by one of your workmates. The metal was not always very solid and so chips and splinters would fly off, causing lacerations and other minor injuries, any of which could soon turn septic in the environment we were working in. Also, the end of the chisel could splinter and splay out making a difficult to remove it from the hole. As an added impetus, if you were to loose your footing on this section of what was to become the 'Wampo Viaduct', you would fall some considerable distance to the river, either hitting the rocks below or falling into the river. Either way, you stood little chance of surviving and the Nips' could not care less about your end result. It would be one less to feed, but their worry was one less to work. However, in the case of shifting this part of the rock face, it was important to us that we made a good job of it. So, the job was set too and completed within the time laid down by the Nips'. Come the day, and along with other stretches of the cliff face, the charges and fuses were laid. Then the fuses were lit, some earlier than was necessary by the Nips' in order to make our life even more difficult. The area was cleared and we moved as far away as possible from falling debris. All waited for the bang ! Funnily, everyone had moved as far away as possible from the site of the camp. Then came the clouds of dust, followed closely by

*the bang and everybody ducked for cover. From across the river, a shower of quite large rocks and other assorted debris descended on the camp, primarily around the Nip hut placement. There had been quite a lot of damage to their huts and surroundings. Not our fault, the Nips' had laid the charges and set them off. What had it got to do with us? The cheers said it all! **They should never have given a job which involved predicting trajectory, estimated weight of projectile, explosive charges, destination and distance to target, to a group who had spent years training to fire large caliber, coastal guns!! Just for once, we could see the results of our efforts from the blood, sweat and tears that had been expended. That was the 'Gunner's Revenge'***

## **SAM DIMMOCK – 'D' FORCE – GROUP IV**

5,000 POWs in 'D' Force, **Sam Dimmock's** party, were entrained from Changi, Singapore for 1,200 miles to Ban Pong to work on the railway. **Sam** left Singapore on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March and is recorded as being on train number 9. **The** 'Hell Trains' carried up to 600 men. **Sam** was allocated to construction Group IV working in the sector **Konyu – Hintok – Kinsaiyok**. Some men from Group IV eventually went as far as Krain Kri, a distance of 244Km's.

The following table shows the overall geographical area covered by Group IV.

This was during the time of the dry season and there is a comment in one of the men's diary explaining that at this time, instead of marching, open trucks were used on the completed part of the railway to transport prisoners from Ban Pong. We know for certain that trains could get to Wampo by mid may 1943, so at least an 80km march would have been involved even if trucks were used for the initial part of the journey. The Konyu River Camp & Hintok Road camp had already been constructed by the time Group IV arrived. **Sam Dimmock** would have undoubtedly worked on this section of the Railway.

Hellfire Pass (Konyu Cutting) was the deepest and longest cutting along the entire length of the Thai–Burma railway. The name 'Hellfire Pass' came from the appalling working conditions at and around this site, which was some 150 kilometres from the start of the railway at Nong Pladuk. In mid-1943, when the Japanese introduced the dreaded 'Speedo' to meet tight deadlines for completing the railway, prisoners were forced to work long hours into the night. Their work site was lit by oil lamps and bamboo fires. This flickering light, the noise from the drilling of the rock and the shuffling of hundreds of poorly fed prisoners would have seemed like the very image of hell.



**KONYU CUTTING (HELLFIRE PASS) TAKEN SHORTLY AFTER THE END OF THE WAR AND BEFORE THE RAIL LINE WAS REMOVED. THE POWs HAD TO CREATE A RAVINE THROUGH THE ROCKS TO ALLOW THE TRAIN LINE TO PASS THROUGH.**

'Hellfire Pass' was a dramatic cutting some 75 metres long and 25 metres deep. The approach to this cutting consisted of a longer series of excavations which created a narrow plateau on the hillside following the contour line. The excavation of these cuttings by the large workforce, required 20 meters of rock to be blasted away which was done largely by hand, although a small number of jack-hammers powered by a compressor were used. Prisoners would drill a series of small holes in the rock; one man holding a metal drill or 'tap', and another hitting its head with an 8-10 lb hammer. These drill holes would then be filled with explosive and detonated. Bridges 1km in length had to be built as well as the embankments and the project had to be completed by October 1943. The resulting rubble was moved by skips running on narrow gauge lines or by hand in baskets and sacks, an exhausting and back-breaking task for hungry and ill workers. Even before starting work, prisoners might walk a number of kilometres up or down steep and treacherous mountain slopes.

As the line-laying parties came closer to Hellfire Pass, Japanese engineers increased the pace of work, resulting in the infamous 'Speedo' period from April to August 1943. Whereas a prisoner might previously have been expected to drill one metre per day into the solid rock, now he was made to drill two or three metres. The work day extended to fifteen, even eighteen hours. If the pace of work seemed too slow, the Japanese resorted to physical punishment.

Conditions were made worse when the monsoonal rains arrived, which turned work sites and camps into quagmires and made already steep hill faces impossibly slippery.

Thousands of men would have been hospitalised in the camp hospitals at Kanchanaburi and Chungkai (see preceding coloured map and later feature on Chungkai). In fact, it is recorded on his JIC, that **Sam**, who was suffering from tropical leg ulcers was sent to Chungkai hospital in January 1944. He left there in May 1944 and was sent further down the line to Taimuang camp where all Group IV men originally from Changi, Singapore were returned.

It was around this time that **Sam Dimmock** was selected to go to Japan. He was subsequently entrained at Taimuang to travel the 1,200 mile journey to River Valley Road Camp in Singapore to await transportation to Japan.

From June 24<sup>th</sup> 1944, **Sam Dimmock** and 2,217 other POWs were entrained in multiple train loads for this 1,200 miles horrific journey back to Singapore. The first party arrived in Singapore on the 29<sup>th</sup> June at 2.00pm. **Sam's** final destination was to be the Electro-Chemical Industry Company Branch Camp, Fukuoka 25B at Omuta in Japan where he was interned as a POW till the end of the war.

**See the later feature describing Sam Dimmock's further experiences, covering his journey to Japan and his internment in the POW camp.**

<b>GROUP IV CAMPS - MARCH 1943 TO MARCH 1944</b>							
<b>SAM DIMMOCK WAS PART OF GROUP IV DURING THIS PERIOD</b>							
<b>APPROXIMATE DISTANCES FROM START OF RAILWAY AT NONG PLADUK THAILAND GOING NORTH – THESE CAN BE RELATED TO THE PRECEDING COLOURED MAP.</b>							
	114km	137km	150km	156km	172km	182km	244km
10/42	Wampo	Tonchan					
11/42	Wampo	Tonchan	Kanu / Konyu Hell Fire Pass				
12/42	Wampo	Tonchan	Ditto				
01/43	Wampo	Tonchan	Ditto				
02/43	Wampo	Tonchan	Ditto				
03/43	Wampo	Tonchan	Ditto				
04/43	Wampo	Tonchan	Ditto				
05/43		Tonchan	Ditto	Hintok			
06/43		Tonchan	Ditto	Hintok			
07/43		Tonchan	Ditto	Hintok			
08/43				Hintok		Rintin	Krain Krai

09/43				Hintok		Rintin	Krain Krai
10/43				Hintok		Rintin	Krain Krai
<b>RAILWAY COMPLETED – 17<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 1943</b>							
11/43		Tonchan					Krain Krai
12/43		Tonchan			Kinsayok		
01/44		Tonchan			Kinsayok		
02/44		Tonchan			Kinsayok		
03/44		Tonchan			Kinsayok		

## **‘F’ FORCE**

**None of our three men were in ‘F’ Force, but it was felt the readers would benefit from an explanation of what they did and the enormous number of men they lost.**

‘F’ Force, **a labour party of 7000 prisoners (3,444 British & nearly 3,600 Australians)**, left Changi on 13 trains between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1943 and remained under Singapore control. They were not assigned a group in the same way as ‘D’ Force (their JIC’s were not marked up to indicate with which group they were working). They were simply directed to where labour was most needed – in their case to the area near Changaraya where group III men were working. Stanley "Stan" Wakefield Harris (later CBE) was a famous ruby union player who played for England and the Lions and he was appointed senior officer in command of ‘F’ Force, with Lieutenant Colonel Dillon leader of the British and Lieutenant Colonel Kappe leader of the Australians.

‘F’ Force were not classified as a normal working group of slave labourers. The POWs allocated to this group were all sick men before they left Singapore and were suffering from Diphtheria and Dysentery amongst other things. The men were not considered fit enough to be transferred to work areas but were sent anyway.

In a desperate attempt to get the railway finished on schedule, even those additional forces (D & F) did not provide sufficient manpower. An interpreter with the rear party, which was the last group to pass through Kanchanaburi recorded that over one hundred sick men from ‘F’ Force had to be abandoned there, sleeping in the open and without medicines. ‘F’ Force eventually reached their final destination at Chanaraya (the nearest camp to the Burma border) in May, which was 345 km’s from the start of their forced march at Ban Pong. This included **700 British POWs**.

A cholera epidemic which struck in the monsoon season also compounded the already dreadful conditions. **Of the British in ‘F’ Force, 2037 of them died, whilst the Australians lost 1060 men.** They were to suffer among the highest casualties of any POW group. Due to remaining under the control of the Malay Command,

rather than the Thai-Burma Command, they also suffered in the distribution of supplies. They were sent back to Singapore when their services were not needed.

## **SAM HODGES – ‘H’ FORCE**

As the last groups of ‘F’ Force were being entrained north from Singapore station, ‘G’ Force was being got ready to be shipped off to Japan. In some ways, **Sam Hodges** was lucky not to go to the railway with ‘F’ Force, as the survival rate amongst them was only 25%.

Immediately after the last group of ‘F’ Force had departed, the first parties of **Sam Hodges’** ‘H’ Force were being assembled to begin their journey to Ban Pong. The first ‘H’ force men left on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1943 and the final sixth party of officers left on the 17<sup>th</sup> May. Sam Hodges left on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1943. ‘H’ Force was the last of the numerous parties to be entrained on the 1,200 mile journey from Singapore. By late May 1943 when the railway operations were into the second year, 60,000 POWs had already been sent to Burma and Thailand.

The railway authorities had asked for an additional reinforcement of 3,270 men and the Japanese in Singapore put these together from the prisoners who remained. These were men who were too poorly to work. The force commander was Lt. Col. Humphries, and accompanying him were approximately 2,000 British including **Sam Hodges**. The rest were made up of Australians, Dutch and Americans. Many of the men had arrived in February from Java.

‘H’ Force did not venture quite so far north on the railway as ‘F’ Force and were used to reinforce the labour gangs in the middle reaches of Tonchan to Hintok where work had fallen behind schedule.

It is on record that when the men reached the transit camp at Ban Pong, the huts were now in a filthy state, littered with excrement and seething with flies. At this stage, like all parties, they would have been searched, ordered to fill their water bottles, if they had one, and then begin their 20 mile march to the initial staging camp. When they arrived at Kanchaaburi where the hospital was, besides being inoculated, they were put through the undignified process of being ‘glass-rodged’ by the Japanese to test for dysentery.

The marching continued, and when ‘H’ Force (H6 party of officers) arrived at Tonchan South Camp it was occupied by H5 party (**almost certainly Sam Hodges party**), which is where they began work on the railway. It soon became apparent to the commanding officer Lt. Col. Newey that the officers were to be expected to work alongside the ranks, even though many of the officers were of mature years. Although Newey argued the legal points, this made no difference, and the officers had to do their share of labouring on the railway, as apparently was now the case elsewhere on the Thailand end of the line.

**Sam Hodges further confirms his whereabouts in a video that his son had made where he says that he was lying in mud at Hintok presumably from the monsoons.**

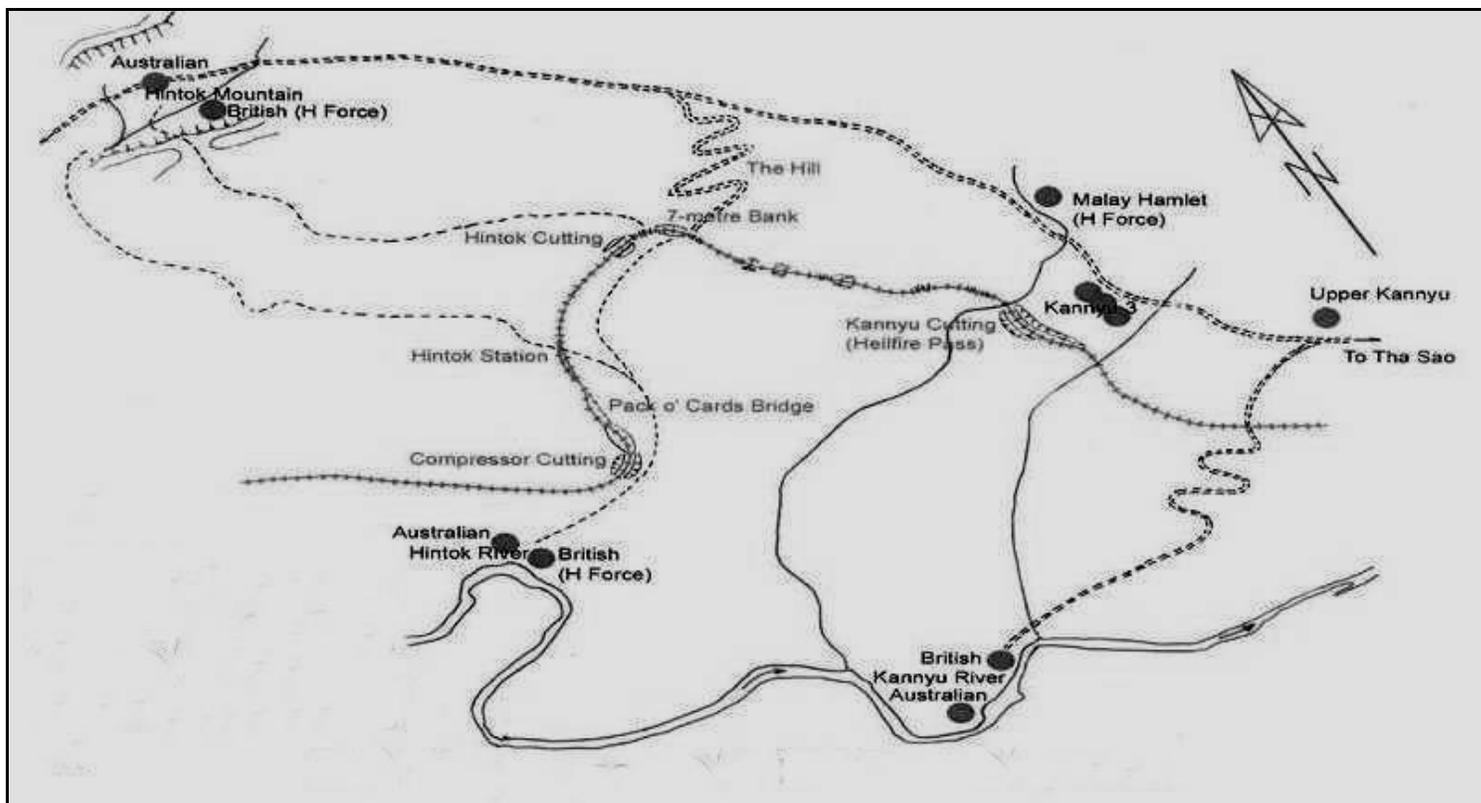
The Malay Hamlet camp shown on the following map was a camp where 'H' Force men were located to reinforce work on 'Hellfire Pass' where there were 216 deaths in about 10 weeks.

Kanchanaburi base camp / hospital was used as a hospital for 'H' Force on the way back down the line.

There can be no doubt in anyone's mind that 'H' Force would have been totally ignorant of the real purpose of the move and the conditions they would find there. POWs were kept in total isolation of all knowledge of the Japanese administrative plans. Even the Japanese in Singapore were not always ware of what was happening it seems. They just did as they were told.

**Sam Hodges** left Thailand on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1943 (having worked on the railway for approximately 6 months) and arrived back in Singapore on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1943 after being entrained for five days and nights on another horrific 1,200 plus miles journey. **Sam** was sent to Sime Road POW camp, until 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1944 when he was transferred to Changi Gaol (used to intern POWs) till his final release following the Japanese surrender on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1945.

**Sam Hodges** would have returned home from Singapore by ship to Liverpool docks.



MAP SHOWING THREE OF THE VARIOUS CAMPS WHERE SAM HODGES' 'H' FORCE PARTIES WERE LOCATED – HINTOK MOUNTAIN, HINTOK RIVER AND MALAY HAMLET. THE SPELLING FOR KONYU IS INTERPRETED AS KANNYU ON THE MAP



**A SECTION OF THE 'PACK OF CARDS BRIDGE' (SEE PRECEDING MAP)**

The 'Pack of Cards Bridge' which 'H' Force helped to construct was 2kms from 'Hellfire Pass'. During its construction it fell down three times, leading the Australians' to give it its name.

**ORIGINALLY, 601 MEN FROM THE 1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION, ROYAL LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT WERE SENT BY THE JAPANESE TO WORK ON THE BURMA TO THAILAND DEATH RAILWAY.**

**106 OF THESE MEN DIED IN THAILAND AS POWs, EITHER WHILST SLAVING ON THE RAILWAY OR IN THE CAMPS AND SO CALLED HOSPITALS.**

**THIS WAS 17.5% OF THE ORIGINAL LEICESTERS' WORK FORCE!**

## WHAT IT WAS LIKE WORKING ON THE BURMA TO THAILAND 'DEATH RAILWAY'

UNLIKE MANY OTHER POWs, NEITHER SAMUEL DIMMOCK, SAMUEL HODGES OR JOHN HOWKINS KEPT ANY FORM OF DIARY OR PERSONAL WRITTEN RECORDS OUTLINING THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE BUILDING OF THE 'DEATH RAILWAY'. THE WRITER HAS THEREFORE TRIED TO CONVEY FROM DIARY'S KEPT BY OTHER POWs WORKING UNDER THE SAME CONDITIONS WHAT THEY HAD TO ENDURE.

THE CRUELTY, IN ITS MANY FORMS, THAT THE JAPANESE AND KOREAN GUARDS INFLICTED ON OUR BRITISH AND COMMENWEALTH SOLDIERS IS BEYOND COMPREHENSION TO ANY NORMAL HUMAN BEING.

<b>POW WORKERS / DEATHS ON THE THAILAND TO BURMA RAILWAY 1942 – 1945</b>			
<b>Country of origin</b>	<b>POWs</b>	<b>Number of deaths</b>	<b>Death rate</b>
<b>UK, British India or crown colony</b>	30,131	6,904	23%
<b>Netherlands or Dutch East Indies</b>	17,990	2,782	15%
<b>Australia</b>	13,004	2,802	22%
<b>United States</b>	686	133	19%
<b>Total</b>	61,811	12,621	20%

Although over 61,000 allied POWs were forced to work on the Burma to Thailand railway, we should not forget that some 250,000 natives (known as coolies) who came from countries such as Java, Ambon, Singapore, Malayan, Burma including thousands of Tamils were used as slave labour by the Japanese. It has been suggested that between 90,000 and 100,000 died, presumably without record.



On arrival, the forced slave labour workforce was sent in parties under the POW officer's own administration, and once the prisoners arrived at their destination; the Imperial Japanese Army put them into work groups. The POWs had to construct their own camps, there being a total of some 68 built along the route of the railway. This figure is an approximation based on various records.

Below is a further extract from the diaries of Corporal Alastair K Urquhart. This vividly describes what life was like for these poor souls during the building of the 'Death Railway'.

**(Permission granted by Ronnie Taylor ([www.fepow.family](http://www.fepow.family)) )to include the following extract from the diary of Corporal Alastair K Urquhart :-**

*Word got around that we were to walk to our next stop and those who had taken a lot of kit decided to ditch the non-essentials. We were paraded at 5.00pm early May and after much shouting and beatings by the guards we finally moved off, taking turns to carry the stretcher cases, no transport this time. It was a bright moonlit night. Physically this was more trying, but at least you were out in the open and not cooped up in those steamy stinking wagons.*

*Now we were being forced marched into the jungle and our bodies covered in lice, hands itching with scabies and the body shaken by bouts of prickly heat, apart from the incessant churning of one's stomach as hunger pains and constant bowl movements, either where you squatted or dashed into the jungle, if the guards let you. The blisters soon appeared after a few miles and the column of prisoners were trudging, not marching. Men fell by the wayside unable to lift their feet anymore. Those of us in better condition had to carry or drag the fallen comrades.*

*If we were lucky, we got five minutes rest in the hour, but a target of 50Km (30 miles) was set for each night and we slept in the jungle by day if one could, but the ants and other insects, mosquitoes and such, made it difficult to sleep. Sheer exhaustion took its toll and if you did fall asleep, it was a broken body that woke or got kicked by a Japanese boot and it could land anywhere. The food when it was available was a lump of sloppy rice and some green water. There was no salt, sugar or anything in the rice, sometimes because of the heat the rice had started to ferment, but you ate it or starved.*

*We had been marching for five nights and we lost another two men, with more holding on to life with little chance of surviving. The dreaded malaria had struck me again and my spleen was tender and enlarged. Others helped me with blankets to stop the rigor, and one did the best to keep up with the column, or you were just left to die if no-one came to your aid. I was helped by some who I had helped further back.*

*We arrived at a site by a river which was subsequently named Konyu (see the preceding map) where we are to start clearing the thick jungle to build our camp. Tired as we were, there was no let up, and promises of Yasmi (rest) by the Japs was indicated when "all work done". Split up into parties, we were made to hack down bamboo trees with parangs, a job that had hands blistered. Now we were working from sunrise to sunset and anybody who slackened was whipped by a bamboo cane or a rifle butt struck down on your knees or feet or anywhere the Jap wanted to. It was not long before I cottoned on and engineered to be working at a height out of reach, so to speak.*

*Most of us were suffering from Malaria, dysentery or a disease now making itself felt, namely Beri - beri, a debilitating disease from lack of vitamins, particularly Vitamin B.*

*Having cleared the jungle after two or three days, seemed longer, one just lay down on the dank earth when worked stopped and the meager ration of plain rice and a watery soup-cum-drink had been eaten. All water from the river had to be boiled and the river was placed out of bounds.*

*Unshaven, filthy, crawling with rice and bugs, which seemed to take a delight with my blood, I became dejected, morose, humiliated, stripped of my dignity, no longer the proud man I was and by no means alone in this respect. Each day, each hour was hell. The relentless sun beating down and no hat or eye shades to cope with the glare, sunstroke being common place. We were now starting to build bamboo huts as living quarters with attap (palm thatch) roofs. You have guessed, up building the roofs and ties was my job. Too high up for a Jap guard to start anything. One got beaten up for the least provocation, and I had many, some bestial and very degrading. Often one was too tired to get down off the roof, so we made bamboo ladders to make it easier. The cookhouse awning was completed first and the supports for the huge 'qualies' which was where the rice was cooked. Sometimes, if the cooks had had enough, we would manage to get the burned skin off the rice, scraped from the 'qualies' which tasted burnt but so much better.*

*When the huts were finished, the beds were a continuous line of slats of bamboos, tied with raffia to the bamboo supports, holding forty men tightly squeezed together. You were so tired each day that sleeping on bamboo slats was hard on the body and the journey to the latrines, in bare feet, boots no longer being serviceable, was a nightmare; sometimes through*

mud, other times through excrement, i.e. someone did not make the bog. This was just a hole in the ground with bamboo slats across it.

Hopefully, you did not meet up with a guard, but if you did, it usually meant a beating or a fist in your face. A tin of water was left at the entrance to the hut for the purpose of cleaning one's feet, but it need no guessing what indeed happened.

Tomorrow we leave the camp at sunrise to start work on the infamous railway, later called the 'Railway of Death'. The next morning we were paraded at sunrise, issued with a pick or shovel, and marched to the area to be dug for the railway track. Most of my gear had either worn out or been stolen so labouring under a Thailand sun without a hat or vest or shirt was hardly uplifting, and by the time for Yasmi (rest) mid-day, the rice you had in your mess tin had turned sour with the heat from your body and sun. You were issued with rice before leaving camp and some of the parties were designated to carry water from the river and boil it up so that you could have a small mug of tea. Each day, the Japs gave us a bigger target to complete and only when finished did you return to camp.....cont'd after photographs



**TYPICAL OF THE HUTS BUILT BY THE POWS AT VARIOUS STAGES ALONG THE RAILWAY**



**THREE TYPICAL POWs SELECTED AS FIT MEN BY THE JAPANESE TO WORK ON THE RAILWAY**

**CONTINUATION.....***We were of course, terribly dehydrated and suffering from sunstroke with many other illnesses as well. Subsequently, I suffered untold agony as kidney stones formed and started to move and no morphine or pethidine to help. Many times when ill, I just wanted to end it all by jumping off a bridge or over a gully, but always something, or someone, made me carry on. Our hands and feet were blistered and bleeding but that did not deter those bastard (sorry) Korean guards and the Japanese NCO's and officers.*

*Our bodies were being torn apart. Severe lack of food and vitamins, Beri-beri, Dysentery, Malaria, Scabies, Prickly Heat, Ringworm and now we were starting to have tropical ulcers which were so difficult to heal. We used maggots to eat away the decaying flesh and even to this day I can remember clearly the sensation of these creatures on one's leg or ankle. The scars of these ulcers are still visible after 50-odd years and the mental scars still very vivid in my mind. My body was beginning to swell with the effects of Beri-beri and the pain in my legs, like constant tooth ache, made my living such hell. You still had to go out to the railway each day, even stretcher cases, and if the Japanese engineers thought the work was too slow, many a beating was dished out, shouting and screaming abuse at us. But we knew, or I did, that their day would come.*

*Today I was the target of a Japanese NCO who beat me up knocking out one of my front teeth, simply because I failed to use an awl on a 12 inch diameter trunk, boring from one side and then the other so that the hole met in the middle. The stupid-----, may rot in hell, and the rest.*

*Perhaps some of you who read this often wondered at my attitude to the Japanese race. Maybe, just maybe, you will understand as the truth unfolds. We were expendable and our only reason for living was that we were unpaid workers, dying slowly, painfully, without any medical help. Our own doctors did what they could with limited resources.*

*Day in, day out, the misery continued. Men being helped by others to the railway, some unable to stand and made to wield heavy hammers to break up rocks for ballast. Konyu I camp was probably one of the worst to be in as the commandant was a vicious, sadistic evil Jap. His ideas of punishment were so bizarre, so degrading; prisoners spread-eagled by ropes from their wrists and ankles in the blistering sun, the ropes having been soaked beforehand. Believe me, men, aye men, aye even brave men, screamed in agony as the ropes dried out and shrunk. Then there was the cage of bamboo so small you could not move and you were left there in the stifling heat. Few survived, I having been one of the few.*

*Little did we realize worse was to befall us in the 18 months ahead. Literally, men were dying in their hundreds up and down this railway. Rations continued to be cut for some reason, usually to blackmail our officers to put the sick and even dying to work. Many of the chaps who were sick volunteered to go so that the rations per man could be restored. No-one sick was allocated a ration, only the working parties. So the rice received from the Japs had to be spread out by our own people to cover the sick.*

*After months, maybe years, one had no idea of time. We were reaching completion of the track and bridge, so we were told to be ready to move to a better camp. This proved to be another jungle clearing job and building another row of huts to be called Konyu II.....*

*My clothing consisted of a "Jap Harry" (nick name given by POWs – Japanese name was Fondushi) which was a long piece of white linen approximately six inches in width with two pieces of tape or string attached to one of the ends and tied around the waist. Then, from the back, the length of material was drawn up under your groin and the front part drawn up and under the tape and the loose end just flapped about in front of you. Otherwise I was naked with nothing on my feet or head. The more naked I was, the cleaner I thought I was, but the filth, the dirt, the crawling lice, the itch, the smell, the loss of all your dignity and the degradation to a proud man was so hard to bear.*

*We were still a proud bunch of men who stood up to the Japs, even though the odds were 100-1 and our pride in our country gave us the strength (the spirit that carried us through) to fight the conditions. Treated worse than pigs or rats, the days lingered. Rumours swept through the camp that the Japanese had lost a big sea battle and it gave us fresh hope, which was all banished when a guard wielding a bamboo stick started laying into us- "All men worko", "Speedo", "Buggero". "Aye, aye, keep your ----- head on, it'll soon be knocked off."*

*My time on the railway lasted 761 days and this time is being condensed into very few pages. There are scenes too painful to describe, the beheading of an escapee and the crucifixion of a man who stole three of the officer's chickens. We were forced to parade at all of these brutalities. Could anyone forgive and forget? Only those of you who have never suffered or witnessed the torture and pain inflicted on another human being could, but do not ask me.*

*One night, when I was on my way to the latrines, a Korean guard stopped me and started to attempt to commit a sexual act against me, and without stopping to think, I kicked him as hard as I was able in that spot between his legs, doubling him up, and I ran right into a second guard. I knew I was in for a beating or death or worse. All hell broke loose, Japs screaming at me, bayonets jabbing at me; my instinct was to run and perhaps they would then shoot me. I was dragged and kicked along the ground to the officer's hut where the interpreter had been summoned. I was made to stand to attention whilst the NCO clubbed me with his rifle and each time I fell to the ground I was made to stand up again. Suddenly the camp commandant appeared and the guards stopped and stood to attention. He spoke to the interpreter in*

*Japanese and, in very broken English, I was asked why I kicked a guard. So I told the interpreter why and he relayed it to the Jap officer and he harangued all and sundry, and standing to attention is difficult when your body is wracked with pain and broken bones. I was then marched to the front of the guard house where I was forced to stand to attention, and every time I wilted a rifle butt in the kidneys straightened me up. Every hour through the night was torture, bitten by Mosquitoes and other beasties. At sunrise, the men were being assembled for work on the railway and soon after their rice rations were issued they left for work. The sun was rising in the sky and my condition was a hopeless mess. As the sun bore down on my defenseless body I lapsed in and out of consciousness and the guards through water over me and kicked me until I stood up to attention and so it went on relentlessly, hour after hour. My eyes were closed and my face felt swollen as blood seeped from my body and feet. Body burning and dehydrated, no food or water, except what I got in my mouth as they revived me when I collapsed from heat exhaustion. One prayed that it would end. Why don't they shoot me or worse? But no, they played their game of torture like a cat plays with a mouse.*

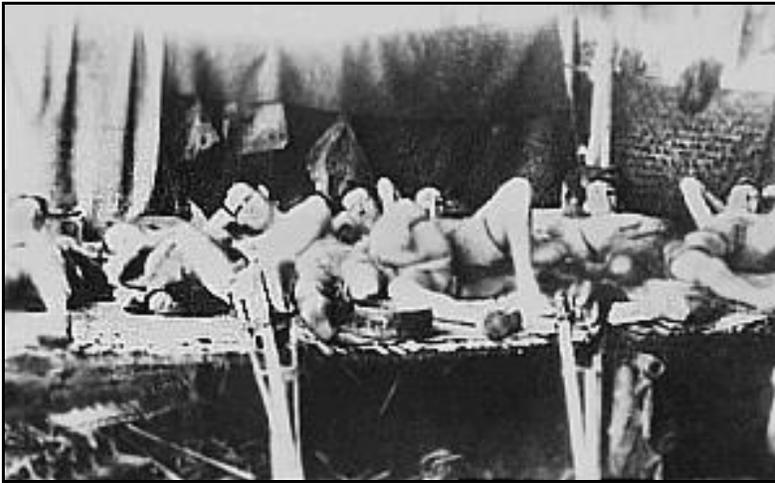
**The diary continues with the hellish experience endured by Corporal Urquhart and his comrades which continued until their part of the railway was completed, and they were sent back down river to board the trucks for another nightmare journey back to Singapore.**

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**The following extract is taken from "Prisoners of War of the Japanese 1942-1945" with research and articles by Lt. Col Peter Winstanley OAM RFD (retired) J.P. This is in the public domain with no reference to copyright.**

**This is an extract of a story related by Lt. Col. Albert Coates who became the chief medical POW of the Burma to Thailand railway and was interned at the 55km camp (from Thanbyuzayat) near Tanbaya in Burma – see preceding coloured map:-**

*This 55 kilo camp was to become an 1800 bed hospital camp for men too sick to work from up the line. Bamboo huts were constructed and a small operating theatre added, covered over with palm thatch, dirt floors, and a bamboo table for surgery. There was no equipment, no supplies, as the Japanese refused to allow any, and there were no beds. They had no proper instruments, only a few artery forceps, a scalpel or two, sharpened table knives for amputations, bent forks for retractors, some darning needles, a kitchen saw and a curette which the Japanese had given as a joke. Coates had a spinal needle, which became the method for giving anesthesia. There was no general anesthesia and for minor procedures, like removing a gangrenous toe, no anesthetic was available at all. Cleaning a leg ulcer meant three men holding down the patient. Saline irrigation was generally used to help clean the ulcers although the Dutch doctors favoured the use of maggots, and in Thailand by the Kwai Noi, patients immersed their limbs so the fish could clean the wounds. There was an initial small supply of quinine, no other drugs, just some meager supplies that had been carried by POWs. They began to make sutures from the lining of the gut of the water buffalo that were occasionally killed to make the meager gruel. Thin strips were cut and washed, and soaked in iodine solution for a week before use. When Coates recovered enough from the scrub-typhus he commenced surgery immediately, and performed a wide range of operations here. Strangulated hernia reduction, tracheotomy for diphtheria, and ileostomy for toxic amoebic dysentery were all done here. The complications of tropical ulcers was ever present, one orderly who scratched his hand during a night-round of the patients developed gangrene and required an amputation. Coates performed 120 amputations for gangrenous lower limbs here. The judicious use of the curette probably saved many more limbs. Sometimes more than 50 men would have ulcers curetted in a day.*



**'AMPUTATION WARD' IN A BAMBOO HUT IN A POW HOSPITAL ALONG THE RAILWAY c. 1943. THE POWs OFTEN HAD LEGS AMPUTATED BECAUSE OF UNCONTROLABLE TROPICAL ULCERS. ALL THE MAIN HOSPITAL CAMPS SUCH AS KANCHANABURI AND CHUNGKAI HAD THESE WARDS**



**A TYPICAL JAPANESE POW CAMP HUT BUILT BY THE POWs WHO ARE ALL WEARING THE 'FONDUSHI' OR THE 'JAP HARRY' (THE NICK NAME GIVEN TO IT BY THE POWs).**

At some point towards the end of the war, thousands of POWs were entrained back to Singapore. Some were in such a parlous state that they were hospitalized for long periods, and were not fit enough to be shipped out to POW camps in Japan for example, as was Sam **Dimmock**.

In late 1944 /early 1945, over **150 Leicesters'** were relocated to other parts of Thailand to carry out work on aerodrome construction or maintenance projects following allied bombing raids along the length of the railway. Several of the **Leicesters'** were killed during air raids, five of these being when an air raid was carried out on the railway sidings at Nong Pladuk at the start of the railway.

The situation in Thailand was far too complex to cover in detail here, but it is recorded that **352 Leicesters'** remained in camps and hospitals along the route of the railway in Thailand when the Japanese signed the official surrender documents on September 1<sup>st</sup> 1945, following which they were liberated.



**POWs WASHING AT A STREAM DURING THE BUILDING OF THE RAILWAY**

**THE CHUNGKAI CAMP HOSPITAL**  
**THIS FEATURE HAS BEEN INCLUDED TO PROVIDE AN EXAMPLE OF**  
**A CAMP HOSPITAL ON THE RAILWAY**

**Sam Dimmock spent from January to May 1944 in this hospital suffering from Tropical Leg Ulcers.**

**The Chungkai Hospital which later became the site of the Chungkai War Cemetery** is the original burial ground started by the prisoners themselves, and the burials are mostly of men who died at the hospital. According to the CWGC, there are now 1,739 commonwealth graves in Chungkai of which 1,384 are British and 313 Dutch. No Australians are thought to be buried in this cemetery. It was situated just outside the town of Kanchanaburi where the river Kwai divides into two separate rivers; the Mae Khlong and Kwai Noi and about 5km west of the main Kanchanaburi war cemetery.

There is a good chance that both **Sam Hodges and John Howkins** would have been in this hospital for a spell.

**Permission has been granted by Ronnie Taylor ([www.fepow.family](http://www.fepow.family)) to include the following extract from a POWs recording on his experiences in Chungkai Hospital Camp.**

*After two weeks I was passed as unfit and with about two hundred more men evacuated to Tarsao. Oh no! Not by lorry or railway, but by marching. It was not a march, it was a nightmare! It was only about nine miles, we started marching with what kit we had at 8 am, still raining, through mud and pools of water and arrived at Tarsao at 2 am the next morning. No food and we had to sleep in the open. It was no joke when you are sick, with such things as acute diarrhoea that involves passing blood, 30 to 50 times a day. Or Ber-iberi, legs the thickness of thighs, from groins to toes. Testicles like footballs, ulcers on your legs, from knee to ankle with the shinbone showing and acute Malaria. These were the sick that did that march; the hospital contained about 10,000 POWs, all in the same state or worse. The treatment received was nothing to speak of, for example, pieces of blanket used as hot ferments, boiled and used over and over again. After two days I was evacuated by barge to Chungkai Base Hospital Camp. Here the conditions were worse, but the food was better, meat and fish were issued, a good canteen was in operation if you had any money, which is where the Black Market operated. The camp was situated on an island at the fork of two rivers, and being very flat, when the river was in flood, half of the huts were a foot deep in water. **Between 12,000 and 15,000 sick men were based here in about 60 huts. 300 men to a hut, the largest hut containing 530 men.***

*The camp was subdivided into two portions, Hospital and Convalescent huts. The Hospital consisted of 2 surgical wards, 8 ulcer wards, 2 acute dysentery wards, 2 Anti-Vitamin huts, 2 malaria huts and 4 amoebic dysentery bath huts; the sleeping space allocated was about 2 feet.*

*In these huts conditions were terrible, most men unable to move through weakness, they were without clothing, bedding consisted of perhaps a rice sack, with millions of flies and bedbugs, and running with human lice. Whilst at night they were eaten to death with Malaria breeding mosquitoes. In all the huts, POWs were just skeletons, the Malaria patients having relapse after relapse. In the Ulcer Wards, the stench of decaying and rotten flesh and bone made it practically impossible to walk through them. Amputations were being done every day with 24 legs being taken off in one day, either above or below the knee! The surgeon used a knife for the flesh and a hacksaw for the bones. Treatment was very poor, dressings insufficient, only able to be dressed every two days. Wounds were scraped every two days without anesthetic with a spoon, blue bottles were allowed to settle on the wound, then maggots allowed to breed and to eat away any decaying flesh and then pulled out by tweezers. As an illustration of the kind of sickness suffered, all men had an ulcerated leg,*

or both legs, stretching from thigh to knee and from knee to ankle coupled with either having malaria or acute diarrhoea. In the dysentery wards, the conditions were the same with men passing motions as regular as 70 times a day.

The worst wards were the Anti-Vitamin wards; if you went in here you only came out feet first, through lack of vitamin containing food, and harsh treatment. Men contracted Ber-iberi, vitamin diseases of the skin, acute debility, and consequently just became bags of bones, unable to feed, wash, or sit up, or even to move. These wards only contained men like bags of skin and bone. You would visit the ward one day and see men just like skeletons, the next day they would be blown up like balloons, arms, legs, body, face and private parts. By night they would be dead.

From June 1943 to May 1944 – 1,600 of these men died, 28 in one day, 400 in one month and just through the lack of food and medical supplies. The Nips used to laugh as a funeral procession went passed them and say 'Another one to Paradise'

Parties of such sick were arriving in the camp every day, either by barge or rail in parties of 50 to 100; they had been travelling 8,9,10 or more days, with very little food and no treatment. Ulcer cases on arrival had to have their dressings and bandages cut out of their wounds. Men died on the way and were buried at the side of the tracks in unknown and unmarked graves!!.....

The men in the camp belonged to 1,2,3,4,5 and 6 Groups including Dutch, Australians, British and American from Malaya, Thailand and Burma. The convalescent parts of the camp were divided into battalions by groups, each hut housing one battalion. These battalions consisted of men recovering from serious illnesses. The Nips would call them light sick and force them to work. Various incidents happened during my stay at Chungkai, which I would like to illustrate. One example only is included here:-

One of the cookhouses caught fire and was destroyed through a quantity of cooking oil catching fire. The Nips severely built up all the men working there. The Nips took the messing officer to the guard room and forced him to stand to attention for seven hours, he was then tried by the Nip commandant and awarded beatings and twenty days in solitary confinement, dismissed and ordered to report back at 8 pm. On reporting, he was set upon by four Korean Guards, thrown to the ground, kicked in the face, body and private parts, beaten with bamboos' then taken without medical attention to a small bamboo cell, where he could not stand up or lie down, always in a huddled up position. He had to urinate and pass his motions in the same position, fed on rice, water and salt only and beaten up every night for twenty days!!



**AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF CHUNGKAI HOSPITAL CAMP – NOTE THE KWAI NOI RIVER ALONG THE BOTTOM – THIS EVENTUALLY BECAME THE SITE OF A CEMETERY (SEE END OF BOOK FOR DETAILS)**

**HOSPITAL CAMP IN CHANGI, SINGAPORE 6 MONTHS PRIOR TO  
THE JAPANESE SURRENDER IN AUGUST 1945**



**A MAKESHIFT HOSPITAL WARD WITHIN THE CHANGI POW CAMP IN SINGAPORE – JANUARY, 1945 SIX  
MONTHS BEFORE THE JAPANESE SURRENDERED**

**THE EXPERIENCES OF 4860501, LANCE CORPORAL, SAMUEL DIMMOCK AFTER BEING ENTRAINED FROM TAIMUANG POW RAILWAY CAMP IN THAILAND TO SINGAPORE AND ONWARDS TO JAPAN ON THE SS KACHIDOKI MARU PRIOR TO HIS INTERNMENT IN THE FUKUOKA 25B POW CAMP AT SHINKAI, OMTA**



Having slaved on the Burma to Thailand railway for about 15 months under hellish conditions, life took yet another unfortunate twist for Sam Dimmock, when he, along with nearly 2,000 of what the Japanese referred to as 'fit men' were selected to be transferred to another POW camp located in Japan. This must have been a devastating blow to Sam's morale. Twelve other of his Leicesters' comrades were also amongst those shipped out with him from Singapore, of whom seven lost their lives during the sinking of their ship.

On June 24<sup>th</sup> 1944 – 1,877 POWs (14 Officers & 1,863 other ranks), in batches of approximately 600 per train (up to 40 per wagon), were starting to be entrained from Taimuang camp on the railway for another horrific 1,200 mile journey south to Singapore. They started to arrive in Singapore on the 29<sup>th</sup> June at 2.00pm. **Sam Dimmock's** destination was to be the Omuta Electro-Chemical Industry Company Branch Camp (Fukuoka 25B) which was established on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1944 (see following details). For two months after arrival, they were held at the Valley Road camp. They apparently had to work during this time doing various jobs on the docks.

On September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1944 – 2,218 Australian and British prisoners of war, who had survived the building of the Death Railway, were marched the three miles from the Valley Road camp (as part of Japan Party 3) to the docks, to board the two twenty-three year old passenger/cargo ships Rakuyo Maru (9,500 tons) and the Kachidoki Maru (10,500 tons). 598 POWs were under the command of Captain Keyes and 950 under the command of Captain Wilkie. **Sam Dimmock** was in Captain Wilkie's party.

**SAM DIMMOCK'S PARTY COMMANDER CAPTAIN WILKIE RECORDED IN HIS DIARY THAT THERE WERE 12,329 POWs LEFT AT RIVER VALLEY ROAD CAMP AWAITING REMOVAL TO CHANGI. 10 OF HIS INTENDED PARTY HAD BEEN LEFT IN CHANGI HOSPITAL AND 4 HAD DIED AT RIVER VALLEY ROAD.**

**TRANSCRIPTION FROM FIRST PART OF DIARY KEPT BY CAPTAIN R. D. WILKIE, 2/S., S.V.F. WHO COMMANDED THE FUKUOKA 25B CAMP POWs PARTY DESCRIBING THE JOURNEY FROM LEAVING TAIMUANG POW CAMP ON THE BURMA TO THAILAND RAILWAY TO BOARDING THE SHIP IN SINGAPORE**

**The following transcription of Captain Wilkie's diary is in the public domain and is the copyright of the originator.**

**Date of Departure: 24/6/44 From: Tha Muang (aka., Taimuang), Thailand**

**Strength of the Party: 14 Officers, 1863 Other ranks, Total 1877**

Journeyed by train to Singapore: Accommodation 30 men per truck. Average two meals per day which was quite inadequate.

30/6/44: Arrived River Valley Rd Camp, Singapore. Australians already in possession.

Accommodation: wooden platforms with attap roof. No side walls. Two and a half years old, in very bad condition.

Three hundred men per hut in two layers, one, six feet from the ground, the other, one foot from the ground.

In some huts the bottom platform was missing and the men had to sleep on the ground. The huts had electric light.

4/7/44: Started work at docks. Loading and unloading cargo ships. Very heavy work.

15/7/44: Two parties, with some Australian Troops, left for Japan. 305 strong.

1/8/44 (approx): Party arrived from Nong Pladuk under command of Major Seeking.

10/8/44 (approx): Hut collapsed injuring 20 men.

11/8/44: 8 badly injured in hut collapse and removed to Changi. Some rejoined the party later.

Rations: During this period: Rice – about 650 gr. per day. Dried fish 2 – 3 times a week and tapioca root. Inadequate supply of tinned cooking-oil. (Help received from Indian Troops in next camp in way of curry powder and extra rations). Complete rations totally inadequate.

Canteen: Very expensive. Japanese making private profit. Supplies: Coconut, cakes, soap, tobacco, fruit.

Medical: Main diseases: Beriberi, malaria, ulcers, slight dysentery. Two deaths.

Morale: Morale of troops gradually declined throughout this period.

Discipline: From bad to worse. During this period in River Valley Rd. Camp, party funds of \$850, comprising canteen funds, pay, and personal money, were stolen from Captain Wilkie. The criminal was undiscovered.

Amendment 1: Several boxes of British and American Red Cross Medical Supplies were received. A number of bags of rice polishings were provided just prior to leaving the camp. Medical supplies and rice polishings were taken on board the ship. We commenced receiving mail about two weeks before the departure. This was about one to two years old. A number of bags of letters which had not been issued were taken on board the ship.

4/9/44 **EMBARKED FOR JAPAN AS UNDER:-**

On vessels:	Party under command of Capt. Keyes	598
	Party under command of Capt. Wilkie	950
	Total in party	1548
Less:	First Japan Party	305
	Died at R V Road	4
	Left in Changi Hospital	10
	Left at R V Road Camp for removal to Changi	12,329
Total		1877

**Samuel Dimmock** boarded the Kachidoki Maru at Keppel Harbour Singapore on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 1944 for Omuta, Japan. The Kachidoki Maru was originally built as The “WOLVERINE STATE” for the U.S. Shipping Board. It served on the Pacific coast and east coast of South America routes. It was transferred to “Dollar Steamship Lines” in 1923 and sold to them in 1926. It was then transferred to “American President Lines” in 1938. In Dec 1940, it was sold to “American President Lines” and renamed SS PRESIDENT HARRISON. In Dec 1941, it was chartered by the US NAVY to remove men of the 4<sup>th</sup> Marines and the USN from Shanghai. Captured by the Japanese off the Yangtze River on Dec 9<sup>th</sup> 1941, it was renamed KAKKO MARU and later KACHIDOKI MARU. The Japanese ships which transported POWs were commonly known as “**Hell Ships**” for obvious reasons. The ships were often used for transporting livestock and goods as well; needless to say, holds were not cleaned or made habitable in any manner prior to POWs being herded into them as was the case with the Kachidoki Maru and the Rakuyo Maru. The suffix “Maru” was apparently a common addition to Japanese ships names meaning “beloved” and was intended to protect the ships from exterior harm; clearly it didn’t work in this case!



**KACHIDOKI MARU SEEN HERE AS THE SS PRESIDENT HARRISON PRE WAR**

## **SECOND TRANSCRIPTION FROM CAPT. WILKIE'S DIARY COVERING THE JOURNEY FROM SINGAPORE BY SHIP TO MOJI HARBOUR, O MUTA, JAPAN**

Our own transport: Japanese soldiers and some wounded. Nurses, civilian women and children (Japanese). We were in two forward holds. These had only one narrow staircase and two vertical ladders as means of egress. Conditions insufferable and cramped. Sleeping conditions extremely bad: not sufficient room for every man to lie flat. Few were allowed on deck at a time, deck space being very limited. Latrine and washing accommodation very limited, there being long queues both day and night. For two days whilst lying in harbour drinking water was very scarce.

6/9/44: Sailed in convoy as under: Two transports, three destroyers, one cruiser, three merchantmen. Lifebelts were issued to all. Whistle signal arranged. First: "Don lifebelts." Second "On Deck." Third: "Abandon ship."

8/9/44: Food on board ship about same quantity as in Singapore, but more variety. Wholly inadequate Red Cross Medical Supplies. Rice polishings and letters withheld from us.

10/9/44: Convoy joined by four ships coming from the direction of the Phillipines.

11/12 – 9/44 AT NIGHT: Convoy attacked by submarines and the following ships were sunk to the best of our knowledge: 1 trooper carrying party under command of Capt. Keyes. 1 Tanker, 1 Cruiser. 1 Destroyer. Our own boat suffered a slight collision in the bows with the stern of another ship in the confusion which followed.

12/9/44: No signs of any of above vessels. We did not stop to pick up survivors.

NIGHT: Own vessel torpedoed well astern. Noise was not an explosion but similar to the noise of the collision the previous night. No orders or information received from the guards, and no warning from ship's siren. After 15 mins. approximately the ship stopped and began to settle rapidly by the stern. Lifeboats were lowered and rafts slung overboard. Our own officers ordered men up from the hold and the Order given to abandon ship. She sank in about five minutes. Behavior of our own troops very good. Japanese soldiers & sailors verging on complete panic. No other ships believed sunk that night.

13/9/44 MORNING: Japanese soldiers in many cases beat British P O Ws off rafts. Japanese sailors behaved reasonably well. Early daylight, two destroyers arrived, guided by planes and picked up all Japanese survivors and a few British. Empty lifeboats left with us. P O Ws took over life boats. Tinned milk, water and biscuits found on board, very welcome. Life boats continued rescue work. Very difficult owing to the very weak condition of the men.

13/9 Morning: Destroyer vanished in direction of a stationary oil tanker which was soon followed by sound of gunfire. This was followed by a huge pall of smoke. This tanker remained burning all through the night and best part of next day.

13/9/44: NIGHT: Spent night in lifeboats in vicinity of blazing wreck. Morale of troops extremely low. No medical relief and many injuries.

14/9/44: About 1000 hours two small trawlers and two small destroyers arrived and commenced rescue work. All visible survivors picked up. Condition of men: many injured limbs, cuts, oil burns. Some men naked, and in all cases clothes were useless. Eyes were badly seared with crude oil. Treatment was good. Food, cigarettes, water but no medical aid or treatment.

15/16/9/44: Arrived Hainan. No medical aid here. Survivors were transferred to another trooper and were joined by survivors picked up by other ships, including Australian troops. These were survivors from Capt. Keyes's party. P O Ws put in forward holds. Accommodation much more roomy than before but had to lie on steel deck.

18/9/44: Sailed in evening. Still no medical aid for wounded. Lifebelts were issued to officers only. Japanese guards and surviving sailors had two to three lifebelts each. About 100 – 120 sick and injured attended by Capt. Matheson R A M C, assisted by R A M C orderlies and untrained helpers. No assistance given by Capt. Richards R A M C during remainder of the voyage.

21/9/44: Arrived Kaolung. No medical aid and still no lifebelts. Part of the time here was taken with making up what records we could of the survivors. All previous records and party funds had been lost in the shipwreck. We had to use what scrap paper we could pick up, no paper or pencils being provided for these records.

25/9/44: Sailed in the evening. Destination unknown.

26/9/44: Arrived back at Kaolung in the morning.

27/9/44: Sailed in the morning. During the night of 27-28 we had an alarm. One destroyer was torpedoed.

29/9/44: Arrived in Moji harbour in the morning.

General: food during this part of the voyage was better in quality and quantity. Latrine accommodation was still inadequate. Washing facilities were better. No medical aid throughout. Five men died en route. Morale and discipline still worse.

30/9/44: Landed. Had disinfectant baths and then back into same dirty clothes. Accommodated in a large hall over night. good meal. Heavy sick were left on dockside to be taken to Moji hospital.

<b>DETAILS OF SURVIVORS:-</b>	<b>CAPT KEYES'S PARTY</b>	<b>CAPT. WILKIE'S PARTY</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Sailed:	598	950	1548
Survivors	55	515	570
Died on board ship	1	5	6
Missing believed drowned	542	430	972
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	598	950	1548
	-----	-----	-----

**THE REMAINING PARTY WAS THEN SPLIT INTO TWO UNDER CAPT. WILKIE & CAPT PEARCE :-**

<b>CAPT. WILKIE</b>	<b>CAPT PEARCE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
289	270	569

**LEFT AT MOJI HOSPITAL :-**

11	?	?
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**CAPTAIN WILKIE STATED THAT ALL RECORDS UP TO THE TIME OF THE SHIPWRECK WERE LOST, AND THEY WERE UNABLE TO MAKE ANY UNTIL THEY ARRIVED AT THEIR FINAL DESTINATION**

## THE CONVOY SETS SAIL

The following extracts are taken from the POW research network Japan website which is in the public domain, although they own the copyright. There is some confusion regarding the number of ships in convoy which is to be expected. The actual number of ships in the original convoy which left Singapore was 9 or 10 depending on various records researched. There are some slight variations in this report to others that follow which is to be expected.

HI-72 Convoy, consisting of 10 vessels - *Kachidoki Maru* (flagship with the 16th Shipping Forces Commander aboard, the ashes of 582 war dead, the British POWs, and 6,000 tons of bauxite), *Asaka Maru* (593 passengers and bauxite), *Shincho Maru* (573 passengers and a load of fuel oil), *Nankai Maru* (6,500 tons of bauxite and 4,000 drums of av-gas), *Zuiho Maru* (8,000 tons of oil), *Kimikawa Maru* (273 passengers, bauxite and av-gas), and *Rakuyo Maru* (US, British and Australian POWs and bauxite) - was escorted by the Coast Defense Ships *Hirado* (flagship with the 6th Escort Fleet Commander aboard), *Mikura*, *Kurahashi*, No. 11, sub-chaser No. 19 and destroyer *Shikinami*, left Singapore on 6 September 1944. Among the POWs aboard *Rakuyo Maru* were Australian Brigadier Author Varley and USAAF Colonel Harry Melton.

About 2,200 POWs aboard *Kachidoki Maru* and *Rakuyo Maru* had suffered the heat in the hot holds for 36 hours before their departure. The Australians did not put up with the crowded holds, and they openly broke into revolt. In order to prevent a bloodshed incident, the Japanese skipper allowed about 200 POWs to come up to the deck at a time.

At noon on 7 September, the convoy passed about 150 NM east of Kota Bharu, and changed course to northeast at the middle of the entrance to the Gulf of Siam, and headed for Japan. By noon on 8 September, they passed off the southern tip of French-Indochina (present Vietnam), and about 09:00 on 11 September, *Kagu Maru*, *Gokoku Maru*, and *Kibitsu Maru* of MAMO-03 from Manila joined HI-72 at about 120 NM east of Hainan, and entered under the command of the 6th Escort Fleet Commander. Then the three escorts CDV No. 10 and No. 20, and mine-sweeper No. 21 were relieved of their duty, and returned to Manila. The enlarged convoy was re-organized, and *Rakuyo Maru* moved to the rear of the starboard column.

About this time, in the waters around 18-00N, 114-00E called the "Convoy College," the USS *Growler*, *Sealion II*, and *Pampanito* submarines were patrolling the area. Each commanding officer of the submarine was informed via Ultra message that an important convoy would leave Singapore on 6 September and head for Japan by the Operations Officer of the ComSubPac (Commander Submarine Forces Pacific) in Pearl Harbor. However, the Operations Officer himself knew nothing whatsoever about POWs being transported on this convoy.

At 01:55 on 12 September, *Hirado* was suddenly torpedoed by *Growler*, and sank instantly. The convoy was plunged into chaos for a while, but soon resumed normal conditions. However, as the sun was just rising, the torpedoes *Sea Lion* fired struck *Nankai Maru* first. Then at 05:31, a second torpedo hit *Rakuyo Maru*'s bow, and penetrated No. 1 hold filled with rubber. A third torpedo ran directly into her engine room, and the main engine and auxiliary machines, such as generators were stopped, and she became unable to make way. If the torpedo had hit No. 2 hold, hundreds of POWs would have been killed. With the drainage pumps becoming inoperative, the ship gradually went down by taking on water. Shortly before 07:00, *Growler* came back for another attack, and the torpedoes she fired struck *Shikinami*. At 08:45, *Nankai Maru* disappeared beneath the waves.

Aboard *Rakuyo Maru*, the Japanese rushed to the lifeboats, kicking out POWs who tried to get into the boat with them. Many men jumped into the water. At 06:55 when *Shikinami* went down, the depth charges she had loaded exploded, causing shock waves, which resulted in internal injuries to those who were in the water. Confusion prevailed at the scene, and there were cases of murder on both sides. On *Rakuyo Maru*, as many Japanese abandoned the ship first, some POWs got revenge on their guards. About 10 POWs attacked the shipping artillery men at bow deck gun. A POW grabbed an iron bar, and walked toward the bridge, saying that he would kill some Japanese before going over the side. In the water, lone Japanese were beaten to death after the escort ships were gone. About 13 hours after she was torpedoed, at about 18:20, *Rakuyo Maru* disappeared beneath the waves in the east waters of Hainan (18-32N, 114-29E)

By 19:00 on 12 September, the Japanese escorts had picked up everyone they were going to rescue; about 1,200 British and Australian POWs were left in the water. As the escorts were leaving the scene, they passed right through the middle of the floating POWs; some were chopped up by the screws, and others were drowned.

Let's return to 07:00 in the morning. After *Shikinami* went down, *Kagu Maru*, *Gokoku Maru*, and *Kibitsu Maru* were thrown into disorder by the attacks of *Growler* and *Sealion*, and then headed for Hainan separately. After *Kachidoki Maru*, *Asaka Maru*, *Shincho Maru*, *Zuiho Maru*, and two escorts steamed to the north to dodge the enemy submarines and escape, and when they were about to change course toward Hainan, this time, *Zuiho Maru* was hit by a torpedo from the American submarine *Pampanito*. At 22:50, she transmitted a distress message. Location was 19-23N, 111-50E. For *Kachidoki Maru*, the situations changed rapidly. She sighted three torpedo wakes (from *Pampanito*) coming on her port side, and

avoided two by making a hard left turn, but one hit No. 7 hold, and split seams along the water line, which instantly caused flooding in other holds and engine room. The engine stopped, and at 23:15, the skipper ordered, "Abandon ship." Soon, *Kachidoki Maru* took a heavy list and slipped into the water at 23:37. Although the loss of crew members was only twelve, **476 passengers and POWs were killed.**

On the morning of September 13, *Nissho Maru*, *Kasuga Maru*, CDV No. 11 and sub-chaser No. 19 were dispatched from Hainan and rescued the survivors of *Kachidoki Maru*. The three vessels which had been relieved from MANO-03 escort were also ordered to rush to the waters where HI-72 had been attacked. Of the survivors of *Rakuyo Maru*, the Medical Officer, Captain Roland Richards was on one of a group of four boats, and another group of seven boats on which Brigadier Varley and Colonel Melton were drifting, remained within the sight of each other. On the morning of 14 September, a Japanese CDV appeared, and to the great surprise of the survivors, this CDV No. 10 rescued 157 POWs of Dr. Richards' group. According to his statement; before they were rescued, they had heard gunfire. The survivors aboard those seven boats, including Brigadier Varley and Colonel Melton, were never seen or heard from again.

After attacking the convoy, *Growler* was detached from the wolf pack and returned to her base, and *Sealion* and *Pampanito* would patrol near Hainan for a few days. On the afternoon of 15 September, while steaming, *Pampanito* found wreckage and approached for investigation. They found that there were some men floating on rafts. They brought small arms out of the gun locker, and were ready to take prisoners. There was no set policy regarding the disposition of survivors of a sunken ship. It was entirely up to the skipper under such circumstances. He shouted, "Anyone who wants to shoot Japs, get yourselves a Tommy gun and come out on deck." Then, a whole bunch of guys came out on the deck with Tommy guns. As *Pampanito* approached several rafts with some 15 men on them, they saw some had Australian "Digger" hats on. They were waving and shouting as hard as they could.

"Who in the world are you?" Someone asked. "Prisoners of war. Australians and British POWs. Please help us!" But the skipper was not yet sure. He wanted to be extra cautious, and said, "Get the one speaks English!" The answer was indignant. "You bloody bastards, we all speak English!" Then the skipper ordered to pick them up, and rescue began.

*Pampanito* moved slowly in the wreckage, thoroughly searching for more survivors. She broke radio silence, called *Sealion* about 30 NM northeast, and asked for help. *Sealion* steamed down at flank speed, and began rescuing the survivors. At 18:35, *Pampanito* radioed the ComSubPac in Pearl Harbor, and reported the situations, then continued the search until the night, and rescued 73 men (one died after rescue). *Sealion* also rescued 54 men (four died), and contacted the ComSubPac by radio, and was instructed to hurriedly steam to Saipan with *Pampanito*. The ComSubPac ordered *Barb* and *Queenfish* to immediately proceed to the scene of rescue, however, at a point about 150 NM more to go, they encountered HI-74, another convoy escorted by Escort carrier *Unyo*, which had left Singapore 5 days after HI-72. They launched attacks on this convoy, and sank *Unyo* and another ship. By so doing, they spent a few more precious hours to get to the scene of rescue.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM THE DIARY OF CORPORAL ALISTAIR URQUHART DESCRIBING HIS JOURNEY ON THE KACHIOKI MARU**

**Permission granted by Ronnie Taylor ([www.fepow.family](http://www.fepow.family)) ) to include the following:-**

*We were on our way. The throb of the engines, the heat, the awful stench of filthy, sweat soaked bodies, no toilet, so add urine and excrement to all of this and the battens across the top of the hold. At least they could have left them off, but no, that was their style. How many days at sea? You had no idea as every hour became the same hell, and your mind so shattered, death would have been a godsend.*

*Then one night the ship shuddered as an explosion tore through the holds. Up on deck someone loosened the battens and there was a mad scramble for the one ladder up to the deck. Shouts and screaming racked the air. Suddenly the ship took a large dip to the bow and began to sink with most of us still trapped in the hold. I suddenly felt the cold water and the oil on my face. Instinctively I started to swim away from the ship knowing that if I didn't, I would be drawn down by the suction. Never having swum in a sea of oil before, some inner strength, some strong need to survive, gave me power to move far enough out to clear the ship's last moments as it slid beneath the waves. It turned out that we had been sunk by an American submarine (*Pampanito*) in the South China Sea on the 13<sup>th</sup> Sept 1944 (Actually 12<sup>th</sup> September). Oh, so many survived the 'Railway of Death' to be free of the Japs, only to become prisoners of the sea. In reality, we were only being taken from one slavery to another.*

*The sea was a mass of oil as a total of 21(?) ships were sunk that night. Those who were lucky enough to get on a lifeboat started to sing "Abide with Me", and to this day I cannot listen to, or want to hear, that hymn. Many gave up and deliberately drowned themselves. Was I thankful that I was a good swimmer and able to do things in the water! With so much debris around, I fashioned a raft on which I was able to be floating for four nights and five days.*

*So many gulped salt water and quickly went stark raving mad, drowning themselves to end the torment. The harrowing scenes of men hallucinating, talking to their wives, mothers and children saying "Daddy will be home soon", then slipping away beneath the waves in the darkness. Any Japanese survivors were pushed under and held under. Fighting broke out as the ruthless instinct to survive made some try to capture more seaworthy vessels and shoved others off to their deaths. Many gave up immediately and very few officers survived. Horrible as it may sound, as men became mad, they had to be shoved off the rafts or the remainder would have perished.*

*Dawn came, and suddenly there was a silence. An eerie feeling of solitude and fear. I had drifted from the main bunch and only one round inflatable dingy was near. I realized it was a Japanese Officer and had he come near enough either he or I would have perished. In fairly good English he said "We will be picked up soon" and threw a metal tin towards me which, even with my body and hands covered in oil, I caught and he paddled away. I tore at the waterproof covering and eventually opened it. Guess what? It was a tin of chocolates. The temptation was there, but having been a Scout of some standing, I knew to have even taken one would have been suicidal. As the sun came up, my body, previously shivering in the night cold, now began to burn. There was nowhere to go; either the sea, or stay on my raft. My spirits were at their lowest ebb. With the pain of the sun on salty, oily body and no shade, I just kept moving around and singing to myself – anything to cut out the misery. After the third and fourth days, the thirst was unbearable. I was hideously burned, lips swollen and my tongue so swollen it felt as if I had no mouth. It would have been so easy to have used my hand to scoop up seawater. I was no longer able to see anything, or virtually anything, except water and sky. Slowly I fell into a trance-like state, past caring, but somehow telling myself "Hang on until you can't hang on anymore". I have since learned that a submarine (American) had picked up 15 survivors and taken them to Saipan.*

*On the fifth day, suddenly there was a lot of noise and shouts and I was lifted up and into a small boat and then onto what was a Japanese whaling ship, left on the deck and eventually taken to Hainan Island. Congregated there were other survivors, and, as a punishment we were paraded through the streets naked. As it was raining, we all started to sing "Singing in the Rain" with some alterations to the words. Some of the Japanese public did turn their backs but most jeered and spat at us. Being burned so badly and emaciated, I was left without a hair on my body and so ill I staggered like a drunk along the streets. Eventually, along with others, I arrived at a POW camp in Omuta, approximately 12(?) miles from Nagasaki. For the first time we were given clothing but no improvement on the food.*

**FROM HAINAN THE SURVIVORS WERE TAKEN ON BOARD THE KIBITSU MARU ON THE 15<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER FOR TRANSPORTATION TO MOJI, JAPAN FROM WHERE THEY WERE ENTRAINED TO THE FUKUOKA 25B POW CAMP, BUT MORE ON THAT LATER. THIS SHIP ENCOUNTERED BOMBING RAIDS ON THE JOURNEY BUT SURVIVED WITHOUT FURTHER LOSS OF LIFE.**

As the reader will note from the above diary extract, Alastair Urquhart, was one of the POWs on the Kachidoki Maru. In 2008, at the age of 89, and 64 years after a near death experience on this hellship, he visited the site of the sleek grey Pampanito submarine which is berthed at Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco as a tourist attraction. This sub torpedoed and sank the Kachidoki Maru. He described that he was drawn to visit the submarine by a pull of memory he couldn't explain. He stood in the submarine control room where Lt. Cmdr. Paul Summers, captain of the submarine, had tracked the Kachidoki Maru, moved in for the kill and gave orders to fire. He stood in the forward torpedo room where five torpedoes were fired at the ship. Two of them hit, one amidships, one aft. The ship sank in 15 minutes late in the night of Sept 12<sup>th</sup> 1944. When the torpedoes hit, it made the most unimaginable sound he said. The Japanese crew took to the lifeboats. The ship was carrying Japanese wounded, and a Japanese officer went round with a pistol shooting them. **The above extract is taken from an article published by Carl Noble on Sept 17<sup>th</sup> 2008 (Copyright is with the originator).**

**TABLE SHOWING MEN OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION, LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT WHO LOST  
THEIR LIVES IN THE SINKING OF THE HELLSHIP KACHIDOKI MARU**

**SAM DIMMOCK WAS ONE OF THE LEICESTERS' THAT SURVIVED**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>ARMY No</b>	<b>DoD</b>	<b>GRAVE LOCATION</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
Pte Harry Barnett	4865719	12.09.44	Singapore	Died in sinking of Kachidoki Maru
L/Cpl Thomas Blackham	4858218	"	"	"
Pte David Bowman	4858616	"	"	"
L/Cpl William Chessman	4859689	"	"	"
Pte Stanley Gibbins	4862860	"	"	"
Pte George Tidd	4859933	"	"	"
L/Cpl Jack Weston	4863487	"	"	"

**INFORMATION IN THE ABOVE TABLE PROVIDED BY KEN HEWITT©**

**Sam Dimmock's** daughter recalled her father talking about being alone on a raft with only a rat for company, but she wasn't aware that he had been sent to Japan or had been on a ship that had been sunk by an American submarine, or even that he could swim.

## THE FUKUOKA CAMP COMPLEX AT OMTA

The Fukuoka camp complex was located at Shinkai – cho, Ōmuta City which is in the southernmost end of Fukuoka Prefecture, bordered by the Ariake Sea in the west, and meeting Kumamoto prefecture to the south and east.

The exact location of Ōmuta is shown on the following map in relation to Nagasaki and an accompanying aerial photograph shows the exact location of Fukuoka 25B camp, ringed in red.

The entire party of POWs in Fukuoka 25B camp worked in the Carbide Plant including **Samuel Dimmock**, but men from other surrounding camps worked in atrocious conditions in the mines. The carbide Plant was within the Electro Chemical Industrial complex on the side of the Ōmuta River.

BRITISH						
No.	Name	Rank	Next of Kin	Home Address	Age	Welfare
99.	Dent, William H.	Leading Sergeant	Mother	275 Firston Rd. Alrodale Castleford, Yorks	24	Health
100.	Dillon, Frederick	Cnr.	Wife	81 Mouthfield, Fonders End Enfield, Middx	35	"
101.	Milworth, Joseph	Dvr.	Wife	5 Garso Grove, Preston, Lancs	25	"
102.	Dimmock, Samuel	L/Cpl.	Mother	Main St. Griffydan, Leicester	26	"
103.	Davis, Eric J.	Cnr.	Father	10 Victoria St. Medditch Worcestershire	24	"
104.	Debson, William A.	Pte.	Grand- Mother	273 Ripple Rd. Darkin, Essex	33	"
105.	Decherty, Richard M.	Cnr.	Mother	16 Aberearn St., Glasgow G 4	23	"
106.	Dunne, Christopher	Cnr.	Uncle	27 S Earl St., Dublin, Eire	32	"
107.	Eadie, Thomas	Cpl.	Wife	51 Brookenhan St. Everton Liverpool	45	"
108.	Eastlake, John G.	Sgt.	Mother	10 S Villas, Winst, Ashington Northumberland	38	"
109.	Edwards, Stuart	Pte.	Father	c/o Kales, 3 Hope St. Greenock, Scotland	25	"
110.	Ellis, Lawrence G.	Sgt.	Wife	19 Landerber Ave., B Colman Bournemouth	20	"

ABOVE IS AN EXTRACT FROM THE ORIGINAL 25B CAMP ROSTER LISTING SAMUEL DIMMOCK AS NUMBER  
102 – SOURCE AND COPYRIGHT ROGER MANSELL, PALO ALTO, CA.

The first Fukuoka Branch Camp 1B was established as Kumamoto Branch Camp of Yawata Temporal POW Camp at Aza-Saburotsuka, Kengun-cho, Kumamoto City, Kumamoto Prefecture on November 26, 1942.

Fukuoka 25B camp was established on Sept 31<sup>st</sup> 1944 with 289 Brits. 11 men had been left at Moji Hospital. The last 26B and 27B camps were established on May 10<sup>th</sup> 1945. 101 British POWs were interned in 26B and were used as slave labour by the Aso Mining Company. There were 73 British interned in 27B and they were used as slave labour by the Mitsui Mining Company.

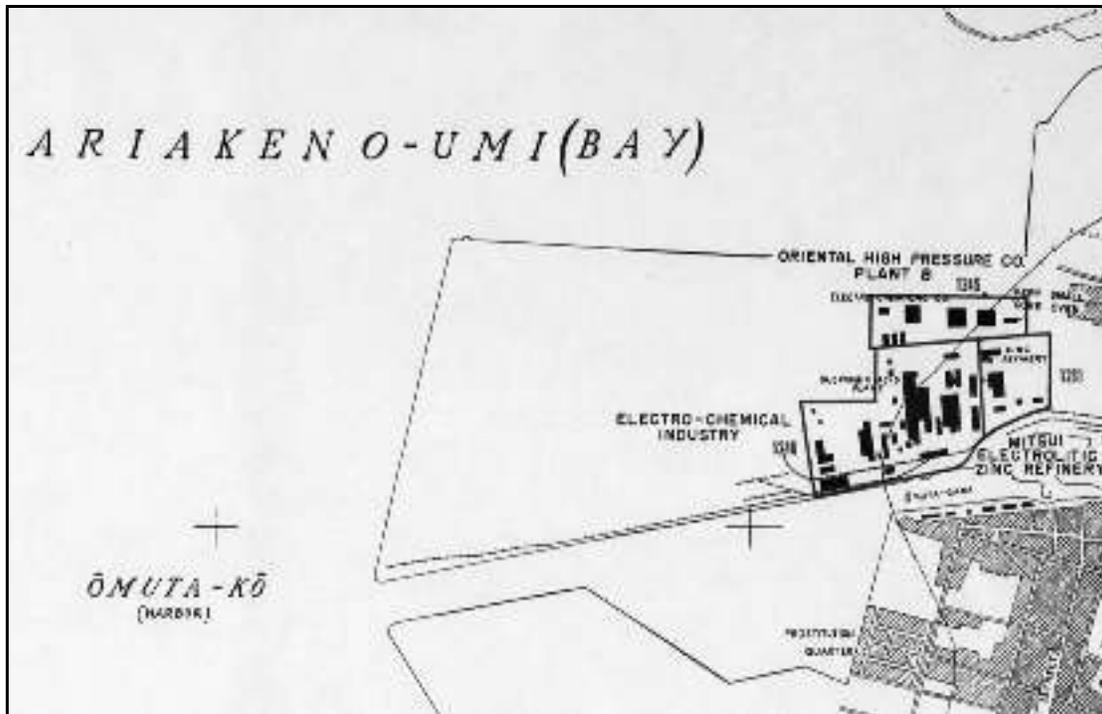


THE ABOVE MAP SHOWING POW CAMP 25B AT Omuta IN RELATION TO NAGASAKI WHERE THE SECOND ATOMIC BOMB WAS DROPPED FOLLOWING THE ONE ON HIROSHIMA



THIS IS AN ACTUAL AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF FUKUOKA 25B CAMP DEFINED WITHIN THE RED CIRCLE. PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN 1947.

(SOURCE AND COPYRIGHT ROGER MANSELL, PALO ALTO, CA.)



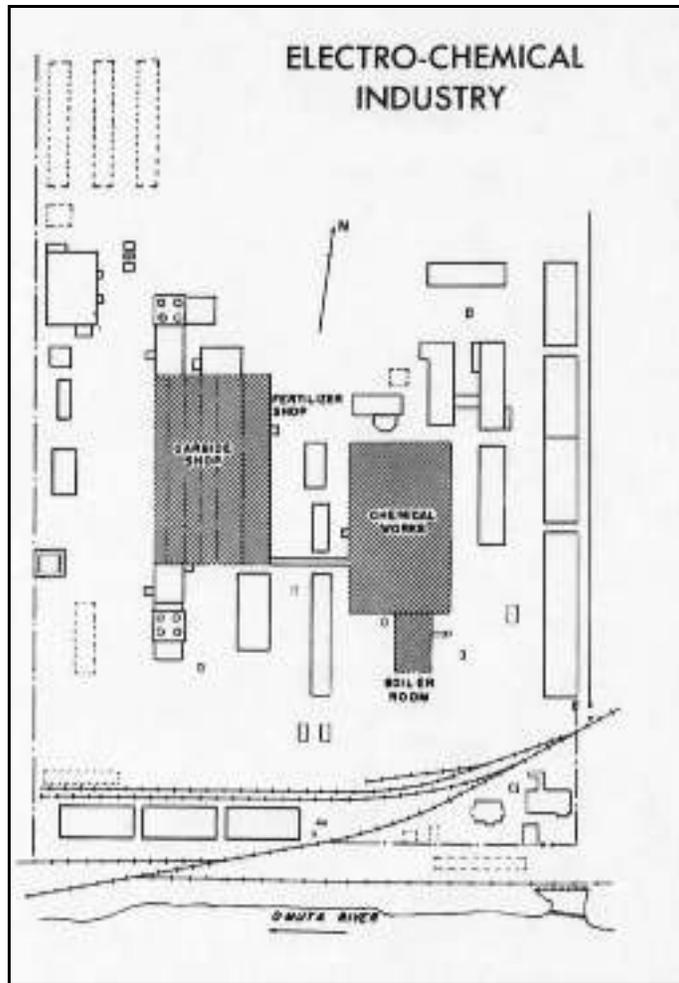
MAP AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE ELECTRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRY COMPLEX AT OMUTA (SOURCE AND COPYRIGHT OF ROGER MANSELL, PALO ALTO, CA.)

NOTE THE REFERENCE TO 'THE PROSTITUTION QUARTER' AT BOTTOM RIGHT



NOTE THE CARBIDE SHOP WHERE ALL POWS IN CAMP 25B WORKED. PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN AFTER FIRE BOMBING BY THE AMERICANS

This electro-chemical complex was apparently established in 1916, and is still in operation today, and employs c.600 people. It is the oldest plant in the area and still continues to make inorganic materials such as calcium carbide. There is a record confirming that calcium carbide was being produced here during the war as a raw material for use in carbide/acetylene lamps, which were used down the various mines and for flood lights, as well as being used in the manufacture of tungsten carbide metals for weapons and ammunition.



**AMERICAN BOMBING PLAN OF THE ELECTRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRY COMPLEX SHOWING THE CARBIDE SHOP WHERE SAM DIMMOCK WORKED (SOURCE AND COPYRIGHT ROGER MANSELL, PALO ALTO, CA.)**



**AN AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF THE Omuta PLANT AS IT IS IN 2019 – SEE TEXT REFERRING TO THIS PLANT ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE - NOTE THE Omuta RIVER STILL RUNNING ALONG THE BOTTOM**

**JAPANESE GUARDS - POW CAMP 25B**



**KAZUMA FUKUDA – CAMP COMMANDER**



**AOJI SHIEIRI**



**AKIRA SHIOYAZONO**

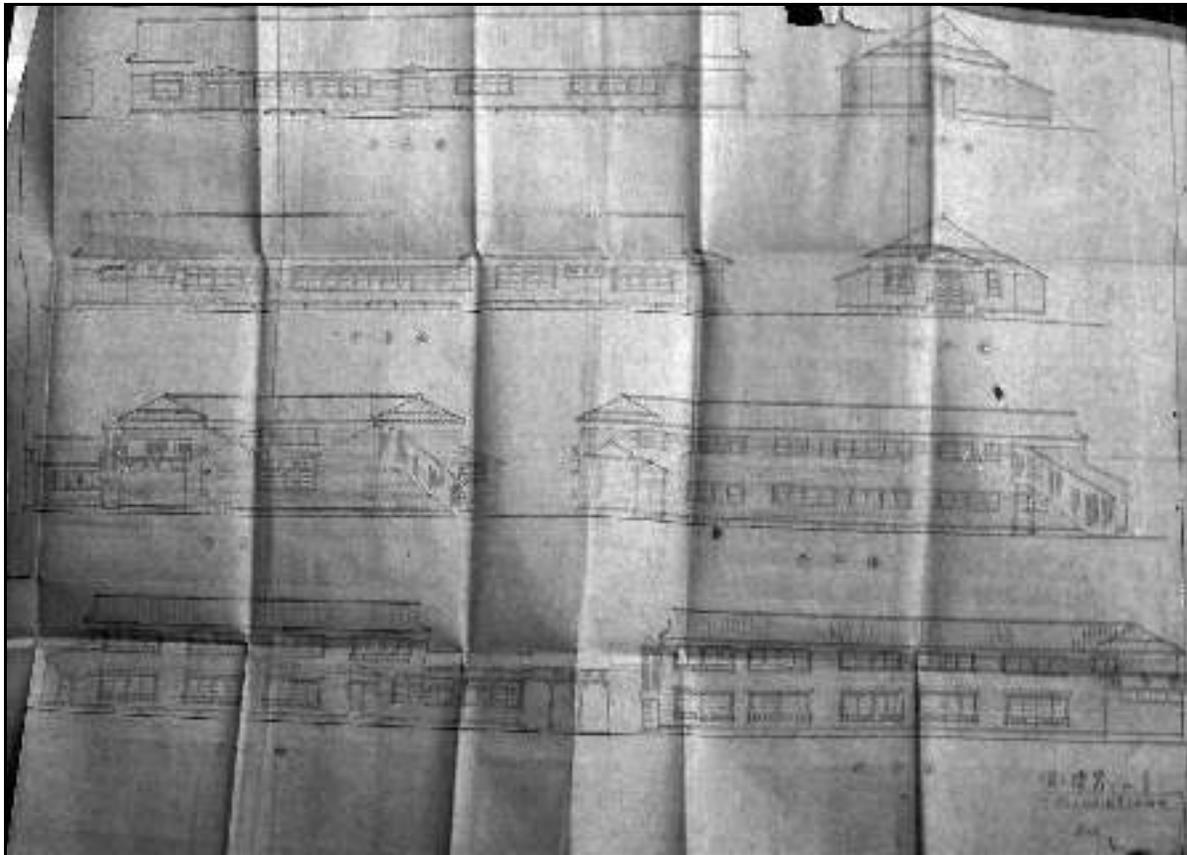
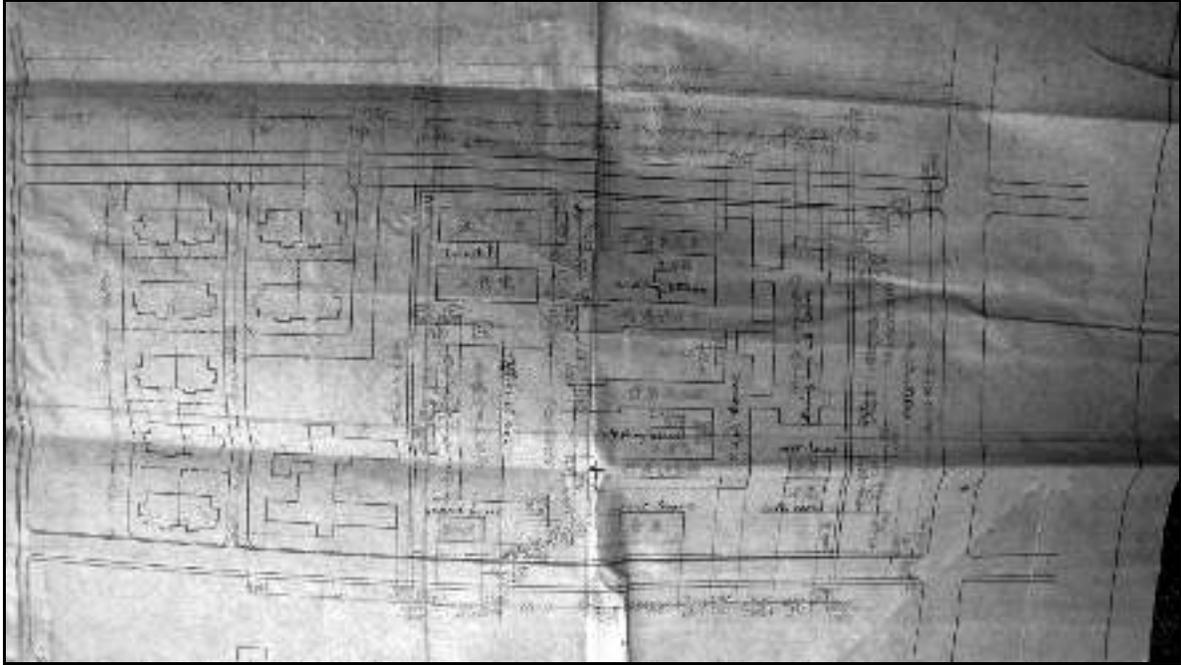


**SABURO KAWAI**



**KUNIO SARUWATARI  
(CIVILIAN)**

**(SOURCE AND COPYRIGHT ROGER MANSELL, PALO ALTO, CA.)**



**PLANS FOR FUKUOKA CAMP 25B AT OMUTO**

**(SOURCE AND COPYRIGHT ROGER MANSELL, PALO ALTO, CA.)**

**CONTINUATION OF CAPTAIN WILKIE'S DAIRY – ONWARD JOURNEY BY TRAIN FROM MOJI HARBOUR, Omuta TO FUKUOKA CAMP 25B TILL THE JAPANESE SURRENDER (copyright owned by the originator)**

31/9/44: Entrained early morning for new camp. Received good meal on train. Arrived mid-day and marched to new camp. Hot bath was ready and afterwards received an issue of good warm clothing. Underpants shirt, jacket, trousers, towel (face). A good meal was waiting for us. Then signed a non-escape form under Capt. Wilkie's authorization (following precedent at Changi, Singapore). Quarters:- Capt Wilkie, Medical Officer (Capt. Matheson) and Adjutant (Lt. Miller).

5/10/44: 10 Safety razors and 25 blades along with cigarettes issued.

7/10/44: Washing powder and tooth paste issued to whole party. Tooth brushes and soap issued to half the party. General rations most of this period both good and adequate.

9/10/44: Working clothing made of sack cloth issued to all men, also a light calico shirt. No. 1115278 Gnr. Lea, Ronald Percy, 88/Fd. Rgt., R.A., died of injuries received at sea, exposure and lack of drugs etc.

10/10/44: First visit to Factory and distribution of workers to various jobs.

11/10/44: Work at factory commenced. One man dangerously ill.

13/10/44: Two more men placed on D.I. list.

Night 15-16/10/44: No.246241 Dvr. Taylor, Thomas Charles, R.A.S.C. died, exposure, lack of drugs. Next of kin, wife, 24 Darwin Street, Old Kent Road, Walworth, London, S.E.17. (Leaves twin brother in camp). Next of kin Gnr. Lea Father, 66 Ing's Lane, Castleford, Yorks.

16/10/44: No. 2876671 Pte. Elder, Henry died (2/Gordons). Exposure, lack of drugs. Next of kin Mother, 9 McGill Terrace, Gourion, Kincardineshire.

17/10/44: Greatcoats issued to all tps. Lt. Miller given powers to try and punish as from 14/11/44.

20/10/44(Approximately): First concert performed. Very satisfactory.

29/10/44:No. 900327 Gnr. Erin, John Arthur, 118/Fd. Rgt., R.A., died. Next of kin, Father, 9, Wemyss Rd., Blackheath, London, S.E.3

1/11/44: Six men arrived from Moji Hospital. Total strength now 291.

10/11/44: American Red Cross boots issued.

12/11/44: Canadian Red Cross boxes issued. One box to five men. Cheese bad.

9/12/44: No.926119 Dvr. Dandy W., 88/Fd. Rgt., and 831157 L/Bdr. Carpenter, A, 3/Heavy A.A. Rgt., gaoled by I.J.A. for five days for stealing soap and tooth powder from Orderly Room.

10/12/44: Visit from civil and Army officials from Japanese Government. Object, to give facilities for letter writing. From conversation with them, letters obviously desired for propaganda purposes. Wireless broadcasts, radio recordings and cabled messages promised to selected men. Usual attempts to get us to admit animosity against the Americans for the torpedoing incident.

20/12/44: No. 1075311 Gnr. Goodchild, B.J., 155/Fd. Rgt., R.A., gaoled for four days by I.J.A. for laziness at the factory and failing to obey an order given by a Japanese overseer. Whole party punished by being made to kneel on the parade ground because a tap was broken.

25/12/44: General Holiday. Service followed by games. Lunch and boxing. Dinner and then a concert. Evidently desired us to enjoy ourselves.

1/1/45: Commenced tightening discipline. For many offences the punishment will be the forfeiture of Japanese cigarette issues for which no A.F. B252 will appear as this not a punishment under the Army Act. In cases where immediate effect is desired, however, it is our only means of punishment and as no offence can be punished twice no additional action under the Army Act is possible.

5/1/45: Postcards to relatives typed out and handed to I.J.A. Also a few letters Radio Broadcasts and telegrams.

8/1/45: No. 872019 Dvr. Kavanagh, P.J., 3/Heavy A.A. Rgt., R.A., punished by I.J.A. for stealing from his comrades. Five days gaol. No official action taken.

9/1/45: Capt. Wilkie ordered by Sgt. Shionozono to report all crime to him for punishment. Refused but no repercussions.

10/1/45: No. 1872230 Spr. Kirk, R., R.E., beaten up by his room mates for stealing cigarettes and soap. No official action taken.

12/1/45: Issue of American Red Cross boxes. (300) I.J.A. demanded one box per man Capt. Wilkie refused and was ordered to distribute all boxes to the men but that all tins were to be opened, emptied of contents and given to I.J.A. by 1800 hrs. same day. Deemed wiser in view of this to accede to I.J.A. request for "present". Distribution I.J.A., complete boxes 8 Remainder one per man for 292 men less contributions from 76 boxes To make up another four boxes to provide for five men to arrive from Moji Hospital on 16/1/45. i.e. 300 – 8 equals 292 plus 4(made up) Equals 296.

16/1/45: Five men arrived from Moji Hospital. Complete party strength now 296; two men go into hospital, one suspected T.B. and one crippled from hip dislocation. Other three lame but able to walk by themselves.

21/1/45: Issue of clothing, said to be Red Cross by I.J.A. but undoubtedly some of it is captured American Army stores.

Blankets	50	Sweaters	47	Shirts	50
Socks	93	Gloves	46	Pyjamas	48
Vests	48	H'chiefs	93(13 to IJA)	Caps and helmets	50
Pants	48	Boiler Suits	50	Towels	43

Dubbin issued for three months – 4 gallons.

Above distributed as evenly as possible amongst all ranks. Thefts of Red Cross food increasing during last few days but spirit and morale of camp shows general improvement due :- (a) to Red Cross issues (b) tightening up of discipline which has taken place since New Year. Most N.C.O.s and all W.O.s except B.S.M. Smith continue to be very unsatisfactory in their failure to accept their responsibilities that go with their rank. Shall commence tightening up on them. Have proved beyond all doubt that punishment in the way of stoppage of Red Cross and other amenities such as I.J.A. cigarettes issues is the only way of bringing the men to realize their duties to the Army and their fellow men. In this the opinion of Capt. Matheson and Lt. Miller and the better men in the camp agree.

22/1/45: No.3836245 Pte. Stenbridge E. 2/Cambs. and 923055 Gnr. Hutcheson N.L. 125/A/T Rgt., R.A. jailed for four days by I.J.A for stealing salt from factory. Salt was first stolen by Japanese workmen.

25/1/45: Lt. Miller ordered by Kawaii to strike men who had lost Face-masks. Was struck by Sarawaterai.

26/1/45: Main work in air-raid shelter construction completed. Main shelter seeps water badly being below water level.

6/2/45: 52 Housewives ??, 105 tins boot polish, 12 Razor Blade sharpeners, 104 Safety Razors each with 5 blades, 205 tubes of shaving cream issued.

10/2/45: 1577854 Gunner Lindsay gaoled for five days for cutting Red Cross blanket to make slippers. 67948 Sgt. Glass, W., gaoled for five days for stealing Red Cross chocolate and Anti-scorbutic tablets from store.

12/2/45: 1871247 Spr. Roberts, 7653887 Pte. Clifton, 831197 L/Bdr. Carpenter, 1105120 Gnr. Kay, 984121 Gnr. Juson and 1871814 Spr. Maddox gaoled for five days for stealing rice. Issue of Red Cross food-stuffs.

10/2/45: Issue of Red Cross, 14 boxes to I.J.A. Only certain articles for issue direct to men. Remainder issued through cook-house. Issues to be piecemeal and to last about six weeks for this lot of boxes.

13/2/45: Issue of Red Cross Food-stuffs also 296 packets of I.J.A toothpowder.

16/2/45: Issue of Red Cross Food-stuffs.

18/2/45: General I.J.A. Audit plus inspection of camp. Beri-beri becoming worse.

Cannot get rice-polishings or beans from I.J.A.

19/2/45: Issue of items of Red Cross Food-stuffs. Thieving has lessened and general morale better.

12/2/45: General attitude of Nips, never markedly antipathetic, now much more friendly.

23/2/45: Considerable increase in Beri-beri and vitaminosis cases. No Vit.E Food-stuffs available.

24/2/45: Issue of items of Red Cross Food-stuffs. Basic diet still on short side for working man.

26/2/45: 15 letters, 6 Postcards and 20 broadcast messages issued, written and passed to I.J.A.

29/2/45: Issue of items of Red Cross Food-stuffs.

1/3/45: " "

6/3/45: " " Thieving again on increase. Boils and abscesses becoming more and more frequent. Increases of instances of men fainting at work. Few beans added to diet.

7/3/45: Meat and fish issue very seldom now.

9/3/45: Issue of items of Red Cross Food-stuffs.

10/3/45: 325717 Dvr. Menzies, T., 155 Fd. Rgt., found stealing. Dealt with by the men . 2nd. Offence.

12/3/45: 896407 Dvr. Wilson, N., 88th. Fd. Rgt., convicted of theft. Dealt with regimentally 842584 Sgt. Eastlake J.G., 831197 L/Bdr Carpenter A., 872690 Gnr. Robinson T, and A/B Walker C.F.. No.d/JX180588 These men imprisoned for five days for breaking into stores and stealing rice. The theft was discovered by us and could probably, at least for a time, have been concealed from I.J.A. However, considering the liability of risk of (1) repercussions on the whole party by collective punishment and (2) loss of confidence by the I.J.A. in our administration was too great to make concealment worth while. In view of this the men were handed over to I.J.A. for punishment. L/Bdr. Carpenter punished on two similar occasions by I.J.A. This man is a very bad character and a definite evil influence on weaker-willed men. Original 100 Red Cross books despatched to another camp. 150 newly arrived books issued.

16/3/45: 1055383 B.S.M. Johnson A, 859663 Bdr. Laity T, 853316 Bdr. Lawrence A.S. and 1115654 Gnr. Fenn G, were burned at a blow-out of the furnace at the factory. Johnson and Lawrence badly burned and with Laity were admitted to hospital. Cause would appear to be overloading furnace . This occurrence happens every year when this type of furnace is in operation. Diet:- Meat and fish becoming increasingly scarce and issues smaller. Beans added to rations. Health :- Lately has shown considerable increase in boils and abscesses. I.J.A Guard Cpl. Convicted of thieving POWs cigarettes from kit in rooms whilst occupants were out at work.

17/3/45: Noted bad characters isolated in room by themselves and confined to certain parts only of the building. 67948 Sgt. Glass W, 896407 Dvr. Wilson N.F., 325717 Dvr. Menzies T, 872690 Gnr. Robinson T, 831197 L/Bdr. Carpenter and 827019 Dvr. Kavanagh P.J.

18/3/45: Air raid shelter used for the first time.

Remainder of month: No event of any importance occurred during the remainder of the month. Air raids of March fairly frequent. Rations of very poor variety. Bread now being made in new oven which was finished about this time. All surplus wood stripped from building in case of incendiary bombs. Changes in I.J.A Administrative personnel:

Cpl. Okuda "Q" left

Messing Cpl. Left and was replaced by a Sgt.

Hirado, Cadet Doctor, left and was replaced by a I/Lt.

Red Cross food boxes – the last of the current issue was finished at the end of the month.

April: First half of month quiet with no untoward incidents. Increasing pressure on men to wash clothes but soap issue wholly inadequate, being two pieces per month. Following Okuda's leaving, sugar issues ceased to prisoners but I.J.A. personnel had increased rations.

15/6/45: Approximately two acres ground part planted with vegetables. Taken over as camp vegetable garden. Work on this done by light sick.

20/6/45: Further supply of American Red Cross Foodstuffs arrived and put in stores. We are told that a Japanese Red Cross supply ship of 14,000 tons has been sunk by the Americans so this supply must last for a longer period than previous ones. No word as to when we shall be given them. Told we must wait. Sacking clothing changed with a lot of fuss. The attitude towards clothing is completely un-understandable.

23/4/45: The loss of two Army issue caps and theft of another reported. Every man's kit searched by guards but no solution reached or caps found.

24/4/45: All men on knees on square. Threatened to be all night there unless thief owned up to taking cap. Rations to be cut to half for indefinite period. Saruwaterei (wounded by machine gun in Rt. Shoulder in Singapore. Also fought in China. Now employed by Government as clerk. Throwing Beales (cobbler) and also kicking him. Increases of ill-treatment and bullying by former. Attempt to extract bread from cook house under threat because rations are cut by half. Reports of ill-treatment to Camp Commandant I.J.A. ineffective. Commenced bribing Saruwaterei to induce him to treat men better by threatening to report bribes to I.J.A.

Commandant.

25/4/45: Ashes of the four dead men placed for safer keeping in a Buddhist cemetery.

26/4/45: Capt. Wilkie has interview with Japanese Camp Commandant and gets the full scale of rations reinstated. Issue of 45 pairs of Red Cross socks.

27/4/45: All men vaccinated. Sugar ration – since the change in administration this supply has dropped from, originally, a kilo per day until there is only sufficient now to keep the yeast supply alive, with occasional small issues to the hospital.

30.4.45: Rice ration cut by 18 kgs. per day. This cuts down two of the meals each day to half a bowl of rice per man. The haversack ration for working men kept as it is.

1/2.5.45: 45 pairs of Red Cross socks of very poor quality issued. 325717 Dvr. Menzies T. caught in the cookhouse by a Japanese sentry. He was eating bread which he said was old cabbage stalks. He gave the wrong number to the sentry. Placed in the guard room and sentenced to 14 day imprisonment. This man has been an increasing source of trouble to the whole camp. The bread he was eating was stolen from one of his room-mates.

2.5.45: The above mentioned in the morning tried to kick his way out of his cell. During remainder of day was tied hand and foot and twice beaten for telling lies. At night commenced screaming and screaming. Was given a blanket and drink of water. Quietened down for a while. He then asked to go to the latrine and when released began kicking and screaming and calling for Capt. Wilkie, who on two occasions went to see him. He was perfectly rational each time and his only excuse was that he could not sleep. He was eventually gagged and during that night tried to hang himself with the gags, but it was quite apparent even to himself that the rag would not hold his weight. In the morning when Capt. Miller went to see him, he was very sorry for himself.

3.5.45: Factory shirts and pants issued.

5.5.45: Cut in rice ration now only xx kgs. per day. Sugar ration now only averages 0.2 xxxx per day.

8.5.45: Army shirts and pants handed in. 500 pieces of soap 0.21 Yens issued.

10.5.45: Saruwaterei threw down and kicked No. 136571 Dvr. Maco Y.L. Dragged him to his feet and knocked him with three blows of his fist. Reason: Dirty clothing. Capt. Wilkie told I.J.A. Sgt he would have Saruwaterei shot after war.

12.5.45: Cigarettes in part and chocolate issued from Red Cross. (Boxes).

14.5.45: Cheese and raisins as above. Dvr. Menzies released from imprisonment but on my orders, to continue to live in guard room on full rations and with all clothing and bedding. Allowed in the dining hall from 1800 to 2000 hrs daily.

15.5.45: No. D/-X 28836 A.B. Childs W.E. gaoled for breaking into and stealing sugar from Nippon stores.

16.5.45: Coffee and sugar from Red Cross boxes.

23.5.45: No. 520331 Pte. Chivers E.R. handed over to be gaoled for five days for refusing to obey an order given him by B.S.M Tawso C. and Lt. Miller W. This man has given considerable trouble in past and was recently sentenced to 14 days detention for receiving stolen rations. This to take effect after release. Evidence of the former case :-

#### STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE BY B.S.M. TAWSO C.

Sir,

On the morning of 23.5.45. at about 0050 hrs. whilst in the air-raid shelter, I was forming the men up in ranks of four for the purpose of roll call for the I.J.A. I told the accused. Pte Chivers to fall in and make up a section of four. He replied, "I am not falling in there". I repeated the order and got the same reply. I then said, "I am giving you an order to fall in, and make up a section of four", and I pointed to where he had to fall in. He then replied, "I don't care what you are giving me, I am not falling in there". I also

heard Lt. Miller call him by name and give him the same order and receive the same reply. I then received an order from Lt. Miller to warn the accused for office, which I did.....Signature of C Tawso B.S.M.

#### STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE BY Lt. W. Miller

On 23.5.45 at approximately 0050 I had occasion to be in the shelter whilst B.S.M. Tawso was dressing and numbering the men in his section of the air-raid shelter. The accused. Pte Chivers was asked by B.S.M. Tawso to fill up a gap in the ranks. The accused payed no attention to the order but turned to walk to the end of the ranks. B.S.M. Tawso addressed the accused by name and repeated the order. He, the accused, stated that he was not going to fill up the gap. The order was repeated by the B.S.M. and the accused once more stated that he was not going to fill up the gap at the same time saying something to the effect that it was dirty. He turned and commenced walking to the end of the ranks which happened to be near where I was standing. I addressed the accused by name and ordered him to fill up the gap as

ordered by the B.S.M. He once more refused to obey the order given him this time by myself. I then ordered the B.S.M. to warn him for office as there was no time to deal with the matter on the spot.

Lieutenant

24.5.45: No. 331072 Gnr. McQuarrie M., 9C.D.Reg. R.A. enlisted for 4 years with colours and 8 years with Reserve. This expired on 22.10.41. Owing to intervention of war, re-engagement papers were lost. He has today applied for re-enlistment. Balance of coffee, sugar, raisins, chocolate from R. Cross boxes issued. By order of the I.J.A. all tinned foods will be retained in stores temporarily.

25.5.45: Odd instances of lice reported. Commenced boiling blankets.

31.5.45: Cigarettes issued 16.2. are not payment and 15.6 are free. 20 cigarettes per man less than the previous month. Boiling of blankets as anti-lice precaution completed.

4.6.45: No.5769717. Pte. Wren 5th Bat. Norfolks. 18 years time expired 17.3.45. Applied for re-engagement to 21 years. Letter written to unit. Part of rations (Barley) removed to another store outside camp. Said to be an air raid precaution.

5.6.45: Balance of Red Cross stores, I.J.A. clothing and a quantity of other packages (contents unknown) removed to stores as above.

9.6.45: Rice and barley being moved out of camp every day. Same as above. About 20 cases of Typhus fever reported in the town, We have very few lice, but arrangements being made to steam all clothing.

12.6.45: Alterations to buildings in camp commenced. This is pending arrival of more men. Said to be 100.

14.6.45: Details of new arrivals given – 2 M.Os. 1 American , 1 British. 100 British troops, one of whom is an American.

17.6.45: Suffered a rather heavy incendiary raid on this area. Spent the night in the shelter but had a few men assisting in fighting the fire. The camp suffered no casualties but the surrounding district was ablaze. The camp was completely ringed with fires.

18.6.45: No work was done at the factory. Some clothing of the men which was left in the factory was burned.

19.6.45: The men went to the factory as usual. Mainly cleaning up work.

28.6.45: Started cleaning up for new arrivals. Previous Nip buildings completely evacuated and new buildings occupied.

30.6.45: 1 Officer, 1 M. Officer, and 98 men arrived from [[No.]] 6 P.O.W. camp. Details attached. General condition of men much better than our own people and morale much higher. Accommodation and issue of sacking clothing completed.

2.7.45: Killed a pig today – we received approx. 4 kilos of meat.

3.7.45: New men taken to factory for the first time. Mori, civilian clerk from No. 6. Camp, arrived.

4.7.45: No. 833013 Gnr. Wilding and No. 1115654 Gnr. Fenn G. gaoled for 10 days by the I.J.A. for gambling.

6.7.45: Some improvement in the vegetable rations etc.

12.7.45: Gnr. Fenn and Wilding released early.

13.7.45: A new quartermaster – a Cpl. – arrived. w.e.f. 2.7.45 No.850493 Bdr. Kirkpatrick promoted to the rank of Acting / Unpaid Sgt. whilst acting as N.C.O. i/c cookhouse.

20.7.45: No. D/SSX 28855 A/B Childs W. gaoled for breaking into biscuit store at factory – Sentence 3 days.

22.7.45: No.325717 Dvr Menzies T. gaoled for failing to obey an order, scavenging and improper behaviour in the Dining Hall. Sentence unknown. On his second day he attempted to show desperation by making an effort to escape. This was done by breaking from the guards and running out of the gate. He stopped just outside and was brought back and tied hand and foot. He was allowed no food for two and a half days. This an order from the I.J.A.

23.7.45: Guards changed today, after 4 months stay. A/B Childs released from gaol.

25.7.45: Saruwaterei leaves camp today. We are told he is going first to the f

27.7.45: Another incendiary raid lasting from 0001 to 0300 hrs approx. Much more concentrated than last. Fire picquets were placed at points within camp but at first had great difficulty in operating owing to guards. These were terrified and insisted on keeping our men in small pits at each fire point. Eventually Capt. Wilkie managed to get us operating freely on our own initiative which was done successfully. In all 16 small and 4 large incendiaries were dropped on the camp but were successfully dealt with. One of them penetrated the roof of the shelter. One end of the hospital was hit and slightly burned but was not rendered uninhabitable. The town is practically laid waste but for a small area round the camp. The factory was not damaged much but the area next door was gutted. Work has been greatly deranged mainly through lack

of electricity and supervising labour. Everyone was in bed at the time and had to dash for the shelter but no panic occurred.

30.7.45: The numbers of air raids have greatly increased during the last few days.

5.8.45: High level air raid bombing attack on locality. On the factory, some of our men injured. Factories about 3 to 4 miles distant received weight of attack. One engine bomber received a direct hit from A.A. One of the crew took to parachute and landed in sea nearby. He was dead when found. Remainder of crew perished in plane.

7.8.45: A/B Childs released from gaol. Was put in on 4.8.45 for stealing duck eggs from duck pen.

8.8.45: Spent about four and half hours in air-raid shelter. Very heavy concentration of planes (4 engine bombers) passed over close to our camp at about 1200 to 1400 hrs. Men at factory told 750 planes took part, the object being a strip of coast 60 miles by 3 miles on the main island. No action except serial combats around this locality.

10.8.45: Rice ration down to approx. 520 gms. per man per day. Vegetables very short. Complaint made to I.J.A. Commander.

12.8.45: No. 1427185 Gnr. Bridge W.P. gaoled for having a fight with a Japanese sailor at the factory. This man can almost be classed as a mental case but when put under observation, did not prove serious enough for isolation. Had been under observation in hospital in Singapore but had been dismissed. Veg. ration improved slightly. Nos. 3855203 Pte. Nicholson A. and No. 4859190 L.Cpl. Sharpe. E. No.1605620 Gnr. Davies R. 549488 L.A.C Spencer T.E. These men gaoled for trying to steal a bag of salt from the factory.

13.8.45: All five above have done 24 hours kneeling in the guard room without food.

14.8.45: Gnr. Bridge W.P. released from gaol.

15.8.45: At the factory today about 1200 hrs. there was a radio broadcast after which the Nip workers were assembled and addressed by the factory official. In the middle of his speech he broke down and cried. When the siren sounded a little earlier than this the men were told not to worry that American planes would not bomb Nip. workers, and women did not take cover on this raid. No work was done in afternoon.

17.8.45: Told this is a big day of mourning in Japan, when they mourn the war dead.

18.8.45: Commenced issuing Red Cross foodstuffs and cigarettes. Killed off pigs and some chickens. No doubt in anyone's mind now that war is over.

19.8.45: Nothing of import happens today.

20.8.45: Complete clothing issued to all men Japanese clothing. Old clothing handed back. Capt. Wilkie put in hospital. Remainder of Red Cross food parcels issued.

21.8.45: Declaration of cessation of hostilities of 15.8.45 read out first time. Swimming party taken out today. Normal conditions carried on.

22.8.45: Arrangements made for Kiddies party on 24.8.45.

23.8.45: Valuables returned to men with no losses.

24.8.45: Kiddies party very successful. Revert to our own drill today.

28.8.45: 1700 hrs relief foodstuffs dropped from one B.29 plane. Buildings slightly damaged with canisters. One man slightly injured with the flying splinters of wood. One other superficial cut. One house outside camp damaged (unoccupied). No other casualties. Foodstuff damaged but mostly salvaged.

29.8.45: Target area for above marked out in white line on garden patch 100 yds. East of Camp. Should be easily picked out. Two men left camp tonight without permission. A picquet was sent out but failed to find them. Japanese guards were also turned out to search for them. They however returned by themselves, quite sober and properly dressed. They were arrested however and placed in the guard room for the night. (Bdr Kirkpatrick and Gnr. Queite).

30.8.45: The above two men were tried by Capt. Wilkie and sentenced to confinement in our own guard room until such time as we are taken over by the Allies.

30.8.45: A British guard room and Police Staff of 18 men arranged. They will police the main gate by day and patrol Camp perimeter by night

2.9.45: Official handing over from the Nips. We now take over the Camp and all stores. In the evening an official ceremony was held when the American and British National anthems were played.

3.9.45: Walking out leave was to have started today, but owing to rain no one went out. Capt. Wilkie visited Camp 17 and conferred with Major Shott, Commanding Officer.

4.9.45: Had four airdrops on this camp today. No one injured except one civilian woman who had slight cut on arm. One house damaged by a canister.

5.9.45: The American and British flags hoisted over the camp for the first time today.

### **CONDENSED TIMELINE FOR FUKUOKA 25B CAMP FROM CAPTAIN WILKIE'S DIARY**

**Sep 31st 1944** – Established with 289 men; 11 of Wilkes party were left at Moji Hospital.

**Jun 6<sup>th</sup> 1945** – Two medical officers (1 Yank, 1 Brit) arrive; also one American enlisted man.

**Jun 30<sup>th</sup> 1945** – 98 men arrive from Fukuoka 06D Tanoura camp including two officers (1 medical) to work in the carbide factory

**Nov 1<sup>st</sup> 1945** – Six men arrive from Moji Hospital. Total in 25B now 291 plus 98 from 06D

**Jan 16<sup>th</sup> 1945** – Five more men arrive from Moji Hospital. 2 more go into hospital. Total in 25B now 294 plus 98 from 06D

**Mar 3<sup>rd</sup> 1945** – Four men badly burned in "Blow Out" at Carbide Factory – A. Johnson, T. Laity, A. S. Lawrence, G. Fenn.

**Jul 27<sup>th</sup> 1945** – Fire bombing raid on camp and carbide factory. Camp was saved by POWs.

**Aug 17<sup>th</sup> 1945** – Information that war is over.

**Aug 21<sup>st</sup> 1945** – Declaration that war has ended and cessation of hostilities.

**Aug 28<sup>th</sup> 1945** – First food drops from American B29.

**Sep 4<sup>th</sup> 1945** – British and American flags raised over camp.

**Sept 16<sup>th</sup> 1945** – POWs entrained to go to Omuta.

### **DEATHS IN FUKUOKA 25B CAMP – ALL BRITISH**

**Oct 9<sup>th</sup> 1944** – Ronal Percy Lae, Gnr 1115278, 88<sup>th</sup> Field Regt; died of injuries received at sea, exposure and malnutrition.

**Oct 16<sup>th</sup> 1944** – Thomas Charles Taylor, Dvr, 246241, RASC; Died of exposure effects (twin brother Walter also in camp).

**Oct 16<sup>th</sup> 1944** – Henry Elder, Pte, 2876671, Gordon Highlanders', exposure.

**Oct 29<sup>th</sup> 1944** – John Arthur Ewin, Gnr, 900327, 118<sup>th</sup> Field Regt, Royal Artillery; Bronchitis and malnutrition.

## THE JAPANESE SURRENDER AND THE LIBERATION OF THE POWs FROM THE FUKUOKA 25B CAMP

At the end of the war, 388 British and 2 American soldiers were imprisoned in **Fukuoka 25B** camp and 4 POW's died whilst in imprisonment.

The American and British flags were hoisted over the Fukuoka camps for the first time on 5.9.1945

**Samuel Dimmock's** date of liberation was given as 16.09.1945.

**Samuel** went to hospital in San Francisco for convalescence and re-habilitation before returning to his beloved Griffydham.

As soon as Japan surrendered, the U.S. Forces immediately sent help to the Allied POWs. They ordered the Japanese Government to mark the roofs of the POW camps with the letters 'PW' (**See following photographs**) and dropped relief supplies by parachute using Navy fighter-bombers and Air Force B-29 heavy bombers. They began preparing assembly areas for the POWs as soon as the Japanese surrender documents were signed on September 1, 1945. The Allies also dispatched officers to oversee the transfer of the POWs from the Japanese Army. The POWs assembled at places such as Nagasaki, Nii-machi in Shizuoka Prefecture, Yokohama, Omori in Tokyo, Chitose in Hokkaido, and by the end of September, most of the POWs had returned to their homeland via Okinawa and Manila.

### EXTRACTS FROM GEORGE McNABS DIARY. HE WAS IN FUKUOKA 25B WITH SAMUEL DIMMOCK

Below are extracts from the original 25B camp roster showing George McNab listed as number 235. (**source and copyright Roger Mansell, Palo Alto, CA.**)

231.	McKenna, David	Cnr.	Mother	7 Levens Terr., Lambrook Somerset	23	"
232.	McKosalek, John	L/Cpl.	Mother	Lothbury Pyre, Aberdeenshire	33	"
233.	McLaren, John F.	Cpt.	Wife	14 Dragon St., Petersfield Hants	37	"
234.	McLeod, Kenneth	Cnr.	Foster Brother	70 St. Philips Rd., Dereham Rd. Norwich	24	"
235.	McNab, George	Pte.	Wife	9 Church Terr., Peterculter Aberdeenshire	29	"
236.	McGarrick, Malcolm	Cnr.	Mother	108 Taylor St., Glasgow	20	"
237.	McQueen, David	Spr.	Mother	233 Dalrieth Rd., Edinburgh	23	"
238.	Mathews, Alexander W.	Ct.	Father	303 Brockley Rd., London SE 4	27	"
239.	McLaughlin, Roy	Cpl.	Wife	90 Frederick St. Nth Thameside, Weymouth	32	"
240.	Maxwell, Stewart	Cnr.	Mother	626a Raleigh Ashton Devon	42	Devon
241.	Martin, William	Cnr.	Father	Willow Farm, High Helden	22	Health

By sheer coincidence, George McNab had been sent to the same Fukuoka 25B camp as Samuel Dimmock. They had travelled from Nong Pladuk POW camp on the same train to Singapore and sailed on the Kachidoki Maru from Keppel Harbour, Singapore. Unfortunately, we will never know now if they knew each other, but for sure, they both shared the same experiences.

## DIARY EXTRACTS

30<sup>th</sup> Sept 1944 we reach Omuta, Fukuoka and taken to a camp known as number 25B POW camp.

10<sup>th</sup> Oct 1944. Start work in carbide factory. I become a furnace man. Its pure murder!

**Whether Sam Dimmock worked as a furnace man also is not known, however, when he was reminiscing in later life with Sam Hodges about their experiences, he told Sam Hodges that he suffered with splash burns all up his legs, which obviously related to whatever work he was doing in the carbide plant.**

6<sup>th</sup> July 1945 incendiary raid on Omuta, half the town is burned out. All of us now faced with starvation, had the camp dog in soup for supper.

17<sup>th</sup> July 1945, second incendiary raids which burn down the whole town completely with the exception of our camp, thank God

24<sup>th</sup> July 1945, the carbide factory gets an H.E. Dive Bomb raid and it goes sky – high. Whoopee. Our work now consists of cleaning up the mess those Yankee boys left behind.

6<sup>th</sup> August 1945, see the golden cloud over Hiroshima over 40 miles away caused by the first atomic bomb.

8<sup>th</sup> August 1945, see similar cloud over Nagasaki, the second atomic bomb, air raids now continue from dawn to dusk. We were all saying, send them down boys, not worrying whether the next one got us or not, for we might just as well be dead for all we got to eat.

In Omuta, at the time of the mandarin orange harvest, a load of mandarins were delivered to the prisoners. They were so hungry that they wolfed down mandarin after mandarin eating them whole without pausing to peel them. They suffered a week's diarrhoea for the pleasure! The medical officer told the camp commander that it was imperative that the prisoners should be given some meat. The Japanese commander pointed to the prisoner's faithful Alsatian and the poor dog ended up in their soup. Many of the prisoner's could not bring themselves to eat their soup knowing that it had been made with their loyal companion, but it was a matter of survival. If the war had gone on for another 6 months, all the Omuta camps prisoners would have perished from malnutrition.

15<sup>th</sup> August 1945, boys let us down, no raid today.

18<sup>th</sup> August 1945, Japanese tell us the war finished three days ago, none of us believe it and just carry on as usual.

24<sup>th</sup> August 1945, B-29 appears over the camp flying very low, we all run for cover, he lets go his load, but alas its leaflets. We all rushed out to get one, the first three words were the "Japanese have surrendered", boy did I sing and shout. It also said that he was making a second run over the camp, and to look out as he was dropping food by parachute. What a site, fifty odd shutes, all colours of the rainbow, and what a super thanks to that gallant pilot.

15<sup>th</sup> September 1945, get orders we are entraining tomorrow for Nagasaki to go on board an aircraft carrier to take us to Okinawa.

16<sup>th</sup> September 1945, we leave Omuta, not one bit sorry. After four hours travelling, we pull into Nagasaki, what's that, a dance band? We all look out the windows, sure enough all the platform is lined with big husky American sailors dressed in 'Persil' white with the odd nurse here and there dressed in grey. What a welcome they gave us, when a well fed yank shook hands with me, he made my skinny frame rattle. We were so timid

*and shy not having seen a white woman for three and a half years that most of us slunk away like a scolded dog when these snow white skinned nurses approached to greet us. We discard all our old clothing, have a disinfectant bath and are fitted out with new clothes. What's that, real ham sandwiches? Sue enough, and as much as you care to have plus coke a cola and ice cream. At this point I kick my left shin to make sure I am not dreaming. Well clothed and well fed, we step aboard the USS CAP-GLOUCESTER to glorious freedom, something the majority of people the whole world over does not appreciate.*

*18<sup>th</sup> September 1945, we sail for Okinawa, and as I stand on the flight deck of the carrier, my last farewell to Japan as it fades on the horizon is "Goodbye land of men without virtue, women without honour, birds without song, and flowers without smell". And so ends this grueling episode. I am now relaxing and praying that I shall be reunited with my dear wife and daughter sooner than I expected to enjoy a long and happy life together for evermore.*

The first night on the carrier was the first time they had all been at sea since they were torpedoed. They were all on the flight deck reluctant to go below. Although they had the best quarters and been provided with the best food, they all sat around the flight deck despite the commander's plea to go below. Eventually the cool of the night saw them move. In their quarters there were crew going around. A flight sergeant asked George if there was anything he fancied "a drop of sugar" he said. He received a bowl of it and ate the lot. Sugar was unheard of throughout his captivity...none for three and a half years. Arriving at Okinawa, the Americans gave them coffee...lovely sweet coffee, but every time George drank it he was sick. This was very worrying to his mates who kept asking him what was wrong. It carried on for weeks and even a visit to the medical centre concluded that he was in good health. Eventually they were to be flown from Okinawa to Manila. These were operational planes taking thirty passengers. The first plane took off and struck pylons, then the second plane tried to take off but plowed through a fence and several men were killed. In the third plane were George, Ernie, a regular with twenty one year's service and Charlie Laden who was in the RAMC. They had all been in Changi at the same time. Charlie turned to George and said "well Mac, after all I've been through I'm not going up in that". George said "and I'm married". "Right" said Charlie "come with me" and they went down to the beach. The three of them spent the day on the beach, and around four in the afternoon, they saw a tramp steamer, and coming ashore from it a wee boat with the captain and two officers. "Excuse me sir" said Charlie "are you going to Manila?" "I don't know, I am just going to get my orders" replied the captain. He returned an hour later and said "right lads come with me". They were taken on the steamer, and once on board, George was given a note book by one of the crew in which he wrote out everything that had happened to him. **How George McNab came to write his diary and photographs of the original can be found on the internet.**

**ALL THE FOLLOWING PHOTOGRAPHS WERE TAKEN AFTER THE JAPANESE SURRENDERED AND ARE FROM CAMPS IN THE AREA OF FUKUOKA 25B CAMP (MAINLY FUKUOKA 17)**

(SOURCE AND COPYRIGHT ROGER MANSELL, PALO ALTO, CA. )



**NOTE THE WHITE LETTERS TO SIGNAL TO THE AMERICAN AIRCREWS**





15102 Stretcher cases of POW's formerly of Omuta prison camp #17, shown here arriving at Nagasaki, Japan. On stretcher car. 45/09/15

**WHAT WAS KNOWN AS STRETCHER TRAINS**



15103 Stretcher cases of POW's formerly of Omuta prison camp #17, shown here arriving at Nagasaki, Japan. L. A. Bump, suffering from malnutrition. On stretcher car. 45/09/15



15106 Prisoners of war at Nagasaki, Japan after being released from Omuta prison camp #17.  
Dutch POW's. 45/09/15



16<sup>TH</sup> DEC 1945 – KETTLES USED FOR COOKING RICE IN FOR POWs IN FUKUOKA CAMP 17 AT OMTA



16<sup>TH</sup> DEC 1945 – BATHING FACILITIES FOR POWS IN OMTA



THIS WOULD MOST LIKELY HAVE BEEN ATTACHED TO THE HOSPITAL AT MOJI



**A CAMP HOSPITAL BUILDING ON THE COMPLEX AT OMTA  
WHITE LETTERING ON THE ROOF CAN JUST BE MADE OUT TO SIGNAL TO THE AMERICANS  
THAT IT WAS A POW HOSPITAL CAMP BUILDING**



**THIS FINAL PICTURE TELLS ITS OWN STORY**

## GENERAL INFORMATION ON JAPANESE POW CAMPS IN JAPAN AND ITS ISLANDS

POW camps in Japan were repeatedly reformed and rearranged, so the main camps, dispatch camps and detached camps opened during the war numbered about 130. At the end of the war there were seven main camps, 81 branch camps and three detached camps with 32,418 POWs in total detained there, amongst those was **Sam Dimmock** of course. Approximately 3,500 POWs died during their imprisonment there.

The total number of the POWs who died in all the camps in Japan was about 10 % of the total of those who were transported to the home islands. This is less than the percentage for Japanese run camps as a whole and brings into stark contrast the fact that in order for this to be 10% officially, the other camps, notably on the Burma-Thailand railway were far higher than the 'average' overall death rate of 27.1% as shown below.

Most of the causes of death were disease, malnutrition, overwork, and poor sanitary conditions. Many of the deaths happened immediately after the POWs arrived in Japan from South East Asia. The POWs were already in weak condition prior to embarkation from the 'Hell Ships' where they had to endure terrible conditions including the sinking of some ships as described earlier. It is almost certain that had the war lasted even a little longer, the number of the POW deaths would have been much greater given the shortages Japan was experiencing toward the end of the war. There were also other causes of death including work accidents and bombardment by the Allied Forces

Few POW camp buildings were new. In most cases existing warehouses, company employee dorms, or school buildings were remodeled and used as POW camp buildings. Typically, they were two-storied wooden buildings in a compound surrounded by wooden walls topped with barbed wire. Japanese staff worked and lived in the camp's administration building, which also contained storage and toilet facilities. Inside the compound, POW quarters usually consisted of rows of two or three storied bunk beds with either traditional Japanese goza (woven straw mats) or tatami (straw mattresses) on the wooden bunks. Bare bulbs were used for the lights, and heat came from fire pots or stoves made from shipping drums. In most camps blankets were provided by the camp, however, many POWs reported that the severe winter cold adversely affected their health.

Toilets were traditional Japanese 'dipping style' (open latrines), and POWs had to endure the smell and flies and POWs were used for labour to empty the latrines which usually went to fertilise crops: a common practice in Japan at this time. In most cases a Japanese style multi-person bathing facility was provided, but there were camps where it was unavailable due to the general shortage of fuel. In some camps the large number of prisoners trying to bathe limited baths to one per week, and some POWs washed themselves at laundry sinks or wash stands or in the nearby bodies of water.

Generally, the Japanese guards were responsible for providing rice and other ingredients for meals, and the POWs took turns preparing the food. The basic menu was a bowl of rice, a cup of miso-soup, and some

pickles. In some camps they had bread once a day. Several times a month, meat or fish was provided, but as the food situation in Japan worsened, the meat disappeared. Ordinarily, the POWs carried a lunch box to work, and in some cases the companies provided food for the POWs. Starvation and malnutrition were the POW's most critical problems. There are some Japanese who claim that the Japanese Army did their best to secure food for the POWs under the wartime conditions, but there is no denying that the POWs were in poor physical condition toward the end of the war.

The POWs used the clothes that they had with them upon their arrival in Japan, and the camps provided work clothes such as tenugui (Japanese cotton towel), jikatabi (traditional work footwear), and gunte (work gloves made of cotton). Most of the POWs did not have the means to mend or repair their clothes. Some camps provided overcoats for the winter and some did not. Towards the end of the war, the lack of clothing was very serious, and POWs were dressed in rags.

## THE FINAL SURRENDER

On 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945, Japanese Emperor Hirohito announced over the radio that Japan has accepted its fate of surrendering unconditionally to the Allied forces, marking the beginning of the end of the war and occupation. The official instrument of surrender was formally signed on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945. This took place on USS Missouri.



**REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EMPIRE OF JAPAN STAND ABOARD 'USS MISSOURI' IN TOKYO BAY, PRIOR TO SIGNING THE FORMAL INSTRUMENT OF SURRENDER DOCUMENTS**



**THE JAPANESE FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER MAMORU SHIGEMITSU SIGNS THE JAPANESE INSTRUMENT OF SURRENDER ON BOARD 'USS MISSOURI' AS GENERAL RICHARD K. SUTHERLAND WATCHES ON – SEPTEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup> 1945**



**THE JAPANESE SURRENDER – NOTE THE THOUSANDS OF JAPS LINED UP IN THE BACKGROUND**

### **THE SURRENDER TO THE BRITISH AT SINGAPORE**

In a ceremony held at City Hall, Singapore ( now 'The National Gallery'), Japanese General Seishiro Itagaki led a delegation of Japanese representatives and signed the formal Instrument of Surrender in the presence of the British led by Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Supreme Commander of South-East Asia Command.



**SOURCE WIKIPEDIA**

**SAMUEL HODGES WAS A POW IN SINGAPORE AT THIS TIME HAVING BEEN RETURNED THERE WITH OTHER SURVIVING POWs AFTER THE BUILDING OF THE BURMA TO THAILAND RAILWAY HAD BEEN COMPLETED. HIS SON MICHAEL WAS TOLD BY HIS FATHER THAT HE WAS ENGAGED IN DIGGING A TRENCH OUTSIDE THE RAFFLES HOTEL WITH SEVERAL OTHERS WHEN AN IMMACULATELY DRESSED JAPANESE OFFICER WITH HIGHLY POLISHED BOOTS APPROACHED THEM AND SAID “WAR OVER, ALL MEN GO HOME” AT WHICH POINT HE TURNED AND MARCHED OFF. THEY STOOD THERE FOR A FEW MINUTES, COMPLETELY BAFFLED BY HIS STATEMENT, UNTIL IN THE DISTANCE THEY HEARD THE DULCET TONES OF THE BAND OF THE ROYAL MARINES MARCHING UP THE ROAD. THE PRISONER’S HAD AN IDEA THAT THE END OF THE WAR WAS NEAR AS SOME OF THE OFFICERS HAD CONSTRUCTED A BASIC RADIO AND WERE KEEPING ABREAST OF WORLD NEWS.**

## WAR CRIME TRIALS RELATING TO JAPAN POW CAMPS

The Allied Occupation Army then began arresting war criminal suspects. The Class B and Class C War Crimes Trials were held by the U.S. Army of Occupation in Yokohama. Soon after the war ended, the Allies requested that the Japanese Government adopt the Geneva Conventions and its stipulations for the humane treatment of the POWs. During the war, the Japanese Government hadn't ratified the conventions but claimed its intention was to abide by them. However, in practice the Japanese treatment of the Allied POWs was far from 'humane'.

In the War Crimes Trials at Yokohama, a total of 327 cases were brought before the tribunal, and 1,037 Japanese were prosecuted. Of these, there were 222 cases related to mistreatment of POWs in which 475 Japanese were prosecuted. 5 Cases were tried relating to the daily violence by the Japanese Army personnel including the killing of the escaped POWs, lack of medical treatment, lack of food, and embezzlement of the Red Cross supplies.

As a result, almost all the prison camps in Japan had produced war criminals, and 28 of those convicted were sentenced to death by hanging. Typical examples of the camps that produced many condemned criminals are Naoetsu Branch Camp (Tokyo No. 4), where eight Japanese guards were sentenced to death by hanging, and Hiraoka (or Mitsushima) Branch Camp (Tokyo No. 12), where six were sentenced to death by hanging, These were the cases in which those prosecuted were held responsible for causing many POW deaths due to poor treatment. There were other camps in which a large number of POWs died, but those two camps were noted for the severity of the sentences.

**OMUTA FUKUOKA CAMP COMPLEX WHERE SAMUEL DIMMOCK WAS INTERNED IN CAMP 25B** - The killing of the escaped POWs was the main cause of the execution of the Japanese camp staff in Miike Coal Mine Branch Camp at Omuta (Fukuoka No.17) where four Japanese guards were executed and in Mizumaki (or Orio) Branch Camp (Fukuoka No.6) in which three were executed. The latter included Col. Iju Sugawara, the Commander of the Fukuoka Main Camp, who was held responsible for the actions of his men.

Other camps that produced many war criminals were Ofuna Naval POW Camp: 30 war criminals, Narumi Branch Camp (Nagoya No. 2): 22 war criminals, Niigata Sea and Land Transport Branch Camp (Tokyo No. 5): 18 war criminals, Niigata Ironworks Branch Camp (Tokyo No. 15): 17 war criminals, Niihama Branch Camp (Hiroshima No. 2): 13 war criminals.



WAR CRIMES TRIAL

## SOME FINANCIAL JUSTICE AT LAST – BUT FAR TOO LATE

The question has to be asked as to why when Britain celebrated VE day in the summer of 1945, when some of the survivors of the Japanese POW camps had not even returned to our shores, there were no celebrations or victory parades for them – **absolutely no recognition**. Also, it must be remembered that these men had to start their lives again with no jobs waiting for them to go to, and only a financial pittance of £76 was provided by the San Francisco Peace Treaty, with £49 going to civilian internees. The treaty stated that if Japan agreed to better terms with other countries, British POWs could demand the same treatment. In 1992, a lawyer named Martyn Day, a senior lawyer of Leigh Day & Co., was persuaded by his great uncle John Gott an ex POW, some 50 years after the end of the Second World War ended, to take up the case for compensation to be paid to the Japanese POWs.

Several other countries had managed to get a £2,000 payment from the Japanese Government in the mid 1950s. The British Government could also have pressed for a similar payment but apparently chose not to because it feared it would interfere with the Japanese recovery after the war! Forty years on, Martyn Day gave the British Government an ultimatum to either pursue the Japanese Government through the courts to claim compensation for the POWs or provide a payment themselves. Martyn Day was supported in his efforts by former POWs Keith Martin (from the association of British civilians Far East Region) & Arthur Titherington (the Chairman of the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors Association) who also campaigned for a formal apology from Japan.

The British Government in 2001 decided to award a one off payment of £10,000 tax free to the survivors and widows of those who had since died. There were 5,654 former Japanese POWs and 4,663 widows at that time in Britain. Arthur Titherington, Chairman of the Japanese Labour Camps Survivors Association, who was forced to work in copper mines in Taiwan, said: "Today is a great day. The British government has shown that it has fully understood the importance of these issues to today's society. My only disappointment is that the real culprit, that is the Japanese government, has got away scot-free. The least it can do is recognise the gross errors of its past which it can do by providing a full, unequivocal apology." Keith Martin, chairman of the Association of British Civilian Internees Far East Region, said: "Our members can now look forward with satisfaction that their suffering and losses have finally been recognised after so many years."

Lest we forget - Over 50,000 British troops and civilians were captured in Singapore in 1942 and 25% later died in captivity.

Representatives of the POWs and the civilian internees stated: "compensation and an apology should go hand in hand". Arthur Titherington stated: "The demand for a full, meaningful apology from the Japanese remains."



**SAM HODGES**

**WRITE IN BLOCK CAPITAL LETTERS IN PENCIL**

No. 4854871 Rank LANCE-CORPORAL Surname HODGES  
 Christian Names SAMUEL Decorations \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ship (R.N., U.S.N. or Merchant Navy) \_\_\_\_\_ Unit & Div. (Army) 1/LEICESTERS. INDIAN DIV.  
 Squadron and Command (R.A.F., A.A.F.) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Birth 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 1918 Date of Enlistment 15/9/39  
 Private Address and Telephone No. TOP ROAD, GRIFFYDAM, LEICESTER, ENGLAND.  
 Place and Date of Original Capture TAIPING (MALAYA) 11/1/42.  
 (Aircrew R.A.F. to give place and date of a/c crash).

1. What camps, detachments or hospitals were you in? Give dates and names of the British Camp Leaders, Detachment (or Block) Leaders or, in the case of hospitals, the Senior British Medical Officers.

Camp or Hospital.	Dates.	Camp Leader.	Detachment or Block Leader (if any).
TAIPIING SAOL	1/1/42 - 2/7/42	RT. COL. FITZPATRICK	
KUALA LUMPUR SAOL	3/10/42 - 13/9/43	COL. F. HOLMES	
CHANGI CAMP	13/9/43 - 6/11/43	RT. COL. NEWBY	
THAILAND	10/11/43 - 3/5/44		
SINGAPORE SING.	3/5/44 - 11/9/45		
CHANGI QUARTERS			

ESCAPES OR ATTEMPTED ESCAPES: (Additional paper will be supplied on request if required)

兵 卒 20780

NAME HODGES, Samuel  
 Date of Birth 1st September 1918  
 Nationality BRITISH  
 Service No. 4854871  
 Rank LANCE CORPORAL  
 Regiment 1st Leicestershire Infantry  
 Place of Capture TAIPIING (MALAYA)  
 Date of Capture 11/1/42  
 Name of Prisoner of War Mrs. S.A. HODGES  
 Name of Hospital BRITISH, SINGAPORE, CHANGI, (Prisoner) Mr. F. HOLMES, Top Road, SINGAPORE, SINGAPORE

Other Information: - 55 95 7

昭和20年11月2日 聯合國軍に降参した

**JOHN HOWKINS**

JOHN HOWKIN'S LQ IS PARTICULARLY DETAILED AND ALTHOUGH IT CANNOT BE READ CLEARLY HERE, IT HAS BEEN TRANCRIBED AND PROVED KEY IN ESTABLISHING JOHN'S MOVEMENTS IN THAILAND.

**WRITE IN BLOCK CAPITAL LETTERS IN PENCIL**

No. 956459 Rank GUNNER Surname HOWKINS  
 Christian Names JOHN Decorations \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ship (R.N., R.A.N. or Merchant Navy) \_\_\_\_\_ Unit & Div. (Army) 148<sup>th</sup> FLD REGT RA 15<sup>th</sup> DIV  
 Squadron and Command (R.A.F., R.A.A.F., etc) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Birth 10/5/1919 Date of Enlistment 12/12/39  
 Private Address and Telephone No. ANCHOR FARM, PEGGS GREEN  
LEICESTERSHIRE  
 Place and Date of Original Capture SINGAPORE 15/2/42  
(Assign R.A.F. to give place and date of a/c crash).

1. What camps, detachments or hospitals were you in? Give dates and names of the British Camp Leaders, Detachment (or Block) Leaders or, in the case of hospitals, the Senior British Medical Officers.

Camp or Hospital.	Dates.	Camp Leader.	Detachment or Block Leader (if any).
CHANGI SINGAPORE	15/2/42 - 19/4/42	Major G. Deakin	Major G. Deakin
FARRER Park	17/4/42 - 27/7/42	Major G. Deakin	Major G. Deakin
SENAI	27/7/42 - 27/7/42	Major G. Deakin	Major G. Deakin
BANGSAI THAILAND	27/7/42 - 27/7/42	Major G. Deakin	Major G. Deakin
TRAP	27/7/42 - 27/7/42	Major G. Deakin	Major G. Deakin
TRAP	27/7/42 - 27/7/42	Major G. Deakin	Major G. Deakin
TRAP	27/7/42 - 27/7/42	Major G. Deakin	Major G. Deakin

2. ESCAPES OR ATTEMPTED ESCAPES. (Additional paper will be supplied on request if required).

**泰 泰 IV 8938**

收容所 Camp	<u>馬六甲</u>	番號 No.	<u>馬六甲 4462</u>
姓名 Name	<u>HOWKINS John</u> <u>ホークンズ ジョン</u>	生年月日 Date of Birth	<u>10.5.1919</u>
國籍 Nationality	<u>英 英</u>	所屬部隊 Unit	<u>No. 956459</u> <u>148 Field Regt R.A.</u>
階級身分 Rank	<u>Gunner</u> <u>陸軍兵</u>	捕獲年月日 Date of Capture	<u>昭和17年2月15日</u>
捕獲場所 Place of Capture	<u>昭南島</u>	母ノ名 Mother's Name	<u>Eliza</u>
父ノ名 Father's Name	<u>John Henry</u>	職業 Occupation	<u>肉ヤ</u>
本籍地 Place of Origin	<u>Cole-Orton, Leics.</u>	特記事項 Remarks	
通報先 Investigation of Report	<u>(Mother) Mrs. J. Howkins, Anchor Farm, Peggs Green, Cole-orton, Leics.</u>		

*[Faded Japanese document with illegible text]*

## KANCHANABURI WAR CEMETERY, THAILAND 1939-1945

**TOTAL IDENTIFIED CASUALTIES – 6858**  
**TOTAL IDENTIFIED BRITISH CASUALTIES – 3585**



<b>POW WORKERS / DEATHS ON THE THAILAND TO BURMA RAILWAY 1942 – 1945</b>			
<b>Country of origin</b>	<b>POWs</b>	<b>Number of deaths</b>	<b>Death rate</b>
<b>UK, British India or crown colony</b>	30,131	6,904	23%
<b>Netherlands or Dutch East Indies</b>	17,990	2,782	15%
<b>Australia</b>	13,004	2,802	22%
<b>United States</b>	686	133	19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>61,811</b>	<b>12,621</b>	<b>20%</b>



KANCHANABURI WAR CEMETERY, THAILAND. E.C. 1949



## **THE CHUNGKAI WAR CEMETERY, THAILAND – 1939-1945**

**THERE ARE NOW 1,426 COMMONWEALTH AND 313 DUTCH BURIALS IN THIS CEMETERY.  
THERE ARE NOT THOUGHT TO BE ANY AUSTRALIANS BURIED HERE.**

**AS FEATURED EARLIER IN THE BOOK, THE WAR CEMETERY IS THE ORIGINAL BURIAL  
GROUND STARTED BY THE POWs THEMSELVES ON THE SITE OF THE CHUNGKAI CAMP  
HOSPITAL, AND THE BURIALS ARE MOSTLY OF MEN WHO DIED IN THE HOSPITAL**



CHONG KAI WAR CEMETERY, THAILAND, E.C. 1949

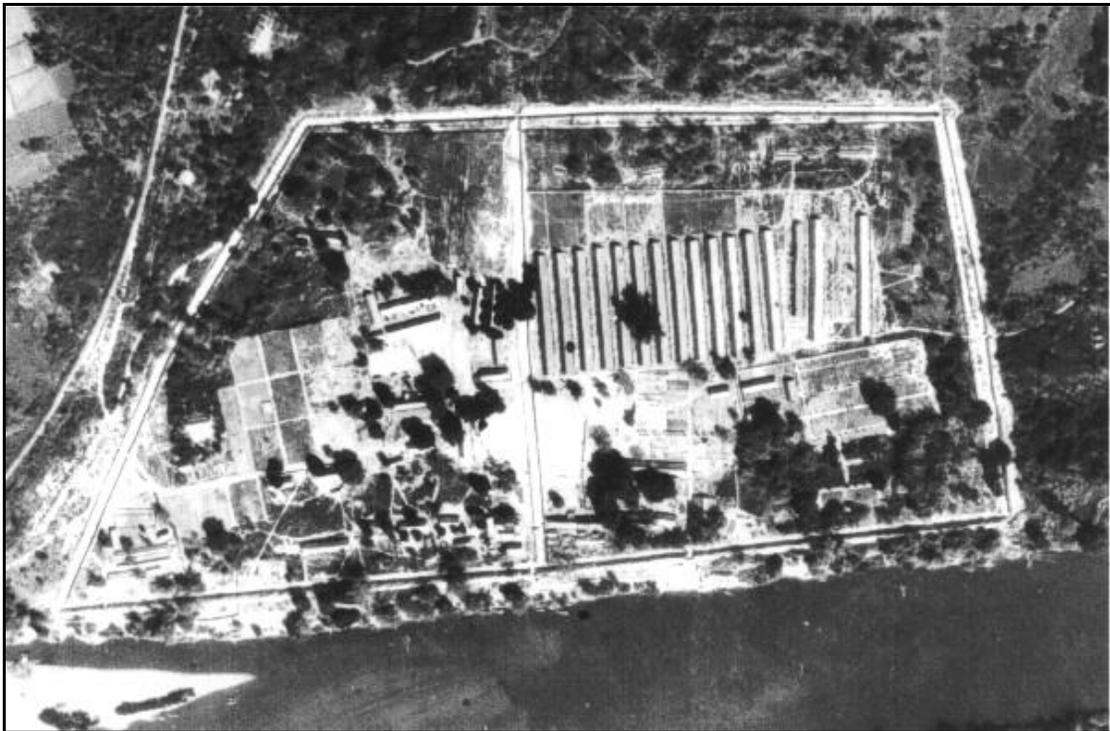
**TAKEN 1949**



**RECENT PHOTOGRAPH**



**AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF THE CEMETERY**



**THE FORMER CHUNGKAI HOSPITAL CAMP ON WHICH THE CEMETERY NOW STANDS**

## **TAIPING WAR CEMETERY MALASIA 1939-1945**

**32 MEN OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION, LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT ARE RECORDED AS BEING BURIED HERE. A LIST OF THEIR NAMES FOLLOW.**

**OUT OF A TOTAL OF 864 MEN BURIED HERE 500 ARE UNIDENTIFIED**

**OF THE 99 LEICESTERS KILLED ON THE MALAYAN PENINSULAR, 65 HAVE NO KNOWN GRAVE AND COULD WELL BE AMONG THE 500 UNIDENTIFIED**





**THIS PHOTOGRAPH IS OF SAM HODGES DURING HIS VISIT IN 1983 LOOKING AT THE HEADSTONE OF HIS MATE HUGH PRITCHARD WHO WAS MURDERED BY THE JAPANESE**



**SAM HODGES WITH THE REST OF THE PARTY**

**TABLE OF KNOWN LEICESTERS' BURIED IN TAIPING CEMETERY  
INCLUDING HUGH PRITCHARD**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>RANK</b>
Eric Lane	26	Private
Harold Handley	35	Private
Thomas Ashmore	23	Private
George Barkby	28	Sergeant
Walter Ronal Barnacle	22	Lance Corporal
Ernest Gordon Bucket	25	Lance Corporal
Patrick Gifford Burder	26	Captain
Tom William Claricoates	Not recorded	Lieutenant
Patrick Guy Crosthwaite	22	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant
Reginald Thomas Cutts	29	Corporal
Ronald Leonard Green	29	Private
Herbert Henry Ecclestone	49	Private
Reginald Foster	21	Private
Samuel Freer	27	Private
Maurice Arthur Garner	22	Private
Herbert Green	20	Lance Corporal
Peter Jackson	18	Private
Arthur Vincent George Jakeman	24	Private
John Henry Lambert	23	Private
James Henry Mills	23	Private

Charles G Newton	29	Lance Corporal
Edward Ernest Parsons	21	Corporal
<b>HUGH PRITCHARD</b>	38	Private
George Albert Smith	26	Sergeant
Joseph Leonard Tew	22	Private
Walter Sidney Toon	28	Private
Horace Vann	22	Private
Thomas Warin	26	Corporal
Bernard Edward Watkins	28	Sergeant
Jonas White	26	Private
William Wood	26	Lance Corporal
Reg Foster	Died prior to Japanese invasion	

**NOTE THE GRAVE OF HUGH PRITCHARD – Hugh was a mate of Sam Hodges and was murdered by the Japanese because he would not surrender. This incident features earlier in the book.**

**ANOTHER MAN, PRIVATE PERCY PARGITER WAS KILLED IN THE RETREAT SOUTH DURING AN AIR ATTACK ON THEIR TRUCK CONVOY. HE WAS DRIVING THE MO'S TRUCK. HE IS BURIED IN THE CIVILIAN CEMETERY, TAIPING.**

## THE KRANJI WAR MEMORIAL AND CEMETERY – SINGAPORE ISLAND



**THERE ARE 3,692 IDENTIFIED GRAVES AT KRANJI INCLUDING SOME WW I TRANSFERRED GRAVES**

**THERE ARE 4,461 COMMONWEALTH CASUALTIES OF WW 2 BURIED OR COMMEMERATED OF WHICH 850 OF THE BURIALS ARE UNIDENTIFIED**

**TABLE OF KNOWN LEICESTERS' BURIED AT KRANJI**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>RANK</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
Eric Pearson	26	Lance Corporal	4973967
John Hathaway	23	Private	4858299
Thomas Hinton	?	Corporal	4858205
Leonard Alfred Llewellyn Thomas	?	Private	54969333
James William Robinson	28	Lance Corporal	4857111
John Herbert Thomas Sale	21	Private	4863437
Leonard Sharpe	23	Private	4858332
Leonard Taylor	38	Lance Sergeant	4815486
George Edwin Marshall	28	Private	4856441

Leonard Corton	28	Lance Corporal	4863288
Eric Falconbridge	26	Private	4859863
Cyril Gibbons	22	Private	4858738
Bernard Annis	28	Sergeant	4857568
Frank Cyril Bramley	26	Lance Corporal	4857501
William Blanchard	35	Private	4865814
Harry Brookes	?	?	4859932
Richard Jeffs	23	Private	4859932
Ian Desmond Vance Mitchell	23	Captain	71121
William Orchard	29	Private	4863406
Cyril Arthur Barnes	23	Private	4859824
Wilfred Waller	28	Private	4855545
Douglas Henry Mowbray	27	Private	4857775

**'1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION - LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT' CASUALTIES IN THE MALAYAN & SINGAPORE CAMPAIGN**

Please note that the information in all the following tables has been supplied to the writer by Ken Hewitt with permission to publish & he holds the copyright

**TABLE OF KNOWN CASUALTIES IN THE MALAYAN CAMPAIGN**

LOCATION	OFFICERS	OTHER RANKS	TOTAL
Jitra	2	10	12
Retreat	1	16	17
Alor star	2	28	30
Gurun	1	4	5
Penang	0	4 (Note 1)	4
Kampar	0	17	17
Batu Pahat	0	8	8
Other Locations	0	4	4
Singapore	2	79 (note 2)	81
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>178</b>

Note 1: Died of wounds and/or malaria between June & Oct 1942.

Note 2; 10 known to have died on the island and have identifiable graves. Some of the remaining 69 may have fled to the island and died / drowned during their escape.

**DEATHS ON BURMA TO THAILAND RAILWAY BY LOCATION**

CAMP	NO OF DEATHS	COMMENT
Nakom Pathom	1	Major hospital camp. Died of dysentery
Non Pladuck	7	Killed in allied bombing raid (5), died of cerebral malaria (1), died of dysentery/avitimosis/beriberi (1)
Ban Pong	1	Man disappeared soon after reaching Ban Pong from Singapore

F&H hospital Kanburi	4	Died of Pneumonia (1) / Dysentery (2) / Malaria (1)
Aerodrome camp	2	Beri-beri (2)
Kanchanaburi	6	Died of dysentery (5) / liver abscess (1)
Tamarkan	2	Died of malaria (1) / dysentery (1)
Chungkai	32	Major hospital camp. Deaths attributed to dysentery / avitaminosis / ulcers / malaria / cholera / aneurism / pellagra / pneumonia / beri-beri / tuberculosis. Malnutrition a factor in most deaths
Wan Yai	2	Died of cholera (1) / other (1)
Tarsao	7	Died of dysentery (5) / cholera (2)
Tonchan	3	Died of dysentery and malaria (2) / Beri-beri (1)
Kanyu	3	Died of dysentery and malaria (2) / malnutrition (1)
Hintok river camp	2	Died of cholera (1) / Beri-beri (1)
Kinsaiyok	6	Died of cholera (3) / Malaria (1) / Dysentery (1). <b>1 man was executed following an attempted escape</b>
Matoona	11	Died of cholera (7) / Malaria (3) / heart failure (1)
Lin Tin	1	Died of malaria
Brankassi	1	Killed in allied bombing raid on train
Takanoon	2	Died of cholera (1) / dysentery and pneumonia (1)
Nam Chon Yai	3	All died of acute enteritis
Nikki	1	Died of dysentery and beri-beri
Kami-sonkuai	3	Died of dysentery (1) / dysentery & ulcers (1) / malaria (1)
Changaraya	3	All died of cholera
Tambaya	3	Hospital camp in Burma. Sick from northern Thai camps were transferred here. Died of ulcers & beri-beri (1) / beri-beri & dysentery (1) / dysentery (1)
<b>TOTAL DEATHS</b>	<b>106</b>	

## THE LEICESTERS' IN JAPANESE POW CAMPS

CAMP (Arranged N to S)	NO OF LEICESTERS	NATURE OF WORK
<b>NAGOYA</b>		
Funatsu (N3)	9	9 Leicesters' arrived in June 1944 as part of Japan Party 1. POWs provided slave labour for the Mitsui Mining Co., in the mining and refining of lead and zinc.
Takaoka (N6)	5	5 Leicesters' arrived from Amagasaki. Provided labour for Hokkai-Electro Chemical Co involved in manganese smelting, machine shop work and quarrying at Nomachi and Fushiki.
Jinzu (N9)	4	4 Leicesters' arrived from Amagasaki. Stevedoring at docks for the Nippon Tsuun Co.
<b>OSAKA</b>		
Osaka (O1)	6	6 Leicesters' arrived with Japan Party 2. Various labour work carried out for Nippon Express Co, at harbour & railway stations. 5 Leics move to Omi in May 1945 before Osaka camp was burnt down in air raid in June 1945. 1 Leicester remained in Osaka till liberation.
Kobe (O2)	1	1 Leicester' set to Kobe hospital on arrival in Japan. Later moved to Omi.
Amagasaki (O9)	12	12 Leicesters' arrive on Hakusan Maru suip. Working in factory involved in metal fabrication & loading pig iron into trucks. Later split between Tomanu, Takaoka and Jinzu
<b>HIROSHIMA</b>		
Tomano (H3)	3	3 Leicesters' transferred here from Amagasaki when area was hit by allied bombing. POWs worked for Mitsui Mining Co., at the Hibi refinery factory
<b>FUKUOKA</b>		
Moji (F4)	1	1 Leicester arrived with J Force but was too ill to proceed Hakodate so remained in hospital. When well enough was moved to Mizumaki.
Mizumaki (F6)	1	See Moji above. POWs used by Takamatsu Coal Mining Co.
Miyata (F90)	2	1 Leicester ended up here from JP2. Another arrived late Feb 1945 from Taiwan. Worked for Kiajima-onoura Coal Ming Co.
Omuta (F17)	12	6 Leicesters' arrived here on the Hoioki Maru end June 1944. One of this group died. 5 other Leic's here mid Jan 1945 from Taiwan having survived the sinking of the Hofuku Maru. POWs were used Mitsui Mining Co, at the Miike coal mine.
Shinkai, Omuta (F25B)	12	12 Leicesters' amongst the Rakuyo / Kachidoki Maru survivors who founded the camp when they arrived on 30 <sup>th</sup> Sept 1944. Provided slave labour in the Omuta Electro-Chemical Industry Co., carbide manufacturing plant. <b>SAMUEL DIMMOCK WAS ONE OF THE LEICESTERS' HERE AND A DETAILED FEATURE ON HIS JOURNEY FROM SINGAPORE TO O MUTA AND HIS LIFE IN THE CARBIDE PLANT FEATURES EARLIER</b>

## OVERALL SUMMARY FOR LEICESTERS'

	OFFICERS	OTHER RANKS	TOTAL	COMMENTS
Assigned to battalion	44	889	933	As per Morrison's nominal roll
Casualties of Malayan Campaign	8	170	178	Including Singapore
Early POWs (died)	1 (0)	83 (5)	84 (5)	Penang / Taiping / Kuala Lumpur (excluding Singapore)
Evacuated / escaped	4	71	75	During the few days before and after the surrender of Singapore
Returned home	4	41	45	
Died	0	17	17	
Captured in Sumatra / Java	0	13	13	
Total no. becoming POWs	32	661	693	
Died as POW in Singapore	1	10	11	Changi and other work camps
Worked on BTR (died)	25 (1)	574 (105)	599 (106)	
Worked on post BTR projects in Thailand (died)	9 (0)	150+ (1)	159+ (1)	
Transported on hellships (died)	2 (0)	134 (26)	136 (26)	Inc Brit Sumatra Battalion, Special party, Z party & E and J force and Japan Parties 1,2 &3
Worked in Java / Sumatra camps (died)	0 (0)	13 (1)	13 (1)	Including 5 of the British Sumatra Battalion
Worked in Taiwan camps (died)	1 (0)	17 (1)	18 (1)	4 liberated from here. Others went onto Japan
Worked in Borneo camps (died)	1 (0)	5 (4)	6 (4)	4 men died at Labuan
Worked in French Indo China (died)	0 (0)	13 (1)	13 (1)	1 arrived overland from Thailand. 12 arrived on Harayasa Maru ship. Initially in Saigon.
Worked in Japan camps (died)	1 (0)	79 (1)	80 (1)	Officer transferred to Mukden, Manchuria April 1945

Hospitalised in Philippines (ex hellships)	0	3	3	1 subsequently died on route to Japan. 2 were liberated by USA forces at Bilibid in February 1945
Total who died as POWs	2	155	157	
Total who died in Malayan Campaign and as POWs	10	342	352	
Total returning home	34	547	581	

**A DETAILED ROLL OF HONOUR FOR THE 148<sup>TH</sup> BEDFORDSHIRE YEOMANRY FIELD REGIMENT – ROYAL ARTILLERY APPEARS ON THE INTERNET BUT IS TOO EXTENSIVE TO RECORD HERE**

**An extract from the diary written by Gunner Derek Gilbert who was in the 148<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshire Yeomanry Field Regiment with John Howkins:-**

When I worked on the Burma to Thailand Death Railway, one of the guards was a Korean Sergeant Major we called 'Tiger'. In 1943 I had to go into the camp hospital, each morning, one man from the hospital would be picked to go to work. One morning, although I was suffering from dysentery, I was picked. That day, because I did not ask the guards permission to go to the toilet, I was punished and made to hold a sleeper above my head. My knees began to give way and the guard stuck his bayonet into my knee, leaving me with a permanent injury. I dropped the sleeper, which caught the guard's foot. He knocked me to the ground and beat and kicked me as I lay there, but I always thought I would survive.

For many years after I was very bitter against the Japanese, and for 48 years I never spoke about my experiences as a POW. Then the MoD sent me to see a psychiatrist at the Luton and Dunstable Hospital, who told me that I needed to talk about what had happened to me during those years. I began to talk, and after that my nightmares disappeared.

Some years ago, my son was working in Tokyo and invited me to visit him; I would not go as I still hated the Japanese people. But 5 years ago in 2000, a Japanese lady visited our association at Woburn Sands and persuaded two of our members to go with other Far East POWs on a reconciliation trip to Japan. During the visit I met two former prison guards. One of my former guards had been sentenced to life imprisonment, but had been released after 11 years. He went down on his knees and asked for forgiveness with tears streaming down his cheeks. For a time after that I corresponded with a Japanese Officer. I have now completely forgiven the Japanese for what they did to us, but I cannot forget.

On my visit to Japan, I talked to school children about what it was like to be a POW and the teachers encouraged me to tell the children exactly what happened. At the end, the children were all in tears.

## SAM HODGES HOME COMING

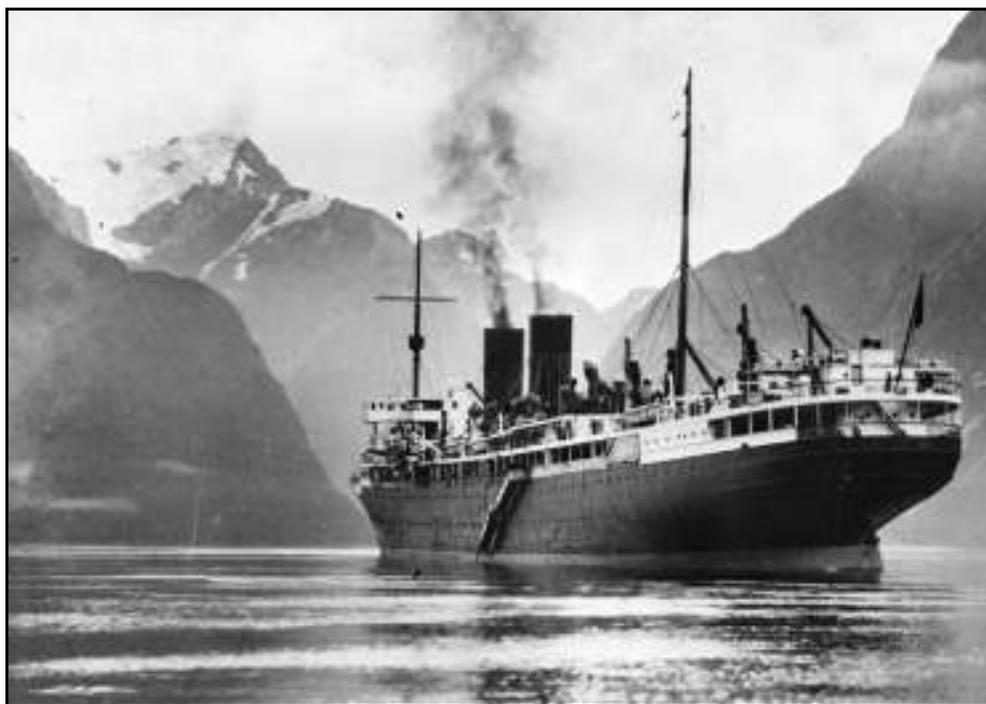
On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1945, Japanese Emperor Hirohito announced over the radio that Japan had accepted its fate of surrendering unconditionally to the Allied forces, marking the beginning of the end of the war and occupation. The official instrument of surrender was formally signed on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945 on board the USS Missouri.

Copies of a menu kept by Sam Hodges, dated 18<sup>th</sup> September 1945, and recently discovered by his son Michael are appended on pages 3 and 4.

Once the names and addresses of the signatories on the rear of the menu have been transcribed, these will be added to the website, with the hope that some of their relatives may see them and make contact.

An expert on the Leicesters, Ken Hewitt, has kindly pointed out the following:-

*An article in the Leicester Mercury dated 10<sup>th</sup> October 1945 records the homecoming of Sam Hodges from Griffydham and his mate George Chippendale together with Mathews and Maile. Sam arrived into Liverpool on the "Monowai", the first ship to arrive from Singapore with ex Japanese POWs. Apparently, the "Monowai" departed Singapore on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1945, so Sam could not have attended a breakfast, dinner or luncheon in Singapore on the 18<sup>th</sup>, thereby suggesting that the menu was a daily menu from on board ship, supported by the statement on the bottom "Smoking is strictly forbidden in the dining Saloon". The diet being prescribed by the Senior Medical Officer subscribes to this theory. A couple of Aussies have signed on the back of the menu, who would have been expected to have gone back to Australia, but clearly they didn't.*



HMNZS Monowai (F59) was a former Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company merchant vessel. At the outbreak of World War II she became an armed merchant cruiser of the Royal New Zealand Navy. She subsequently became HMS Monowai, an infantry landing ship, but mostly operated as a troopship. In 1946 she returned to her old trade as a passenger ship.



**SAMUEL HODGES (2<sup>ND</sup> FROM RIGHT) AND GEORGE CHIPPENDALE FROM RAVENSTONE (2<sup>ND</sup> FROM LEFT)  
ARRIVING AT LEICESTER STATION AFTER THE WAR**

**THIS IS THOUGHT TO BE THE PHOTOGRAPH WHICH ACCOMPANIED THE ARTICLE IN THE LEICESTER  
MERCURY DATED 10<sup>TH</sup> October 1945.**

**BREAKFAST**

*Stewed Prunes*  
*Rolled Oats*  
*American Dry Hash, Brown Gravy*  
*Bread* *Butter*  
*Marmalade* *Tea*

**LUNCHEON**

*Conde Soup*  
*Cold ham*  
*Mixed Salad*  
*Jam Tart*  
*Bread* *Butter*  
*Biscuits* *Cheese*  
*Coffee*

*Tea will be served at 4 p.m.*

**DINNER**

*Hollandaise Soup*  
*Ragout of Beef with Vegetables and Potatoes*  
*Sponge Trifle*  
*Fruit* *Tea*

*This diet is prescribed by the  
Senior Medical Officer.*

*Tuesday, 18th September, 1945*

**Smoking is strictly prohibited in the Dining Saloon**

Mr. A. H. Birnissel  
Thom Street,  
Yarrawonga,  
Vic. Aust.

1/1 Cornish  
269, Cecil Street  
South-Melbourne  
Vic. Aust.

Mr. I. Morgan  
13 Depot Rd,  
Cwmavon,  
Port-Jalbot,  
S. Wales

Mr. F. Giles,  
11 Vicarage St  
Luton, Beds  
England

Mr. N. J. Edwards  
Heathlog, Beach Rd  
Dunstable

Andover, Hants

Mr. J. S. Aylmer  
Hawk Forest  
Buxton, Derby  
G. W. Hart, Ranch of Carrots  
Hampton, Bucks  
or Hereford

Mr. Patton 28 1/2  
Seasbrook

Mr. A. Taylor  
42 Common-Side  
Church-Gresley  
11 R. O. T.  
Staffs Engl

Mr. H. H. Henderson  
101 Park Lane,  
Charlton, S.E. 4.  
London

Mr. J. McManus  
34 Market Rd  
Lyke  
Rochdale  
Lancs

Mr. J. Smith  
14 Devlin St  
Lancaster  
Lancs

**IN MEMORY OF LES KENDRICK – A BRAVE MAN**

**956438**

**148<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, 25 pounders, Bedfordshire  
Yeomanry**

The respected author Michael Kendrick, the son of Les Kendrick, has given the author his kind permission to publish the following transcript of the diary written by his father Les after he became a Japanese Prisoner of War following the fall of Singapore on February 15<sup>th</sup> 1942. We are greatly indebted to Michael for giving his permission for this important record of his father's diary to be published. The complete story of Les's life is included in the book entitled 'Sons and Daughters' Vol 1 by Michael Kendrick which can be purchased from the Coalville Times office.

This is an amazing piece of work considering the terrible and clandestine conditions under which it was written. If Les had been caught writing this diary by the Japanese, he would have undoubtedly been beheaded. It is therefore felt that he toned down his portrayal of what happened to him and his comrades for that reason.

The book written by Samuel T Stewart entitled 'In Memory of Three Men From Griffydham & Peggs Green Who Became Japanese Prisoners Of War during The Malayan Campaign & The Fall Of Singapore' and which appears on the Griffydham history website featured Les and his wife with the three men from Griffydham and Peggs Green - Sam Dimmock, Sam Hodges and John Howkins, during a reunion.

*Les was in the same regiment as John Howkins, and therefore much of what he wrote would have mirrored what John endured during his time as a POW.*

*I was twenty years old when my call-up papers arrived on 12th December 1939, so becoming Gunner 956428, 148th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, 25 Pounders, Bedfordshire Yeomanry.*

*I existed at Ipswich into 419 Battery (H.Q. 148 Field Regiment) and on the same day was driven to billets at the Garibaldi Hotel at Great Yarmouth. The hotel was about two hundred yards from the Britannia*



*Private Leslie Kendrick 14th January, 1940. The Garibaldi Hotel Great Yarmouth*

*Garibaldi Hotel billets were frozen solid for several days, but we enjoyed marching and staying to and from the drill hall, finding it invigorating. I was given a forty-eight hour pass for Christmas, arriving at the London Road Railway Station, Leicester, at ten thirty on Friday night, Christmas Eve. There was no train for Coalville, no buses, and having no money I walked the fourteen miles to Coalville with valise and kitbag over*

*Pier and sometimes we did light exercises there.*

*Our first route march ended round the corner of the road- in a pub- where the bombardier in charge was treated to free drinks. From then on it was chest out, stomachs in and "swing those bloody arms!" Our military training took place at a drill hall on Southdown Road near to Carlton. Not much spare time there. The*

*my shoulder in snow showers. I arrived home at ten thirty on Christmas Day morning; a short lived happiness, catching the Boxing Day train from Coalville to arrive at the Garibaldi Hotel just before midnight. We were the British Army's new generation, and I rapidly grew an inch to five feet ten, fatter, heavier, stronger, wiser but strangely oblivious to the dangers of modern warfare. I was content to drift along and enjoy the comradeship, and ignored any chance of responsibility, promotion or leadership. I obeyed orders without question and I was prepared to do my duty whatever the cost, but in my heart I did not relish the idea of dying at the age of twenty; life was too good for me to let it be finished by a bullet! I bought a little Invicta pocket diary and pencil for future reference; little was I to know the dreadful future experiences I was to record in it. We used to go to the 'Regal' picture-house and sometimes to a pub, but there wasn't a lot to do in Great Yarmouth off-season. There were plenty of market stalls and you could always buy a fish or pie and chips if some of your two shillings a day was left over. We always had to keep a pound in credit, so in the early days we had some deductions."*

*June 1940, a move of eight miles south to Hapton-on-Sea, billeted at a pre-war holiday camp. "The camp consisted of wooden chalets and a green activity area which reached out directly above the sea cliffs; a very*



Leslie Weston, 1940

boating spot. There was a large hall and dining area at the front of the camp. It was rumoured that the Germans might invade the East Anglia coast and so we kept a sharp lookout. We enjoyed our Sunday morning church parade, several of us making up the choir and followed with a game of darts and a drink in the Red Lion. My twenty-first birthday came and my parents bought me a lovely watch. While based here I was detailed to spend two weeks on a water purification course at Aldershot. We were then posted a few miles south to Carton-on-Sea, again a pre war holiday camp but we did not stay very long. I was still with 419 Battery as an Observation Post Battery Surveyor."

In August 1940 the Battery moved inland to East Dereham, living under canvas, and Les was in a section responsible for upholding a roadblock on the Swaffora Road.

"Our Bell tents were small: three men per tent sleeping on palisades; we were next to a stream and at night the mosquitoes bit us to death. We manned a roadblock and had a quiet time.

It was a pretty little town and we enjoyed the local pictures and sampling the beer at a nearby pub. The Germans were stepping up their activity with the Luftwaffe often passing overhead to bomb inland. I was sent to Swanton Howley aerodrome for a week of guard duty. Lots of bombers passed over at night and I wondered if they might bomb the aerodrome. While off duty one day an Orderly Officer overrode on his motorbike and went indoors, so I borrowed the vehicle



Harold Weston's grave, Ayrlandia

and rode it around the aerodrome in bottom gear: not knowing how to change it.

Then my mate decided to try, but his luck was not in and the officer caught him: seven days fatigue! On returning to East Dereham my luck was out, being charged with 'sleeping while on guard duty'. Major Merry discharged me after hearing I had been on duty for nearly twenty-four hours and could not keep my eyes open any longer. Sadly, Major Merry was one of the first to be killed at Singapore in 1942. At Dereham, I had a good pal, Terrie Weston of 20, Ranelagh Crescent, Brunstone, Leicester. In October we were billeted at Brook Hall in the village of Brook; commandeered by the Army, it was ten miles south of Norwich. A magnificent building with a huge staircase, and even the stable-block architecture was superb. The grounds had vast lawns and a lake, and all was set in beautiful countryside. It was a pleasant stay but my treasured twenty-first birthday present, a watch from my parents, was stolen. German bombers continued to raid; we heard that a midland city had taken a thrashing (Coventry). We had trips to Norwich most Saturdays when not on duty. I was then transferred from 419 Battery to R.H.Q. as a Regimental Surveyor: travelling to Lark Hill Barracks, Salisbury, for a six-week course on surveying, doing well in the course."

Les has kept his exercise books, beautifully neat handwriting and accurate figures. Most on the course had studied trigonometry, not Les, he picked it up and finishing first on the course.



20th August, 1940. Rear left: Sidney Gwyn, Jimmy Pomeroy and Jay. Front left: Ernie Fitzroy, Alvo Wilson, Bill Leitch.

"Food was in short supply down there and I lost some weight. In December we moved to Hawick, a large town in Dumfriesshire, Scotland. A hilly area sandwiched between the Southern Uplands and Cheviot Hills. We were billeted in a large drab mill near to the town centre, and spent a lot of time on manoeuvres, sometimes as far off as Edinburgh. The snow mountainous roads were treacherous: one gunner was killed when a twenty-five-pounder gun overturned its towing trolley! We spent several days in fields up to our calves in snow taking sounds of angles, church spires, etc. on the radio. We survivors, just eight of us, worked in the 'Independent Order of Good Templars', doing computations. One day we wandered into cellars and found their band instruments; you can imagine the astounding racket made.

The pubs, shops and pictures closed on Sundays, but often we were given high tea by a local middle-aged couple. We bought them a little present when we left, never forgetting how very kind they were. Returning to England in March 1941, we moved into the Infantry Barracks in Rochdale, conveniently opposite to a pub called 'Oldfellows'. A few yards further on was a small brick one-road theatre: it was still there in 1960 when my work took me to Rochdale. The eight of us slept on the ground floor near to the street and the mill girls wearing clogs used to rattle the windows and shout, "water-wakey" when they went to work at six-thirty am! We'd put on a vest and thurst

and ran through town to a lot of wolf-whistling! We were asked to play Rochdale Cricket Club, and got a thrashing. We scored a dozen runs and I got four of them: hitting the bowler straight over his head, he then bowled me next ball: out of practice!

The weather was very good and we had plenty of manoeuvres. One morning there was no one to cook breakfast and so I was given the job. Thirty hungry men tucked in to egg, bacon, sausage and fried bread. The Regimental Sergeant Major was so pleased he excused me of latines and passed duty for six weeks. I then had seven days leave, but on returning my leave wasn't satisfactory and so I was put on fatigues and full duty again. Whilst in Rochdale we checked our Ack-Ack guns in Liverpool and Barrow in Furness. Liverpool had taken a pounding from the Luftwaffe. I enjoyed Rochdale, the Lancashire folk were very friendly."

In July 1941, they were at Moortown on the Welsh Borders, stationed at Monmouth Castle but billeted in Nissan huts in a nearby field with a small wooden bridge. Duty was mainly manoeuvres, however eyebrows were raised when tropical kit, including gas helmets was issued. The Barracks was annoyed that the public houses only served them cider; the landlords keeping the beer under the counter for locals.

"One night when returning to camp over the railway bridge I was confronted by an abusive drunkard; he sobered up after I punched him and he fell into the river. The locals were not as friendly as Lancashire folk.

We had seven days embarkation leave and I asked Betty to marry me and she agreed, but we thought it wise to let the war finish. I said goodbyes to all my relations and friends: very emotional because I sensed that a time for battle was approaching. I returned to Monmouth and had a few games of football: chosen to play left half for the Regiment. Some good lads were in our side, professionals Albert Hall of Tottenham Hotspurs, Harry Moore of Oldham, Laurie Smith and several who played for Senior League sides. Albert Hall was so impressed with my game that he couldn't understand why I wasn't a professional footballer. We packed up and travelled in ferry: convey overnight to a port that featured strongly in my later life. On 30th October 1941 we climbed from our berths at Liverpool docks and embarked on 'H.M.S. Andes'."



1488th Field Regiment at Panna, India, January 1942. Les Kinnear is second from right in the front row.

convoy, destination unknown. I recall that while sailing down the Mersey and leaving the sleeping, bomb-damaged port we were singing some popular songs, and one in particular struck me as ironic. 'Bluebirds over the White Cliffs of Dover'. I thought, no bluebirds or white cliffs for us this early dark, wet, cold morning, and not a soul in sight, not even a bloody cross to wave off the 12th Division. So long BEIGHTY, be seeing you! My stomach wasn't troubled by the rolling ship and to my surprise ate two helpings of my first meal in a deserted dining room: most of the lads had seasickness! Later I got involved in a game of cards (Brag) that lasted all night, and when dawn broke found myself stony broke. I cheered myself up with a good breakfast and slept well the next. After the dangerous 'U-Boat' infected coasting of the Atlantic Ocean we arrived at Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada on 9th November 1941. We were instantly transferred to the American troopship: 'Wakefield', the renamed passenger ship 'Manhattan'. The all American troopship convoy left and dropped anchor off Port of Spain, Trinidad, for twenty four hours. Setting off we crossed the equator and I was issued a 'Father Beonah' certificate and endured the ceremony. Included in the convoy were: 'West Point' and 'Miami Vernon', altogether ships carrying over twenty thousand troops. As protection we had an aircraft-carrier 'Ranger', two heavy cruisers: 'Quincy' and 'Vincennes' plus eight destroyers and a tanker for fleet oil. The two cruisers were sunk on August 9th 1942 at the battle of Savo Island in the Pacific Ocean."

In early December they docked at Cape Town,



Albert Hall, Jonathan Douglas, Les Kinnear and Alan Kernebeck.

South Africa, staying for three days with sleep leave for every day. Les thought it a beautiful place with the massive "Table Top" mountain, but were ordered to keep away from Black no go areas. He also thought the heat was intense and doing a route march in full kit didn't help. They disembarked and set a northerly course in the Pacific Ocean, coinciding with the Japanese Air Force attack on 'Pearl Harbour', and the United States of America's declaration of war on Japan, and Germany likewise on the U.S.A. The convoy arrived at Bombay, India, on the 27th December 1941, with the troops spending a very hot Christmas Day basking on the docks.

"We slept on bunk beds at the ship's stern and as I peered into the starboard door I wondered just what the future held for us. My shoulders were painfully swollen, but I could not report and otherwise I'd have been put on a charge, so I packed them with band and ate food in full kit before going ashore. We spent three weeks in India, first under canvas at Kinnear, and then into Kinnear Barracks at Panna, near to the coregonese. We went to the picnic in Panna and had a good English breakfast at a Salvation Army centre. Japanese Forces invaded the northern part of the Malaya peninsula on 15th January 1942, and on that day we set sail for Singapore, on the southern tip. The convoy food was very good and the Yanks were a nice, friendly lot of lads, however, we did come under attack from Japanese planes, but the fleet's anti-aircraft guns drove them off. We disembarked on January 24th and I was feeling none too well with a headache and a touch of sunstroke. We climbed into lorries and set off

for Teck Hock village, being issued with rifle and bayonet: not a standard issue for artillerymen. Our troops were in full retreat what with insufficient air and ground support. Major Merry was our first loss, shot and killed by a Japanese civilian sniper from one of the buildings. He was a good and fair officer with a wife and two children.

I sensed a part of history was in the making and so started making notes in my little diary."

Kitchener Barracks, Poona, India, Late December 1941

#### **January 30th 1942.**

Guns went into action for the first time and artillery fire in mainland of Malaya was intense. I sheltered in a shallow slit trench with Lieutenant Seeholm during a Japanese air raid. He admired my speed-of-thought and said I must join him on the Stock Exchange post war.

Japanese occupy State of Bahrn in Southern Malaya. 148 Field Regiment now stationed at Hua Yang. Position in Singapore now very serious, moved up to front-line on the west coast after Japanese had forced a landing. Bombarded continuously by enemy aircraft and artillery. In a bad spot now, no planes or tanks to support us. Japanese have both to their advantage!

#### **February 12th to 16th 1942.**

Bombarded by enemy artillery and mortars continuously during daylight, every day, and the same by enemy air bombing. Our artillery is magnificent, continually pounding away.

Our infantry is holding the front-line but time is limited without plane cover. Churchill promised us planes by February 15th, but none came. Contact hold out much longer. Enemy bomb our ammunition supply and us. They've captured water supply for Singapore Island.

#### **February 15th 1942, 1600 hours.**

Sir Percival, Governor of the Straits surrenders unconditionally. We blow up all our guns.

We felt we could have held the Japs until supplies came, but Sir Percival surrendered on behalf of the civilian population. Thousands were killed through air raids and damage was immense, the city is in a terrible mess!

#### **February 16th 1942, dawn.**

Taken prisoner by the Japanese. Marched one mile to rendezvous. Horrible little bastards.

There was no alternative to surrendering in the situation we found ourselves in! However, the fanatical Japanese troops believe that it is a great honour to die in battle for their emperor, and that to surrender, no matter what the circumstances, is sub-human.

#### **February 17th 1942.**

Left rendezvous at 1400 hours and marched twenty miles in intense heat to Roberts Hospital (Barracks) Changi, arriving 22.30 hours. On coast, near prison. (Foot weedy). Food during march limited to looted rations: mainly tinned food.

#### **February 17th to 24th 1942.**

First week as a prisoner of war. Lovely weather, swimming parades each day. Japs leave us alone. Shortage of drinking water. Fatigue in general: water carrying, barbed wiring ourselves into camps, digging latrines, etc. Question of food. Japs say we must supply ourselves for five weeks, then they will think about giving us some! Some of the Leicestershire Regiment here, but have not seen Gerald. (Gerald Berry: a Hugglescombe friend.) Prisoner tried to escape in a canoe; captured and shot by Japs. Several 'blacks' shot on beach this week.

#### **February 14th 1942**

Food ration small, also water. Issue of cigarettes: just per week. Weather very nice, hot - rain occasionally. Change of billet to 400 yards nearer the coast. Swimming parades every evening. General fatigue each day as per usual.

#### **February 25th 1942.**

Parade on Changi Road for inspection by Japanese general (filmed). Gave good impression under the circumstances. Have not seen Gerald but hope to see him soon. Issue of rice and dried fish. Rice: 12 ounces per man, per day (300 gram). No milk, little sugar or sweetener. Colonel Harris intends to start educational classes soon so that we can join in with civilisation when released from captivity. Colonel congratulates the regiment on its magnificent show on the front, very few casualties to 148 Field Regiment R.A. Indian



The last letter sent by Stanislas Kordecki, January 1942 before his capture in February.

troops brought over from the mainland.

**March 3rd to 10th 1942.**

Very nice weather. Excused Gerald, also several lads from Cochrane in the Leicester's and East Surrey's. See Gerald regularly. Food position not too bad now, rice every day is filling. Still plenty of fatigues, soon get hungry, rice seems to turn to water. Rumours police flying around, most of them heartening, but most unlikely. Turned out for inspection: Jap Admiral.

**March 9th 1942.**

General move about of all troops. R.H.Q. now under canvas. 16 to a tent! Must be plenty of activity at sea with Jap planes flying out practically all afternoon. Landing at sea stopped until further notice. Hope to start again shortly and do a bit of fishing. Plenty of ants: taken all over the place. Big number of troops now down with dysentery, caused by the water.

**March 10th to 17th 1942.**

New camp is all right. Weather is not too good this week, too much rain, very showery. Food is now rice, every meal, full rations of 12 ounces per man, per day. Bakery now working: regimental scones and pancakes every other day: one each per every other day. Rice every occasionally, also plain rice with sugar. Rumours about European War all over! No one will confide, neither Japs nor any officer. Work parties now going into Singapore. Bricklayers, plasterers, cleaning up squads, etc. Plenty of fatigues in camp: digging latrines, wash house fatigues, etc. Kereville-0800 hours. Lights-out 22.15 hours. Not allowed out



Betty Hather's last letter sent to him in January 1942. It is assumed it is expected that it was no longer delivered to the address stated.

of regimental area before 16.30 hours. Have seen Gerald once here. Ill and don't feel up to walking, prefer bed, such as it is. A few cases of skin disease, many of diarrhoea and dysentery. News about us moving again shortly to a camp eight miles from Singapore. Dying for a smoke, only get tea a week here. Very boring life. New rumours: we shall be home by July 1st and W.W.2 is definitely over. Hoping so! Sounds ridiculous to me, they must mean W.W.1. Church services every Sunday now. Bathing still banned.

**March 18th to 25th 1942.**

Weather very good indeed, hot and little rain. Language plentiful. Sifting of rice to remove lime and poor rice quality. We tried grinding rice to produce flour and porridge, not successful but plenty of maggots in rice. No more rations! Camp in good condition now, all bomb and shell holes filled in, debris removed and unexploded bombs taken to a safe area. Navy engaged in laying barbed wire. Cannot visit Gerald now, not allowed outside of the divisional area. Our men paid wire to stop men from visiting 'Wog's' (Western Oriental Gentlemen, village to buy cigarettes, etc. I tried it once, nearly caught, rather stupid of me. Insulted by Japanese High Command on March 25th 1942. Food, rice, occasional rice stew, some odd days, not bad but insufficient to keep us really fit, need more vitamins. Church services on Sunday. We sit around and sing songs at night. Still plenty of rumours floating about. Officers read out old news to us, will not tell us the truth about the war. Issue of tea cigarettes.

**March 25th to April 1st 1942.**

Weather still good, hardly any rain. Storms every night over Singapore city thunder and sheet lightning. A 'humiliation parade' again. Camp inspected by own G.O.C. & Japanese officer.

Several of the lads were slapped across the face for not saluting, also some caught outside Divisional area. They will probably be shot as an example. Plenty of fatigues again all week. Rice a little better. Had issue of bread on April 1st (one slice each). Our next slice will be in 28 days time. Bathing allowed again, each unit allowed one afternoon every four weeks.

Battery fatigue party returns from Singapore, none the wealthier for their experience but believed to have had better food down there. Rumours: someone saw British, American, Russian and Jap flags flying on Government House this week (not confirmed).

**March 31st 1942.**

Divisional concert: a very good show by the boys. I was a bit despondent afterwards, wished I had just been to the 'Rex' at Coolidge. (Picture House)

**April 2nd to 9th 1942.**

Rain every afternoon and sometimes during the night. Easter Sunday: went to Church Service at 11.00 hours. Thoughts very much of home this holiday. Still plenty of fatigues as per usual. Don't get much rest but days seem to fly by. Food still a bit of a problem, mess meetings each Saturday, general impression is that the officers are having the cream of the rations. I think this is feasible. Occasional rice scones and meat rice patty, otherwise just rice with a little meat mixed in plus sugar or diluted milk. It practically all tastes like plain rice. Had tea without milk or sugar, using the latter two to experiment with our rice: not very successful. Officers punching from we can't do anything about it unless we mutiny. On April 7th we had a G.O.C. inspection of billets - a farce! Cigarette ration still ten per week, I haven't had a smoke for four days. Issued with small portion of soap, no toothpaste, etc.

**April 9th to 16th 1942.**

Weather still good, occasional showers.

**April 13th 1942.**

Royal Artillery inspection by Corps Commander re/

general health, good impression. He congratulated us on the whole for the fine display during the action. Informed us that the Japs held much respect for the Royal Artillery, but no respect for the infantry after the show that they put up. Japs shot two men caught outside the barbed wire this week and no unit would claim them! As further punishment Japs cut down cigarettes down to five per week, and reduced food rations for four days. They tell us that the army concerned, when found, would be severely dealt with. Jap fleet came in on holiday on April 13th am. Fourteen ships in all consisting of one battleship and several heavy and light cruisers. Some went out the following morning. Plenty of air activity.

**April 14th 1942.**

The 3rd Corps Commander informed us that our fighting days were not over: "We shall fight again before this war is over". Hope not! Food is same as usual. I experimented today with 'shortcake'. Oh for some good old English food again instead of rice three times a day. Still plenty of fatigues. Regimental fatigue party going into Singapore on Friday. Have not seen Gerald for over two weeks now. Don't suppose I will see him now - he's in another Division.

**April 16th to 23rd 1942.**

Very nice weather again, occasional rain. Food situation remains practically the same, slight decrease in rice issue, increase in sugar. Meat is better issue this week with less bone.

Fatigues as usual in the camp. Fatigue parties have been down in Singapore R.H.Q. twice in three days. I went myself on Tuesday to the docks, loading empty barrels onto Jap trucks. It was a very hot, worked very hard and lots of loading done. I did more than my share and nearly got drunk into the bargain. I managed to evade a sentry and steal into a warehouse, emptied a few bottles of beer and stole plenty of cigarettes and Capstan tobacco, also some condensed milk. Unfortunately one chap got caught and we had to hand everything back to the Japs. We were severely reprimanded by them, but it was worth it! Hope to go again by the end of the week. Nothing extraordinary happened. Canteen opened, able to buy soap, will be improved shortly. Plenty of rumours: everyone now hopes to be home by Xmas but I can't see it myself.

Plenty of cargo boats in the docks, loading up with rubber and flour or latex.

#### **April 23rd to 30th 1942.**

Went down to Singapore again on Friday 25th. I was not very successful this time. Went on a barge to Alexandra Island where we worked all day filling in bomb holes.

#### **April 26th 1942.**

Four hundred and fifty of Regiment left Changi at 0500 hours. We arrived at Bukit Temah Camp about 1800 hours. Very hot, had to march all of the way, about twenty miles in full-kia apart from that we discarded during the journey. I must have lost a stone in weight during this march. Our soles are worn through, feet blistered and sore and clothes saturated with perspiration. It is a better camp, wooden two tier huts with thatch roofing. I work everyday in Singapore on jobs of all sorts, also visit coffee shops and buy bread, etc. Sleeping quarters very poor, too crowded. Much looting is done, one camp is like one huge market. Chaps come back with sacks full of tinny stuff. Parties are allowed out to buy bread, much better here. Hear Japs evacuated Sumatra and New Guinea and bombed Ceylon: unconfirmed. Much rain this week campground is sodden. Still very hot. One said: "Around this time the Japanese attempted to teach us their counting language to facilitate working processes, one to five phonetically was Ichi, Kaze, San, and See, Go. Naturally we were not too willing to learn; hence the Japanese would get mad: Dammey-Dammey, no god-enough! (Darn-Damn, not good enough!). Japanese for five sounds like 'Go', and also the Japanese hand movement for beckoning was the reverse to ours. You can imagine the fun involved when the already angry Japanese guards became incensed when 'Go' was shouted only to see the P.O.W.s wander off, and when they waved to beckon us we appeared to continue to disobey them! We sometimes got a bashing for this". Japanese one to five= Ichi, Ni, san, si, go!

#### **April 28th 1942.**

Emperor of Japan Tojo's birthday. No work, camp on holiday.

#### **May 1st to 8th 1942.**

Hard working week with variety of jobs like removing cement from the docks, loading up timber and iron, bricks and tiles and knocking down walls. Received first week's pay from Japs: 120 cents: 20cents per day, plus an issue of ten cigarettes. Weather good with very little rain. On most jobs we are allowed to have coffee, etc. at a nearby shop, it depends on the nature of the Jap in charge. Still much looting done, we've got tinny stuff of all varieties in 'S' section. Very nice to be able to go out and work and the Chinese are good to us, often giving us a little food. Living well down here, plenty of bread but food issue by Japs is very poor: rice, no sugar, and meat only occasionally. Issued with the Jap number 5247.

#### **May 7th 1942.**

Went to Kotha Tingi, crossed the 'causeway': partly repaired after being blown up. Travelled about thirty miles up southern Malaya and loaded twenty trucks with big tumbers, an all day job. No rumours except we have sunk fifty odd Jap ships off Australia for the loss of eighteen of ours.

Have a slight cold this week. I raided a pineapple field and got a bag full, about fifty, heavy.

#### **May 8th to 15th 1942.**

General tightening up of everything this week by the Japs. New guards on the camp, stopped visits to coffee shops when we go out, so no looting coming into camp. More and heavier work. Japs getting rather hostile towards us, a few of the lads have been knocked about a bit when working. Electricity installed in camp, but complete blackout in the camp at 22.00. Blackout again in force in Singapore. Food situation: big improvement this week, meat every day (Irish stew issue), also flour and sugar again. Issue of one roll of bread each, value: 10cents. Weather good and very little rain. Three thousand more troops arrived from Changi, a Singapore Volunteer Force. Some are in the next hut to us. They are lucky, able to see their wives, parents, etc. over the barbed wire and unofficially receive money, cigarettes. From May 1st our pay was reduced to 15cents per day. Not much news, a rumour that Churchill has said the war will be over by September.

**May 15th to 22nd 1942.**

Weather is good again this week. No pay received as yet. Issue of food shows a big improvement, more European food coming in (does not include luxuries).

No flogging this week. Basic food ration is still rice three times a day. Boiled with sugar for breakfast, boiled and dried off with vegetable stew, fried with meat stew or dried fish. Dried fish looks like hides of leather. Big parties going out each day building roads off Alexandra Road. Other jobs: knocking down blast walls, collecting bricks from brick works, also iron, cement and sand from Changi. Biggest concern was collecting wood (timber) from several mills in Singapore and Kotah Tinggi. Chinese show kindness again—often giving us coffee, lemonade, cigarettes and bread when out working. We hear that Russia has attacked Japan and Chinese are advancing in Indo-China. Japs admit in *Siamese Times* that the Germans will show the white flag any day now. It sounds like fast progress to me!

**May 22nd to 29th 1942.**

Weather is good, very little rain. Japanese on ground defence exercises. Siren sounded. Work as usual, odd jobs. The main job is collecting timber from sawmills all over Singapore and depositing it at Fogden and Fraser's. Food situation quite good, more meat and greens, etc. Issue of tinned Irish stew and occasional potatoes. Received fifteen days pay. Bread very scarce now in the village. (Japs believed to be taking it away from the Chinese).

**May 29th to June 5th 1942.**

Weather good with a little more rain. Received another sixteen days pay, rate still fifteen cents per day. Food still quite good in comparison with Changi. Biggest concern is still collecting timber. Went to Kotah Tinggi again this week. News: four Jap aircraft carriers included in seventeen vessels sunk by Yanks in naval battle. Russian front static.

**June 5th to 12th 1942.**

General tightening up again by the Japs this week. No bread coming into the camp. A few of the lads pumped the barbed wire to bring it in. I managed one trip, buying twenty-one loaves for a dollar. I sold them for 5cents each. It gave me one free, not worth the risk.

(Jap hit a fellow with his bayonet and broke his wrist). One Jap is taken and beaten up by the guards! New orders out instructing Japs not to hit prisoners of war (English). (Another farse).

Work as usual (none at Kotah Tinggi), plenty of timber elsewhere. A few Jap nurses arrive, not for us. Rather wet this week, time for monsoon season to start? Food O.K. this week. More news: Russian front still static. Japs are no longer a naval power. No pay yet. Always perspiring: skin is never free from sweat!

**June 12th to 19th 1942.**

Issue of ten Woodbines per man, sold in camp at 35cents, sold outside camp at 45-50 cents. Also issue of soap. Rather a wet week again. Flour rations cut, only had one party in five days. Very little coming into camp from outside now. Bread very scarce.

Still plenty of work: heavy timber again, also removing cases of asbestos sheets (very heavy work this). Jap nicknamed the 'rat' annoyed one of our lads (Albert Hall, the Tottenham Hotspur's footballer) and promptly got a 'clip' under the chin, quiet for the rest of the day!

(LCS: "Albert was a good chap but quick tempered. The guard was showing how capable he could be in a punch-up, and started pushing Albert around. Albert delivered an uppercut and floored him! No guards were around and the dishevelled man never reported the incident.")

Chinese are terrified of Japs. Local paper says Axis forces occupy Tobruk with 25,000 British prisoners taken and a vast booty captured. Japs on attack all over China, Burma evacuated. British troops retreat to Egyptian frontier. Churchill flies to Washington. Rumour is that Japs ask Hitler for naval assistance. We have named the ugliest Jap: 'frog face'.

**June 19th 1942.**

Food: 2 dollars 25cents, so rate is still 15cents per day. Issue of ten Woodbines and a piece of soap. Weather good, occasional rain. Improvement in food issue this week. Cookhouse staff using more initiative. Shortage of bread outside camp, Japs taking nearly all of it. Japs have stopped us selling our cigarette ration outside camp. Jobs same as usual, collecting timber and iron, etc. We had some propaganda photographs taken this week. News that Axis forces

occupy Sullam and Sidi Barrani.

British and American forces amalgamate: are we now Anglo-Americans or is it just a rumour? Hope to send a postcard home soon on Jap orders.

#### **June 26th to July 2nd 1942.**

Send card home this week. (I wonder if it will arrive.) Issue of ten cigarettes. Weather very nice again, very little rain. Had a rest from timber carrying this week, easy job on sand and gravel, etc. Received fifteen days pay less 5cents distribution to Changi Hospital sick. (Postcard never reached its destination.)

#### **July 2nd to 9th 1942.**

Weather still good, very hot after mid-day dinner. A few executions have taken place this week, several severed heads on show all over Singapore. Four huge posters under heads say they have been punished for stealing: a warning to everyone! Lots of air activity this week. Still carrying sand and gravel with one job of timber. Library is formed in camp. Food is very good this week, new canteen staff. Cholera reported at Singapore so we are vaccinated against it. News: Fall of Sevastopol. Axis forces within range of Alexandria, Egypt. Headlines in local newspaper say British are to blow up the Suez Canal. Looks like we are in a bad spot.

#### **July 1st 1942.**

Betty's Birthday. Friday. Happy Birthday, love!

#### **July 9th to 16th 1942.**

Weather very good, no rain. Food still all right, more used to it now. Inoculated once again against cholera. Had three days off from work this week, don't know why. Working on timber again. Lots of the lads are going back to Changi for treatment: none here. Rumours are that we are doing well everywhere, with Japs at a standstill and Axis withdrawing in Egypt.

George Craig has gone to Changi with malaria and looks very thin. No bread coming in these days, we are unable to get anything in from outside. Japs using 'Sikh' guards. Have they gone over to the enemy?

#### **July 16th to 23rd 1942.**

Lovely weather and very hot. No change in food yet. Boot and clothing situation very bad now, with boots

worn out. One of the lads in our hut was killed this week; he fell off a lorry and went under its back wheel, it was carrying seven hundred bricks. He died in hospital. Still no medical supplies. Japanese refuse our offer to buy some, they say it is an insult; evidently there must be a shortage. Work on Alexandra Road going well, several warehouses under construction. Rumour is that all officers will be going to Japan and we shall be repatriated.

My twenty-third birthday last Saturday, thoughts were very much of home. We have a few lectures now in our huts and the occasional concert.

#### **July 24th to 31st 1942.**

Weather very good, hot, but sticky. Our last debate this week. 'Are conscientious objectors cowards or men of moral courage?' Food good again. Cricket in circulation in the camp with leagues fixed. Teams: R.A.U.C. V25 Anti-tank, 148 Field R.A., Platoon 1, 2,3,4,5. One team: platoon No5 won two games up to now, lost none. Some hard work this week unloading barges of timber, very tiring. Issued with pair of plimsoles, but still no boots. Forced to go out now as Japs only issue passes to the sick. Towel is useless, I don't know what to use. Several officers have left island; rumour is they are off to Sumatra. News not good: Germans taken Stalingrad and most of Caucasus. Burma is anti-British. Unloading crates at Singapore harbour, many on thumb by scorpion. Chinese worker cut open flesh with knife and removed the poison. Felt much better next day. He saved my life!

#### **August 1st to 8th 1942.**

Working down the wood yard unloading barges, dangerous job and heavy work. Food quite good, we get a party every evening now. The stews show improvement too, not much meat of course but fresh tropical vegetables make greens and watery stew a little tastier. Barge job finished Friday. Our main job now is collecting bricks from Jurong Brick Works at **Bukit Timah**, seven hundred bricks per truck.

Jap 'girls' billeted in a big house (brothel) at Bukit Timah. We have not received pay this week, yet. Still a lot of lads returning to Changi sick, with lots of skin disease about now. Rumour: Yanks in possession of six of the Solomon Isles. 'Sydney Times' states that Japs

admit fighting there, naturally they say they are winning everything. These Jap provinces look really hard done by. Japs queue up for their comforts.

#### **August 9th to 15th 1942.**

Little change in climate, a bit colder with a little more rain. Still working on bricks, some 'labour' lads are building a sea wall and jetty on the west coast. Alexandra Road warehouses are near completion, twenty in all. Construction of 'monument' on Barkit Timah hill in progress. Singapore aerodrome being greatly enlarged. Had a few games of cricket this week, was very enthusiastic. News in camp: we are doing very well in the Solomons, holding own in Russia and Libya. Japs say they have sunk thirteen cruisers, nine destroyers and two transporters off the Solomon's (lies we hope!) Cigarette issue of ten Blue Bell, English brand.

#### **August 16th to 23rd 1942.**

Lots of skin disease. Treatment for sore 'balls' by using an anti-gas treatment (some good high-jumpers!) Issued of ten Blue Bell cigarettes again. Received pay on August 23rd. Still plenty of work, mostly taking cement from warehouse to Alexandra Road for sea-wall work. Allowed twenty-minute swim after work in afternoons. Sea wall nearly finished now. Sixty men a day going back to Changi with skin disease. News: Russia doing well, also China. British raid French coast, unsuccessfully. Skin disease mainly ringworm and septic sores.

#### **August 23rd-30th 1942.**

Work slack, occasional cement job, also timber, sand, and gravel. No work at Alexandra. Camp inspection by Jap Major-General Yasme. Given two days rest. Fresh job now (no trucks - shortage of petrol - good sign), straightening up timber at Fogden and Brisbane's, busy job. We are now very good in numbering off in Japanese at roll call and on working parties, also at cursing Japs who don't know English. Mind you the Japs are terrible at arithmetic, they are really thick! News: Yanks occupy the Solomon Islands and New Guinea, Russia advancing. Britain opens up a new front in Brittany. A Chinese man is shot and killed by a Jap guard in Singapore.

#### **August 31st to September 6th 1942.**

Weather good: a little rain. I'm sick with ringworm, some bad cases in camp. Off work on Tuesday. Still working at Brisbane's timber yard, no other jobs for us. Had a few games of cricket, also boxing and rugby. Football has started in the camp. Trouble at Changi: fifteen thousand troops ordered out of camp and put in an area of ground 350 yards square.

There are no cooking or toilet facilities. Men have to sleep in relays. This was punishment because the men would not sign 'parole' as the Japs wanted. Trouble sorted after two days, our officers ordered the men to sign, as they feared an epidemic. Only news this week is that Germans have made a three-point landing in England. I don't believe it. Play darts, draughts, cards or dominoes now at nights: happier. Food as per usual: rice stew, rice with sugar and a pastry each night. No pay yet.

#### **September 6th to 13th 1942.**

No pay, still at timber yard. Ringworms, very sore in tender places but big improvement. Very little in the way of medicines. Food as per usual. Weather is good. Very few rumours.

#### **September 14th to 21st 1942.**

Reduction in rate of pay from 15cents to 10cents. No pay at all for sick. Food about same. Received pay this week. I am still ill but show improvement. Plenty of cricket matches, also darts, crib, draughts, with tournaments and inter hut matches. Whole hut is searched this week: nothing is taken away from us. Tinned food coming in again from outside. Cigarette issue only ten every five days. Five hundred men sent to work on sea wall. No news at all this week. Very little work, lads are taking up pipes from Alexandra to the R.E. depot. Several 'yasmes' (rests) these days. No pay.

#### **September 22nd to 29th 1942.**

Tons of Red Cross food and others arrived and stacked in camp. One-pound sugar already issued, also margarine, flour and tea. Still sick, I have been on yeast for two weeks. Had a touch of Dengue Fever this week. Very little work now, lads only go out about three days a week. The official 'yasme' is now a Sunday. Sikhs and Indo-Chinese troops now on guard over us, the old guards have left, probably off the

island. Lads are now 'pooling' pay to pay for the sick. Weather good.

#### September 30th to October 7th 1942.

Weather good, cloudy for two days and not quite as hot. Only odd jobs around. Red Cross stuff still pouring in, not much has been issued. I'm still sick but not internally. Japs have put out rations to off balance the Red Cross food. Soda!

#### The Railway Job

##### October 8th to 15th 1942.

Left River Valley Camp and travelled for five days by railway in cattle trucks, arrived at **Bampong**, Thailand at 01:00 hours. The travelling was very rough: twenty-five men per truck, very hot in trucks during day and cold at night. Covered in septic sores over my body and so left behind at reception (transit) camp with a few other lads. The rest of the lads left after three days rest for a railway job. Had to march through jungle in three days, it should have taken four-five. Men unable to complete the journey are left behind to finish somehow (unless very ill). Weather good, hot climate, we are close to the Burma border. Siamese or Thais seem to be very friendly. Food is cheap, if you have any money. Jap food rations none too good. Water has to be boiled before drinking. No transport (shortage of petrol). Camp in a vile state: muddy, lousy with mosquitos, flies, and very bad sanitation. Thais very untidy race. Have eaten all Red Cross rations issued in Singapore. When will next issue be?

(Glascoe Bertie Thattar joins A.T.S on 9th October and volunteers for Ack-Ack posting).

##### October 16th to 23rd 1942.

Left Bampong for 1st Base camp H:Q at **Non Pladuk** (two miles away). With 137 Field R.A. and on staff. Good jobs and I'm versatile. Camp has two thousand men. Camp canteen run by officers: make big profits! No pay: it has been given to the canteen to supplement rations. Weather good, cooler, but very hot here in dry season. No news at all. Camp is next to a large marshalling yard (railway). Climate dryer than Singapore so less sweating.

##### October 24th to 31st 1942.



Now one year since leaving England. Still at **Non Pladuk**, food very poor. There's neither a flour nor sugar issue, simply rice and vegetable stew plus Chinese tea. Noed canteen supplements. Plenty of mosquitos and wood bugs here—I'm hit all over. Now on the sick and working at Jap billets on easy jobs. Lads continue to arrive from Singapore, have not seen Gerald yet nor any of the *Leicester's*, they must be further up country. No entertainment or camp competitions. A lovely place to get 'brewed off'. No news. Weather great. I squashed a bug and it smelt awful. When we see anything on us at night we simply squash it!

##### November 1st to 8th 1942.

Rainier wet this week. Went to 1st reception (transit) camp, up country: about twenty-four miles to **Tamuang**. I was digging drains, very hot and heavy work. Men still arriving at Bampong from Singapore. The rest of 148 Field R.A. arrived and then went up country. I never saw them. Informed that four lads have died here in three weeks. In the jungle camps dysentery is very bad, averaging one death per day. In two bad days thirteen died. Japs must be trying to get rid of us. Food not good. Rice and stew three times a day.

##### November 9th to 16th 1942.

On the 11th we observed a two minutes silence on the 19:30 hours rail call. Bugle sounded last post and reveille. Japs also observed it! Odd jobs in the Engine Shop (shed) this week. Our own tradesmen are working in the machine room.

News: rumoured that an offensive has started in Burma with Solomon's and New Guinea in our hands; Java has been bombed. We think we were evacuated

from Singapore, but why have they taken us close to Burma? Dysentery and malaria very bad. Japs issued a few 'family' mosquito nets this week, not to me, not with my luck. Had a few carols at church.

**November 17th to 26th 1942.**

Very hot this week, no rain. Allied planes went over one night and bombed the aerodrome, docks and sidings at Bangkok. What an encouraging sound. Good news in the Bangkok Times: Rommel has successful withdrawal from Libya, German troops fighting heroically against Russian hordes. 'Dived' hands over French navy to Allies and we are advancing in North Africa. Had my second blanket stolen, bastard thief! Three lads have died this week. I am in hospital with malaria, not too bad. Twenty more lads have been sent further up country.

**November 27th-December 4th 1942.**

Weather still nice but rather cold at night. Lots of malaria cases. More British planes bomb Bangkok. Heavy work now, with hundreds of sleepers arriving by train for railway construction! Jap Ack-Ack guns passed through, en route to Bangkok.

**December 5th-12th 1942.**

Cooler, no rain. Food not great. In hospital again with malaria. Lads working on railway lines and sleepers, etc. Several sidelinet have also been built. We have started a pig and duck farm in the camp, twenty pigs and two hundred chicks brought in. News: Churchill's given a speech saying we will soon be liberated and the Japs will feel the full brunt of British Empire!

**December 13th to 20th 1942.**

Weather good and no rain. Hard work this week loading up lines and sleepers for Bampong railway. Worked from 08.00 to 19.30 hours one day and given just one puffed rice biscuit.

More Ack-Ack guns and troops gone through to Bampong. News: Burma offensive has started, slowly advancing.

**Christmas Day December 25th 1942.**

Given day off. Camp presented with chicken, eggs, flour, sugar, salt, bananas, sauce, beef.

All comes from the Thais and we are very grateful to them! Breakfast: Rice and chicken broth. A fish

cake and sweet coffee (rice). Dinner: Rice and stew. A scrambled egg and sweet tea. Tea: meat stew and rice. Rice and diluted cream. A rice doughnut and sweet tea.

A concert at 19.30 hours. Church services at 8.20am, 9.20am and 5.30pm. Very pleasant Christmas. Received 50cents to credit from R.I.P. We sing songs till late at night.

Thoughts very much of home! News: Advanced one hundred and sixty miles into Burma now approximately one hundred and fifty miles west of Rangoon.

**December 29th to January 5th 1942/3.**

Weather is good and very hot, little rain. Japs celebrate New Year's Day, no given morning off, working after dinner. Thoughts very much of home on New Year's Eve. Hope to be freed this year! News good, advancing in Burma, Accubab in our hands. Chinese troops cross border into northern Thailand. Much activity: Japs making us build machine gun posts and dig trenches. Plenty 'Speedo's: the Japs use this word a lot, it means 'quickly, get moving!' The word is usually followed by a swear word: 'Damn-Damnny or Buggero!'

(Having no mail he didn't know that his mother had died on 2nd January 1943 aged 52 years.)

**January 6th to 13th 1943.**

Came across George Foster, George Jarvis, Harold, Pat and Spud, etc. at Non Pladak and we all had a good time. Gerald is up country somewhere! Weather good. Moved to another camp this week between Non Pladak and Kanchanaburi. It is No1 camp- **Tanuang** - small party of five hundred men. This is a good camp with very few flies and mosquitoes. Plenty of work to be done on the railroad, very heavy work. My job is carrying sleepers all day long from 'hogies' to tusing down on the track (two men to one sleeper at present, backwards and forwards all day long!) Out from 09.00 hours to 19.00 hours with 'Tiffin' (food) on the job.

We are hoping to have a canteen in the camp as soon as we can get a contractor to bring the stuff in. News: Rangoon heavily bombed, in flames for four days.

**January 14th to 1st 1943.**

Very strenuous work again on sleepers with the railroad progressing at the rate of one mile per day. The sun's heat is making a mess of it; it's more like the Pacific Railway line at Great Yarmouth! Weather is good, no rain, very cold at night. Had a sore throat and lip this week. Food quite good in its way, and I got some monkey nuts, porpors and bananas whilst out on the job. Received no pay at this camp yet and very little is available in the canteen.

**January 22nd to 29th 1943.**

Nice weather, no rain. Doing good work on the railroad. Reached Noi (hospital) camp on the 27th January, a total distance of 50 Km for the month. Spent the 28th putting in a siding at **Bampong**. Left camp on the 29th January and moved back up to Kanchanshavi: about thirty miles north west of Bampong. It's a nice camp surrounded by hills, and warmer here at night. Very little rice. News is we are supposed to be doing well everywhere. Hope to be free soon!

**January 30th to February 6th 1943.**

I am working in the camp now, a good job, plenty of digging. Little solid food, but not bad. A rissole every other day. Lads started work on the railroad again, ten work here. Twenty-five bogies of rails and sleepers per day instead of thirty but on schedule (ten flat and seventy-five sleepers per bogie). Lads return to work each day at about 17.00 hours. Very little in canteen. Received pay for last fifteen days: 1 dollar and 20cents for the canteen to help buy rations. Weather still good, no rain. News: Mandalay surrounded by British troops on west, Chinese troops on north, and fighting in Iado Classo.

**February 7th to 14th 1943.**

Weather good and I'm working on the line again. Had a relapse of malaria. Pay has been increased to 25cents a day from 10cents. (Thais have met this increase). Food has improved with more vegetables. A cow was purchased this week for seventeen dollars from Battery funds, and four pigs were given to us. This gave us a very tasty meal for one day but we regretted it afterwards: stomach trouble.

**February 15th to 22nd 1943.**

We will be moving on Tuesday to a camp further up the line. Allowed to swim in the river after working on the railway line. Now doing twenty-five bogies a day with rest on Sunday.

We had another cow for dinner today (cost 10 dollars). Football matches being played at night but I do not feel well enough to play! There are plenty of Dutch and Javanese P.O.W.s working on railroad. Japs celebrate the first anniversary of the fall of Singapore. Cows around here not well fed like back home - more like spring chickens.

**February 23rd to March 2nd 1943.**

Travel daily over the bridge on the river **Mae Klong** that was built by our lads. ('Bridge on the River Kwai', but stands on the Klong, the two rivers converge near Kaaburi).

Weather good, no rain. Not moved yet. Have completed 89km to date and it is taking us ninety minutes to get to work using the bogies. A sleeper fell on my foot, obtained an accident report so I'll get the full daily rate pay. Food is not bad and the canteen is improving. Clothing in very bad state, we will require a new issue. I have no socks, no shirts and my shorts are in rags. News: Goebbels asks British to fight against Russians. German people must work sixteen hours a day to defend Germany from Russian hordes. Rumour British subjects to leave Thailand and that the Dutch and Javanese are to finish railroad. Rangoon is surrounded. Daylight air raids on Bangkok.

(Pre-war, private contractors had been asked to construct a Burma-Siam railway through jungle and mountainous passes. They said that it would be physically impossible.)

**March 3rd to 10th 1943.**

Weather good and we have moved to **Bankao**: about twenty-five miles further north. Camp is situated off line and in the jungle. Good camp.

Now with about two hundred Dutch and Javanese troops (latter very clean and friendly race). Good canteen. Food not up to snuff: meat that arrives has gone bad and has to be thrown away. We're living on rice and weak vegetable stew. Hoping to have pictures soon. Received a long pair of green trousers, hope to get a shirt and some socks soon. Very few mosquitoes.

but plenty of flies. A few edible snakes have been caught. No news. Thais send messages by beating drums like African tribes

**March 10th to 18th 1943.**

Weather very hot: one hours rain. Had a concert this week. Meat is still arriving in bad state; why don't they send it to us alive for us to kill? Came across some 'leggy' (extras) bananas near to Rangoon while we put in a tidings and three points. News: big battle off Rangoon lasting four days with heavy losses on both sides. We are still advancing in Burma. Japs attempt a landing in northern Australia but repulsed with heavy losses.

**March 19th to 26th 1943.**

Improvement in food, we are paying. Seems a day towards 'messing'. Rail laying is finished for a bit while we build an embankment. Some of the lads have gone further up country: we are expecting some to join our battalion soon. Using river water for all purposes: dysentery being in the camp. Inoculated for plague. Weather good but too hot. Some Japs have travelled up river, probably to Burma. Roll on the end of the war, getting browned off with this life. Embankment work is so monotonous, chain gang basketwork. No news. The sun is so hot!

**March 27th to April 3rd 1943.**

Guards now 'bash happy'. Jap officers walk away when we get knocked about, pretend they haven't noticed. Very hot, lots of sweating. On four successive days we remain in our jungle camp in dark after working all day in the rain. The camp is mud ridden, the thatch roofs leak so the beds and blankets are wet through. Don't know how we will get on when the monsoons begin. Saw a few of the lads from my regiment this week, they were O.K. but browned off! Digging cuttings and building embankment because we have caught up with other gangs on the track so causing a delay. Pay arrived in camp. Food not bad, the cooks are trying and fewer men are sick, but they need money! Rumour that some of us will return to Non Pladuk. News: British Division invade Burma. A million British and Yank troops invade continent. April 1st: horrible day: saturated; I'm fed up, lots of cursing and bushings from guards.

**April 4th to 11th 1943.**

Rain practically every evening now. Still working on embankments, the two viaducts at Wampo will soon be completed. Saw several lads who were down at Non Pladuk this week. Food not bad. Mail waiting at Non Pladuk for us. No news. Received ten days pay.

**April 12th to 19th 1943.**

Viaduct completed and we are now on the railroad again. We work until its dark each day. The sleepers are very heavy and now it is one man per sleeper. Rains daily. We have now reached 116Kia to a camp called Tarsau. You need nerves of steel to ride on this railroad at night: it just isn't safe in the dark. News: North African war nearly finished, many prisoners taken, German offensive repulsed.

**April 20th to 27th 1943.**

Weather good. I have been sent down to **Kamburi Hospital** camp with a bit of steel embedded in my right eyeball. It shot into my eye when I was hammering a spike into the rail line sleeper. Sorry to leave the lads, I have been with them for four months and they are a grand lot. Kamburi camp is all right and food quite good. I arrived here after dark with a small party. Nowhere to sleep so I got down on the floor on my groundsheet outside a hut next to a fellow with a mosquito net. I spent most of the night watching the wood bugs trailing up and down the net like an army of ants. When you squash one it smells of erossite, revolting. Big water problem here with only one well for the whole camp, and only to be used at permitted times of the day. Had a little margarine, two free duck eggs and a little more meat in the stew.

The steel was removed from my eye and after five days I was discharged to the camp working party. Met a few of the lads from the River Valley camp in Singapore. The work there is quite easy, digging circular holes for uprights for Jap HQ but construction.

**April 28th to May 5th 1943.**

A day off work for the Jap emperor's birthday. Bless him!

Received seven letters from Mam and Betty: I now feel like ten men, these are the first letters received since embarkation leave. I want to get home, no fiance

in this way of life. We are busy building Jap Headquarters.

**May 6th to 13th 1943.**

Jap H.Q. nearing completion, seven huts in all. Weather good. I go down to the river for a wash after the day's work. Received ten-day's pay. Food not bad, more meat in stew. Issued with a jacket but badly in need of shorts. News: Tunisia finished, 130,000 prisoners. Turkey declares war on Germany and together with Greek and Allied forces marched into Bulgaria.

**May 14th to 21st 1943.**

Very heavy rain all week, camp is flooded. Jap H.Q. finished. Deaths: one a day, mainly from dysentery. A lad from my rail battalion died this week from this illness. I was caught and punished by the Japs for being out of camp. I slipped out to fill bottles with drinking water. I had to stand to attention in front of the Guard House for five hours in the raging sun (pm). A bayonet was placed against my back to ensure I did not collapse! The guards watched me all the time, laughing and chatting amongst themselves. Heaviest rainfall and blizzard on 20th. Happy birthday Mum.

**May 22nd to 29th May 1943.**

Weather quite good with little rain. Death rate is still one a day from dysentery. Ninety Dutch soldiers left this camp and went up country. Some very nice fellows amongst them. Food not quite so good. Railroad will be finished by the end of August. My rail battalion is now at Wampo and expects to move soon. Eighty-five lads from rail battalion returned to Non Pissak with sickness. Major Coley is in this camp. Special service: Empire Day, no May pole.

**May 30th to June 6th 1943.**

More rain this week. I am now occupied in making crosses, digging graves and burying the dead. I take them out on a handcart covered by just a groundsheet and bury them as such in nearby Kamburi. One day an Indian was buried, he was 'squatted', and then covered in earth and some fruit was left on his earth mound! Needless to say the fruit did not stay there long - bear him to it! Because of the very hot climate the dead are buried almost immediately. I met Charlie

Woodwice this week: he was only here for the day, working on a barge. His camp is ninety miles from here. Food not quite so good with less meat and flour. Cholera scare at several camps with supposed 180 dead in one camp. Inoculated. No news.

**June 7th to 14th 1943.**

Rains most evenings from about 18.00 hours. Food no better, scarcity of drinking water. Still a cholera scare. Making crosses, total dead for this camp is seventy-one, most from dysentery. There is nothing to fight the illness with, the body is weak and there are no medicines to treat the disease. A lot of the lads are now just skin and bone, and most suffer from malaria.

**June 15th to 22nd 1943.**

Rumour that we are moving from Thailand to French Indo-China (only fit men, the sick to remain at Kamburi). Another railroad to build - I don't like it! Left the hospital camp, but remained for two days in nearby Kamburi and then taken to my coal battalion at the camp of Tanshon. A lot of 148 H.Q. lads here and Ron Bates looks well. Poor food and very hard work. We have twenty-four and thirty-six hour shifts!! There's cholera in the camp, about fifty of the lads here are dead and four hundred Thais dead in a nearby camp. We shall only be here for a short time before moving further up. We are sleeping under canvas - twenty men to a tent, so no room for insects. Saw Albert Hall, he is O.K. A Thai chased Albert and me with a long knife, he caught us on his banana patch.

**June 23rd to 30th 1943.**

Food are good and smaller meat issues. I am working on the line again: nights!! and sixteen hours at a time. The nidges drive me crazy. Weather fair, very wet at night.

My job is now removing bogies off the line when emptied of rails and sleepers, and then putting them behind the full ones as they are moved ahead. One vergeam and three men handle the bogies, we are a good team! It is very heavy work but I quite like it and it keeps us out of trouble with the guards. Betty's birthday (tomorrow, the 1st July). Cholera now in hand, but Indians still dying. All water is boiled and eating utensils are dipped into boiling water before use. No washing in river. No news.

**July 1st to 8th 1943.**

Food same. Rains all night. Working very long hours on straightening lines by levering with crowbars, but this is better than carrying sleepers. Had a touch of colic last night whilst working: severe stomach pains, vomiting, diarrhoea. I was scared, as these are early symptoms of cholera! Spent a day in camp and saw a cow being slaughtered for our meal.

It was tethered to a stake and hammered above the eyes with the blunt end of a large axe. One blow was not enough to fall it, it took six more before it was runned and fell. I will never forget the look in the animal's eyes. Expecting to move camp shortly. Ron Bates doesn't look well. Issue of fifty-five cigarettes per man. Few tins of milk, butter, jam: went into the cookhouse and hospital. Could do with soap and toothbrush, been without for ages. No news.

**July 9th to 16th 1943.**

Very wet week. Working twenty-four and thirty hour shifts. Moved up to Konyu camp on July 15th. A poor place and very muddy. Rail battalion has evaded cholera up to now but we have several cases of dysentery since arrival. Had a relapse of malaria on 15th July, but I was sent to work again on the 18th. Serpents Major White killed when train ran off the rails. Still the four of us on bogies, we have now laid 156 km to Hiatok mark. News: Sicily is now in our hands. This camp is situated on a hill, but the cookhouse is by the river. We take it in turns to collect the meals and to carry them up the seven/eight hundred feet to our camp. I was tired and after queuing for the rice, etc, and a little cake each, I slipped on the way up. Did my best to clean food, don't think tails noticed! Japs chuck explosives into the river, and lots of dead fish come to the surface for us! Dangerous bridge nearby, easy to fall when tired.

**July 17th to 24th 1943.**

My birthday on 18th July. Out to work again, feel a bit weak. We expect to finish the line in about a month's time. Work is held up due to track being under water in long cutting just outside of Konyu. Contacted Anzic from camp higher up the line, the death rate there was seventy in two months (cholera). Very wet again. Pork issued this week. Boots in a bad state - the

Jap issue of rubber boots is no good: no support for the instep, would be flattened in no time. Now 12 months since Mam and Betty wrote first letter to me as a P.O.W.

**July 25th to August 1st 1943.**

Very wet again. Camp in hell of a condition. Three shifts are now working on the line. Hours of 06.00 to 18.00 hours very rarely kept. Line is now up to Kinsaiyok (172 Km). An advance party will be sent to work further up on the 28th. Food not bad. Have no boots, the soles came away in the thick mud. I'm now working barefooted, its horrible. Have sores between the toes. Cholera still around. News: Russia advance on a two thousand mile front. Roll on liberty.

**August 2nd to 9th 1943.**

Weather bad, very wet! Moved to a new camp: Kinsaiyok. Very grassy and dry at first but now very muddy after five days of continuous rain. Three of the lads died this week, one from cholera and the other two from dysentery. Still no boots. Food much better with bigger meat issue. Thousands of Tamils now working on the line, ballasting, etc. Saw some Tamils lying dead near the track by a pool of water, cholera! Rumour that a steam train has been blown up in Konyu. Dead Tamils by the pool: cholera has the effect of rapidly dehydrating the body.

**August 10th to 17th 1943.**

Improvement in weather, much drier. Food quite good. No issue of footwear. Expect to move to another camp about thirty Km higher up. Feet a little better, less mud. \*

(\*He knew of W.W.I. soldiers developing gangrenous feet resulting in amputations.)

**August 18th to 25th 1943.**

Moved on the 17th August to Brangkassi (208 Km from start). A bad camp, very muddy and the weather is wet, wet and more wet! Jap issue of 167 cigarettes per man (Mascot, Black Horse and Jip brands). Food good. Butter issued to cookhouse. One tin of condensed milk between four men, a bar of soap, a few pair of white plimsolls but only small size. Size six was the largest. I take size 8. I'll keep working barefooted! River is close by.

Very little work done on the line. Rumour is of a twenty-eight day hold up, so preparing for long stay. News: Russians fighting on Polish border. Churchill and Roosevelt say war will soon be over.

#### **August 26th to September 2nd 1943.**

Improvement in weather, just a steady shower each evening. Food quite good. Hold up on the line again, spent six days working on a cutting, resting on the seventh! More rumours about another 'present' from Japs, also about moving to a permanent camp 12Kms up the line. Still without footwear. No news. On September 3rd it will be four years of war, and on December 12th I will have completed four years as a soldier.

#### **September 3rd to 10th 1943.**

A little more wet weather. Ulcers on feet, legs and arms are now getting very bad. Many of lads have them, some enormous resulting in amputations with local anaesthetic only. Railroad will not be finished before October. Food O.K. More lads rejoin us from Kamburi.

#### **September 11th to 18th 1943.**

Weather worse. Plenty of 'trench foot' cases. Expect to move camp next week. Have not come across Gerald or any of the 1st Leicesters. It's deadly working in the mud on this line; hope to be out in the hills soon. Small ulcer on ankle. Looking after it myself by wrapping wet cloth around it, as the cloth rots so does the ulcer, always works for me!

(23rd September 1943. Red Cross P.O.W. Department send a letter confirming Les is alive).

#### **September 19th to 26th 1943.**

Moved to **Tamajo**: 236Kms from base. Weather very bad, wetter still. This camp is very bad condition, it is just like a paddy field of mud. Meat ration takes two days to come up from last camp, so consequently it is bad. Hold up on line due to track being unfinished four kilometres from here, so put to work 'banking,' etc.

#### **October 3rd to 10th 1943.**

'N.F.' trying the line now. Our Nip officer away for an operation on his eyes. Now engaged on ballasting and odd jobs. Supposed to be going to Non Ptaduk when the line is finished, and a promise of

being fitted up with new clothing and footwear. Hear that there is some mail for us! Rumour that we will be sent to Indo-China to work on another railroad. Weather is now much better and the camp is drying out. News: Yanks are ready to launch a big offensive against the Nips as soon as the monsoons finish.

#### **October 11th to 18th 1943.**

Received three letters this week, two from Mum and one from Bery. (Heavily censored). **Railroad was finished on October 17th 1943.** It luded up with line from Barua at **Konkoita**, 242 kilometres. It took us twenty-four hours to complete the final section, and then we spent several hours lying about in the jungle while the Japs held a special celebrative ceremony! At the joining up point special 'fish plates' used we hear. Lots of high-ranking Jap officers with General giving speech, also some 'noise' from a Jap band. Weather good. All serious leg ulcers cases sent to Kamburi. Have not seen Gerald, I wonder where he is? Hope to go down country soon. (I won a race with a Nip on 'spiking' the rails to the sleepers on the last one hundred meters.)

#### **October 19th to 26th 1943.**

Weather good. I've been out surveying the bends this week, no idea where we are going next. Had no 'present' off the Japs as promised. More sick men sent down to Kamburi hospital camp. One lad died of dysentery this week, also the padre from disability. A steam train is now running all the way from **Bangkok** to **Moulmein** in Barua, through jungle and hilly country, a distance of about two hundred and fifty miles, not bad! (The Force Lys was in constructed 160 miles of the railroad, the northern Force, mainly Australians 90 miles.) Very little food in canteen because the budget cannot get here due to the monsoon swollen river.

River here is lower. My blanket is now dry again and I'm able to wash in the river, great!

#### **October 27th to November 4th 1943.**

Still at this camp. 'N.F.s' have moved down to Tamajo. My principal job at the moment is chopping wood for the steam train. Food rations not very good, no fresh meat or vegetables for a week. Weather: just a little rain now and then. Still no boots! Battalion



The trestle bridge near Ketsayak

only just over two hundred strong, the rest dead or at base hospital with ulcer cases. News: Philippines now in our hands. People in Singapore have been warned their city will be next war zone.

Hoping to be freed soon, our classifer is optimistic. "Christmas" he says! I hope he is right my little book is nearly full now and pencil is nearly gone. It would be nice to have a shave and a haircut, haven't had either since I left Singapore.

#### November 5th to 12th 1943.

Nothing in the canteen, not even cigarettes. Food rations poor, no meat, just a little vegetable. Work practically finished, odd jobs like carrying bamboo. I'm now working in the cookhouse, poor rations. Weather good. No pay. Worse job this week was carrying one hundred-weight of rice on my shoulders for one mile without boots.

#### November 13th-20th 1943.

No pay, no cigarettes in the canteen. 'N.F.s returned'. Boxing tournament: prizes given by Japs. Weather good. Lads past through from Nikki 281 kilometres on their way to Singapore.

Our Colonel Harris (148 Field Regiment) was in charge. He looks well but has aged a lot. Told 3,500 men out of 7,000 died at Nikki from plague, cholera, etc. and that the survivors looked grand! Rations still poor. Latest rumour is that we are staying until



A sharp drop on the left of the photograph shows another danger during the railway construction.

January 1944. Lots of Nip troops sent up country by train every day, together with horses for cavalry or pack.

Les worked on the above trestle bridge near Ketsayak. The Japanese used green timber fastened with wooden wedges, spikes, bamboo ties and cane-rope. The bridge was 400 yards long by 80 feet high. The similar Hintok Bridge cost 60 men: 31 fell and 29 murdered.

#### November 21st to 28th 1943

Canteen goods arrive and pay. Plenty of stock but no meat or tinned pork. Nip troops still passing through each day. Still working in the cookhouse, good job. Mainly all Korean guards, the rest of the Japs say they are leaving to fight in Burma. Good sign!

#### November 29th to December 8th 1943.

Same camp. Continue to work in the cookhouses and putting weight on. No meat yet. Feeling much fitter now. Weather good. Dutch celebrate Xmas on December 26th. Issue of thirty-one cigarettes and one biscuit bar per man (Red Cross). No cloths or boots, my feet will soon be worn out! Have contained foot ulcer, nearly better. News: Philippines and New Guinea in American hands. Nips say they will be prisoners of war themselves. I expect to be free soon!

#### December 7th to 14th 1943.

Moved camp at last to Hindata, about 40 kilometres down country. Met Gen P. Handford, H.Q. surveyor like me, but none of Coedville lads. Dutch cookhouse, food not bad, plenty of meat: no vegetables. I am out to work again, fairly easy, cutting through the jungle to provide more spaces for huts. About three thousand



Sixty years on and the wooden window frame in this section of jungle near to Hattu Pass.

here, including Dutch. Canteen still working, we have our meals in camp, and have a slight nap after lunch. Very hot after noon.

#### **December 15th to 22nd 1943.**

British take over cookhouse and improvement in food. 148 Field Regiment (not transferred to Nest Company, 155 Regiment, and N.F.C.) have formed three companies of two hundred - fifty strong. Yasmie (rest day) every Sunday. A holiday has been promised for Christmas Day but not for Boxing Day. Latest 'grill' free in four months. Tokyo heavily bombed. It will now be Christmas. I'd be home for next Christmas so get some turkey in, Mum, and give the old pudding on 6000 air, Dad! Now four years since being called up on December 12th 1939.

#### **December 23rd to 30th 1943.**

Nips give us Christmas Day off, but not the Sunday! Had quite a good day. Breakfast - sweet porridge, egg waffle and sweet 'rice coffee' (burnt rice). Dinner: fish, roast beef, meat pie, jam pie and sweet 'coffee'. Two fried rice and pie, sweet tea. Church service in camp at 11.30 hours with carol singing by choir. Still without boots, I do a lot of walking too! Thoughts very much of home again this second Christmas, especially during carol service. I re-read my letters and looked again at my old photographs. British planes posted overhead noise and machine-gunned Kanchotta.

(The letters didn't survive but the photographs did: contained in the same small wallet.)

#### **December 31st to January 6th 1943/44.**

Frustrated with a shirt but no boots. Yasmie (rest half day) given on New Years Eve, and all day on New Years Day. Had a good concert put on by the lads. Football matches played. I played 45 minutes without boots! I did not realise how awful (ill) I was, but I seem to be better than most! Sick inspected by Nips (given a glass red injection to find out extent of dysentery in the camp. More sick evacuated, we shall be moving south soon. Had a smallpox vaccination. One dollar 'present' from Red Cross. No air raids this week. Weather fine but too hot. I'm bamboo collecting and carrying for use as bedding in huts. The bamboo is a two-mile walk and the sun is making the ground hot - hard on the feet! Food O.K. Rate of pay reduced from 25cents to 10cents per day now the railroad is finished. Can't break the habit of mid-day nap, bicycle coil sets us back to work. No news.

(I do know Captain E.W. Swanton well. He was always organising sporting activities and became quite famous after the war as a newspaper columnist, radio and T.V. cricket reporter).

#### **January 7th to 14th 1944.**

Weather good. Food not up to usual standard. Our nicotaf past over almost every other day.

Now building hospital huts for Dutch/British and a canteen for the British. Little in canteen - no money to buy anything.

#### **January 15th to 22nd 1944.**

Same camp. Weather good. No news. Work is mainly in camp, outside job is collecting bamboo. Canteen is full again and there is now a snack bar in action (useful if you have money). Commissioned Officers receive thirty dollars a month whether they work or not; other ranks get 10cents a day (if you work). There is not a lot you can buy with 10cents: two duck eggs if you are lucky! Rumour that all fit men going to Japan in March. Two air raids sounded this week. Mabel's birthday. Supply of Red Cross goods arrived, fourteen cigarettes per man.

#### **January 23rd to 30th 1944.**

Weather good. Very little work. Reconnaissance plane over in daylight, no night planes. Played the Nips at football on Yasmie day. Food not good. shortage of

rice and meat. No news about evacuation of the sick. Received eight more letters: Mam4, Betty3, and Dad1.

Mam's last letter said she had a quiet Christmas (1942). Does latest letter from Dad (not Mam) mean Mam has died? News: British troops advancing in Burma.

#### **January 31st to February 6th 1944.**

Down with fever: gone into hospital hut. Evacuation party of sick men passed down to Non Platak: took sixteen hours, conditions bad, no water, no wood for cooking fires. No news.

#### **February 7th to 14th 1944.**

Yasme on the 12th. Wrote letter home. Photographs taken of football match. (Propaganda). Managed to buy a pair of flu-flops to keep my feet off the ground at night when visiting the boys. Not up to work, still in hospital (dysentery), having a rough time, lost a lot of weight! How much more can a mind and body take? We've had it for two years now!! Hear we are going down country and then onto Japan or Formosa. Two air raid warnings. Weather fine. Two years since capitulation and we are now only 'shadmer'. Disease, starvation, slavery, isolation, cannot take much more of this!! (The pencil is getting a bit low and I'm a bit down).

#### **February 15th to 22nd 1944.**

Yasme on the 15th. Japs ordered us to put on a concert to celebrate two years of P.O.W. life. Fever epidemic getting worse. One death from spinal malaria—a fairly fit man brought back to camp in a coma from a working party. He was dead in eight hours! Was discharged from hospital on February 15th, sent to work on 16th feeling very weak. Sent a small issue of liver, tripe and black pudding from hospital (only usually given to sick that have lost a lot of weight).

#### **February 23rd to March 1st 1944.**

Weather good. Hard work this week making rat traps to keep the rats away from the sacks of rice. More cattle arrived, also boots, but none issued yet. One daylight raid by aircraft - couldn't see plane. No news about going down country. A lot of 'bashing' going on this week.

#### **March 2nd to 9th 1944.**

Still at Hindatu. Move cancelled until all P.O.W.s from Burma have gone down country. Slight rain twice this week. Food very good, the beasts were suffering from foot rot and so had to be killed off. Have mail in camp but the interpreter is away. Small issue of boots per section: still have none. Have fever again and diarrhoea. Can't hold any food down.

#### **March 10th to 17th 1944.**

Our Perce's birthday. Received no pay for last period. Companies 6, 5 and a half of ours have already gone down country - Speedo move! Remainder of us are expected to go any day now. Food is good with plenty of meat. Weather good. Three air raids in locality. Working hard moving Jap stores, bamboo, logs, etc. to rail station. On night shift. Yasme on 10th.

#### **March 18th to 25th 1944.**

Moved down to an extension camp between Non Platak and Bampong: it took sixteen hours to get here. Weather good. Fine camp, up to now the Dutch are in charge. Food is good but rations very small. This hospital camp holds about eight thousand men. There's another small camp next to ours containing P.O.W.s to go to Japan. (They are not allowed to mix with us). They must be fit men, I wouldn't have thought there were any after the last year in the jungle!

#### **March 26th to April 2nd 1944.**

Food not bad. Work is mostly building huts and collecting bamboo from Bampong. Reshuffle of companies: all Royal Artillery going together, trying to keep British as one. Pay monthly. Rumour: become a rest camp as soon as work finished. The Paris for Japan has left.

#### **April 3rd to 10th 1944.**

Church service on Sunday, 10th April: Easter Sunday. I'm in hospital again, malaria. Work getting small now. Air raid this week, nothing happened here. Weather good, very hot. Food all right. Sorting us out again for Japan. Received pay up to 20th March. No griff (news).

#### **April 11th to 18th 1944.**

Still in hospital but improving. Weather good. That

*cautern started in the camp but prices are too high for us 'working lads'. (The officers will be able to live like lords now). I am longing for some good old-fashioned food - I cannot eat much food these days.*

*Parties of our lads off to Saigon. Little work here and only get paid 11cents a day (when we work). Hope war will soon be over, longing for home, I will soon be twenty-five years of age (July 15th). Cannot take much more of this life, we are all looking rather grey and grim now!*

#### **April 19th to 26th 1944.**

*Still in hospital but I am much better. The rice ration has been cut for some reason, and the Thai ration is the only one in operation now. I am short of cash, rather! Lads playing plenty of football as there is very little work. Working hours are: 10-1pm and 5-8pm, so quite good. Received no more letters, longing to get back to civilisation!*

#### **April 27th to May 4th 1944.**

*Emperor's birthday. All men Yame. Nips hold sports-day. Also informed Queen Juliana's birthday (Dutch). I am out of hospital and feel much better. Weather good. Rice ration is still reduced. Very hot in afternoon.*

#### **May 5th to 12th 1944.**

*Still here! Very heavy thunderstorms one night, camp like a lake, and I am still without boots. Have to wear a holes' suit type (shirt and shorts all one piece) - nothing else to wear. Sleep on old dirty grey blanket. Still have army mess tin; looking the worse for wear, one wooden spoon made out of bamboo, a tin mug, also self made with shaped handle. Anything of value has been sold off to buy essential foods like duck eggs, bananas, brown sugar, nuts, etc. Work is in camp, making gardens. Latest rumour - Red Cross parcels in Bangkok. No news.*

#### **End of Pencil so end of Diary.**

The story doesn't end there: Les survived his hellish ordeal and documented what happened after the final entry into his diary. Historians state that the experience of 'Railway of Death' veterans was in a horrific league of its own: Victims of German 'Concentration Camps'

had a dreadful time, suffering from insufficient food and dying from similar diseases, but less was demanded of them physically. Les' experience deeply scared his outlook! For many years he wouldn't discuss his captivity, but it was sufficient to see the look of horror on faces of his generation when it was mentioned.

Readers will now appreciate that I am writing about my dear parents. I retained the use of their Christian names so as not to apply bias. Their storyline is longer, but feel that I must use the memorabilia in my possession to encapsulate what happened to the 'many', and hope that readers appreciate this. After studying books on the subject I gently encouraged father to complete his diary, which he did in March 1987. I am privileged to publish the experiences of a Far East Prisoner of War: they do not portray the full horror, by nature Les underplayed his experiences, a trait familiar to a generation of WW1 fathers and coalminers of the 1930's Depression. For those who have seen the Fifties film 'Bridge over the River Kwai', please remember it was graded: 'U' or suitable for family viewing. Censors would never pass a representative and realistic film, even by today's lesser standards! Father explains why he stuck to a certain formula for writing his diary: all will become clear.

#### **Continuation**

*It is now nearly forty-three years on, and I can only search my memory to recall what happened during the next fifteen months of captivity, because it was August 1945 before I tasted freedom. I will keep to a similar text.*

#### **May 12th 1944.**

*During the past few weeks I have been confined to the hospital but with malaria again, and like most of the lads we are in a very poor condition. To smile demands a supreme effort because we cannot continue for much longer with this way of life. How much longer can we go on? When will the war end? I cannot see any light at the end of the tunnel, will the war ever end, and what if we loose? I am several stone underweight, gaunt, grey and weak.*

*I look like a skeleton!*

*Later May. Tropical stomach worms share whenever little we eat, and nothing remains in my stomach too long what with regular attacks of*

*diarrhoea and dysentery. No treatment as we have few medicines, also, Doctor Duobop says the lack of quinine for my bouts of malaria means that my spleen is greatly enlarged.*

*(His first two children suffered with enlarged livers and spleens in their early life.)*

#### **June 1944.**

*Recurrence of beriberi in my feet and ankles, they are very swollen and slow down my movements. You can get wet and dry forms of Beriberi, a serious illness. With the wet form the body retains water and can be a killer. Some more small ulcers on my legs. I'm fortunate that I seem to be able to contain them, but hundreds of lads suffer horribly with huge ulcers. The doctor's scoop out the septic with metal spoons, the pain is so bad that in some cases the lads start screaming before the doctor starts. The bone is exposed on the bad cases. Another treatment is for the lads to sit with their feet and legs in the river, whereby you can see these little fish entering into their deep ulcers and feeding on the septic and gangrene. If this doesn't work, the gangrenous limb (awful stretch) has to be amputated. They use hand saws to cut through the bone, and only local, if any anaesthetic is available, meaning many die shortly afterwards from shock! There's a lot of thieving going on in camp, and because I'm not fit enough for work I've been given a temporary job as policeman. I never caught anyone.*

#### **Still early June:**

*Having trouble with my chest, I'm coughing all the while: a lot of phlegm and pain! I feel a bit better now, in hospital, almost died! I was at morning roll call when I collapsed and fell flat on my back. They say I was carried on a stretcher to hospital. I've had pneumonia and was delirious for three days. When I was slipping in and out of consciousness I had some strange dreams. I dreamt a large saw was cutting me up: I was just a carcass in a butcher's shop. I suffered no pain, I watched myself being sliced away piece by piece, and not bothered.*

*(I think this dream illustrates the low esteem they all suffered. They were treated as fodder: the lowest of the low, and the Japanese (Koreans) had little concern as to whether they lived or died. Most P.O.W.s were at their wits end, to the point whereby they*

*considered death to be a welcome release. In his semi-conscious world father is considering whether to settle for the escapism of death, and so forget about his physical pain. (They can't see me up, I don't care.)*

*Another dream: It was a lovely sunny day and the camp was peaceful. The lads and the Nips were strolling about as though in an English park. I then saw my mother being pushed towards me in her wheelchair by a 'driver from our R.H.Q.' She had a nice colour to her face and she was smiling. In my dream she had come to visit me, all the way from England!*

*(Les suspected that his mother might be unwell or dead when a letter from his father - who rarely wrote - and didn't mention much. Les was drifting between life and death and part of his mind was focused on the quintessential English tradition of a peaceful stroll in a park. The already dead 'driver from R.H.Q.' pushing his mother towards him in the camp is unexplainable, and provides a warming reassurance.)*

*When I regained consciousness there was no strength left in me. I was wet through with perspiration and could not remember either eating or drinking. The flesh fell off me and I look like a skeleton. I mentioned to the orderly that something on my back was troubling me. The medical officer looked and said he had no drugs to help. My bed is simply bamboo poles tied together, and because the orderly had not turned me when I was unconscious a bed sore developed at the base of my spine (I'd had an abscess there when I was eighteen years of age). The bed sore quickly turned into an ulcer and became gangrenous. The Camp medical officer who is treating me is very kind. He can do no more than remove the gangrenous tissue and cut away the dead flesh. Very painful, I bet I'll have quite a scar, but I am still alive.*

*(He had a strong constitution and I believe his inner reserves helped when he was gravely ill.)*

*I've begun to feel better, but I'm fed up. I feel like some extra food and thought I could use the money I earned when working.*

*I had 2 Dollars 40cents in my army valise, and knew that boiled duck eggs, bananas, brown sugar, peanuts, etc. would build me up. But no, some bastard has stolen my money during my delirium. I am certain it is not the young Malayan lad who is in a hospital bed near me. He is in the early stages of leprosy, and*

he has been very kind to me. He fetches my food from the cookhouse, does my errands and loans me his clean shirts, washes them and returns them to me, and did so until I left hospital. When the tall doctor heard that my money had been stolen he gave me 2 Dollars and arranged for me to have a better diet with the cookhouse to last a month!

(Les said the tall Australian doctor was the legendary Edward 'Weary' Dunlop, later a Knight of the Realm. People say that adversity either brings out the best or worst in people.)

I was about to leave hospital when I went down with toothache! I had to visit a Dutch dentist and that was not pleasant experience. There was no freezing, no anaesthetic, just a strong wrist and hope it came out cleanly. He decided to repair the double tooth. I had to sit for a hell of a while as he hammered away on a fine chisel (no drills available). Was I born lucky?

#### August/September 1944.

Feeling a bit better now and I'm part of a working party of about two hundred being sent up country again to do some jobs. The medical officer apologized and said I was not fit enough to go, but there were none fitter than those chosen! I had a cholera injection before going, a very blunt instrument! We're to be taken on the tops of ammunition trucks which are going to Roma. Dropped off in a small camp, don't know the name, only three bamboo huts and a cookhouse. Food very poor, back to rice and vegetable stew again. We walked from the railroad track and the Japs instructed us to saw down the largest silver birch trees I've ever seen. We are now lumberjacks! The trees have to be tall enough to produce five meter lengths before the outcrop of branches. We've become expert in felling the trees to a safe position, cutting away the smaller branches, then the bark to meter lengths, and tie them up to elephants which drag them to a clearing. One baby elephant took a dislike to me and chased me through the jungle for several minutes. I must took a bit of a sight with long red hair, beard and skeletal body of five feet ten! When the meter lengths of bark are in the clearing we reduce them by axes to logs of suitable size for the steam-railway engines. The above job lasted two or three weeks until it is not possible for the Japs to find a party of men fit to work. The problem was a fever and the medical

team cannot diagnose it. We all had a constant high temperature, headaches, no appetite, etc. We were ordered to leave the camp but not before we had to set fire to the huts to prevent it spreading. We were all very sick, about two hundred of us spending several hours in open topped railway trucks before reaching Chungkai base camp. I have just spent several days in hospital resting and recovering. One had higher up our hut kept on hiccupping every two to three seconds, all day and all night for three days. We did not curse him, poor lad he must have been sick. We all sensed that if the hiccupping stopped he would die, and that is what happened. Weather generally good, but gradually getting a bit colder in the September evenings. Air activity stepping up and we can hear our bombers blowing up what may be sections of the railroad. Can only be a good sign. We are all fed up and look forward to going home. Who will and who won't go home!

#### October/December 1944.

Still at Chungkai. Lots of air activity, our lads must be doing their best, but just hurry up! Food is good with some meat and vegetables to go with our rice. We still have trouble with all the old problems - skin disease, internal worms, beriberi, dysentery, cholera, etc. With dry beriberi the symptoms are similar to wet beriberi, rapid dehydration, but the brain suffers the most and turns to a suicidal constituency. Death is quick! Keep on bumping into old friends from time to time, but everyone looks so ill these days! No letters. No news. We've moved south and are back at Non Pladuk - Rampong extension camp. This is close to where we first started to build the railroad. As before we are fairly close to a marshalling yard and in a siding near to us is a trainload of trucks filled with gasoline.

Air attacks are more frequent these days, and we hope our planes don't bomb this area. I don't think they will, as they must know we are here! \*It's happened! I heard the distant drone of aircraft, very faint, but I'd heard it many times before so discounted it. But this time it was different, it got louder and louder, and so several of us went outside to look. It was at night and there was a low and quite a full moon, and we watched several aircraft seeming to encircle the moon and then turn toward us. All too soon bombs came screaming down in our direction. We ran from

the camp and into the open, no trenches, no sand bags, nothing, so where could we hide? All around were blinding flashes of light as bombs exploded and blasts of air seemed to deafen us. Debris of all kinds was tossed around, and huge streaks of flame lit the whole area as the gasoline trucks exploded. The raid probably only lasted about ten minutes but we were all badly shaken: a terrifying experience. We heard that one bomb landed in the middle of the nearby camp, slap onto a hut, and reckoned fifty lads have been killed. To survive all what we've had to contend with and now to be killed by our own side. (Published figures show that ninety-five P.O.W's were killed and three hundred more wounded). We buried the dead the next day in one communal grave, each one being buried side by side. We're now demoralised, and whom can we turn to! Most of us are Christians but we have long since given up asking God for help. It is as though he is not listening to us. Why does he allow our young lives to be so blighted, why has he forsaken us? We used the pages from our bibles to roll up cigarettes; a cigarette does more to calm the nerves than the bible!

#### **Christmas Day 1944.**

After everything we said we had a good Christmas Day (Our third as P.O.W's.) Yasmie all day. Church service (we praised God) and sang carols, again thinking very much of those we love back home. No idea how much longer we will be slaves or how much longer we can stay alive. So many die of various diseases: some quickly, some slowly. I'm twenty-two next July: life is passing us by! (But we are still alive and will still try to do so).

#### **January/August 1945.**

Weather good. (I will explain all about the 'variable weather' at some future date). Nothing changes we've seen it all before: the red hot sun, monsoons, chugging mud, beatings, starvation, dreadful illnesses—painful deaths, lads screaming with deep ulcerations down to the bone over a large area and waiting for the back saw treatment, blown to pieces by our own air force! One week drifts into another and we loose track of many events. We no longer listen to any news; surely

the rumours have been just that, rumours. I have been working in camp, but our condition is now so poor that we are no longer of much use to the Japs. Our camp is well run and the food is quite good, but by no stretch is it good enough to help us put any meat on our bones, or improve our fitness - it simply keeps us alive - just! These days I'm a chronic malarial case, and about every fifth day I have to have quinine to keep my temperature down. I have become accustomed to having malaria, it no longer puts me off my food and I can still walk around with the symptoms! Still keep having attacks of dysentery, and I find it difficult to cope with this: very tiring! Whatever the work we are given it has to be done as Speedo! I must survive: nothing must stop this resolve for it could be only a short time before we are freed. Had quite a bit of rest for a few days "stick it out, mate"! I'm worried about a further build up of air raids: there is a lot of Jap troop movement and ammo on the railway. Oh no. I've been included in a party of three hundred men to go somewhere up country. I'm ill but I look physically stronger than a lot of the other lads. We were packed into an open topped ammo train, literally sitting on the stacks of ammo. Please don't bomb us! Thankfully we travelled at night, so let us hope our luck is in. After a long journey and a lot of stopping and starting we arrived in a camp somewhere on the Thailand/Burma border.

#### **June 1945**

The work is very hard, digging tank traps in the jungle, five metres deep by ten metres wide and one hundred metres long. The weather is rotten monsoon. The food is very poor, being where we are, at the end of a chain makes delivering the food difficult. Working from sunrise to sunset in the most appalling conditions. Many of the lads are very ill, falling like flies.

This could be our last posting the way things are going. The guards indicate we will not be wanted for much longer, and pull their finger across their throats as though to say we'll have our throats cut! What can we do? We are too ill to try to escape, and if we try we will be shot! Live for the minute! Several of the lads and me just had bad hearings, they demand Speedo!

I've gone down with dysentery again. Never had it this bad before. the little flesh I've got on my bones is

*falling off me! I can't eat anything and have to keep dashing to the 'bog'. I feel so very weak, we could all be getting very close to the end of our road! Horrible experience in the 'bog' which is a ten feet deep hole in the ground and staked with bamboo poles over which we squat. Oh for some toilet tissue, I detest using large leaves from the jungle if you have time. I will never forget the smell of the 'bog' out here, no words for it! We squat over a seething mass of excrement that crawls with muggots, and we squat there in a heavy cloud of flies! All our 'bogs' are like this! We tread very carefully on the bamboo platform no matter how faint we feel for to fall in would result in death (it happened).*

*July 1945.*

*Surprisingly, the guards are easing up a bit; they don't seem to beat us so often. I wonder what is happening on the world stage. Maybe room for a bit of optimism. The guards are a lot friendlier and they talk about a big bomb that was dropped on Japan, destroying a city and its entire people. It does sound as though the war will soon be over. The guards are even friendlier now, even humble and seem concerned about our welfare. I went to the 'bog' last night and it was weird to see one of the guards patrolling the camp, the fact that I didn't see one did not concern me. I returned to my bed in the sick hut and lay on my bamboo bed space next to a sergeant who had amoebic dysentery, and fell asleep.*

*(With Amoebic dysentery the lower bowel haemorrhages; death results if not treated.)*

*It was not until daybreak that I realised something was different, the Japs and guards had all gone, and we were unguarded and alone. There was no roll call, no bugle call for the workers, nothing but peace and quiet. Our officers called us together and told us that the war was over. Most men took it very calmly was it really true or just a dream, then gradually more and more cheering and the singing of patriotic songs. I was happy but in a somewhat sombre mood, the sergeant, a decent lad who had been lying alongside me had died in the night. He never saw freedom; he never knew we were so close, so close and yet so far away. It could be said his release was earlier than ours, but it reminded me of the soldiers who died a few minutes before the end of W.W.I. 10.58 hours on 11th November 1918.*

*It is now safe to write about the Japanese and Korean guards. It was a serious offence to keep a diary, but I thought it important enough to risk death or punishment to record some of my P.O.W. life. I purposely quoted the weather conditions and other simple details because I considered that if discovered I could point out the simplicity of my records, and so avoid death by beheading.*

*There were many atrocities and tortures and I hated the torture whereby a prisoner was tied to a tree with a metal bucket (with a serrated edge) hanging from his neck. The bucket was filled with water, food or earth. The weight of the bucket pointed and arched the neck forwards, but to straighten it up would mean that the serration would bite deeply into one's chest. Another punishment was where we had to stand with a heavy boulder above our heads. The guards told us that we had to stay in that position until dismissed. This rarely happened and when we could no longer support the boulder we would get a beating!*

*Every working day resulted in a beating or bushing for someone. What was important was not to react to punishment. When punched or knocked to the ground by a rifle butt no attempt must be made to defend oneself otherwise other guards would swarm in on you. Also, when they knock you over it was vital to get up straight away, to remain on the floor would result in severe kicking until unconscious! If I had to go through it all again I would hope that all the guards were Japs, not Koreans. The latter are taller, stronger, thicker set, hurt you more!*

*I would also like all the Japanese to be of equal rank because trouble from the top was always handed down, so the ordinary Jap private took most punishment, and we would receive it from them. They even clobbered us if we were married and had no children; we were no good, and they'd give us a nasty punch that usually bloodied our nose or lips. Commiserate! Two days have passed and we have left the camp and journeyed down country to **Hindato**. Planes fly over and drop parcels containing medical supplies, chocolate, cigarettes, etc. To taste chocolate and smoke an English brand of cigarette. Will we get home, meet our loved ones, and eat a good English breakfast again? I'm still suffering from dysentery. We stayed for one week and now we have reached a small camp near to **Bangkok** - the end of the line.*



Freedom After three and a half years, a welcome for POWs in Rangoon

When will they do something with my raging toothache? The medical officer said I must wait until I get back to England to have it removed. Why? A Dakota took us to Rangoon. It was very moving as we passed over the jungle to look down upon our railroad. It all looked so green, so peaceful, but we knew that the only ones who know peace were our lads lying in graveyards. We are leaving them behind, almost certainly we will never return! We had worry and drama over Rangoon as we ran into an electrical storm, the pilot lost radio contact and had to keep on circling until it was clear for him to land (with quite a bump). We landed at Rangoon University, which is used as hospital. What joy a hot bath, the soap made a superb lather. I can't believe that a towel can be so white, and how can bed cloths look so rapacious. I had forgotten just how comfortable civilized conditions are! I was able to keep a few private possessions like my diary and wallet with photographs of home, but the rest was taken from us: like saying goodbye to old friends who had served us well. The old mess tin, tin mug, bamboo spoon, ragged 'cloths', Jap happy (G-string), my hat made from rice material, all dumped and due for destruction. I have had a shave, haircut and put on a clean pair of pyjamas, and slowly eaten a poached egg on toast. Life can only get better. What a horrible 'chore', I have had to give details of atrocities I have seen and put it into writing. I know it had to be done, but I really don't want to have to remember such grim brutality! Left hospital after a week, and we are now aboard a hospital ship on our way to Calcutta, India. Weather great, food

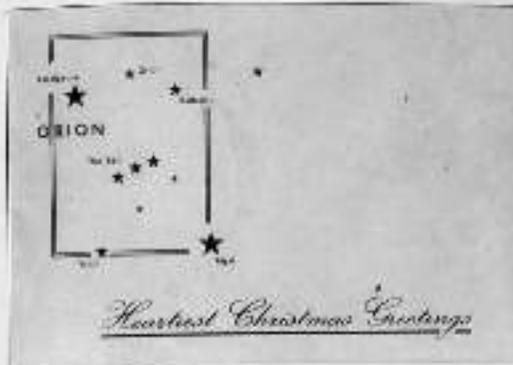


Prisoners of war were interrogated after their release to determine whether the enemy had committed war crimes.

marvellous. So far this rich food is not troubling me, it has many lads. Down with malaria - again. Being treated as V.I.P.s but have been ordered not to divulge information regarding atrocities other than to our own officers!

#### September 1945.

Arrived at Calcutta and billeted in a camp. Received fresh kit and clothing suitable for return to Britain. After three and half years what can we expect of an English climate? Some of these heavy clothes are going to take some getting used to. With back pay I have just bought some rich blue tapestry with silver threads passing through it. (Still got it). Visited 'Belvedere' in Calcutta, what a fine and beautiful building. It had been the official residence of Lieutenant Governors of Bengal from 1854 into the time of transfer to the Imperial Capital to Delhi. It is particularly nice to see 'white' women again and clothed so neatly in their uniforms. They all look like film stars; it has been over three years since we last saw a white woman. Oh joy! a pair of heels and an English brand cigarette! Ever ylong so refreshing and new: the taste of bread, cake, roast beef, pork, lamb with mint sauce, chipped potatoes, gravy, soup, apple pie and custard, and other luxuries that were once just the norm! To be able to clean your teeth with a brush and toothpaste, soapy water and a nap, scissors to cut your nails. A young Indian boy recovered a coin from under my foot! The good old Salvation Army, help and food! To visit the cinema, to enjoy a nice cigarette before retiring so bludugly white bed linen. To wake up and realize it is not all a dream; many P.O.W.s still shattered by the shrill blast of a bugle or cornet for roll call. To see cold morning mists or monsoon rain and to know we hadn't to labour all day, or to suffer



Les Kovach returned to Soviet Russia on the Orient liner 'Orion'.

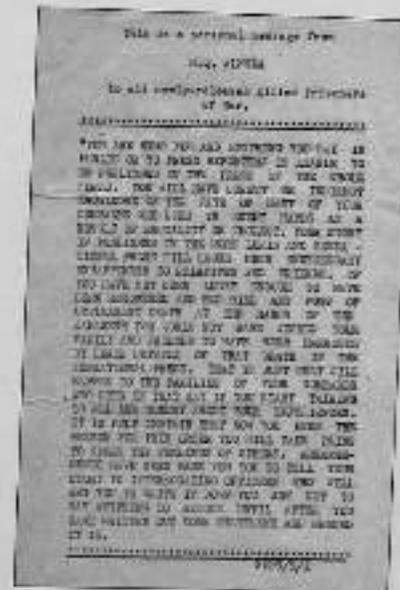
humiliation, frustration, and brutalization by an illiterate and uneducated gang of slant-eyed little yellow bastards from the Land of the Rising Sun! Spent eyes just looking at my photographs of home. Will I really be seeing everyone soon?

After a train journey from Calcutta to Bombay we have just climbed aboard the Orient liner: 'Orion'. Set off on 7th October 1945. 3,000 passengers and 150 P.O.W.s. It is a grand ship but set off with another dose of malaria, so I'm in the hospital quarters. Feeling a bit better and what a marvellous trip: fresh sea air and not the fetid air of jungle! We pass through the Suez Canal. Captain A.C.G. Hawker claims that our 14 day 21 hours trip to U.K. has set a record time for a liner. We all thank him for getting us home so quickly.

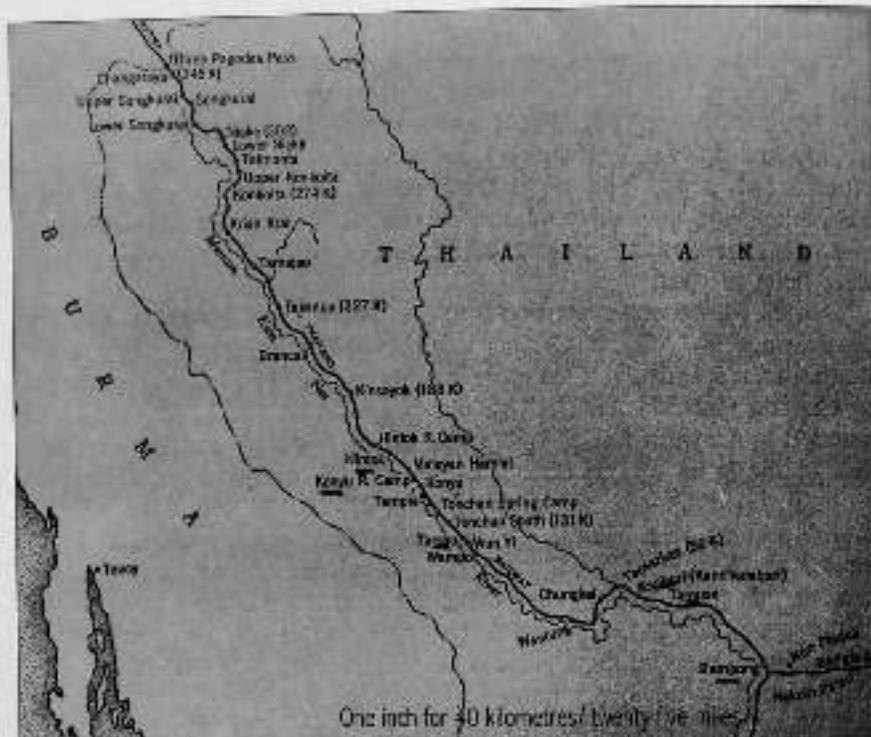
#### 21st October 1945.

We have just docked at Southampton and it feels strange and ironic again. When we left Liverpool it was wet and cold, and here we are back again with identical weather and there's hardly a soul on the docks. I'm feeling pretty rotten and so I am among the first to be taken ashore by stretcher and placed into a waiting ambulance. Later, I could not believe how rosy our children's complexions were as they played, the blue of a policeman's uniform, young soldiers, airmen and sailors so smart, the elderly, a woman, laughter, buses and the sounds of traffic, the peeling of church bells. Oh what pleasure, narrow, winding (and well maintained lanes), green hedgerows, fields, weed, healthy looking cattle and types of birds I'd almost forgotten (not a vulture in sight!) It hit me just how much we had all been denied during our three and a half years of captivity. It was as if we had suddenly been shaken out of a coma. At Aldershot Hospital bay

(with no prying cameras) we were told to walk into hospital, no stretchers and we had to carry off of our kit. True to form the good old British Army had brought us back to life with a bump! Did we grumble? Not one bit, it was great, there was nobody here who was going to hash the living daylight's out of us for no good reason! Would you believe it, I have got quite annoyed with the hospital dentist! After suffering for several weeks he 'froze' my gum and then asked me to wait outside for my turn. When he invited me into the surgery the dentist gave me hell of a pull and I was in agony for minutes, the anaesthetic had worn off; he knew I was annoyed all right! I spent one week at Aldershot Hospital for tests and made partial recovery and was allowed a small leave at home before spending another four weeks in Lincoln Hospital. What words can I find for returning home and seeing Betty and everyone else? What words can I use when I was told mother was dead or how I felt when I visited her grave? What words to use when my father has remarried and my stepmother don't want me to stay at what was once my home? Betty's Mum and Dad have said I can stay with them. It is very comfortable here in Lincoln and my ward overlooks the cathedral, a truly comforting sight, especially just before I fall asleep and when I open my eyes first thing in the morning!



Army Headquarters were the released prisoners not to speak in the press.



The Burma-Thailand Railway

**December 1945.**

*I have a short leave and so today I am returning to Hugglescote and will soon be marrying Betty after a four-year engagement! We married on 15th December 1945, and spent a few days on honeymoon at Blackpool: Mrs. Cooper's Boarding House, 17-21 Blundell Street. Betty understood when I asked if we could watch Joe Davis (our World Champion) play snooker in the Tower. I returned to Lincoln Hospital and was eventually discharged in February 1946 as A1 fit. So ended my life in the British Army after six years and it was back to civilian life. There was no such thing as court-martials in those days, but I did receive a year's free prescription for 'Bengers', a vitamin packed food-drink to build me up.*

Hilton's Footwear re-employed our father as manager of their shop at Burton-on-Trent. After three years of living with his in-laws he placed a deposit on 38, Avebury Avenue, just outside of Leicester. By the early Fifties and with two children, Michael, born 1946 and Maureen born 1951, father was an assistant footwear buyer, and star foxhaller in Hilton's side! In 1956 he achieved full buyer status at 'Littlewood's Chain Stores', in Liverpool. We lived at 100, Chesterfield Road, Great Crosby and have many memories. Pamela was born in 1958. In 1963,

continued success enabled him to gain further experience at 'Direct Fashion', a retail chain at Leeds. The family lived in semi rural peace at 241, Tinsill Road, Cookridge; happy memories.

Throughout our childhood our beloved mother brought us up with endless love to be decent, honest and polite individuals, and it was her devotion that helped us through anxious times when father endured mental scars that originated from his days of captivity! In 1964, a return to Leicestershire, with father rejoining Hilton's (180 shops) in the hope that his experience would lead to extra rewards: he was invited onto the Board. We lived at 32, Laburnum Avenue and then 4, Mallory Close, Newbold Verdon. In 1981, father retired after a successful business career and settled down to family life. In 1986 our parents returned to their roots and bought 29, Fairfield Road, Hugglescote. For a decade they were choristers at St. John Baptist Parish Church, and father a churchwarden. This is the church where father was head-choirboy and where he heard of the start of W.W.2 back on 3rd September 1939. He had a good singing voice and thus he used to great affect with the Coalville Male Voice Choir. Our parents played lawn-bowls and Les had a year as President of the Coalville Club.



Clare returns to PE We had the chance to obtain the Far East magazine.

Mother and father enjoyed a tranquil lifestyle with weekly visits from their enlarged family. Father loved his gardening and his 'green-fingered touch' was so evident in an immaculately kept garden of sylvan pleasure.

Mother, always a devotee of flowers, blossoming shrubs and wild birds was in her element in such delight, and dearly loves her snug home. Father was a member of the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors' Association for several years and relished in writing to and meeting old comrades, including Harold Smalley, John Hawkins, Sam Dumasole and Samuel Hodges.

Mother is a patient as 'The Moscovs' nursing home at Thringstone and continues to suffer from dementia. For five or six years, until he became ill himself, father looked after mother with the most dedicated home-care possible. He passed away in the Leicester Royal Infirmary on the 5th January 2006, shortly after their Diamond Wedding Anniversary, he had been in hospital for a few months. Some readers may find it upsetting to read (I do) but father wrote a last letter for our mother. I decided to print it so that younger couples may draw inspiration from the knowledge that love grows with age.



Les's recent Exemplary: it explains the why imprisonment involved his own choice and that a future employer should appreciate that he was a British Seawarrior in the Royal Airforce.



The children Maurice, Pamela and Michael, 1962



The 1960's. Good health and long may you both be remembered.

*Friday 7th December 2005 at 6.25am.*

*To my darling wife, Betty.*

*I am so sorry, my love, that I have not written to you before: it is only sixteen days to go to Christmas and six days to our Diamond Wedding Anniversary, but my chances of coming out of here: The General Hospital are hopeless. I just don't know when I shall come out again, but at least my handwriting has improved. I think of you all the time, waiting and hoping that I shall see your lovely face again. I know you will not understand much of what I am writing because of your condition, but I have always loved you my Darling and we shall be close together again in the near future.*

*Tell Herbert and Mary that I miss them too and all the friends we made at the 'Rowans'. I love you and miss you very much. Have a nice time at Christmas, my love, we shall be together one day, for good!*

*All of my love,*

*Les.*

XXXXXXXX

**Post Script:**

Father somehow summoned the strength for an afternoon trip from the General Hospital in Leicester to be with our mother on 15th December 2005. There was a small celebration and a congratulatory card from



Frank Johnson with wife Mabel, sister of Les Kendrick



Perce Kendrick and wife Joan (Maam) Les' mother.

Queen Elizabeth. Father read out the above letter knowing that he was dying and gave his beloved a final kiss before returning to hospital. The funeral service took place at 11.00am, St. John The Baptist Church, Hugglescote, and had members of Coalville Male Voice Choir; they sang a solo chorus.

Les left daughters, Maureen (and husband, David) Jarvis and Pamela (and Michael) Gray, and grandchildren: Rebecca, Joanne, Laura and William. I married Beryl Hare and can testify for the above comments.