

**WORLD WAR TWO
DIARY OF
THOMAS H. FAGAN
105 GENERAL
TRANSPORT
COMPANY
POW 1942-1945**

Compiled by Jan Hunter

Albury and District Historical Society Papers No 31

ISSN 1835 5455

INTRODUCTION

A copy of this diary was given to Douglas Hunter, manager of the 8/13 VMR Regimental Collection and a member of the Albury & District Historical Society by Leo Coyle, formerly of Walbundrie NSW. Leo had been given a copy by the granddaughter of the diarist, Thomas H Fagan and Leo felt Doug could expose the story to a larger audience.

This copy of the diary is in the form of typescript on foolscap pages, held together by two metal pins and enclosed by a manila folder labelled 'DIARY OF THOMAS HENRY FAGAN (Originally from Walbundrie) P.O.W. 1942-1945'.

A copy of this typescript, in a very similar form was lodged with the Australian War Memorial (Catalogue number PR87/230) at an unknown date.

Having retyped the diary onto A4 paper, the ADHS decided to publish a small number of copies in booklet form with an ISSN number and to lodge the legal deposit copy with the National Library of Australia, Canberra, and to give a copy to each of the Albury and Corowa libraries. This plan will make the diary more easily accessible to the general public.

The original diary is said to have been written on cigarette paper and it is unknown who first typed it up. Given the variety of tenses used, it is possible that Tom did it himself, typing from the tiny pieces of paper he had preserved at great risk, but sometimes looking back from Australia to those times.

Given that I was not transcribing from an original document I have corrected the spelling of place names where possible to identify them. No editing took place, but occasionally have I queried a word or sentence with a question mark in square brackets.

It was not a pleasant story, but I found myself pushing to get it finished to see how Tom managed the dreadful privation, knowing all the while that because the diary existed, that he had survived. On the other hand, I needed to take a break every so often when his life was so grim.

Thomas Henry Fagan was a brave man, he kept his religious faith, he did his best to help others when he could, but it would be interesting to know if his hatred of the Japanese, during that time of imprisonment, lasted throughout his life.

Jan Hunter, Albury, November 2018.

THOMAS H FAGAN. 1911-1983

Thomas Fagan was the second generation of the Fagan family to be educated at Walbundrie NSW, school. His parents Thomas and Pearl (nee Reed) from Ballarat were married in 1906. They built a brick home on the banks of the Billabong Creek between Walbundrie and Rand and called it "Woodend". There were six children in their family; Nance, Margo, Thomas, Joyce, Elizabeth and Valerie.

Young Tom moved to Manly in Sydney in 1926 when the property was sold. The reason for their move to the city was to further the education of their family. Tom studied wool classing and he returned to the Riverina classing wool at shearing sheds from Jerilderie to Holbrook and Narrandera.

Tom played football with Walbundrie from 1935-37. In 1937 he kicked the winning goal when Walbundrie were 5 points behind. Tom marked the ball as the full time bell rang. The umpire awarded the kick and Tom placed the ball on the ground and did a rugby style kick and put it through the goal posts. He was the hero of the year and his feat it is still spoken of.



Walbundrie premiership team 1937
Tom Fagan (Captain) is at centre of front row

Tom married local girl, Kit Sweet, and mentions their first child, daughter Val, in his diary.

After the war he worked at Corowa and in Albury as a Stock and Station Agent specializing in ram selection and wool classing. He returned to Sydney with one of the wool brokers in preparing wool for sales. Tom and his wife Kit always enjoyed returning to the Walbundrie Show and whenever Walbundrie football team played in the finals.

Thomas H Fagan passed away in 1983 and the Walbundrie Show observed a minute silence at the opening of the Show that year.

Leo Coyle, formerly of Walbundrie, 2018

VX47533 Lance Corporal T H Fagan, 105 General Transport Company

The 105th Australian General Transport Company was formed in Egypt in 1941 to provide transport for the 7th Division. Having been in the Middle East the 105th AGT Coy embarked on the 'Orcades' in January of 1942 en route to Singapore. Also on board, were the 2nd/3rd Machine Gun Battalion, the 2nd/2nd Pioneer Battalion, and several other small units.

The fall of Singapore resulted in 'Orcades' being diverted to Java in the Dutch East Indies where the Australian troops landed on 19 February and became part of a hastily assembled force under the command of Brigadier A S Blackburn VC designated as Blackforce.

The Japanese invaded Java little more than a week later and quickly overcame the resistance of the poorly coordinated and ill-equipped Dutch, British, US and Australian defenders. Allied commanders signed a formal surrender at Japanese headquarters at Bandung on 12 March. Tom Fagan along with the 105th Australian General Transport Company began three and a half years as a prisoner-of-war in Japanese hands.



RMS *Orcades* was a British passenger ship built in 1937 and operated between Britain and Australia 1937–39. At the beginning of WWII, the ship was requisitioned and converted into a troopship. It was in this role in February 1942 she carried troops of the 105 General Motor Transport including Tom Fagan to Java. On 9 October 1942 *Orcades* was sunk by a German U-boat off the coast of South Africa.

DIARY

Just a few points on Java and some of the things I have seen there. I am writing this while I am a prisoner of War in Batavia. Taken prisoner March 9th, 1942.

We landed here in Java 19th February from the Middle East. We were all very disappointed and disgusted to land here as we were under the impression that we were on our way home to defend our own shores from invasion. One has to learn to swallow pride and disappointments in the Army where one is so often messed about. As I write this, maybe I am a little bitter at the way we have been dumped here, set an impossible task and then left high and dry without any support from our Allies. Besides the Australians, there are Americans, Punjabs and Tommies here, making a total somewhere near 12,000 we are all told. There are Dutch here of course, but I have yet to hear of where they have done any fighting on this island. I will start this book from Christmas day in Syria 1941 and try and memorise all my moves since then to the present time.

* * *

CHRISTMAS DAY – 1941

This is my first Christmas day away from my wife and I am spending it in our camp at Haddett in Syria. The village is situated on the slopes of a mountain and just outside of Beirut. It is a day that I will remember for quite a while. Where we had a roasting day in Australia last year, we are freezing here today and there is quite a lot of snow on the hills. We were fortunate as we were able to procure some very good Aussie beer, which helped to make things more pleasant. We also received some parcels and cakes from Home. Our Xmas dinner consisted of tinned meats warmed up on our primus and tinned pudding. We made quite a good meal out of it all, but the most of us were home-sick, so could not enjoy it as if we were home on the banks of the Murray River some-where. In the evening, a few of us went into Beirut for the evening and had a few drinks and tea at the Australian canteen there. We went to a picture show at night and saw a good show.

Boxing Day we carried on as usual, no holiday. The boys look the worse for wear today, but that was to be expected under the circumstances.

I had a very unpleasant task, as I had to escort two chaps up to Alley on the Mountain where they were court martialled on a charge. We spent the day up there and a colder day I have never experienced in my life. It rained and snowed all day, and we had to wait around in a cold passage-way for hours on end.

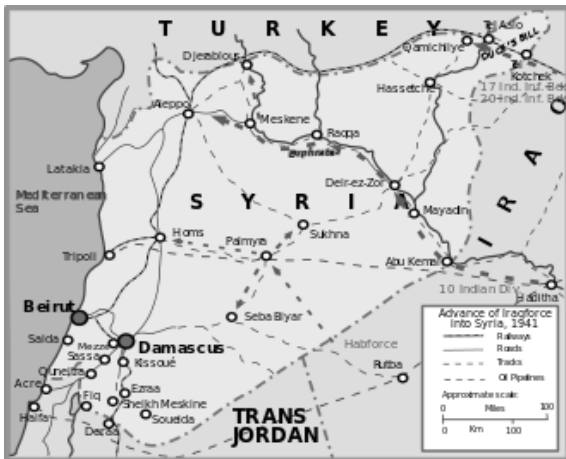
The next week went along alright but freezing. We had one very unpleasant trip to Tripoli. On the Tripoli road there is one spot where sea just bashes over the road when it is rough. As we were going along we copped one huge wave all to ourselves and it made things very unpleasant for driving with the salt on the windscreen and snow falling, visibility was very bad and the road was very greasy. We did not arrive back at Haddett till 10 p.m. and the drive home was a night mare, but we all got through safely, although

tired and stiff from the cold and snow a good hot curry when we go back soon fixed us all up.

New Year's Day was much the same as Christmas Day, cold as a Mother-in-Law's kiss, and snowed pretty well all day. We celebrated the New Year in and the old year out in the usual manner, and had a fair amount of beer. All we hope now is that we are well and truly home by next New Year.

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Up to the 14th of January everything went along smoothly, practically the same jobs day after day, with the exception, when we had to take a convoy of petrol over to Ras Ballbeck. We could not cross Mountain at Alley so had to take a new route over via Tripoli and then over to Homs. We had a good trip till about fifteen miles the other side of Tripoli where we ran into a 60 miles per hour head wind, and we often had to get into 2nd gear to keep moving against it. It was terrific. Eventually we reached Homs and all



In June/July 1941, British forces including 7th Australian Division, fought a bitter campaign against Vichy French forces to ensure Germany could not use Syria as a base in the war in North Africa and the Mediterranean.

one could see was miles and miles of white snow as far as one could see, and was feet deep in places. We ploughed through alright and eventually came to Ras Ballbeck, where we camped. It was a miserable night as one could not get warm. Four chaps up there had been frozen to death a few nights before. We had to drain our Caburcetas(sic) and radiators so as to avoid them freezing up on us. In spite of all our precautions we had a lot of bother to get them going next morning. Anyway, we eventually got them going again and reach(sic) camp.

18th JANUARY – There is a move afoot as we are to have our tents struck and all our gear packed ready to move out

tomorrow to Palestine where we are to be re-equipped and then proceed to an unknown destination. We are all of the opinion that we may see dear old Aussie very shortly, sincerely hope so.

19th JANUARY – We are off now and say goodbye to Syria. Our last night here in camp was as good as a bazaar in Cairo. The bargaining and selling that went on between the Wogs and the boys was a sight to see. They sold everything they could spare over the fence. One way to realise a few cents. It was a lovely day and everything looked nice and green, and the old Mediterranean was as calm as a duck pond. Palestine was at its best and as far as the eye could see was orange grove after grove all green and gold, as oranges were ripe. Yes, we had as many as we could carry and the Palestine oranges are the best in the world. We are now camped at Barbara where we are to be equipped. Will be here

about a week I'm told. All the towns and camps are all familiar down here and makes one think he is home after being away for a while.

29TH JANUARY- We have said goodbye to Palestine and we are now at Port Tufick where we are to embark for unknown shores tomorrow. The trip down in the train was not the best as we were crowded in and travelled all night with very little sleep to be had. We arrived at Kantara 6 a.m. had breakfast and caught another train for Suez. We travelled along the canal and it was a fairly decent trip. We arrived at staging camp by noon where we settled down to sleep as we were tired out.

We were all dressed for the cold Syrian climate and when we arrived here, it was as hot as hell here in the desert. On our trip to-day we passed a lot of prison camps full of Germans and Iti's. They were quite cheeky too, as they all yelled at us and made signs of swimming as if they meant to tell us we would not reach our destination. Haw Haw gave out on the wireless that we would have an escort of Stukas down the Red Sea.

1ST FEBRUARY- We are now on board the 'S.S. ORCADES' a 23,000 ton vessel, speed 23 knots and seems to be a very decent ship. The crew are all British so we hope to have a better trip than we had when we came over. Reveille was 3:30 this morning when we had a cup of tea and then had to march five miles down to the port with all our gear and I assure you it was a hard grind, but we all made it. Huge balloons are let up into the sky of a night over Suez and the canal to keep enemy aircraft up and thus making dive bombing unsafe for them. When we arrived at the port we were taken out to the ship by small tenders. We got ahead of the 106 transport somehow and when they arrived out at the boat there was not room for them, so they had to go back and find another boat. On this vessel with us are the 2/2nd Pioneers, 2/3rd Machine Gunners Olds and Bolds, anti-aircraft battalion, Mobile Battery crowd and a few sundries. There are close on 4,000 of us on board, and we are pretty well crowded. Unluckily for us we have drawn the hold again. We were the last to arrive out at the boat, which almost immediately pulled up anchor and sailed. We all crowded the deck and watched Suez fade away in the distance. There was not a man on board who was sorry to leave the Middle East with its dirty Wogs and disgusting smells. We had been over there a few days over 12 months and it seemed more like 12 years. There are quite a lot of rumours flying around as to where we are bound for. Some say we are making for Bombay, Calcutta, Ceylon and change boats for Rangoon and thus up to Burma Road, but no one knows for sure. My guess is that we are making for Aussie as that seems to be the place where we will be most needed. It may be wishful thinking but that is where we all hope to go. We are now heading down the Red Sea at about 20 knots which is a good speed. We have had our first meal on board and the food was very good and clean, quite a difference from when we came over on the old 'Rhona' ['Rohna'?). The latest buzz is that we are to pick up the 'Mauritania' and 'Hilda France' off Aden in a couple of days' time and go across the Indian Ocean in Convoy. We are alone at present.

2nd FEBRUARY – We have had our first decent sleep since leaving Palestine, but it was terribly hot down below in our hammocks. Will sleep on deck tonight if all goes well. Today we have had the same old routine on board. Stand to for ship inspection, boat drill, boat stations, etc., a little P.T. and plenty of spine bashing. The weather has been lovely and sea very calm. The gamblers have got into full swing and two up, housie,

banker and other games are in full swing on every part of the deck. As soon as a parade is over, one hears two bob in the guts to see him go, or who will set the centre to see the spinner go. They won't worry me as I have 10/- between me and pay day. We lost a few of our mates when 106 did not catch the boat as most of the old J. section boys are not attached to them. We will probably catch up though where ever we land, and then again the drivers are on freighters with their trucks. We have no idea when we will see or hear of them again.

6TH FEBRUARY – I won't write up every day as they are mostly the same day after day. It gets very monotonous on these troop ships. We are now well passed Aden and still no sign of the 'Maurie' or 'Hilda France', and we are still on our lonesome, steaming along at a fair speed. Had a good night in the canteen last night. We were there on Picquet and had quite a lot of beer. It was hot as hell in the canteen last night and the boys handed us quite a lot of beer which we appreciated. The food is very good and everything as clean as a whistle. Saw a couple of freighters away on the horizon today, travelling the same way as us. I have never heard so many rumours as to where we are bound for. I don't believe anyone on board knows for sure till we reach a port and then will probably be told.

9TH FEBRUARY- We arrived in Colombo this morning and everything seems much the same as it was here twelve months ago. The harbour is chock a block full of ships of every description. There are also some American cruisers here, which look as if they are able to look after themselves if trouble comes their way. The natives are here all around the ship selling their wares to the boys and diving for coins thrown overboard. They are doing quite a good business. Today we had quite a bit of rotation as we were told that we were to be transferred to another ship, so we had all our gear packed and ready on deck to go off, and after waiting around for hours we were then told that we were not to tranship, so down again and unpack. We were all pleased of course, as our chances of going to Aussie are now 100% than they were. There was a huge fire down one end of the harbour today which seemed to be a rubber works or oil dumps, as huge clouds of smoke poured up into the sky. There is to be no leave here as we are to sail in the morning. Anyhow we are not anxious to go ashore as we had a good look at Colombo when we were last here.

10th FEBRUARY – Once again we are out to sea, and this time we have the 'Dorsetshire' with us which was one of the cruisers that had helped sink the 'Bismarck' a while back. It also makes one feel much more secure against possible raiders to see her racing around us like a grey hound dog. We have been thoroughly trained and warned what we are to do in case of an air raid or an attack from the sea. At present our boat is bristling with guns, we have somewhere around 90 guns on deck, Bren, Bofor, anti-tank guns lashed to the rails and of course our rifles which would not be of much use though, also there is a six inch gun on 'Orcades' so if attacked from the air we may account for some of them. Now where are we going? Everyone is asking that question, and rumours are flying again, at least we are heading in the direction for Aussie, some of the boys have made wagers on it. Well time will tell and then we will all know. If we are heading for Fremantle we should reach it in five days on this ship.

12TH FEBRUARY – We are still sailing along merrily and sea is calm, is as hot as hell now as we have crossed the Equator and still sailing south east, so now it looks as if we are a moral for Freemantle and all the boys are in good spirits and have all been discussing what they will do when they get home and get some well-deserved leave, which we are nearly sure of getting when we arrive home. The boys are checking the direction we are going hourly and have three or four compasses on the job.

14TH FEBRUARY – Crash! Bang! Wallop! Go our hopes of going home as we are now headed right off the course of Australia and now seem to be heading for Java or Sumatra. I have never been so disappointed in all my life, all my plans have been shattered. It's just like as if everything had gone or been taken away from me just when I had it within my grasp. I have a lot of mates in the same boat though, and everyone is very liverish today. I don't blame them though. Well I'll not write any more today as I may say things I should not, and would then be sorry for.

14th FEBRUARY - This morning when we came on deck, land was sighted away on the port side and we are all curious to know where we are now heading for. We heard over the ship's wireless last evening that Singapore had fallen so we are not going there. Some of the crew told me we are entering Sunda Straits, and a good place for lurking subs. We have now passed some islands

On the port side. These islands are totally different from what I had imagined them to be. There are huge mountains on them and they reach right up in the sky for thousands of feet and they are timbered with several kinds of trees and jungle. We have passed some and have not seen any sign of life in them whatever. They look very nice especially all the little bays and inlets and palm trees and scrub right down to the water's edge, everything looks so peaceful and quiet. We are now in the strait with islands on either side of us. Have just had our first glimpse of natives fishing and they are like Chinese to look at, small dark fellows. The ship is now in Aust Haven [Oosthaven] just off a small harbour of Sumatra and opposite we have Java. I saw a huge turtle swim past our ship this morning followed by a huge sword fish, first time I had seen either of them.

'Tis 4 p.m. and news has just come through that we are to land tonight and go out and act as an infantry crowd and go to the Palembang Aerodrome and guard it. The Japs have landed on the island somewhere and are reported to be making for the drome, also paratroops are expected to land there. We have been ordered to dump most of our gear and kit bag, all we are to take is our pack and haversack, carry three days' ration of bully beef, blanket and ammunition, respirator and rifle.

Some of the boys have been issued with Tommy guns and believe it or not, not one round of ammunition for them, I don't know what they are expected to do with them. The 2nd Pioneers, Machine gunners are also getting off and they also are very poorly equipped, some have very few rounds of ammo.

6 p.m. We are still here on board but we are all prepared to move off at a moment's notice. The old rifle has been well oiled and greased and in fine buckle. It seems at last as if we are going to see some frontline action. Some of the boys are sitting away thinking of home I expect as my thoughts have been there for the last few hours. Ron Booth and I have promised to write home if anything happens to either of us. Now the boys have all started community singing and it sounds good I assure you as it keeps one's mind off the

job before us. The order has come, we are to go off on a tug and it's now pitch dark and raining, not very pleasant, but the boys are all in good humour. Well cheerio till I get another chance of writing, if at all.

15TH FEBRUARY – Here we are again back on board the 'Orcades' and our landing on Sumatra was a very short lived affair which was just as well for us as we would not have stood a chance of getting out if we had bumped into the Japs' artillery equipped as we were. When we landed, we were told by some Tommy Major, who informed our leaders that the Japs were in possession of the drome, and the railway had been blown up so we had better go back to our boat if we did not want to get trapped. So back to the boat we came, there were a lot of relieved men I can tell you. It was 3 a.m. when we at last got back and we were given a hot [cup] of cocoa which we appreciated, then we slept on deck till this morning when we weighed anchor and are now on our way to Batavia, Java.

17TH FEBRUARY – We are now anchored off Tanjong Priok which is the harbour of Batavia. There [are] ships of every description anchored around and the harbour is chock a block full. Most of them have come from Singapore or were on their way there when it fell. Once again we have been ordered to stand by to disembark so once again we are on deck with our gear all packed. At least we know how to pack up and unpack this time.

18TH FEBRUARY – Once again we have had to go below again and unpack and stay on board for the night. We have been informed that we are to go into harbour today and that we may land. Rumours are again flying around that we may stay on ship and go to Aussie, we sincerely hope so anyway.

19th FEBRUARY – We have just berthed in the harbour and have seen a lot of boats going out, on their way to Australia. On the wharf are some Australian soldiers who have escaped from Singapore and Dutch soldiers all in their nice green uniforms, they look very neat. The natives are a very clean lot, much cleaner than the Wogs of the Middle East. The harbour itself is not so much to look at, I was very disappointed with it. We are to get off the boat tonight sometime, and again we are to go out to the aerodrome to guard it. Batavia city is some 15 km from here we are told. We spent the day reading and laying about the deck.

19TH FEBRUARY – Last night at 12 o'clock we came ashore. It was raining and pitch black as we wended our way down the gang plank. We then were taken in buses to the aerodrome which is only a few miles from the capital city Batavia. Kemayoran is the name of the drome and planes all land here from England to Australia. We arrived here 2.30a.m. when we had to stand to, in case of paratroops landings. 9 a.m. we were split up into platoons and distributed around the drome where we were paired off and had to be continually on guard. The heat is terrific and laying out in the grass with no shade whatever is terribly hot, I assure you. There are quite a lot of planes flying about and a few Douglas airliners on the field. Our orders are to shoot anyone not in khaki uniform who crosses our beat. We had three air-raid warnings today and it was amusing to see the Wogs running flat out, hell for leather for their shelters, thousands of them, anyhow everything went off quietly and no eggs were dropped.

20TH FEBRUARY – Yesterday we tried to build ourselves a shelter out of our ground sheets, but were not very successful as it rained last night and we were wet

through. One of us had to try to sleep and another had to be on guard. Johnnie Yule and I were together. Planes and people were leaving here all through the night for Australia. I would have liked to have boarded one. The passenger planes leave here 12 pm and arrive in Darwin for breakfast, so we are not so far from home after all. Today I have been put in charge of an armoured Bren gun, Lewis gun, Tommy gun and rifles. We are supposed to convoy trucks through and if we are near Japs we are to fight our way through. Well we will see what happens.

21ST FEBRUARY – Have been allotted another job and have been placed in charge of a section of ambulances and have to patrol on western side of Batavia, Buitenzorg Road to as far as Semplak Aerodrome, where the pioneers are all on guard today and expect trouble any day. We came into Batavia today and it seems a very decent city and what impresses me is the gardens and lawns which are so green and fresh looking. The streets are spotlessly clean and wide. The city consists of five parts, the harbour at Tanjong Priok joined to Weltevreden but is now called Batavia Centrum and Mc Cornelis recently added to the Municipal. There is a canal which flows right through the town. Batavia is said to be one of the fore most shopping cities of the Orient. There are many hotels in the city and they look very nice, and the beer is extra good. The population of Batavia is well over one million people, black, white and brindle. The natives have three wheeled cycles for taxies and they will push you around anywhere for a few cents. There is a very modern train and tram service here. I think we may enjoy ourselves if we get a little spot of leave. We are now camped in the yard of the Dutch Military Hospital. There are some very nice homes to be seen here. The Dutch girls are well built and are very pretty. 'Tis good to be able to talk English to some of the people here. They have been good to us so far.

22ND FEBRUARY – Everything was nice and quiet here today, till 11 o'clock when the air raid siren went and over came a squadron of Jap planes and they were in earnest this time and let go their eggs over the drome. The anti-aircraft went into action and kept popping away at them, but Nippon never lost formation and they gave the docks some attention. We were all hoping for some of our planes to have a go at them, but there were none about till the Japs had cleared off. We had to go out to the drome to pick up some casualties amongst them being some of our machine-gunners, one Sergeant being killed and others injured by shrapnel, we brought them into the Princess Juliana Hospital. There were a couple more air-raids that day, but no more bombs were dropped, for which we were thankful. They dropped their bombs in what is known as pattern bombing, they flyover in formation and about 7,000 ft. up they let go together. The eggs they let go today were about 250 pounders and did not do much damage to the dromes or docks.

23RD FEBRUARY – We are still here and I had a look around Batavia today and also a few beers which were thoroughly enjoyed by Blue Watson and myself. The roads here on the island are very good so far. We have had good food up to date as we have been cooking our own. We struck a bunch of Pommies today who have just arrived from the old dart, and to be candid, I never saw a more down trodden race in all my life, they must have been the scum of England. Were talking to some Dutch soldiers who are very confident of holding the island. They have an army of 120,000 and profess to be the best fighters in the world, of course we would not have that.

26th FEBRUARY – Nothing happened of much importance the last few days, we had a few air raid alerts but no bombs. We evacuated a lot of sick cases last night from Juliana Hospital to Hospital Ship, most of them have been wounded in Singapore and Malaya I believe; hope they go home. Today we had a decent air raid, this morning 27 came over in one batch and a lot of damage was done to the drome, docks and Shell Oil Company, and huge fires lit especially at the oil wells, where fires burnt all day. The ack-ack went into action and two planes were shot down over the harbour by the ‘Perth’ which was then in. This afternoon we were again evacuating wounded to a hospital ship when we got caught in a raid. We had some bad cases on board our ambulances, and when the shrapnel began to fall around us we pulled up under a tree and got out into the gutter., all the patients were wearing nice clean pyjamas and got mud and slush all over them, one poor chap tried to crawl up a drainpipe full of water. I had quite a job preventing him from doing so. They were in a mess when we eventually got them back into the ambulance. We were also bombed on the wharf again, one fell about 70 yards from us, but there were no casualties amongst our men although a few natives were killed. Another plane was shot down by one of our fighters this afternoon.

27th FEBRUARY - We left Batavia today and came along to Buitenzorg which is a small but important city lying in the hills about 34 miles from Batavia. The road was excellent and a canal runs right along the side of the road, which waters the rice fields. An electric train runs from Batavia to here. There is a beautiful Botanical Garden here which was founded in 1817 and there may be seen several Australian black swans. The flowers are said to be always in bloom. The gardens of the Palace of the Governor General adjoin the garden. In front of the palace is a deer park with hundreds of deer roaming around. The entire landscape of this town is dominated by Mount Salak, which is 8,000 feet high and there is a volcano lying close at hand, while a little way to the S.E. rises the rugged contours of the Cedar Mountains. We are to open up a hospital here in a big school. This will be forward dressing station, and then patients will be evacuated to Bandoeng [Bandung?] 97 miles away. One peculiar thing about this town is that it rains every day of the year about 2.30 and rains for nearly an hour and then clears up. We have been given permission to write a letter home, so I must write to Kit and Mother, as we have not been allowed to write since we left Palestine.

28th FEBRUARY – I wrote home last night and it cost us half a guilder 1/8 for air mail stamps. Blue and I are now here in Bandoeng which is a beautiful city and is a thoroughly up to date mountain city the principal town of the Preanger, the buildings are most up to date, the residences pride themselves on their gardens (Dad would be happy here). It is connected with the outside world by road, rail and air. They have a lot of big schools and Universities here and the climate leaves nothing to be desired. It is surrounded by mountains Tangoenban Prahoe which are 7,000 feet high. On our way here we passed through these mountains and saw some lovely water falls confronted by chalk cliffs or granite rocks, There are three craters but I have not seen any yet. The mountains are hidden by clouds and one minute you are driving through them and the next everything is clear. Our trip up was most enjoyable as the day was fine, road good and we could take our time. We had a choice of two roads and took the longest via Soekaboemi which was around the mountain instead of going over the Punchak [Puncak?] Pass. It was a very

pretty drive. The country here is all paddy fields and palm trees, which make one long avenue along the road. There are quite a lot of villages along the route and one town of note is Soekaboenie which is a nice little city well up in the mountains. We had dinner there at a Chinese Restaurant and we thoroughly enjoyed the Chinese food washed with two bottles of Java beer, yes, most enjoyable. We picked up two Dutch soldiers there and gave them a lift to Bandoeng. They also shouted. We brought up a load of hospital gear for the hospital they were opening up in the Christlyk High School, which was a beautiful spacious building. Have just been informed that Japs have landed at three points of the Island.

1st MARCH – Blue and I had a look at the night life of Bandoeng last night, and made a night of it. We started off in the Shang-hi-dream, a café where one could eat, drink, and dance. We did not dance, but we quenched our thirst. The Dutch insisted that we drink with them and then an English gentleman took charge of us and insisted that we go with him to his lounge at the Savoy Hotel, well we did, and he turned it on in good style. The Savoy is the biggest and nicest I have ever been in. Well to cut a long story short we got back here to Buitenzorg at 8 o'clock. We took turns at sleeping and driving. Wilds said he was going to Aussie so I gave him a note to post to Kit for me when he landed there. 'Tis quite true that the Japs have landed and are being held back by the Pioneers and Machine-gunners are only a few miles from here. The wounded lads are starting to pour in here now and it looks as if we are to be kept busy from now on. Had several more air raid warnings today but did not see any bombs dropped.

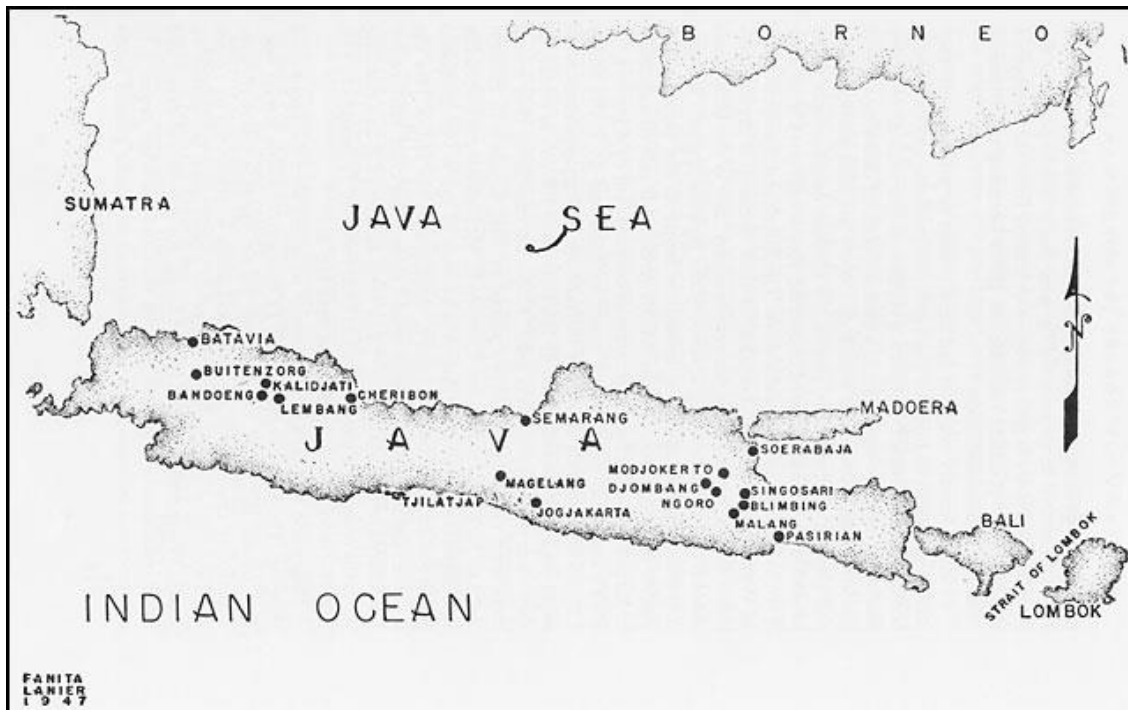
2nd MARCH – My thoughts have been with my wife and daughter today as Val had her 3rd birthday, how I would love to be with them at present. I could not even send a cable. Today I had to take a convoy of ambulances to Bandoeng with wounded and come straight back for more. Some of the lads were badly wounded and driving dying men is a strain on one as you think every ripple on the road is jarring them, but you have to move along to get back on time. We were in a hurry and came back by the pass, it was a stiff climb but 20 miles shorter, the road is dangerous in parts with steep hair pin bends. Would be a pleasant drive under more pleasant conditions, and men were not depending on one. When we got back we were wet through as we had run into a heavy storm.

3rd MARCH – We have been going flat out today some buses have gone to Bandoeng with patients. We have had a lot of air raid warnings. Semplak Drome just outside of Buitenzorg has had a severe bombing and drome is now useless. There is a huge fire there today as oil and petrol dumps are being burned and drome has been evacuated I have been sent out to a Dutch headquarter to salvage gear they have left behind. The Dutch are on the run now. We can't make it out our gear is going to the front and the Dutch and Pommy stuff is coming out. The Pioneers and Machine-gunners are holding Japs up a couple of miles from here. They have blown bridges across the river and are machine gunning it. Got wet through again this afternoon as we had orders to fill trucks with all available petrol and load ambulances with all hospital gear and be ready to move out at a moment's notice. I have been up to our headquarters and have been waiting till 10 p.m. for movement orders. They did not come through so we have to unload at 12 p.m. load up again at 2 p.m. have one hour's sleep till 5 p.m. when we had to unload again. Well I can assure you that the language was pretty choice, all this rotation because

of the incompetent officer we have over us. What the boys did not call him does not matter. The lads found a dump of whisky and gin somewhere and distributed it amongst the crowd, and it's a life saver, as it keeps one going when one has very little sleep. (Taken in moderation of course.)

4th MARCH – Some more trucks were detailed for Banoeng, and some of us snatched a few hour's sleep. Batavia has fallen to the Japs and they were allowed to walk in without a shot being fired in defence of it. Our boys are just holding out but are retreating slowly. The boys who have come back wounded say the odds are ten to one against them. The Yankee artillery are down there but have only fired a couple of shots.

5th MARCH – Six o'clock orders came through last night, that we are to retreat to Bandoeng with all our gear as there is no hope of holding out here. We had to load everything on again and we had to destroy all our food and material we could not carry. Tons of good food were dumped in the canal; condensed milk, jam, butter, sugar biscuits,



The island of Java was the main administrative centre in the colonial Dutch East Indies. It was also the centre of the Indonesian struggle for independence during the 1930s and 1940s. The Japanese invasion was at first welcomed by the nationalists but later resisted as Japanese occupation intentions became clear.

cheese, nearly every kind of tinned food. Was a shame to do it. There were hundreds of natives picking it out of the canal as fast as we threw it in. We eventually pulled out of Buitenzorg 9 p.m. The evacuation was on in earnest, the road was wet and greasy, and thousands of trucks all on the road in the retreat. Was a terrible mess up. Eventually we got to Socemboemy 2 a.m. and had to camp.

6th MARCH – We camped in a lane last night and camouflaged our trucks with bamboo and banana tree leaves as best we could and then caught a couple of hours of sleep. I awoke at 6.30 a.m. with a start and heard a plane roaring overhead and looking out saw it was an enemy plane so promptly dived away from the trucks. Luckily for us he

did not open up on us but went away again. Must have been a reconnuicoval [reconnaissance?] plane we expected to hear them come over all day, but we were not disturbed. We had to bathe and wash in the drain beside the road which is also used as a native sewer.

At 3 p.m. I had to go with Captain Rees as an advance party to a place a few miles beyond Bandoeng and find a place to shelter our boys and trucks when they arrived along tonight. We were held up twice by air raids and the road was bombed and machine gunned. We eventually found a suitable spot to camp by 9 p.m., we were then very hungry so we journeyed to Bandoeng where we had a meal in the Savoy Hotel and a couple of beers. We then had to go out and wait on the road for our convoy to come through. We had to wait till 3 a.m. 'twas all I could do to keep awake, as we have had very little sleep lately. 4 a.m. we had trucks all parked ready for bed. We were so tired that we lay down and slept anywhere.

7th MARCH – The Jap bombers have been over all day and have bombed and machine-gunned all the roads, We have been busy getting petrol all day, one has to wait a long time as every unit is trying to get at one bowser. I went into Bandoeng and saw how the Dutch were fighting for their country. They were all in cafes, drunk as lords, makes one wonder. This evening we came back into Bandoeng and camped in hospital grounds.

8th MARCH – We are still here at Bandoeng and there is a strong rumour that the Dutch are going to capitulate. 11 a.m. Bombers came over and bombed the railway Station, Post Office and Police Station. We picked up twelve killed and 17 wounded, mostly natives though. One huge fire was started there. 2 a.m. bombers came over and bombed town and railway. One plane was shot down after the worst exhibition of ack-ack shooting I have ever seen. Never saw one of our planes go up whatever to try and drive them off.

9th MARCH – The worst has happened, the Dutch have capitulated and we are sold. We made a break from Bandoeng last evening at 5 p.m. and we are now camped at the grand Hotel or in their grounds I should say. I believe the Japs marched into Bandoeng, so we are only one jump ahead of them. It was raining like heck when we arrived here last night. We were making for the beach when we had to stop here, as road down is impassable, we are forty miles from beach. There are trucks, cars and Bren gun carriers everywhere. There is quite a lot of making a break for the hills and trying to make our way down to the beach. Personally, I don't like the idea as one would have Japs, Natives, malaria and dysentery to contend with and we have heard that there are no boats there, so what's the use. Our officer has let us down badly and is not worth the ink it takes to write his name. The boys are hitting the whiskey and gin and are drowning their sorrows in a big way. This evening we had to destroy and bury all our arms and ammunition as we have been handed over by the Dutch unconditionally. The Dutch who are the bravest and best fighters in the world (Oh yeah!). I really don't think they fired a shot at the enemy.

There is a large swimming pool here, and we have made good use of it. There are quite a few women and children here at the hotel: their husbands are supposed to be prisoners in Sumatra. We are just waiting around here until we are picked up. The boys

are throwing money around, the natives are doing well. All souvenirs have been dumped and we are down to bare necessities. There are quite a few Tommies here with us.

10th MARCH – Today we had orders from Tojo to go back to Bandoeng where we are now, back in the hospital grounds, We are to be allowed to carry on our job as ambulance drivers until further orders. We are not allowed out of the grounds except by special orders from the Japs. The town is full of Japs now. The natives have changed their tune and are all waving Jap flags and booing when we go past.

11th MARCH – We have been visited by the Japs and they made us promise that we would stay put, and not try to escape. Well that was easy to do as we have no earthly chance of getting off the island, if we did make the beach.

12th MARCH – My birthday today, how different it was twelve months ago. We were then in Tobruk, and now we are P.O.Ws in Java, as much as I hated the desert, I'd rather be free, than here under these conditions. Today I went out to Lelles and brought in a load of sick Tommies to hospital. Our old crowd is in a prison camp near Tjabarto.

16th MARCH – Things have been quiet these last few days, but today we were to go to a place near Garvet and open a hospital up in a native school, as this one is crowded out. We left Bandoeng and arrived here safely this evening, and have set to work, opening and cleaning the school, which is situated in a Native village. The Natives here are still quite friendly and buck in and give us a hand. The mosquitos and malaria are very bad.

17th MARCH – We have received about 20 patients now, suffering from different diseases, the worst cases are taken to Nandoeng where they can get proper treatment. Medical supplies are running out and we won't be able to procure any more we are told. We are also finding it hard to get petrol and provisions. We are still living on iron rations and biscuits. Today, Blue Watson and myself are to go back to Bandoeng.

18th MARCH – Blue Watson, Jack Flynn, D. Doehety, Ernie Burandt, Ron Robinson, Paddy Burke and Bill McCulloch are all back here at Bandoeng and are to stand by for further jobs. The food here is a little better as we tucker with the hospital orderlies. The Japs are doing a lot of Air Training here as planes up all flying about. The Dutch people are getting around again and quite a few come up to the hospital to cheer up the patients and bring them some decent food. We managed to get hold of a bottle of S. Australian wine and had a few spots, which made all hands merry.

22nd MARCH – The worst has happened and we are to take our trucks to Tjabartoe and hand them over to Nippon. We are allowed to keep two as there is still a lot of running about to do. Well we delivered our trucks over and had to come back to Bandoeng by train. It was quite a decent trip back here. We had to travel 3rd class but we are quite used to that by now. The train trip has its attractions. When we first leave Garoct, we travel a short way across plain country, and then one reaches the mountains, where the line plunges deeply through cuttings blasted out of granite rock and winds through tortuous gorges, then suddenly it flings itself across some deep ravine on a slender viaduct that is a master piece of engineering. After a while of this breathtaking travel we were suddenly confronted by one of the most beautiful landscapes imaginable. We came onto the plains again, with its network of dykes separating the glistening rice fields which are like a patch work quilt of rich velvet made in every conceivable shade and tint of green. In the midst

of these rice fields there rise little clumps of trees which mark the sight of some village or hamlet where the natives live.

23rd MARCH - I have been detailed with five men to stay on at the hospital to clean the wards and grounds. Quite a good job only takes about 2 hours per day. The rest of the drivers have gone up to the convalescent camp where they are to act as orderlies. Much better than being behind barbed wire. I believe our old unit have been taken down to Batavia to a prison camp.

26th MARCH – Things are really quiet here for us now as we have most of our day to read and sleep. Four airforce chaps were brought into the hospital yesterday. They had three eyes between the four of them, and one poor chap had both eyes blown out and both arms blown off. Quite a few of the boys have passed away since we have been here from wounds or dysentery, poor chaps.

28TH MARCH – We have a couple of Dutch lads here who come across and bring us some cigarettes and now and then some food. The Dutch have been ordered to leave the hospital by the Japs, so the orderlies will have to do all the work now. We are still able to get some news of the war, and things do not seem to be going too well for us.

3rd APRIL – Nothing of importance has happened in the last few days, except that the officers here had a seven course dinner last night and we don't think it right, when we are on short rations and they are gorging themselves with seven course dinners. Tomorrow we are to leave here and proceed to Leles and pick up with a few stragglers and then go to Batavia.

4th APRIL – We arrived here at Leles and have pitched a tent under some trees and don't know how long we are to be kept here. The village itself is not so much to look at, but the landscape is really beautiful around here. There is also a beautiful lake nearby and one can go swimming. Our routine here is: Reveille and roll call 7 a.m. Breakfast 8 a.m. Muster parade and route march for three or four miles, break off 11 a.m. dinner 12.30, Muster parade and roll call 6 p.m. so we are fairly free. Some of the lads play soccer. The food is getting very short now and we are down to eating boiled rice once a day.

8th APRIL – Just the same old routine day after day, eat, sleep, and answer roll calls. The Japs are quite busy recovering our trucks, guns and equipment which was never destroyed by our men when they capitulated. I don't know why it was never destroyed, but I have seen Tommies guarding the stuff so others could not wreck it. The Dutch handed over most of their stuff in good order. The Japs must have captured millions of pounds worth.

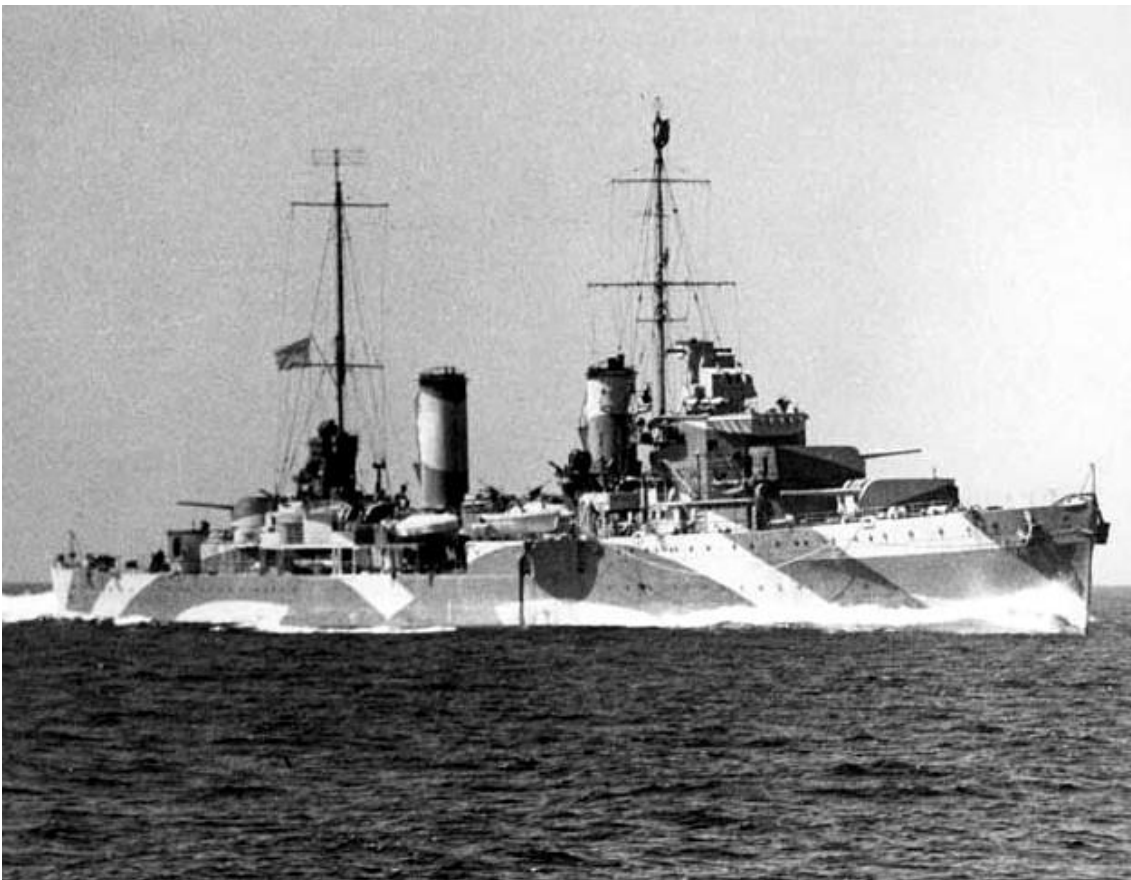
13th APRIL – Our quiet time is up at last as we are to proceed to Batavia by train 150 miles and rejoin our old unit and go behind barbed wire.

We had a 4 mile march down to the railway with all our possessions and I assure you it tested us, but we all made the grade and boarded the train at 7 a.m. The trip down was not pleasant as we had all been crowded in and were guarded by Japs. The day became wet and miserable as we passed Bandoeng. Some of the trip or scenery, I should say, was marvellous, as we travelled through mountains, valleys and plains. Java is really a beautiful country. We had to cross over railway bridges that had been blown up and repaired again. We eventually reached Batavia by 6 p.m. tired, hungry and miserable, we

were then herded outside the station where we were checked and rechecked by the Japs. Then we marched about a mile to an old Dutch barracks which is known as Bicycle Camp. When we marched in through the gates our feelings were mixed and all wondered for how long this place would be our home, and how we were going to be treated by our captors.

14th APRIL – We were put in a huge hut last night where we bedded down on a hard concrete floor, we slept well thought, as we were tired out.

The first to greet us here were a crowd of sailors off the ‘Perth’ and ‘Houston’ and I can assure you they were in very poor shape and all had beards and only a sarong for they were all naked when they made land. A lot of them were suffering from dysentery and they were half starved, poor beggars. We at once gave them what clothing and gear



On 28 February HMAS *Perth* (pictured) together with USS *Houston* encountered a powerful Japanese fleet in the Sunda Strait between Sumatra and Java. After a furious fight both allied ships were sunk. Of the 328 Australian survivors, four died after reaching shore, while the rest were captured as prisoners of war. Of 368 US Navy and Marine Corps personnel taken prisoner, 77 died in captivity.

we could spare which they appreciated. We also gave them cigarettes and some had an odd tin of bully beef. The ‘Perth’ and ‘Houston’ were sunk on February 28th in the Sunda Strait. They were trying to get out when they ran slap bang into a big Japanese invasion convoy. They put up a splendid fight, but were heavily outnumbered and went down fighting, some of the boys say that they sunk 28 Jap ships. So Nippon did not have things all his own way. The remainder of our unit are not here at this camp, but are in the town

goal we are told. There are Tommies, Punjabs, Dutch and Aussies here at present. The food here is beyond words, all we get for breakfast is rice, rice for dinner, rice for tea. It's a very poor rice at that and undercooked. I don't know how long we can put up with it, but I suppose beggars can't be choosers, or I should say, prisoners can't choose.

15th APRIL - We had another day on the rice and it has not improved. I for one can't eat it. We scrounged around yesterday and got some bamboo and made a bed for ourselves.

The natives on the island gave the sailors a very bad time when they first landed, they were very hostile in places and they attacked them at one spot and cut one chap's head off and severely cut others.

When they were captured they were thrown into gaol, at Semarang and were treated very badly. There are only 300 survivors out of 700 on the 'Perth' and 400 odd off the 'Houston'. I have been unfortunate as I have an attack of dysentery again and the majority of the boys are suffering from the same complaint. Some of the lads went out to work today down to the oil wells where the work is very heavy.

16th APRIL - We have found an addition to our rice and it's weevils, one has to eat it or go without as I have been doing. I am still on the sick list and feel very miserable indeed. We are all down in the dumps. We are locked in our compounds at night.

20th APRIL - Everything is going along just the same here, life is very boring locked up here with nothing to do. The rice is just the same, but we were given a pork sausage yesterday, and it was the nicest sausage I have ever tasted. We also get a cup of strong black tea with no sugar, 'tis very bitter, but better than water. Some of the lads are eating the rice alright but I cannot get it down. A lot of us are losing weight and are as weak as chickens. The camp hospital is full up with dysentery, malaria and tinea patients. The doctors are having a hard job as they have no medical supplies or equipment. I went out on working party yesterday to Tanjo Prick where the oil plant was. The plant is badly knocked about from bombs and fire. There is still quite a lot of good oil and petrol there though, and Nippon has us working on it.

21st APRIL - We had our first death today as one of the machine-gunners died from dysentery. We lined the road and gave him the last salute as he was taken away. I have seen a few men die since I left home, but none affected me as did this one. He died because he did not receive correct treatment. There are a few more in hospital who are expected to go the same way, poor chaps.

23rd APRIL - Today a party of us were marched out and put on filling big drains in the park with picks and shovels while Nippon stood over us. The sun was blazing down as hot as hell and we, in our weakened condition, felt it very much, I assure you. Some of the boys had their faces slapped by the guards for going slowly. 'Tis a hard life.

26th APRIL - We have another addition to our rice now, some call it stew, but I think it's dish water. It's terribly greasy, and sometimes one gets a piece of greasy pig fat in it. Sometimes one or two of the boys will receive a fraction of meat. It's like winning a lottery, and there will be loud cheers for the fortunate one.

28th APRIL - 'Tis Kit's birthday and I cannot send her a word of encouragement. I am very home-sick. We heard a few rumours of what's happening outside and we hope we are not to be kept here too long. The officers here are not proving themselves as men,

for when out on working parties they buy eats like sugar, bread, cakes and tobacco or cigarettes and do not split with the men, but keep it to themselves. The men will not forgive some of them for what they have done. We were allowed to write one letter home to let our loved ones know how we are faring, but we have it on pretty good authority that they have never been sent and we have not heard any more of them. My main worry is, at present, that Mother and Kitty will not know what has become of me, and if only they would send our names home it would be a great relief to us. I would give all I possess to hear from my Darlings.

1st MAY – There is a big reshuffle around camp today, as the Punjabs, Dutch and Tommies are to go to another camp and this one will be for Australian and American prisoners. I'll be glad to see the rest of our unit as some of my closest pals are amongst them. Up to date, three have died from dysentery, two Australians and one American naval officer. We had a holiday a couple of days ago as it was the Nippon Emperor's birthday and the Japs had a big day in Batavia. A lot of flag waving and aeroplanes dropping propaganda pictures, etc.

2nd MAY – The remainder of our unit which landed on this island marched in this morning, and some of the boys look very sick on it. They have been in Gladdock Gaol and were kept in crowded cells. Most of them have Dengue Fever and dysentery. I did not recognise Ron Booth as he has fallen away so much. Even Capt Polson and our C.O. Chas Howard have lost quite a bit of weight. They will find living conditions much better here.

10th MAY – Things are the same, day after day, which is very monotonous. The only consolation is that a few bob is mounting up in our book for us, but I'd give it all to get out of here and see my loved-ones again. The boys held a concert here last night and it was a huge success and we are told we may have one a week. There are quite a lot of buzzes going around the camp. We have heard that the Aussies have been attacked, and a landing has been made in W.A. Others say New Guinea, Timor, and Bali have been evacuated by the Japs. We don't know any news for sure but hope the latter is right, then we may not be here so long. All the boys are as brown as berries, for all they wear is a pair of shorts and a pair of boots, that's all most of them have anyway so it's just as well the weather is warm, although it's winter here now.

20th MAY – There has been nothing startling this last week to write about as every day is the same. Work parties have been regular so we go out every day. Some of us go out to the golf links where we have to stack 84 gallon drums of petrol in heaps of 200, the work is very heavy, and we feel it in our weakened condition. Others go out to the park, where they have pick and shovel work, while the remainder go down to the dock and wharf, there is tons of work for us to do. The Japanese have allowed us to have a canteen here in the camp where we can buy eggs, tobacco, fruit etc., if one has any cash, which is very scarce now as we are not paid for our work. There is a concert every weekend and they are quite good, we have some very good singers. Some of the Yanks are quite good. Last Saturday night I was sitting on a wash bench listening to the concert when I felt something cold on my back and looked around to see a Nippon guard there with 2 bottles of icy cold beer, which he gave to us. We soon made short work of it. It was beautiful! The guards are funny here, one moment they will give you a bashing and the next they will surprise you by giving you something. There was a bit of a stir over our food, and

since we have had more stew in it also a few beans and herbs which help to digest the rice.

1st JUNE - Most of us here are starting to pick up a bit and have got used to our diet of rice. I never thought I would look forward to a feed of it, but we get very hungry at times. The boys have all sorts of hobbies to while away the time. They make rings, brooches and watch glasses out of unbreakable aeroplane glass which they have scrounged somewhere, while others play cards, chess and draughts. I have been having lessons from Ron Booth on book-keeping and I have learned quite a lot from him, which may come in handy when the war is over. The boys have built a volley ball court and some good games are played and one gets plenty of exercise. The Yanks here are living like lords as they brought 1/4million guilders with them, while our officers destroyed most of the Aussie supply. John Yule saw 60000 guilders destroyed and thrown into the river. What a loss!

10th JUNE – The news had been filtering in from different sources and we are in great hope that we may be released from here in the near future. All the Dutch people we see, tell us it won't be long now, and the niggers have taken down the Jap flags they used to fly which seems a good sign. The rumours have it that the Australians and Americans have recaptured New Guinea and Timor, well we will see. The Jap guards have been nasty the last few days and quite a lot of bashings have occurred. It made my blood boil the other day when we were coming home from a work party, the guards stopped a Dutch girl about 14 years of age and gave her two hefty punches in the face. All she had done was to wave to the boys. We had to stand there and growl as they would not hesitate to bayonet anyone who interfered. But our day will come and when it does! We were told that 3 air force chaps had been shot in trying to escape. We have to learn the Japanese word of command, and drill our boys in Japanese. One of their favourite tricks is to come into the compound and yell Shootsky, which means attention and some of the boys will not be quick enough for them, and they go up to the offender and kick hell out of his shins, and all one can do is take it. They are not particular who they bash and they have all taken it from Brig. Blackburn to O.Rs.

20th JUNE – We are still here, so news could not have been correct. The same old routine goes on here day after day, and life is very tiring I assure you. There have been quite a lot of fights lately among the boys, as they are all pretty liverish now. The fights don't last long as the boys are too weak to do much harm. Heard that Togo is sending names home, I sincerely hope so, as Kit and Mother will know that I am alive and kicking. Will be a load off my mind. The weather is much cooler now, something like our summer at home. The boys are having a bad time from tinnea and Dhoby's itch, and I am one of the unfortunate ones to have it. Rice has been cut down a bit, so boys are all hungry. If any person ever asks me to eat rice at home, when I reach there, well look out.

30th JUNE – Today has been one of the worst and hardest days I have been through here. The Japs have been very nasty and have stopped all our privileges such as canteen, lessons, concerts, and lectures and bashings are the order of the day. We have been asked to sign a paper for Nippon and we have refused and he is taking it out on us. We had till 7 p.m. to sign and here is a copy of the oath.

Written Oath

The undersigned solemnly swear that henceforth they will obey, absolutely, all orders and commands of Dai Nippon Gun.

Notice

The lives of the men who do not sign the oath will not be guaranteed. Senior officers are not allowed to punish men who sign the oath. If you make up your minds to sign, come to the Commandant's Office of Dai Nippon Gun. Signed, Comm. Suzuki.

Well no one went over and signed voluntarily, so Nippon took things into his own hands, and we were marched down to the office and made to sign. A few held out for a while, but were bashed into signing in the end. Everyone on the island had to sign, and they, like us, had no option.

6th JULY – Nippon has been picking on the men and takes them away for interrogation, he could not learn much from Officers so hopes to do better from the men. He won't have much luck, as the boys don't know much to tell, if they had a mind to. We are still being punished like naughty boys for the signing business, as bashings still go on, now boys are not allowed to lie down during the day or even go out of compound to visit mates in other huts.

10th JULY 1942 – Another ten days have passed and we are still doing the same old thing day after day. We have heard a lot of rumours here, which tell us that the big drive has commenced, and we are not to be here long now. New Guinea, Timor, Bali and Celebes are all supposed to be in our hands. Only hope half of it's right and I'll be pleased. Nippon has eased up a bit on the bashings and we are now getting a bread ration daily and we thoroughly enjoy it even though it is dry. The bread is cooked by our own boys, they even made the oven for cooking. We are heartily sick of rice, but manage to live on it somehow.

20th JULY – All the good news we have been hearing has been all hooey and we are again where we started. The boys who start these rumours should be horse whipped. Things are normal and we have the Canteen once again, and there is a lot of volley ball played. They have a competition going here and each hut has a team and the Japanese Commandant has promised a cup for the winners. There is quite a lot of interest taken in the game, and one gets quite worked up barracking for his team. There are also chess and draughts tournaments being played. We had a treat last night as we had a tin of M. & V. between three and have been told we are to have more. We had an inspection by some big Jap General yesterday and he was quite pleased with everything he saw.

26th JULY – Our priest is not allowed to come into our compound now, but is allowed into another yard where he rigged up an altar on a bed with a board across it, he then says Mass and gives the boys communion through the barbwire with the Japs looking on wondering what it's all about. This afternoon the boys had a boxing tournament and there were some really first class fights, how the boys kept going I cannot understand, as there is no body in rice. The bouts were all Australian v. American, and America won the day by 4 wins, 2 draws to 3 wins, 1 draw. So it was pretty even. tinea is getting a hold on here and I have it again. We have some more Dutch rations, nasi goreng it's called and it's really good.

20th AUGUST – Another month has gone by and we are still here and we have heard very little reliable news of the outside world. Everything is much the same. Some days the Japs treat us very well, and others the bashings go on for no reason whatever. Our officers here have been court martialling our boys and have been giving them heavy sentences for minor offences, some have got up to 90 days in the brig. Three more Aussies were brought in the other day, they were of the missing A company Pioneers. A batch of Australians also arrived here from Timor, Officers and N.C.Os. and they soon settled another rumour that we had Timor. It seems as if they had been like us and had no chance either, there are only 12,000 of them. Another of the Australians died a few days ago which makes the total five since we came here.

20th SEPTEMBER –I'm afraid we are here till after Xmas now something to look forward to, boiled rice for dinner. Another batch arrived here from Timor, all Aussies, who say there is very little happening there. There has been a lot of Jap troop movements here lately and they are being shipped somewhere. Everything cavalry, infantry, artillery and sailors are all moving. We also have a new Commandant, haven't had time as to see how he will treat us.

White Crosses

On the day before leave taking,
From this place called Tobruk Bay,
One last visit I'll be making,
To that graveyard down the way,
Where 800 small white crosses
And 800 sacred mounds,
Show where our heroes
Sleep their last on foreign ground.

Every white cross tells a story,
With a number, rank and name,
Every mound is one of glory,
For it holds an Anzac's frame.
Each fair state a space divided,
In this square of Libian sand,
And undoubtedly decided,
Fairest square of all the land.

Every mound holds someone's digger,
Every cross a mother's pride,
And Australia's fame grows bigger,
For the way these heroes died.
Best of mates it's hard to leave you
In this sandy waste so bare,
But fond hearts shall ne'er forget you,
In your native land so fair.

We know not our destination,
When we leave this hostile bay,
But we've the determination
We shall square the debt some day.
And perhaps it sounds like hooey,
But the orders read, 'No Noise'
Or I'd shout one long last coo-ee
As a farewell from the boys.

This starts just as we are to leave Batavia, Java.

3rd OCTOBER, 1942 – A bombshell was dropped amongst us today as one of our boys have been warned to be ready at a moment's notice to move to an unknown destination. Our little party has been split up again as Blue Watson, Snow Mayman, Wog McMahon and Dan Dockerty are to go. A few men have been taken out of each unit including Dutch and American, 300 all told are going. There are quite a lot of rumours flying around as to where they are going, but our hosts, the little yellow men, will not say. The general impression is that the Nips fear invasion and are shifting us back somewhere. May even be to the land of Cherry Blossoms. Well I hope not as it is a long way over the big drink, and we may strike some tin fish. Something seems to have happened around here and the Nips are on their toes, and bashings are the order of the day once more. One has to be wide awake all the time and sleep with one eye open. The wet season is just beginning now, and it really poured down last night. The gutters and drains could not cope with the water and flooded our compound.

7th OCTOBER – The boys got away to an early start yesterday morning 4 a.m. Wonder where we will see them again. We have been informed that we are to be ready to move also. Today we had several muster parades and roll calls. The Nips are a damn nuisance counting us. It would be alright if one counted us but two or three start on us always ending in a mess up. Our officer will be right, but will probably get a bash just the same. That's the way the Nips save face, they will never admit they are in the wrong. We have also had a couple of searches. But anyone who wants to keep anything has no trouble whatever to plant same till search is over then collect again and put with gear that has been searched. The Nips have ordered us to shave our heads and, one can't help laughing at one another, we look like real gaol birds now. No man is allowed to have hair longer than the camp commandant Col. Suzuki. We have to watch him closely. There will be a few of our boys staying here, as they are too sick to move. We won't get much sleep tonight as we are to leave here 3 a.m. in the morning. Reveille 1.30 a.m. So we must try for a little shut eye now.

8th OCTOBER – We arose at 1.30 a.m. had a light breakfast of rice and a mug of native tea, packed our gear and were ready to move at 2.30. Like all other moves we sat around till 4 a.m. We moved out onto the road outside the camp where we sat on our kit bags for another hour. Then we had to march to the railway station carrying all our gear a little over a mile. The furchies were flying again and report is we go to Sourabaya. We were packed into dirty native carriages and after another long wait we were sent on our way. After a lot of shunting around, we headed for Tangong Priok. Arriving there we had to march about a mile from station to wharf where a very dirty ship was awaiting us. We are not too pleased about things in general now, but can't do much about it. After sitting on the wharf for about 1.1/2 hours we were ordered to board, and herded into a smelly hold. We were packed in tighter than sardines. We were not anxious to move up and we all tried to keep enough space to lie down, but the guard soon stopped that when he got in amongst us with his rifle butt. It reminded me of penning up sheep. There were about 720 of us in a space 80ft by 40ft. The floor was filthy and all the vermin in the world seemed to be congregated there. Rats, cockroaches, bugs, fleas and lice. The only fresh air we get is through a board taken off the top of the hatch. The heat is stifling as the hot

tropical sun is beating down on the iron sides of the ship. The sweat is just running off the men and we all stink. We are told that we are not allowed to go on deck and Nips guard the stairway. We pulled away from the wharf 2 p.m. but did not get far as we anchored just beyond the harbour boom. 7 p.m. we feel the ship start and we are on our way where?

We had our first meal for 20 hours, rice, but we were hungry and gobbled it down and liked it. We had a hell of a job to get our good (Muchen as Japs call it) as we were all crowded in. We all stayed put and a few of the boys acted as orderlies and passed it over to us. We were not allowed any water or anything to drink and water bottles are very low indeed, so we only allowed ourselves one swallow. It's marvellous how thirst one gets when one has no water. We were allowed for 20 mins was the most beautiful air I have ever tasted, we just gulped it down. The 10 mins flew and we were herded into the hold again. We have just been informed by the captain of this packet that we are to have a long trip and they have no water to spare for us. There will be no washing but he will try to give us a pint a day for drinking.

9th OCTOBER – It's impossible to describe the night we put in. If ever human beings have to suffer, well we did our share. The black hole of Calcutta was a palace compared to this. If the 'Altmark' was a hell ship then this is a bloody hell ship. The hold stinks like a sewer this morning. The men could not sleep and the heat was terrific. All one could do was squat down and let the sweat run off one like water. The mats we are sitting on are wet through. It was pitch black and one could not see a few inches in front of one. The rats came out and annoyed us. One would land on one's head and frighten the wits out of one. You'd fling him onto your mate and then he'd go crook. A lot of the men went out to it and the Nips gave our officers permission to take them out on the deck for a while. This morning a lot are in a bad way from dysentery and Dengue Fever. The nip Captain had a look or rather a smell of us so he has allowed us on deck every couple of hours for a few minutes. Don't we look forward to it! Had two more meals of rice today. I quite understand the mariners' song now, 'Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink.' The rumour is now we are heading for Singapore.

10th OCTOBER – We are all completely done now, the sweat is pouring off us and we are as weak as chickens. We have lost a lot of weight. The hold is like an oven. One poor devil died last night and was thrown overboard. Well, his troubles are over. Dysentery has broken out and a lot of the boys are suffering from it. It is awkward here as the sanitary arrangements are very bad. The poor chaps can't get out to the latrines, so they dirty their clothes. Their mates can't do much for them although they try. We are nearing the equator, and if hell's any hotter I'm not going there. The Nips are letting us on deck more often now, but as there is not shade it's very hot but one gets some fresh air at least. We are sailing without any escort whatever but one sees nothing of interest. Hope none of our subs spot us, Borneo is away on our right.

12th OCTOBER – Yesterday was much the same as the previous day, only more men have gone down to it, another two men died and they were thrown overboard. We passed a lot of small islands today, have seen a couple of Jap war ships pass away in the distance. We were nearing Singapore we were told, so the rumour was right anyway. We have anchored in Singapore Harbour and a Jap doctor has arrived on board, and has



Changi Prison was constructed by the British administration of the Straits Settlements as a civilian prison, in 1936.

Following the Fall of Singapore in February 1942, the Japanese military detained about 3,000 civilians in Changi Prison, which was built to house only 600 prisoners. The Japanese used the nearby British Army's Selarang Barracks as a prisoner of war camp, holding some 50,000 Allied soldiers, predominantly British and Australian; and from 1943, Dutch civilians brought over by the Japanese from the islands in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia).

POWs were in fact rarely, if ever, held in the civilian prison. Nevertheless, in the UK, Australia, The Netherlands and elsewhere, the name "Changi" became synonymous with the infamous POW camp nearby.

About 850 POWs died during their internment in Changi during the Japanese occupation of Singapore, a relatively low rate compared to the overall death rate of 27% for POWs in Japanese camps. However, many more prisoners died after being transferred from Changi to various labour camps outside Singapore, including the Burma Railway and the Sandakan airfield.

ordered us off the boat for three days to recuperate. We got on Nip trucks and were driven through Singapore to Changi which was English barracks before the war. What I saw of Singapore was not very impressive, just another native village with noise and smells. They say it's the bottom of the world, I believe it. We arrived in Changi and were installed in our barracks. It is a beautiful spot here overlooking the sea, plenty of green lawns and shady palms. The P.O.W.s here seem to lead a pretty quiet life. They are wandering about everywhere with a few guards to guard them, but there are plenty of Sikh guards around. We could not understand why Indians were guarding us, but were informed that they had gone over to the Japs. They are very officious and demand salutes from the boys, they have bashing down to a fine art, the dogs. The Tommy soldier must have had a pretty good time here before the war. They have tennis courts, cricket pitches, pictures and concert halls. Plenty of nice villas for the officers. Of course the place is stripped now and we have to camp on the concrete floors. Our first job there was to find a shower in order which we duly did. It was grand, our first wash for five days, we made the most of it. Then we had a feed and lay down for 12 hours without moving.

13th OCTOBER – The boys have been very busy his morning looking up their old pals, some they have not seen since leaving Aussie. There have been many happy reunions. One chap with us met his son whom he thought had been killed in the Malayan

campaign. I also met up with my mates who left Batavia a few days before us. They had a rough trot getting here. British Red Cross parcels arrived today. We received 2 tins of bully beef, 1 pkt of cigarettes, one tin of milk, some biscuits and a portion of cocoa. We appreciated our issue and partook of it sparingly. We were also allowed to write home to our loved ones, 24 words only, but it meant a lot to us, as we know how worried our loved ones at home must be. I hope they go this time. Some of the barracks have suffered from Nip bombs and are in a bad way. A lot of the boys who came up here with us have been put into hospital suffering from dysentery, malaria and Dengue Fever. Bad news again. We are to embark on another craft tomorrow, destination unknown. Well a good rest tonight and hope for a better trip this time. We would have liked to stay here till it's all over.

14th OCTOBER – We left Changi this morning and were brought down to the wharf in trucks. We went aboard an older and dirtier vessel this time, and once again have been herded below. We are up forward and have a little more room. We can at least stretch out and move around a little. We pulled away from wharf 5 p.m. and once again anchored in the harbour.

16th OCTOBER – We stayed in harbour two days. One cannot understand why they brought us out here and kept us cooped up for two days. The heat is terrific and the men look miserable. The water is rationed and is once again scarce. There is an old donkey engine in the hold, and Nips start it up every day. The pump leaks so the boys hold a billy below the leak and get a supply of greasy boiling water. It's hard to drink, but at least it's wet. A Nip caught one of the boys at it today. He went mad and gave the chap a good bashing. There are a lot of Jap ships here at present and would make a good target for our bombers. The Nips do not carry any distinguishing on their ships to show they are carrying P.O.Ws. Hope our planes don't show up as we would have not chance if it were hit. She would go straight to the bottom. Their only protection is an old mountain gun perched on a staging aft. One shot and it would come tumbling down. The Nips have quite a load of junk aboard also. Old trucks, tractors, railway lines, explosives and numerous other things.

At last we are on our way again and are heading in a N.W. direction. There are four ships in our convoy and we are led by a small Jap destroyer. The food is still pretty bad but we had some meat today. I don't know how old it was, but it was green and mouldy. We forced it down. Some of the boys could not keep it down. Many of us are really sick and will have a job to make it. Dysentery is here again, and the only wash we get is when the Nips hose the deck. The boys crowd up on deck until Nip gets wild and turns the hose on the boys. Just what they want him to do.

18th OCTOBER – We are still crawling along the Malayan coast and have never lost sight of it since we left. It looks good to us for if anything happens we have a chance of making land. The sea is like a duck pond. There are miles and miles of duck ponds along the coast therefore the water is very muddy. A range seems to run right along the rugged coastal country. The water is the greatest problem as one is always thirsty. The boys would give almost anything to lay down and drink his fill from a good old Aussie stream. The cigarettes are almost done now, and if one of the boys light one up now we all gather round for a draw. Some of the men have done a little trading with the Nips,

selling watches or cigarette cases for a couple of packets of smokes. The men are getting a haggard look about them now. They are all feeling the strain and have not been able to wash or shave and the smell is horrible. We are depressed about things in general, then Jim Anderson, who is a champion singer, began to sing. Jim has a marvellous voice and everyone was silent listening, then he got going some community singing. Well, it was a great effort on his part for the boys soon forgot their troubles. They sang for several hours, and the guards pulled back the hatch covers to look at us. They could not make out why we seemed so happy. There is no doubt about singing cheering one up.

23rd OCTOBER – Today we arrived at Rangoon, Burma on the Irrawaddi River. We had a very miserable trip and the boys neither look or feel well. We have been cooped up most of the time and the ventilation was very poor indeed. There was a nasty incident last night, when the Nips were on the war path. They bashed the boys for trivial offences. The main trouble was that the boys found a stack of life belts and were using them for pillows. The Nips raved and yelled and bashed some of the boys who could not hide or get rid of his belt. I was very fortunate, after they bashed the boys, they took them on deck and shaved their heads so they would be known as thieves. An Aussie captain was amongst them, Capt. Edwards, 2/3 machine [?] gunners. We dropped anchor for the night in the mouth of the Irrawaddi River, and came up river today 1.30 p.m. to Rangoon. The river is wide and deep and when the tide goes out the water rushes out at a great speed. The native fishermen have great fun with the tide. They have a small sail on the boat and simply fly along, but the poor devils pulling against the tide have a hell of a job. I watch two pull past our boat today while we were tied at the wharf. It took them 15 mins. I would not attempt to guess how long it would take them to do a mile.

The country around the entrance is as flat as a flounder but looks very fertile. Rangoon does not look so good to us from here but we may be doing the town an injustice. We can see a few pagodas and temples. The Burmese are a dirty looking lot. The wharves are well bombed about, whether by our bombs or the Nips I don't know, but whoever did it has done a good job.

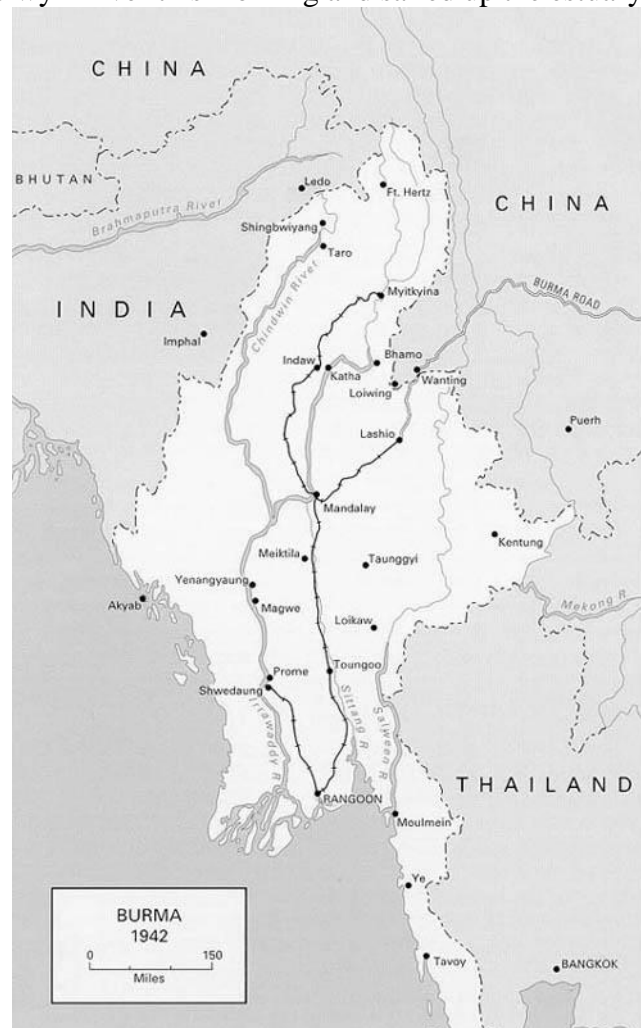
24th OCTOBER – We did not disembark as we thought last night, but waited till today. Last night was a nightmare. I don't think anyone on board had any sleep. It was terribly hot down below and mosquitoes attacked us in thousands, some of them as big as hornets and the sting would drive one silly. I assure you the language was pretty bad. There was no way of getting away from them. If one covered up with a blanket one nearly suffocated. Some of the lads had mosquito nets but there was not room to put them up. We were taken off this tub today and were checked and rechecked by the Nips. We were glad to be on Terra Firma again and we wonder where we are going. We were not kept wondering long for our officer Colonel Black informed us we were to go to Moulmien to build a railroad through to Thailand. You can imagine our disgust when we were loaded onto another tub. I thought the last tub was filthy but this was an old coal boat. We had to go right to the bottom and lay on iron sides of a ship filthy with coal dust and vermin. We were given one water bottle full and one small packet of Jap biscuits, they had to last us the trip. The weevils had eaten all the good out of the biscuits some years ago by the look of them. We are now out of smokes and very irritable. We are on our way down the Irrawaddi again. The Nips do not seem to worry about blackouts as all their ships are

lighted up at nights now. They will get a shock one night. A Nip guard had a lucky escape this evening. We had been on deck for a while when he started bellowing and slapping, ordering all men down again. Well it was 40 ft below and a straight drop. He was right on the edge of the hold, the boys were all crowding past him when he slapped one chap over the head with his rifle butt. The boys saw red and yelled, 'Push the yellow B* over.' The boys at the back gave a shove and the men in front went forward. Nippon got a shove, and, like a monkey leaped onto a girder six feet away and luck was on his side, he hung on some how. He is known as Basher and a nasty piece of work. Anyhow he got a hell of a fright and lets us alone then.

We entered the mouth of the Selwyn River this morning and sailed up the estuary to Moulmien where we dropped anchor in the river. The country is very low and swampy around the estuary, yet back a few miles the country is very rugged and mountainous. We are damn glad to get off this tub. I hope never to travel on a Nip ship as long as I live. We are as hungry as men can be, and although I've never liked rice I'd love to see a dixie of it now. 6.30 p.m. we got into a big punt affair. The tide was running out very fast so we had a job to get on safely. Eventually we made it and when we were cast off the boat the tide took possession of us and gave us a few anxious moments, but after a lot of trouble the tug took charge and we did a mile to the wharf taking 4 hours. We had to march a couple of miles carrying our gear to the Moulmien native gaol, where we were dumped into a building and told to settle down for the night. It was blacker than the inside of a black

dog's belly. Most of the boys just dropped where they were and slept till morning. As we marched up from the punt we came through a part of Moulmien. Some of the natives would say, 'We are sorry for you Aussie.' Some of the lads would reply, 'Not as sorry as we B* well are.' Some were fortunate to get a couple of coconuts from some natives if the guards were not looking. Quite a few of the men were done up with dysentery and fever and some of the boys would carry his mate to where we were going to camp.

27th OCTOBER – We are still here in the Moulmien gaol but expect to move out tomorrow to a jungle camp where we will start work. There are a lot of native prisoners here in the gaol and they are in a pitiful plight. They have huge iron rings around their



ankles and knees with a rod of iron running up to the waist. They can just amble around. Three and four of them are chained together. They never have the irons taken off. They eat, sleep and work in them. Just before the gaol there is a huge Burmese Pagoda. The pagoda Kipling wrote about in his song ('The Moulmien Pagoda looking eastward to the sea') 'The Road to Mandalay'. It looks a huge turnout but we can't see it all from here. One hears the bells playing at day break. They are very pretty. The dome of the pagoda is of gold, and when the sun shines one can see the glitter for miles. The food here is not good, rice and a very watery stew. The water is very scarce, only one well with limited supply. We could not have a decent wash. The beds are wooden floors and a wooden block for a pillow. We are used to such hard bunks now. We were addressed by some Nip head today and he told us we were to work on the line, but conditions would be very good. We would work 8 hours a day and have plenty of meat and vegetables for food, very little rice, cigars and tobacco, no bashing as guards were very kind to us. We would be paid for working and would have a yassmeh (holiday) every 10 days. We were brightened up considerably and were anxious to get onto the job. We are to be divided into battalions 800 men strong and are to be known as Black Force. The first crowd moved out to Thambuysak today some 70 kilometres from here. We also have been formed into sections of 50 men each. We have one of our own officers over each section and he is responsible for us. Two more of our men died here today and we were allowed to form a guard of honour and give him a last salute before they took him away to bury him.

28th OCTOBER – Today we were ready to move at 6.30 a.m. At 7 we had to march three miles to Moulmien station through the town. We were glad to leave the gaol behind us. When we arrived in town, the natives rushed us with food, fruit and cigars. The Nip guards tried to stop them but they had no chance. We ate a hell of a mixture of native dishes that day and it appeased our hunger. Some of the food really was good, and the fruit was a blessing, paw paw, banana and pomolows. The native cigars are terrible but will get used to them. The wog weed is rolled in banana leaf, and it leaves a funny taste in the mouth. Most of the natives are Indians from Ceylon, may be why they were so kind to us. We eventually reached the station and were pushed into cattle trucks for a very uncomfortable journey of 40 miles. There are a few farms dotted about the country and plenty of paddy rice fields. Have seen a few head of cattle grazing around. Would like one in a pot. We reached our staging camp about 2.30. We all assembled in our sections and were welcomed by a Jap Colonel. He welcomed us to the camp and told us how pleased he was to see us. (With a big grin) He also told us that we were the remnant of a rabble army, that could not even dress up properly. He went on to say that until such time as the stupid British and American Governments saw eye to eye with the great Imperial Nippon Government we would be kept here to work. He also told us that the railroads would go through even over our dead bodies. Well he finished and turned round to get off the table from which he was speaking and the back side was out of his trousers. The boys could not help laughing at him after his remarks about our clothes. This camp is to be our hospital and base camp called Thambuysak. 'Tis a pretty big camp, the huts are made from bamboo with thatch roof called atap. The floor is of bamboo slats where we sleep. Water is tight again, only two wells working, but we manage to have a wash. We had tea of rice and did not see any meat.

29th OCTOBER – Off on the trail again, this time we have arrived at the 40 Kilo camp from base. We are all done in as we had to march all the way carrying our kit. We are in the jungle now. We are in a valley with rough mountains on either side. We have bamboo huts to live in similar to base camp, each hut holds 300 men. There are Americans, Dutch, Tamil Indians and Burmese here. We have to carry our water nearly half a mile from camp. There are only a few buckets and we have to carry washing water in bamboo sticks. The bamboo grows very big here, up to a foot through.

Each day there are different fatigues to carry water for the cook house, each man has to make nine trips and carry two buckets of water. At last we've seen some meat, we are allowed one cow or bull that has been worked for at least 15 or 20 years in the Burmese carts. One beast between 800 hungry men. It's something anyway. We are to be paid for working here, privates 10 cents, N.C.Os 15, W.Os 25 cents a day. Ten cents equals about 4d Australian. We do all our own work in camp. We have our own cooks, butcher, hygiene squad and hospital orderlies. All water has to be boiled before drinking as it is full of cholera germs. Mosquitoes and bugs and bamboo lice are very bad.

30th OCTOBER – We are assembled for different work parties. No 1. scrub clearing, I drew that. 2. Grubbing trees. 3. Levelling line and filling up embankments. There is no machinery, all human labour. The tools are very obsolete and Jap made. Each man has so much to do each day, and when he is finished he can knock off. We started out with picks, tomahawks, shovels, chunkels, cross cut saws and ropes to attack and cut a path through the jungle. The work is very hard and we are not in good condition, so we were very tired men when we went to bed that night. The jungle is alive with ants, flies, cockroaches, centipedes, and snakes. So one has to be careful what one picks up. The centipedes are the biggest I have ever seen. The only animals I have seen so far are spider monkeys, they are here in thousands. There are hundreds of vultures here. They are huge, tip to tip of wings is seven ft. We started work 9.30 a.m. finished 7.30 p.m. all for 4d a day.

3rd NOVEMBER – 'Tis Melbourne Cup day at home and Nip has allowed us to have a Yassmah so boys spent the day mending and washing clothes, also general clean up around the camp, making our home comfortable to live in. Some of the men have made a fish net and are having a go to catch some in the river, but are not having much luck. There are fish there alright but one would need a plug of geli to get them. A lot of men have beards now as their stock of razor blades have run out, and soap is a thing of the past.

Quite a few men are sick at present and are in a hut on one side of the camp called hospital. They are suffering from dysentery, malaria, berri-berri and pelagra all caused through lack of vitamins. We lost another man today, he died from dysentery and was buried by the railroad. The food has not improved as we were told it would. Two of the cattle got away into the jungle so that means two meatless days for us. We are quite used to it now.

15th NOVEMBER – I won't write every day now as things are much the same, same work, same men, same jungle, same guards. We have had a few very rainy days and when it rains here, it pours, the work goes on just as usual. The humidity is very bad and the work gets harder and harder each day. The Nips have put our quota up and some get

in very late from jobs. Some of the men had a sit down strike last week so Nip kept them out till 11.30 p.m. The only satisfaction they got was that the guards had to stay out and miss tea too. The men are now in a bad way for clothes, and all some poor devils have is a pair of raggy shorts. Boots are done and men go bare footed to work. We have scored another day off after 11 days and we all appreciate it. I can tell you without fear of contradiction that we are tired, hungry and miserable. One good thing about it here is that the nights are pretty cool and it gets cold towards day break. The Nips have put their watches on and now eat in the dark and are on the job by sunrise. Disease and sickness are spreading at a rate and two men died yesterday. The way things are going there will be a lot more die soon. We have been given a native tea to drink and it's a wicked concoction. We held an open air concert last night and had a good sing song to help while away the time. There are some good artists amongst the crowd. When the concert was finished we all stood to sing 'God Save Our King'. The Nips also stood till they realised what we were singing, then they stormed and raved and have banned the song. One lad caused some amusement when he came out and sang 'There's a little yellow basket'. Instead of using 'basket' he used another word common amongst soldiers. The Nips did not wake up. I went down to see a Nip officer shoot a bull a few nights ago. He had an Aussie hold it by the head, stood back six paces, marked a spot between the eyes and fired. He hit the bull in the nose, tried again and shot it in the mouth. The Aussie could not stand it any longer, so he grabbed the axe, and hit the bull behind the ear, dropped him and then cut his throat. He was a very bad shot.

21st NOVEMBER – I have had a very bad week, as I have had a touch of dysentery. There are 150 of us in a hut here, all with the same complaint. It is the worst sickness I have had and has knocked me out completely. I have lost over two stone in a week. My record was 43 trips to the lavatory in 24 hours. The conditions here are very bad now, and one has to be on the verge of death to get into hospital. The hut I am in now is open and we have to lay on bamboo sticks with no orderlies to attend to us. Every man has to fend for himself. There are some very bad cases. Men would try to get to the latrine, fall down and mess all over himself. Some would dirty their blankets and clothes and have to wait till mates came in at night and bring them some water to wash themselves. The Nips rave about too many sick men and will not give us any medical supplies to help us. When one goes on sick parade each morning, the doctor says he is sorry, but can do nothing for you. He has nothing. Some of the men go out to work and cannot do their quota and is called a bludger by some of our own officers. When they answer back they are crimed, so things are only fair to middling on the job here. They will not stand up for the men and whatever Nip says they order us to do. Some argue and take a bashing but win points for the men under him. The boys will do anything for a man like that.

26th NOVEMBER – I am back on the job again and feel much better. A few more men died last week and were buried on the railroad track. The men that die here get a military funeral and the bugler blows the Last Post over his grave. As soon as the boys hear the bugle blow they stop what they are doing and stand to attention. Nips could not make us out for a while, but when it was explained to them they did not mind much. To make matters worse around here, cholera has broken out amongst the natives. We have had needles to counteract it. Hope it's successful, as cholera is a terrible disease. The pool

from which we got our water has gone dry so we get our water from a dirty swamp a mile away. The water is not good, but it is all we can get. We have a crowd of Korean guards who are very officious, and bash and kick boys on the least pretext. We have to salute all officers and guards whenever we see them. We had a bit of a blow out yesterday as Nip guards shot a wild bull in the jungle, we went out and butchered it. They gave the heart, liver and head to our section, so did we have a feed. We have a bit of a canteen now, where one can buy wog cigars, shindager and an odd egg once in a while. We have not had any pay yet but boys sell watches, pens or any jewellery they have to the Nips, to raise a few cents to buy food. They men have invented a new drink. They call it coffee. It's rice burned till it's black as charcoal, then boiled for half an hour. It put a peculiar flavour in the water but one gets accustomed to it. Our clearing job has been cut out for the present and we are building embankment for the line now. We have to carry dirt in little baskets on yo [?] mound. It's a tiring and monotonous job going backward and forward each day. At times one has to carry dirt 200 yards or more.

3rd DECEMBER - We have finished our section of the line at the 40 Kilo camp and have moved back to the 26 Kilo camp. We had to march back carrying all our gear. It was a hard, hot, dusty walk but we eventually made it and arrived to find it in a filthy state. Burmese had been on this section of the line, but cholera broke out amongst them and reports say 70% of them died. It is hard to describe the filth of the camp but natives did not have any sanitary arrangements whatever. There were dead natives everywhere in the bush and a terrible smell arising from them. The bamboo huts are also in a filthy state.

All hands got to work and tried to make a new home presentable. None of us are very pleased with the camp and are a bit windy of this cholera. There is a small stream running at the end of the camp, where we get our water for washing and cooking. The work here is much harder than the 40 Kilo camp. We are on cutting here and have to cut through rock and shale to a depth of 30 ft in places. It's all manual work, no drills or explosives, just pick and shovels. The quote of work is the same as when we were working in dirt, so boys are up till 11 p.m. before they finish their work. It's as hot as hell and men work in black gee string. There is a big American Officer in charge of us. He is a card. He does not let the Nips stand over him. He abuses them up hill and down dale. He gets away with it too. We are heartily sick of the food. Rice and greasy water some call stew. It is not the best for men working hard with pick and shovel. The boys will sure appreciate good food when we get out of this jam. We have not had any pay so we cannot buy anything to help us along. The Nips took a few of the boys down to the base a couple of nights ago to show a propaganda picture. They say it was a terrible show but Boongs lapped it up.

15th DECEMBER – At last we have received a reward for our work and have had a pay day. For my 20 odd days work I received the large amount of two rupees, 23 cents which equals about 4/- Australian. I could afford to buy 2 eggs, 2 spoonfuls of curry powder, which turned out to be turmeric, one slab of shindager, which is a product of sugar cane. That day we had a tasty dinner as we fried rice in petroleum jelly and had two fried eggs. The eggs tasted lovely to us as we had not tasted any for so long. I have been put on the bridge these last 10 days and we have been pile driving. The monkey that drives in the piles has to be hauled up by men and let drop on pile. The monkey weights over

half a ton and by the end of the day seems like five tons. We have an elephant now and he saves us quite a lot of back breaking work, getting piles into position etc. He is the most intelligent animal I have ever seen, and it's surprising what he can do. The work is still very hard, but we are making a good show. Another 250 Aussies arrived here today. They are from 19th, 20th, 26th and 30th Battalions. They came up from Victoria Point and Yea. I have not met any I know yet. Three Dutch Officers who tried to escape were shot like dogs the other morning. That brings the tally up to 16 now from these parts who have been shot by the Yellow Bs....

25th DECEMBER – Christmas day in a prison camp. What a difference to the last 25th December, when we were in the snow in Syria. Today is much like our hot summer days. Last night we had boys singing Christmas carols. They were very good. A huge cross was erected and soaked in oil, and when it was dark was lit and was a splendid sight as it burned. The 29th Battalion boys have their band here with them and we had some music last night. 'Twas good to hear music again. Today we had a holiday. This morning we had rice and shindager for breakfast. Parade 9 o'clock, church service 9.30. After church we went back to our line where we made ourselves a pudding. We had to crush up rice till we made flour. Then we got some shindy and a couple of eggs, mixed them up (yes it was a hell of a risk taken with eggs). Then we place it in a cloth and boiled for 2.1/2 hours. Well we ate it and kidded ourselves it was good oh. The dinner consisted of stew and rice. Stew was good today as we were allowed eight beasts today from the Nips.

We also had luck to find three more in the jungle. The Burmese owner will find they are gone and will go mad, but it's too late now, they're eaten. Well that brought a total of 11 for the day. That is among 1,500 men. A cricket match was played this afternoon. The bat was made from a piece of teak wood and the ball was made of cow hide, anyhow the boys had fun. For tea we had a treat. Braised steak, roast sweet ducks and radish. We thoroughly enjoyed it as it was the best and only decent feed we have had since we were taken prisoners. This evening we had a concert which was a huge success. The day went better than we expected. Of course we missed a lot as our thoughts would wander home to our loved ones and wondering what they would be doing and if they were enjoying themselves. We were also given a card to send home. Hope it reaches there. Some of the boys have had messages and cheerios from home. They were received over the secret radio which is in camp here. The boys refer to it as The Nightingale, as it sings so sweetly and keeps us in news from the outside. It is a unique set and is worked by torch batteries. It was controlled by an airforce operator. He took the risk of having his lolly (head) lopped off if he is caught. The parts were brought up in bully beef tins. The Nipas handled them on occasions when the search was on, but overlooked them. They usually get news three times a week. The boys would pass the news along to one another. We were really more up to date with the news than our captors. On occasions Nip guards would try and pass on some news to us. He would go to a lot of trouble to draw a map of the islands such as Singapore, Sumatra, Java, Timor, then a circle for Australia. He would explain all islands and say, 'All Nippon'. Boys would reply, 'Yes George.' Then he would point to where he thought Darwin was and say Boong, meaning to inform us that Darwin had been bombed. 'Yes George', then Sydney bom-bom. Some of the lads would get tired of him and ask if they had bombed Phar Lap. He would look very wise and his

face would light up and say 'Phar Lap plenty bomb-bomb'. Boys would roar laughing and Nip would be very puzzled. Well there is one good thing this Xmas, none of the boys will have a hangover tomorrow.

31st DECEMBER – New Year's Eve and glad we are that this year of 1942 is over. It has been a very bad year for us and our Allies. We hope and pray that there are better things in store for us this year. Mr Churchill said 1943 would be our year. I hope so anyway. On Boxing Day a priest was allowed to visit us and all R.C. were allowed to go to communion and confession. We had to have mass in the moonlight in the open air, and had to rise early to go to work as usual. The yellow dogs shot another Australian down at base a few days ago. They made him dig his own grave then shot him beside it. He was A.W.L. for a few days.

A sergeant just down from us was suffering dysentery while coming home from work he was taken short and went into the jungle to do his job. When counting work party they found one man missing. They waited a long while and then went back to find him. They did, with two bullets in his back. One of the dirty yellow mongrels had murdered him. We could do nothing as guards said he was trying to escape. Rice ration has been cut down and men are always hungry. I have been down a few days with dengue fever. The boys are going down like flies with dysentery, dengue fever and malaria. All the men who mustered for work this morning were 250, the others were too sick. The Nips went crazy but our M.O. was firm and bluffed Nip.

New Year's Day, Churchill's Year, 1943

New Year's Day is a very quiet day this year. We have been given a holiday again, but it's supposed to be the Nips Xmas Day and they are celebrating in a big way. They now are howling like a lot of kids. Hope they keep in their own compound. They are a nasty lot at any time let alone when they have booze in them. The Nips received a lot of parcels from their families at home, and are all playing with them, believe it or not. The parcels contained Yow Yows, small dolls and other toys. That's true.

10th JANUARY – Things have gone on pretty quietly the last few days, plenty of work, long hours and poor tucker. The sick men are being sent out to work now as we cannot get enough fit men. Some of our officers have their batman and they won't release them to take a sick man's place. The Nips want so many men on the job and they don't care how sick they are as long as they make up the number. We have to walk 2.1/2 miles to the job and I can assure you a man is well and truly done after this hard yakka in the hot sun. Some of those lads are still receiving cheerio calls from home. It cheers them up a lot. The Nips are putting on pressure and a lot of bashings have occurred. Some of the boys stole half a bag of salt from the cook house of the Nips. The little yellow men were very annoyed and put on a search for salt. They never found it, but made men stand to attention till the thief owned up. Well he did and the Nips gave him a terrible belting. Our meat supply has practically stopped now and our native drink has been cut out, as bad as it was we miss it. The malaria is bad now and there are a lot suffering from it. The nights are very cool as a matter of fact they are cold when we arise at dawn. Some of the men who have no blankets sit around and freeze all night. I don't know what the poor devils will do if it gets really cold.

30th JANUARY – Another batch of Dutch have arrived here, some 200 odd. They have had a very bad time and lost 240 from dysentery and fever. They were also bombed and sunk coming up from Penang to Moulmien and quite a few were lost there. There was also another ship in the convoy that was bombed but not sunk. Some of the boys were on board. The Japs had an old gun aft on their boat and opened up on bombers. The old gun blew up killing gun crew and setting fire to the boat. Things looked bad for boys and Nips panicked and went mad. Luckily some sailors off 'Perth' were on board and got the fire under control and got ship to Victoria Point. Quite a few were wounded by exploding shells. While they had all this excitement things have been carrying on as usual. The boys caught another Yak yesterday so we may see some meat soon.

12th FEBRUARY – We had another holiday today as it's the Jap foundation day. We spent day quietly sleeping and mending our rags. More and more boys are down to gee strings now. They are burnt as black as the natives. The Nips have had a paper in which it says that Australians are burning Nip prisoners in New Guinea and Americans are shooting them in cold blood. So they are retaliating on us, and terrible bashings have taken place for no reason at all. We are not allowed to sing or whistle and no talking after 10 p.m. and no smoking, or Slappy Slappy, as Nips call a bashing.

A Nip had an accident here a few days ago. He was standing in front of a Caterpillar tractor which was on the road driven by a Yank. The driver's foot slipped off the clutch and ironed the Nip flatter than a flounder. The strange thing about it was there was little said about it. The Nip Commandant took the driver's word for it. There have been a few nasty incidents on job lately. The boys will turn one of these days. Human flesh will not stand much more. Yesterday a fellow was very sick and could not do his work so Nip bashed him with his rifle butt and knocked him down and then proceeded to kick him to bits. One of the boys raced in and shoved Nip back who roared like a stuck pig. Boys thought it was on and grabbed their picks and shovels, yelled at Nips calling them Yellow Bs.... etc and moved in on them. Well only for an Australian officer with us, who kept cool, murder would have been done. The Japs really got a big scare that day. Well that night, the Nip who had started the bashing came over and gave the victim some eggs and bananas and said he was sorry. One cannot follow the oriental mind.

22nd FEBRUARY – I am down again with malaria. I broke down at work and it took me over 3 hours to walk 2 miles back to camp. We had another day off and boys got permission to hold sports. They decided to have a race meeting and each section had to enter a horse for the big race, the Burma Cup. The boys had to make and ride wooden horses. The course was over two furlongs. Book makers had their stand and a tote was operating. The boys could wager in anything from a tooth brush and a gold watch. The books had a bad day and the favourites had a day out. Scanties out of Foul Play won the Cup under Section 83. His owner and trainer, Bill Toogood, was presented with cup and five dollars. The cup was made by men in camp. The Nips were very amused by the way boys bet and wanted a race for them so they could all bet. Boys soon obliged and Nips never looked like getting a winner. The day went off very well and was enjoyed by all.

5th MARCH – We are still here at 26 Kilo camp but expect to move any day. All the sick and light duty men have been sent down to base. 300 in all have gone from this camp suffering from complaints. The Nips have explained that they are only taking fit

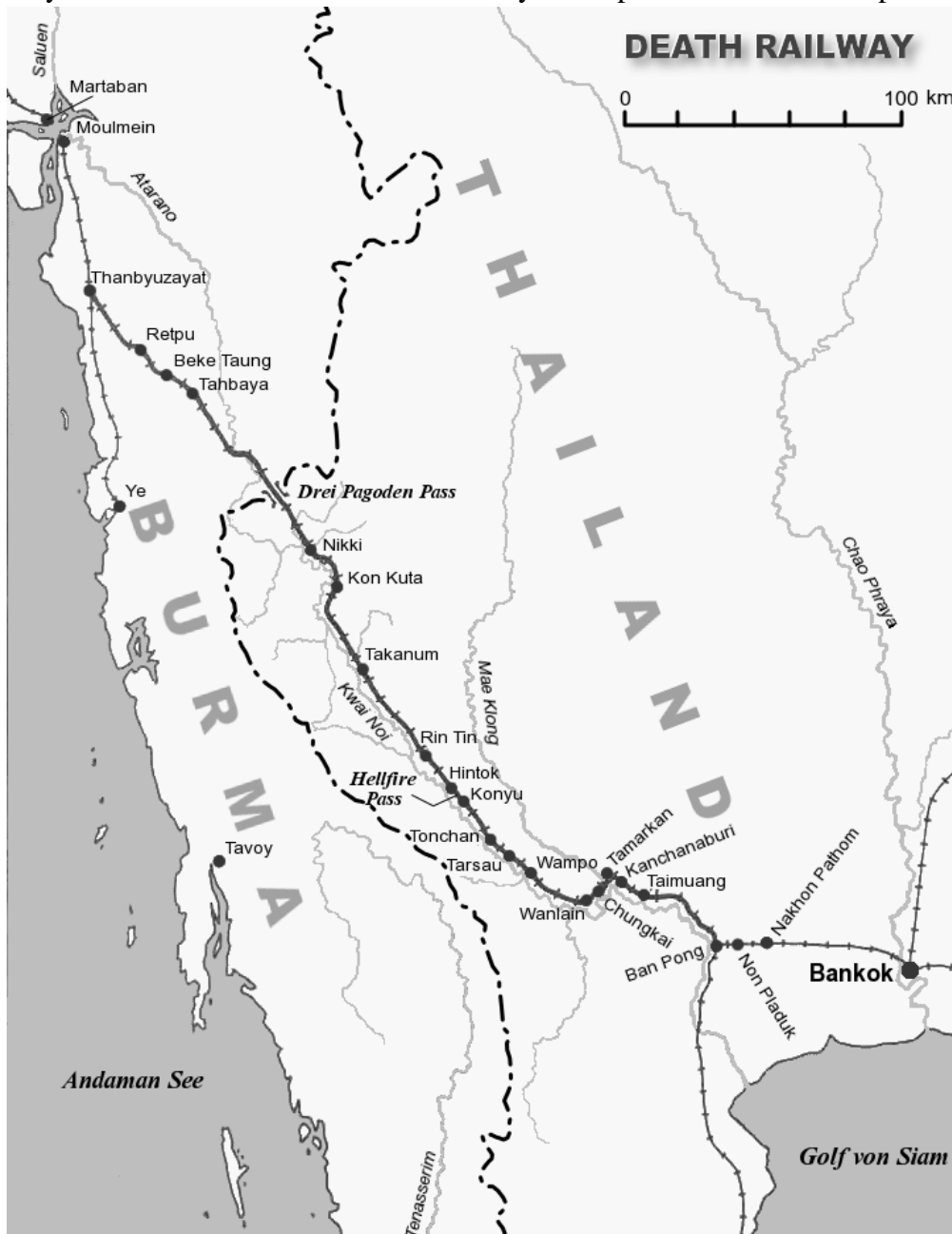
men on the job as it will be hard work. Another Australian has been shot trying to escape. After he had been shot, Nip Officer said he was the bravest man he had every shot. He refused to be blindfolded and cursed Nips all the while from their ancestors down. Thambayzak had some excitement when a couple of allied planes circled over. Two came out of formation and dived over camp with guns blazing. When boys got over their surprise they dived for funk holes. The others came over and dropped some big stuff. There were 100 casualties and 33 killed. After the first shock the boys started to dig their less fortunate mates from under the debris. The railway and Nip work got a bad doing. The Nips would not let us put up a red cross to show it was a hospital camp., so our bombers thought it was a Nip camp and let us have it. 'Tis bad luck for those who were hit. We know that we have at least seven planes and they are on the job. We learned later that they had also bombed Moulmein Harbour and shipping. The boys are beginning to get a bit touchy now, and there have been a few fights amongst them. The main reason is that boys can't get cigarettes and are very irritable. They do not last long as Nip is soon on scene then both parties have to stand to attention while they receive a bashing so it's really not worth while. Our work on the line is finished, all cuttings, embankments and bridges are complete so we will move on any day now. The work has been very hard this last week and Nips have been driving boys to get this section finished. We worked for 10 hrs some days to get our contract done. The Americans have moved along to another camp and we are standing by.

25th MARCH – We are now in new camp in the heart of jungle 75 Kilo from base. The camp is situated in a gully and there is a creek on both sides of us so water is plentiful. Boys are allowed to swim when work is done. It is very good too. We are surrounded by hills and have a big climb to our work. The days are very hot now and boys are continually sweating. The work is much the same here as at 26 camp. There are a lot of Burmese here. They are a dirty lot. They have no idea of hygiene whatever. One has to be very careful where one walks around the camp for they mess everywhere. The flies are very bad and we are afraid of an outbreak of dysentery. We can't do anything about Boongs. The Nips won't. We did not have a pleasant trip out here as we were crowded into trucks and smothered in dust. Our driver found every bump in the road and there were many I assure you. We left quite a lot of sick men behind. The food is not going to improve and we are told they cannot buy cattle, but will substitute with stink of fish and they do stink believe me.

We have nearly scratched ourselves silly. When we came into this camp the Nips went into clean huts and we went into dirty huts where the natives have been living, so we all had the bugs for a time. Then some of the boys will catch a bug and carry it to a Nip hut so as to share and share alike. We saw another side of the Nips yesterday. They were having a great time laughing and clapping down beside the cook house. We wondered what was going on and investigated. We were disgusted to see them torturing a dog. They poked lighted cigarettes in its nostrils and got a red hot coal and put it down the dog's throat, well the poor animal went mad. They thought it a great joke. It's nothing to see them pluck a duck or rooster before killing it.

The Nips have some of their comfort girls here, and they are a greasy lot of women. They are camped over the creek from here. We are very crowded here and have

12 men in bays 12 x 12 ft. We have built three decker beds to make room to move around. A lot of men are now getting jungle fever, which usually lasts about six days. Makes one very miserable. We have been informed by the Nips that we are to complete this section



The Burma Railway was a 415-kilometre railway between Ban Pong, Thailand, and Thanbyuzayat, Burma, built by the Japanese military in 1943-44 to support its forces in Burma using POW and native labour. It is estimated 12,000 POWs and 90,000 native labourers died.

of line by May. Then we are to be taken to Singapore while the wet season is on. We had a very miserable day yesterday as it poured. We had to work in the mud. It was heart breaking. The roof of our hut was like a sieve, the rain just poured through making us very miserable and wet. Smokes are very scarce and natives won't sell us any.

21st APRIL – The work goes on as usual and holidays are things of the past. The only spell one gets now is when one is too sick to walk to one's job. There are another

thousand boongs in camp to our disgust. The Nips let a few of our boys to back to 46 Kilo camp to fetch some cattle. They had to walk over 46 miles. And the cattle were so bad that most of them died on the track and only a few reached camp. The Nip Commandant gave us a good dressing down last night. He said there were too many sick men in camp. And that the railway would have to be finished by September at all costs and men would have work, sick or well. He did not care how many died on the job. The men who did not go to work would be given no food. Nip made us all go to the pictures which showed the attack on Pearl Harbour and sinking of 'Repulse' and 'Prince of Wales'. The native lapped it all up and said Nippon was No. 1.

28th APRIL – Bashings are the order of the day and some of our boys have received terrific bashings. One chap retaliated and knocked Nip as cold as a frog. The other guards rushed in and man was taken down to Nip guard room where he was bashed and kicked by guards all at once. The poor chap is in a bad way. Once again we assemble to hear No 1 Nip give us a dressing down. He told us that if any man struck one of the great Nippon soldiers he would be shot and reprisals taken on other men. We just got away from 26 Kilo camp as they were having another outbreak of cholera there. My health has been pretty good lately. I have been on bridge party, and we are at present building a three decker. All timber used is cut and trimmed by boys. Some of it is very rough as some of the men have never held an axe in their hands before. Anything seems good enough for the Nips and I can assure you they get anything. I can't see how some of this will hold up. Hope we don't have to travel over it by train. Things get really boring here at times, and one gets down in the dumps. Sometimes we think the war will never end and others we say, 'It won't be long now.' An Aussie paper would be worth its weight in gold. A party of Yanks passed through yesterday and called out to us, 'Keep your chin up boys, Wavell will soon be here.' Like a shot one of our boys yelled out, 'Good Lord, is he a P.O.W. too?'

8th MAY – Quite a lot has happened this last week and we are as busy as hell. The most important is that the sentry is raving mad and that a lot of boys have passed into the great beyond. The reports from other camps are also bad, men are dying all along the line. The boongs are to blame for their dysentery and do their dirty work everywhere and the stink coming from their compound is shocking. The flies are terrific and a lot of boongs have died. When they die they are just dumped into the bush and we have a lot of corpses in the bush. When a boong gets sick he just lies down like a sheep and dies. His mates will not do a thing for him. Besides death we also have birth. A boong girl while working on the line had to knock off for an hour, gave birth in the bush and went back to work again, while the baby lay in a small hole dug by mother. The pressure is on, and we are working long hours as the job has to be finished by 12th. So we are on the job daylight and knock off 3 or 4 o'clock the following morning, we are lucky to get a few hours sleep. We work by bamboo fire light at night. The boys are a weary ragged lot now. All boys have beards as they have no time to shave and we are lucky to get a wash. Some of our mates that we left behind at 26 Kilocamp have caught up with us again.

22nd MAY – We finished our contract at 75 Kilo camp on 13th. We're told we could have a couple of days holiday. Well we lay down and died for a few hours when the yellow dogs told us we had to march to 105 Kilo camp carrying all our gear. I had

travelled about a mile when fever came on and a touch of dysentery. We were all burnt out as we had worked 17 days and 9 nights without a break excepting a couple of hours at night. I was very sick and had to throw my kit bag away containing what was left of my clothes. I could not carry them another yard. I would not let my mates carry them as they had enough to carry with their own gear. A lot of boys had to dump gear for the same reason. As night progressed we were strung out like sheep in a drought. We looked like them too. The road was very rough and rocky and as the night was very black, boys kept falling over stones and roots. We could not help each other as we were in the same boat. 5 o'clock we could go no further and fell down where we were. The Nips gave up trying to force us and let us have an hour rest till daylight. When we reached the 96 Kilo camp we were allowed to boil some water to drink. When I staggered down to river I took a risk and had a drink. I thought it better to risk cholera than die of thirst. I got away with it anyway. The boys staggered in at all hours. We left 96 Kilo camp at 12 noon and set out for 105 Kilo camp. We arrived at 8 p.m. tired, sick and miserable. We had last few hours in heavy rain. The distance by rail is 30 Kilo but the way we came was 36 miles over rough country. I have been in hospital ever since. This camp is the worst so far. Boys have to carry water a mile from camp. There are going to be dirty men here I'm afraid. I had a shower yesterday when it rained. The rainy season is coming on now and it rained everyday last week. The atap roof leaks on all huts and men are never dry. Work goes on as usual.

26th MAY – Myself and nine other men were detailed back to 98 Kilo camp to operate a pump on the river. We were told all we had to do was to fill 40 gallon drums and load them on trucks to be taken up to 105 Kilo camp. It sounded a good job to us as we are just out of hospital and pretty weak. We thought we were getting a break at last. The camp here is a Nip staging camp and we were the only white men here. The boys at 105 Kilo camp had to walk seven or eight miles every day to job on line and it rained continuously. We duly arrived at 98 Kilo camp and found it to be a quagmire. We were dumped into a tent and had a Korean guard over us. He also camps with us, as Nip soldiers and engineers will have nothing to do with him. The food is much better and we get the same ration as Nips. Well the good job is not so good as we are at the beck and call of the Nips, and they use us too. The road is in a hell of a mess and trucks bog every few yards. It's our job to dig and push trucks out, while drivers abuse us. It takes us all day to do eight miles with loads of water to 105 Kilo. When we come back we are cold, wet and tired, and have to grease truck and maintain it and wash Nip clothes. About 10 p.m. we are allowed to go to tent for tea and sleep.

1st JUNE – The rain has been coming down for nearly three weeks, it's just a +quagmire everywhere. We were washed out of our tent and have been shifted into hut Nips allowed us to build. The remarkable thing is that men are continuously wet, but none of us have colds. It beats me. The Nips gave us a Yass Meh of our job yesterday, they gave us sledge hammers and made us bust up rocks to mettle the drive out of camp. They made us get into river up to waist and pick out stones from the bottom. It was a cow of a job as stream was very strong and one tired very quickly. We saw a lot of puny Jap soldiers pass through yesterday they looked very miserable and were carrying gear. Some were pulling hand carts, 6 and 8 men to a team. The carts were loaded with Jap officers

gear, and some were pulling old mountain guns. They were completely done as road is mud up to knees. I saw one soldier fall down in mud. The Nip officer came up and trampled his head into mud then kicked and bashed him to his feet. They had come from Bangkok and still had a long way to go to front line in Burma. I don't think they will be much good when they get there.

5th JUNE – Today we arrived back at 105 Kilo camp to find that cholera has broken out and four of our men died last night while others are isolated in a hut and being watched closely. The orderlies are doing a marvellous job, nursing them at the risk of their lives. I have only been away from boys ten days and it's hard to realise that men can change in so short a time. They are thin and gaunt looking and there is not one fit man in the camp also food is bad and scarce as they can't get supplies through. The patching is hopeless as everything is mud and water. The Nips have us cutting saplings and laying them side by side on road, a cord royd [corduroy?] road. They are alright for a few days. We have had only one day off since 25th April. We have not had time to mend our clothes, or what we call clothes now. It's a terrible life this. I wonder how much more of it.

10th JUNE – Rain, mud, rice and work is our life now, it's heart breaking to see some of the boys getting around. Three more died yesterday and hundreds are too sick to walk about. They are suffering from dysentery, malaria, pelagra, berri berri, malnutrition and starvation. I could not describe the sight of some. One has to see to believe. The food is very short and Nips allow sick men only half rations, so fit men share and share alike but we are all underfed and always hungry. 500 of us have to go to 96 Kilo camp to bring back rations, wading through mud and slush up to ones knees. The way we have to go is 18 mils there and back. We have to carry 38 lbs of rice per man. It gets very heavy as we are as weak as chickens. A lot of boys who make trip are too sick to work on road. If they don't get rations it would be hard for our mates in hospital. Over half the camp is down. Nips are going mad as we cannot get quota of working men. When work party is called all men who are fit will volunteer then our own doctors will go through the sick men and pick out the best. We still have not enough so guards go through and pick at random. Well they go out and collapse at work and mates have to carry them home. Some get over it but many don't. Those who miss the blitz the guards put on are safe for a day at any rate. The Nips sure want to be scarce when war finishes, as the boys, if any are left will do them as sure as hell. The majority of us are bootless and our feet and legs in a horrible mess from jungle ulcers. We cannot do much for them as we have no medical supplies and the yellow heathen will not give us any.

20th JUNE – Things are really bad here now, in my most vivid dreams I never thought things could be so bad. I don't know how some are still alive. The majority of men are crippled with ulcers and can get about only on bamboo crutches or crawl on backsides. Besides ulcers some have dysentery and malaria and to see some trying to make the latrines makes one's heart bleed. Some cannot do it and fall where they are and do their job. Anyone who can will help them, but all who are not at work are in the same boat. The camp is in a deplorable state. There are rivers running through many huts and everything and everyone are wet and miserable. The hospital is crowded out now and most of the men are looking after themselves and their mates. The only treatment is a little hot water to bathe sores with, and for dysentery doctors are getting the boys to drink

charcoal and take Cascara which we get in jungle. The men have been boiling grass and bamboo shoots to keep from starving. They have also been eating snakes and frogs when they could catch one. Rarely a day goes by that one of our mates die. We have quite a large cemetery now. Last week a crowd of P.O.Ws. were marched up through Thailand (F. & H.O.force I believe, English and Aussies) 150 miles to a camp not far from here. 600 died on trip from malaria, dysentery and cholera. 93 Aussies died at 130 Kilo camp in a couple of days. They made a huge fire of bodies, 1900 went down at one time and no medicine. It's plain murder. I hope the day of reckoning is not far away. All news we hear from other camps is much the same as ours. All the Burmese have cleared out at night, they were dying like flies, so I don't blame them. They left their bullocks and carts here, loose in the jungle. The Boongs won't work in wet season. Some of their bullocks came in handy to us and boys would sneak out at night and butcher a couple unknown to the Nips. Some of the lads made themselves very sick on meat as they were not used to it. I have been down again with malaria and dysentery and am very weak. Base has been bombed again and more of our boys killed.

30th JUNE – We have had a couple of fine days, and they were quite a treat after all the wet weather. It did not keep fine for long and it is raining heavily again. They inform us that heavy rains are just beginning, so I am dreading the future. We have been working very hard of late. We are up in the hills smashing rock to make ballast for the line. We have to smash it with sledge hammers and carry it to the line in a basket. 'Tis very tiring work. Our legs and feet are in a mess, and most of us are crippled with ulcers. We had a visit from Colonel Nagatoma yesterday, we all had to parade before him and show our ulcers, there were some terrible ones for him to see. The ulcers eat flesh away then eat into bone. The smell that comes from them is terrific. The colonel only looked at a couple as his stomach was too weak. Anyway we gained one point and 800 men are to be evacuated to 55 Kilo camp which is supposed to be rail head. A hospital camp is to be opened and he has promised to get medical supplies and better food for sick men. The death rate is creeping up here and will continue to do so till we get better conditions.

5th JULY – We had a holiday yesterday, the first for ten weeks and it still continues to rain like hell. We have not had any pay for over 2 months now so we are broke and out of smokes and we miss smokes more than anything. The cripples are being slowly evacuated to 55 Kilo camp. I have a beauty on my shin now and have been laid up for a few days as I can't even hobble about for it's too sore. The food has gone to blazes and it's very light. It's a marvel to us that we survive at all let alone do a day's work. The lads go hunting snakes as they are very tasty. The Japs give us a paper now and again to read – 'The Greater Asia'. By the way, they are winning battles, sinking our navy and blowing our air force out of the sky. The war will not last too long. Some of the stories we read are beauties and create a lot of amusement. This is one. The Nip air force were bombing over India. They bombed and machine gunned the cowardly British who did nothing but run. After wiping out thousands they were returning over the Bay of Bengal when a brave Nip pilot saw a British destroyer. He found he was out of bombs and ammunition but not to be out done the brave Nippon pilot turned his plane over on its back, swooped down drew his sword and cut off Admiral's head. Another bomber pilot returning home found that his under carriage had been shot away. The brave bomber pilot kicked his feet

through the fuselage and landed plane by running along and carrying it. There were dozens of stories like that. They must have thought we were school children or babies. All the while we were getting this news from the paper, our nightingale was singing a sweet little tune to us.

15th JULY – I am at present in the camp hospital as the ulcer on my leg has gone bad and prevents my moving around. The leg is very sore and throbs all the time, so that one is lucky to get a couple of hours sleep at night. The hospital is chock a block full of dysentery and ulcer cases. We lost an officer last night, Capt. Watts of the Engineers. He was only 25 years of age, a nice chap and very popular with the men. The Nips give us no medical supplies and we have nothing with which we can treat any ailments. We are using lime and charcoal on ulcers. Our force was 800 strong when we started in Burma and has dwindled to 200. The Nips are going mad and once again bashings are the order of the day. I have seen them stand our boys to attention in front of guard house for twelve hours and bash them every time new guards come on which was every hour.

24th JULY – I am still here in hospital and have not moved off my spine since I came in. I am very miserable as the ulcer on my leg is still growing and the pain is intense. I am so tired that I wish I could sleep for a week or more, but I'm lucky to get an hour out of 24. The smell from the ulcers is terrible and a dead body is sweet compared with it. The flesh has been eaten away and my shin is exposed. We are laying on bamboo sticks and some of the men have terrific bed sores. The death rate is alarming. The poor unfortunates who went to 55 Kilo camp had a very bad time, as they were not given anything to eat for two days. They were in a very bad way, and those who could move about a bit had to clean huts. Burmese had been there so you can imagine the state of them. Half a strap had fallen off the roof and rain poured through and made things very miserable. All had to pull their weight and do what he could as there are no fit men in the camp. The medical supplies have only been a myth. It is heart breaking for our M.O's such men as Col. Coates, Major Fisher, Major Hobbs and Krantz to try and save men with nothing at all. There is another rumour going round that we are to finish up in August and go to Changi to recuperate. I have not faith in it as we were told we were going in May and we are still here. The line has been named the railroad of death. It is properly named too.



Sir Albert Ernest Coates OBE, FRCS (1895–1977) was an Australian surgeon and soldier. He served as a medical orderly in World War I serving on Gallipoli, and as a senior surgeon for the Australian Army Medical Corps in World War II in Malaya. He was captured by the Japanese and during his time as a POW, worked as a surgeon for the many Allied POWs working to build the Burma-Thailand Railway

20th SEPTEMBER – ‘Tis nearly two months since I have been able to write and I will try and remember some of the things. It is really dreadful to see some of the men here as they are nearly skeletons. The hospital is a mad house now as M.O. has had to take drastic measures to try and save the men. They have to gouge and scrape ulcers to get the infected part out. It’s terrible to hear the shrieks and groans of the men. I have had a pretty bad time with my leg as the poison got into my system and I could not keep my rice down. Pain from my leg is unbearable at times and to matters worse leg has contracted right beneath me, and I cannot straighten it at all. Gangrene set into sore and doctors and orderlies got to work on me. It was now or never. Three of them held me down while doctor cut ulcer out with pair of scissors. He cut through all good flesh from instep to knee to get beneath sore. My bone is exposed. The job took ten minutes but it seemed hours to me. It was cruel. Since then I have had some relief and can sleep and eat. There have been a lot of deaths these last weeks. Those who can still get about are made to work long hours. All are suffering from either starvation, exposure, malnutrition, tinnea, pellagra, dysentery, ulcers and malaria. One has to see them to see how they look. It’s only their spirit that keeps them going. The P.O.Ws are eating anything they can get hold of. Cats, dogs, snakes, lizards, frogs. There have been over 150 deaths at 55 Kilo camp since men went down and 30 leg amputations. All along the line thousands are dying.

26th SEPTEMBER – The weather has at least improved a little and the sun is a blessing after the rain. The camp is packed and men are crowded into huts. As a lot of sick men have also come in the hospital is crowded out. The Japs are pouring troops and material through to Moulmien. Some are marching while others go by train. They are packed like sardines, troops hanging out everywhere and what a miserable lot they are. There are a lot of planes about but we could not see markings on them. Lads are sure they are ours as they have a lovely hum from their engines, something a Nip plane never had. The Nips are on their toes. They wear tin helmets and arms, they seem to expect something to happen. They have a big Coral near where all P.O.Ws are to go if anything starts. If it does I’m a No 1 man for jungle if I can make it. One English chap was very fortunate as he received a letter from his mother. It was the first to come through, it was 15 months old. All the boys got a kick out of it and clustered around for news from outside. I hope it’s the fore runner of more.

The Nips are building a lot of oil and ammo dumps here in jungle, so it looks as if this camp may be one of their supply camps. At last the line has gone through and has linked up on Thailand side so things may be easier for boys on the job now. They have been promised that things would be easier now all they will have to do is maintain the line. The sick are to go to Bangkok to a big hospital there base and several places along the line have been bombed again, causing a lot of damage to Nip workshops and line. We have seen a couple of motor trains go through pulling a couple of bogey trucks. The Nips put on a grand show here a few days ago as they were around taking pictures and recordings. They made boys put on a mock funeral and took photos of how a Christian is buried. They also had boys march out of camp with picks and shovels up and wanted boys to sing ‘Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag’. They had all recording apparatus ready, gave the order to march past, the boys marched past all singing ‘Cheer Up My Lads, bless them all’, in the old army style and when they passed machine believe me they beefed it

out. Old Nips were all smiles. I could like to see their faces when they have song interpreted. I would not like to be around though. There would be slappy slappy. I am beginning to kick on again and eat all the rice I can lay my hands on. I am also getting more sleep. The men are still dying all along the line – cholera has broken out again up the line and men have no needles or anything to combat it with. The boys who have been looking after us here have been doing a marvellous job and some have been like a mother to us.

2nd OCTOBER – We are still here at 105 Kilo camp, so Nips have not stuck to their word again. The ulcers are still very bad and men are still going to the Great Beyond, a day never goes by now unless we bury some of our mates. One poor chap had his leg amputated yesterday and seems to be doing well now thanks to Major Hobs. My old leg is not worrying me much now, but feels as if it's dead, the whole shine bone is exposed and as black as the ace of spades. The rainy season has definitely eased up now and boys are beginning to look a little better. The work goes on as usual, but Nips have ceased up on bashings and do not stand over men saying, 'Speedo, speedo' like they did before. Men are now breaking stone for roads and cutting wood for steam train when it arrives. They have tons of it stacked on the line. The food has not improved any as it should have when the line went through. It's a marvel how many of us are still alive, just living on dirty rice and watery stew. We had a concert here last night the first for a long while and it was quite a treat, and every one appreciated it. The Padres have played a very big part here keeping the spirits of the boys up and doing things for them. In the hut here we have all denominations, so one the R.C. Padre, then C. of E. Padre, then Methodist Padre will give a sermon and have prayers, all join in and pray together, and believe me they pray.

10th OCTOBER -- I have been here in this hell house for 14 weeks now and I am heartily sick of it now. The old pin seems to be at a standstill now, gets no better or worse. I can sit up for a while now and then and it's great to get up off the back, even for a short while. I was weighed yesterday and got a shock as I was only 6 stone 9lb. A lot of the ulcer cases are on the improve now and men are improving and are more cheerful. They have some community singing and organise quiz tests which helps time go more cheerfully. The rainy season has definitely taken up and we are having very nice weather. The Nips have given us a few cattle lately and we in the hospital are getting the tongue, liver, brain, kidneys and blood which improves our stew considerably. They even boil up the hooves for us and call it soup, but boys have another name for it. We have not been able to buy anything for months now as Nips have not allowed us anything for canteen. The Padres have been very good though and have been able to get a few cigars somewhere and give to sick men.

24th OCTOBER – It is twelve months today since we arrived here in this land of vermin, disease, sickness and hardships. It has been longest and most miserable twelve months we have ever spent. God knows how much longer we will be kept here, as we have no news from our loved ones for 20 months. The Nips are making men clean up camp as they are expecting a visit from a big Nip General and Colonel Nagatoma and 14 big officers. They say this is to be a new Nip supply camp, as Allies have bombed them out of Thambuzak. I tried to get around on crutches but pain in leg was too great.

5th NOVEMBER – The weather is very hot and we have not had any rain for a long time. I am very bored with this existence. There are a few books in camp and if we did not have them we would go nuts. The camp is crowded and huts are overflowing and men find it hard to find a place to bed down. Men are still dying and we are growing very callous concerning death. We don't worry over it, but every respect is paid to the dead. The rats, fleas, bug and chats are giving us hell. The Japs put on a big search yesterday and found some of the boys hidden treasures. Under floor where I was laying some of the orderlies had hidden 2 pistols, maps, a compass and diaries. I assure you I didn't feel too good about it for had it been found I would have got slappy slappy in a big way. Nips came round to search me and the orderly told him I was very beyoke (sick) with cholera. They passed through very quickly and I was left alone. They also failed to get wireless and we heard that Italy had thrown it in. Hope the rest follow suit.

20th NOVEMBER – At last we have been moved from 150 Kilo camp, 11 of the worst ulcer cases have been sent to 55 Kilo. We had to be ready to move two days ago but were kept waiting for a train. When it did [come] we were raced over to train on stretchers and told to get into truck. When door was opened we were overcome by the stink of rotten maggots. The orderlies did what they could to clean truck but could not do much and we were pushed in and had to sit on our packs. Three stretchers only were allowed in for the three men very low who could not sit up. The truck was alive with maggots and it was very uncomfortable with them crawling over us. It was only 50 km to go and to our disgust we took 18 hours to do it. At every camp we came to the train would jerk from pillar to post. The line was very rough and I think train had square wheels. At one siding we were shunted on to side line where we waited two hours. They would not let orderlies take us out of trucks. It was pitch black and boys were in a bad way. We were sitting there quietly when suddenly the engine hit our truck with terrific force. Men were thrown everywhere and I nearly had my leg broken. Well the boys abused that driver, the Nips and everything they represented in a most appropriate manner, at last we got on our way again. The old engine that was pulling us must have been worn out years ago, as one hill we came to, they had six attempts to get over it. They would get about half way up when it would conk out then would run back a mile or so to have another run at it. Three of our boys had diarrhoea very bad and had to be held over the side of the truck to relieve themselves. To cut a long story short, we arrived at 55 Kilo 11 o'clock. We were all completely done up as we were tired, stiff and miserable and our ulcers were giving us hell. We were dumped on the side of the line a mile from the camp. One of our orderlies had to walk into camp and get 44 men to carry us in. We were immediately informed by Colonel Coates that two other chaps and myself would have to have our legs off if we wanted to live. It was no shock to me as I had guessed for some time that I would lose it. I met up with quite a lot of my old mates. There are 60 camps here at present and they are a cheerful lot of men – they are all giving me good advice and telling me not to worry. The camp here has been improved 100% lads tell me, but it's still very rough. What we have seen of the food so far is no improvement on 105 Kilo camp. There are some very sick men here they are thin and haggard looking poor devils. They are suffering from every known disease. There are a lot of berri berri cases, ulcers and dysentery. The

Medical Officers are flat out operating every day. The instruments they use have been made by men in the camp.

30th NOVEMBER – The 22nd was a big day for me. The orderlies came around at 9 o'clock and told me they were going to take my leg off. I wondered if it was worth it, I would be a cripple for the rest of my days. I did not hesitate long, as life is sweet after all. The orderlies shaved my leg and took me along to end of hut, where there was a bamboo table. They had an old ground sheet on it. I was placed on it and given a spinal injection of cocaine and native brandy which had been invented by a Dutch dentist here. Major Hobbs who was doing the job said I would feel everything yet feel no pain. He then gave me a cigar and went to work. I soon lost interest in cigar and had to shove end of blanket into my mouth to stop screaming. The spinal would not act properly on me and every time he cut it was like hot pitch forks being jabbed into my leg. Anyhow the boys held me down and the major completed the job. When the old leg fell off it was a wonderful relief. I was then carried down to hut and placed in bag bunk which was full of bugs and chats. I was then told to lay quiet and not move otherwise I would get a terrific headache from spinal. At this I was very dickie on it and was receiving plenty of advice from other amputations around me whose ranks I had now joined.

The next morning I had a haemorrhage and then got an attack of malaria which was the worst I have had. That day my stump got fly blown and maggots nearly drive me silly. I did not realise they were maggots. I thought it was the cut nerves going to market. Anyhow when it was dressed next day they were there. Major Hobbs had to take stitches out and flush stump with salt water. He then stitched stump up again. There are orderlies on day and night and are kept very busy. The boys who cannot move call for a pan and have to use a steak and kidney pie tin or an old Dixie, the bottle is a piece of bamboo. There are over 250 graves here and 95% are British and the rest Dutch. There have been over 160 amputations and less than 50% are alive now. All amputations have been done with old meat saw borrowed from Nip butcher's shop. The Japs gave men a day off yesterday to hold a thanksgiving in commemoration of those who gave their lives in completing line. The following day was to be a feast day. It consisted of 2 meals of very watery pork broth, with our usual rice issue, and a piece of pork pie made from ground rice flour.

10th DECEMBER – Today I have been allowed to move onto my side for the first time since my amputation and it was marvellous to move from my side onto my back. The stump has not responded as it should and to make matters worse I have had a severe attack of dysentery. I have lost a lot of weight this last fortnight and it's very hard to get to sleep as men are yelling all night. We are burying 3 to 4 every day. It's pitiful to see some of these men, once big robust chaps 12 to 14 stone now only 6 or 7 stone, it's hard to recognise mates they are so sick.

The Aussies have proved themselves again and again and now organise parties go through fence to buy meat and food from natives. These chaps take their lives in their own hands as Nips have warned they will shoot on sight. The food is distributed among sick men, and has helped many a man to escape the grave. Most of the other camps are looking well in spite of primitive conditions. We have had some eggs lately which we have been able to buy from canteen. Also a few native cigars which are a God send when

one is in pain, they soothe the old nerves. Some of the lads have terrific bed sores and the chap beside me had his back bone bare from bed sores. A few of the men have cracked under strain and have gone mad. We received some mail a couple of days ago, and I received four letters. I was overcome with emotion and as I read the tears ran down my face. I also received 2 snaps of my wife and kiddies. Well it was the best medicine I ever had. I only hope they keep them up to us now. They were 20 months old but the first news of our loved ones. We also had a surprise from Nip as they handed out 20 cigarettes and cake of soap per man. First soap in 12 months. I have gone off my food the last few days and cannot force the rice down. The bombers have been busy along line and around Moulmien. We have had news of Italy packing it in hope it won't be long now. The Nips are very sore with Musso at present. It is a very strong rumour that we are to shift to Bangkok where we will be put into a good camp.

26th DECEMBER – Rumour for once is correct and we said good bye to Burma. They have brought all the very sick out to our present camp Tamakan, Thailand. The first batch went 18th December after waiting for hours by track for train. We got away on 20th December. I was a stretcher case. There were 9 stretcher cases in truck and all very sick men. Our stumps are still open and Colonel Coates thought men might haemorrhage so tied main artery at thigh before leaving. The other trucks were crowded and had up to 45 men and gear and men could not stretch out. We got away about 8 p.m. and had travelled about 30 kilos on the roughest train I had ever ridden on when we were shunted onto siding till day break. We got going again till we reach 105 Kilos camp where we stayed till 2 hours were up cooped up in trucks. Some of the men were in a bad way especially those who had dysentery. We stretcher cases also had a bad time as we were on stretchers of bamboo and bumps and jerks gave us hell. We crossed frontier into Thailand over Pagoda Pass and had our first meal at place called Nicki. There was a camp of Aussies there who had rice cooked for us. Also some stink fish was given to boys. I was unlucky as I could not eat at all. The Nips then put on another engine thus making it fore and aft. We got away again and it seems as if the engines were having a tug of war. The jerks nearly drove us crazy. We were dog tired but sleep was out of the question. That night we were bumped onto siding, at 12 p.m. we had an air-raid and Nips locked us in trucks. It is not a nice feeling. Anyhow everything was alright, no bombs were dropped. We got on our way again at day break and passed through some nice scenery, especially crossing the Mekong River. They have the largest bridge on this line over river, and cost 800 P.O.Ws lives to build. The work must have been very hard as they had to cut through solid rock to a depth of 60 ft. We have passed a lot of Nip troop trains going up Burma way, they are packed with troops and guns. The Nip soldiers are very young and miserable. We arrived at new camp at 2 a.m. Xmas morning. We were all pleased to get off train as we were done in completely. We were carried to our hut by boys who were in camp before us. We all died that morning as we were played out. We were given a doover (fried rice ball) for Xmas dinner.

I cannot keep anything down as I vomit it up as soon as I eat it. The old stump has gone bad on me again and poison has got into my system. My mates and I had a fright today as we had a visit from an 8ft snake hanging on rafters over our heads. We could not move but we yelled for orderlies who killed and ate it. A few days ago two English

officers were caught with secret wireless. They were bashed and tortured and made to drink gallons of water, when they could not get any more down the Nips pumped more into them and made them lie down and jumped on their stomachs till they died. The bashings are still going on and men are forbidden to whistle or sing, and one cannot talk after lights out.

NEW YEAR'S DAY 1944 – Well another day gone by and things still look gloomy. The morale of the troops is marvellous. They are certain this will be the year. The food has improved and men are looking better. We get more rice and greens also onions and a better meat ration. I managed to get some liver down today after a 10 day fast. We can also buy some eggs from canteen, and have been having egg flips. All food we get is brought down river in barge. It is best camp we have been in so far. We got a hell of a fright last night as Nips opened fire on planes with ack ack guns. Some of the shrapnel came down through huts but no one was hurt. There is a five span iron bridge over river and I expect it to go up any minute. The Nips have built a big monument here in respect of 1500 P.OWs who died this side of line. They had a big day and all our officers were invited and received a small tin of biscuits each. The Nips are hard to follow, they have more respect for a dead man than a live one. They also had our band to play Jap tunes to them. Nine out of 11 went to 55 Kilos camp were amputated and 2 died. More men have arrived from jungle and are in a bad way. Four died on way down and Nips would not allow men to buy them. They made men in trucks very uncomfortable. They were buried as soon as they arrived. The natives dig them up during the night and stole the old blankets they were buried in. They must be hard up for blankets.

30th JANUARY – We are still here at Tamakan and things are much the same. Plenty of bashings from Nips and men dying every day. A couple of poor chaps went mad yesterday and wandered away into scrub. They were picked up and had a terrible bashing from guards. They have one poor chap in a small cell and bash him with bamboo and rifle butts. The man is completely off his head. Nips call him out of his cell and when he comes out they whale him with everything. The dirty yellow mongrels will pay one day. I had a very bad week, my leg has gone bad on me again and is very painful. I have had fever for several weeks now and weight 5 stone 6 lbs. My good leg has gone stiff and foot has dropped and I'm helpless and cannot move it on its own power. The flesh and sinew muscles seem to be gone. I can circle my leg above the knee with my finger. Have gone off food and cannot eat anything. The fever gives me some very queer dreams. A couple of nights back I dreamt I had two bottles of beer in my bed and when I awoke I had orderly looking for them but he could not find them. At that stage I thought I was going off my head. My mates have been very good to me and come round every day to have a yarn and make a man keep his pecker up. The raids have become a nuisance as the planes come over nightly. The Nips open fire with ack ack fire and men stampede for slit trenches. We saps who cannot move have to lie here and pray for the best. The weather has been good. The flies, chats, bug and mosquitoes make us miserable. The chats and bugs get into our wounds and give us merry hell. We have had some good news today. We are told that the Swiss Red Cross is going to improve our conditions. Rumour tell us that they have ½ million tickets valued at 1/4d each to spend on us.

7th FEBRUARY – I have had bad luck and had 4.1/2” of bone taken off my stump. The bone was completely rotten and stump was full of puss pockets. The operation was another wicked one and my nerves are shot to pieces. Every time I see a knife or pair of scissors I shudder. I hope and pray I don’t have any more as I don’t think I could stand it. The old stump is a horrible mess now, and is left open for draining purposes, when it starts to heal they tear it open again. The orderlies are as kind as they can be, but they have to be cruel to be kind. Major Hobbs is very kind and considerate and men love him. There are a lot of amputations having trouble with their stumps, they have healed over alright but abscesses are coming in them and they have to be cut open again. The yells and screams are pitiful to hear. We are still using the bandages we originally had as the Nips will not give us any. I had a blood transfusion a few days ago and it put new life into me. Am now able to keep rice down. Was weighed again today and went 4 stone 9 lbs. I could not believe it. The Nips have allowed us to hold a concert every week and we are carried down on a stretcher by mates. We look forward to them as they break the monotony for us.

12th MARCH – It is my birthday today another one in prison camp. I got a pleasant surprise today as my C.O. Capt. Howitt, Capt. Polson, Lieut. Davidson and Solkoefield came in and presented me with a bonzer birthday cake. They had even scrounged some candles from somewhere. Only 11 so I multiplied by three so everything was OK. I really appreciated the gesture. The cake was made from rice flour and was really good. My mates and I had a blow out that night. The food has improved and men are beginning to pick up a little. They are sent up the jungle as soon as they can get around and are soon back again that is if they do not die. Men have little resistance now, as soon as fever or dysentery hit them they go to pieces. Our news service has broken through lack of batteries and some weird and wonderful rumours are floating round the camp. There was another small batch of mail for men yesterday, I did not score though. Some of the fit men in camp have a football team and Nips play them every night. The boys are careful though and let the Nips win by a small margin to keep them in a good humour. There are a lot of Dutch and English in camp now. Nearly 3000 strong. We had a wind storm a couple of nights ago, which blew two huts down and part of the atap off our roof. We are now exposed to the sun, and it’s very hot on us. The Nips are picking out all fit men who are to go to Japan. The chaps do not like this idea as our planes are very active over here now.

31st MARCH – We are still here at Tamakan but rumour has it that we are to move on to another camp much better than this. The days are very hot now and one is a lather of sweat. It’s very uncomfortable as one has to lie on ones back in a pool of sweat. We have more worries as scorpions, snakes and centipedes have joined to annoy us, and believe me there are plenty of bashings. The Nips are copping hell somewhere and are taking it out on us. I’d give a lot for an Aussie newspaper at present. 1200 men have been picked out for a trip to Jalon. They were examined by Nip doctors and only fit men were taken. They were all issued with new clothes before they were taken. The first new clothes I have seen for years. The bombers have been very busy lately. There is very little to write about as I am always on my bamboo bed. The old leg is better and I am eating everything

I can get and am putting on weight fast. Old Colonel Coates says the bottom of your dixie is your passport home so I should make it now.

30TH APRIL – We have moved on and now we are in a camp called Nakom-Paton. We moved 25th April and I was once again a stretcher case, but the trip was not too bad. 500 of us came up 60 of stretcher cases. We had only to go 30 kilos but it took 12 hrs. We were held up at one station and locked in trucks while bombers had a go. Luckily we were not hit. We arrived at Nakom-Paton 5 a.m. and had to wait till 11.30 till stretcher bearers came to take us to camp. We nearly boiled in the sun. One of the Nips said he was sorry for us and threw us a bunch of bananas. There is a good sized Pagoda here which is reported to be the biggest in the world. This is the first look at civilization for 19 months. The camp is very big and holds 1600 men when completed. The huts are all new and good. They have board floors 2 feet from the ground where we sleep have all wall and windows and a thatched roof. The food is better but the water is very tight and boys are working on wells at present. Each hut holds 250 men. The men that came down are the heavy sick and amputations. This camp is to be the main hospital camp in Thailand. Colonel Coates is in charge of camp. We met up with quite a lot of our mates who have worked on this side of line. They have had a hell of a doing from Nip also. There are about 100 amps. here amongst them, including Dutch, English, and Aussies, without our crowd of 69. We have been informed that we are to receive a Red Cross parcel each as 8000 have arrived in camp. Colonel Coates has informed me that I shall have to have more bone removed as it's still leaking and won't heal. I'm not looking forward to it. We have had a lot of Nip orders read to us, telling us what to do. Any man who goes over bamboo fence will be shot on sight, trading with any one is forbidden. All men will tenko (count) in Japanese. Saluting at all times. If we are good boys they will allow us to have a canteen in camp. Some of the amps have made themselves artificial legs and are getting about very well. The Thai men and women are building themselves huts here.

31ST MAY – The Red Cross turned out a flop as we only got a taste of food. We had to divide a tin of bully beef between 8 men and 14 men to a parcel. The Nips got down on most of the parcels and we did not get them. We have settled down at this camp and God alone knows when we shall get out. We got a small bundle of mail yesterday and I received two letters, they were 2 years old. The Nip Commandant has informed us they have 270,000 letters for us but we will not get any as they are wrongly addressed. We are hearing all kinds of rumours now that the wireless is dead, but there is very little truth in them. The only news we get is from a Chinese paper boy outside and have interpreted by Chinese P.O.Ws. The R.A.F. have been busy over here lately and we consider it a good sign. They are over day and night. Hope they know this is a hospital camp or? We got a hell over a scare a few nights ago as a Liberator flew over the camp. The boys that could move went through in a hurry to slit trenches. While we had to stay there and pray for the best. Anyhow all went off alright and no eggs were dropped. The old stump has gone bad again and I have another disease in it. Erisy puss this time and it's not too pleasant. The doctors are doing all they can but the medical supplies are bad. They gave us some a few days ago and promised us more. We have a fairly good canteen now and if any one has money (which most of us have not) they can buy eggs, bananas, paw paws and pomows and native tobacco. The smoke problem is not too bad now as

one's mates seem to get a caddy of weed somehow. The Nips have a lot of ducks running round here. They were bewildered to find that 270 has disappeared. They were very good too. The first bit of poultry we had for years. They have locked them up now and our men are responsible for them.

30th JUNE – We are still here at Nakom Paton and we are very tired of this life. The same old faces day after day, the same stories, same food, rice and watery stew, same old routine, no variety at all and I'm still on my back. Stump is still the same, discharging all the time, Colonel Coates has put my operation back as he hopes we will be able to get out of this mess and he will be able to X ray me. I can sit up in bed now for a while which was a marvellous break. Men are dying every day. The spirit of the boys is marvellous. One hears very little grumbling. We have a few books to read or we would go mad. The books have been carried by the men and one keeps changing them amongst ourselves. The blitz is on again and Nip is handing out bashings by the score. The men are still dying like flies in the jungle and some bet back to hospital in a bad way.

31st JULY – The rain has started again and we rarely get a dry day. The camp is a quagmire. The mosquitoes, bugs and chats are a problem, we can't get rid of them, though we pull up the floor boards and kill hundreds every day. There have been rumours that the allies are doing very well, so boys are getting optimistic. The Nips made all leggies who can get about, work. They have some old spinning ginnies and have to make string glax from palm leaves. Others have to make straw brooms from the bamboo. The boys are planting and growing cotton for Nips. Colonel Coates, Major Krantz and Colonel Dunlop have been very busy operating on all kinds of cases and have done a marvellous job for the men. They are always in trouble with Nips and won't send sick men out to work. There have been 60 deaths since we came in April. I was weighed yesterday and have picked up to seven stone.

30th AUGUST – There is not much to write about as life is just the same. We have moved around the camp a fair bit and as soon as we have settled in one hut the Nips get a brain wave and shift us again. All amps and surgical cases are together again. Our hut is infested with bugs and scorpions. It is impossible to sleep as bugs attack us in millions. The 3rd night we took the risk of a bashing and slept out in the open air. Everything went off well. Next night we went out and Nip guards came on scene and a lot of bashing took place. The Nips presented us with 10 boong cigarettes and 5 biscuits which weevils had been eating for years. Our boys unloaded a large batch of mail the other day but so far our hosts have not released it to us. Another batch of semi-sick men had to leave and go back into jungle, poor devils. A black market has started in camp and traders will buy anything that will sell, they then go over fence at night and sell to Siamese at terrific prices. They also bring in Chinese paper so we get a little news from it.

1st SEPTEMBER, - There is a big movement going on here now, boys are coming and going all the time. The men that return are in a bad way. They bring back news of other camps. All reports are the same, men are still working under poor conditions and the death rate is very heavy. It breaks the men's hearts as soon as they start to get well again they are sent into the jungle, it's like going over the top for a bayonet charge, they never know if they will return. There are thousands of wounded Nips pouring out of Burma, they are in a terrible mess. Men with arms and legs blown off, eyes out and

suffering from every known disease. They are pelted into a truck and left to look after themselves, no orderlies or medical supplies. At one siding a train pulled in with wounded Nips. When the boys saw them they could not help it. They pulled out the wounded, washed and cleaned them and gave some of them a smoke. One Nip officer could speak English, he said he did not realise Australians could be so kind and he cried like a baby. Even after the way we were treated by them the boys cannot see them suffer. We got a hell of a scare two nights ago, as allied bombers were over in full force. They kept circling over camp and boys made for slit trenches. They passed over us but bombed hell out of Non Palduk, a few kilos away. There were over 100 P.O.Ws killed and 200 casualties. They blew 2 trains and railway sidings to Kingdom Come. The wounded have been brought into our camp and some are in a mess. Over 130 bombs were dropped. They were still digging up the bodies today. Quite a number of Nips were killed too, over 300 odd. The Nips are on their toes and when planes come over in day time all are confined to huts. Even all blankets and clothes must be inside for they think we may signal them.

1st OCTOBER – Everything is much the same, there have been no more bombings but Charlie the Gig (Reccy plane) is over every day having a look see. We are not very pleased to see him as the big fellows may come after his visit. No chances are taken now and we may move at any time. They dropped some pamphlets one day telling us to cheer up as it's in the bag now. The news certainly cheered us up, but what beats me is they know where we are so why drop eggs on us. There was some excitement the other day as men who have been trading with Nips and going over fence were caught. The guards started to bash them when men hauled off and dropped the two guards. It was 12 o'clock at night and bedlam broke loose. Nip were bellowing, whistles blowing and guards running from all angles. They raced through huts trying to find missing men but all men were in bed by that time. At 3 o'clock men had to go out on parade ground till guilty men gave themselves up. After 1 hour men could see Nips were not bluffing so 4 gave themselves up so as to save sick comrades. They were marched away to guard house where they were bashed and tortured for 12 hours. They were then thrown into Nip guard house and were not allowed any bags or blankets to lie on, only bamboo rails. They had on old shorts and the cold and mosquitoes nearly drove them mad. Their food consists of 1 very salty rice ball and 1 drink of water per day. From 8 a.m. till 10 p.m. they have to sit to attention and cannot talk to each other. Our M.O. tried to get them out but Nips are firm and say they have to do 18 days in the boob. They will be lucky to get out alive.

1st NOVEMBER – We have plenty of excitement as planes are going over every day and we have some big raids. They have passed over our camp every few minutes up to six hours. They have been blowing hell out of Bangkok and are doing a lot of damage. Some of the men who were bombed at Nong Pladuk take these raids very badly. They are bomb happy at the first sound of a plane their nerves are shot to pieces, poor devils. The Nips are on their toes, and they, like us, expect something to happen soon. I was allowed to get up yesterday for a short while. The first time in 12 months. I hopped between two orderlies for about a hundred yards.

I soon weakened and was glad to get back to my bed again. The old stump is very bad and keeps suppurating all the time. I have it dressed twice daily. The bug (malaria) has been troubling me again and also tonsillitis. If it's not one thing it's another. At a

camp up the jungle the Nips made four Americans stand to attention for 80 hours, also bashed and kicked hell out of them. Men are still dying and hardly a day goes by that we don't bury one. There are about 7000 men in camp, all sick men.

1st DECEMBER – Time marches on slowly, and we are still here. Our hopes of being released before Xmas have now been dashed. We had some hot news that the Huns have turned it in, but some gossip we heard today put an end to that. Some of the men have taken it very hard. They cannot last much longer. The yellows men lost their heads a few days ago and gave us a few cigarettes and some native tobacco. A decent batch of mail arrived here from home, some were lucky and received a fair amount. I received 2/25 worders. Small fish were sweet though. Most letters were old, but we were able to get a fair amount of Aussie news between us. Several of us were guinea pigs yesterday. We were taken down to theatre where Colonel Coates and Major Krantz lectured to other M.Os on our stumps. There are some very big operations going on. The old man Col. Coates has been bringing men back from the grave. He has done some amazing jobs with hardly any tools to work with. A lot have gone off their heads lately, and we are in a special ward for the insane and guarded day and night, some have to be put in a straight jacket at night. The big planes were over yesterday in force. Bangkok railway bridges and rolling stock. The kempies have bashed and tortured to get information from boys. The yellow men have all available men building a huge bund to stop prisoners escaping. The weather is very cold and some men have no blankets and freeze at night. The smoking problem has grown acute and men cannot get paper to roll a cigarette. Most of men have made themselves pipes from bamboo. My old stump has been playing up lately and has been very sore. We get a taste of fish now every few days.

1st JANUARY 1945 – Once again we start a new year under the Yellow men. We are full of hope, and are unanimous that this will be our last. I hope and pray it will. Xmas day was the best we have spent as P.O.Ws, everywhere men were wishing each other the best in the future, the Xmas feeling seemed to be here. All churches held services and men who have not been to church for years went to say a prayer. We had celebrated a high Mass, which went off very well under the circumstances. Our hosts gave us extra food for Xmas day. The cooks excelled themselves and gave us a good feed. We started off with three dovers and coffee for breakfast; 2 eggs, meat and vegetables, pork dover for lunch; after tea two dovers; for tea meat cake and another doover. That night we had supper cup of coffee and a bottle of native brandy amongst 40 men, we mixed it with coffee. It was the biggest and best feed we had for years. We held a race meeting in afternoon and the big race of the day was won by Col. (Weary) Dunlop. We had bookies on the course. Col. Dunlop was 4 to 1 on. All had a grand day and topped it off with a concert and were allowed to keep light on till 12 o'clock. Boxing day was very quiet and was not pleasant after our gorge the day before. All officers have been warned to be ready to move at a moment's notice. It's a good sign to see them taking officers away there must be something doing. The work goes on as usual. The bombers have not been seen for a week. The Nips have taken away boys who were in guard house and we fear the worst for them. We were told they were to be shot as an example for disobeying orders.

1st FEBRUARY – Time marches on and the news we hear is very good. Have heard that Philippines have fallen and Burma is nearly done. 28 of us have a guessing

contest as to when the war will finish. The majority have guessed March or April, but I am not so optimistic and have said 22nd August. We have £2 in. It is just on 3 years since we were taken as P.O.Ws and it seems like 10. We, the bed downs, find it very hard to fill in time. The spirit of the boys is very good. All officers have been taken with the exception of Medical Officers. They have been taken to Kan Buri, 30 odd Kilos from here. There have been more shifts and we are nine hut so we better attention and have more room. Men have bamboo beds to lie on. News has come through that there is to be a very thorough search so I must plant diary.

1st APRIL – It is some time since I have written as Nips have put on search after search and I have had to hide diary. It had been well and truly buried. On 22nd February my stump was giving me hell, so Col. Coates ordered me down to theatre to have another operation. I was not feeling too happy as I remembered the other two I had. Major Krantz did the job. They had a good American spinal injection this time and although I was very nervous I did not feel a thing. He took another 4” off diseased stump which makes it very short. It has been very sore but it’s coming good. I think they fixed it this time. The bone they took off was a horrible mess, and the smell was terrible. An English Colonel died yesterday after suffering from cancer in the throat. Poor man went through hell before he died. Col. Coates did all he could for him. I don’t know when that man will stop surprising us, with his operations. Last week he put a complete new anus in a man and saved his life. On the 2nd March we had some excitement as 27 of our fighters came over and frightened hell out of us. It was just on dinner time. They came out of the blue the first we heard of them was the open fire of the cannon. The boys went through like a Bondi tram. They were going for the drome nearby. It was a marvellous sight, they shot it up in 20 minutes, well we were like schoolboys. One amusing incident was, when planes opened up, boys went for slit trenches. A big Dutch man came running hell for leather and dived 10 yds into trench, and from his trench yelled to us. ‘Don’t panic boys’. Well we roared laughing at him. Five big fires were started on the drome, and there were a few explosions after they had gone. The thing is, where did they come from? Burma, Malaya or Air-craft carrier? The general opinion is Burma, which is a good sign as our friends are not far away. The bombers have been busy also and camp, railway and bridges have been done. Tamakan Bridge which is a five span was blown sky high, 30 of our boys were killed and a lot injured. All sorts of rumours are coming in about Germany. The Nips have us herded into a small compound, and have machine gun posts all over camp, all pointing into camp. The Nips are using part of camp as hospital for their sick and wounded from Burma. They are in a mess and get very little treatment. 1,000 of our boys have to leave camp to get a job down Mergui way near Malayan border. The boys hate leaving this camp to go out on work parties as our friends know we are here.

20th MAY – The game still goes on, day after day, week after week, same old routine. Men are still dying. 120 walking skeletons marched into camp or staggered in, half carried by their sick mates. I have been hardened by some of the sights I have seen, but those men left six weeks ago comparatively fit men, now one does not recognise one’s mates. It nearly made me cry. They had just arrived back from Mergui border road job. They had to make their way back on foot and dozens died on march from hunger and starvation. I spoke to one of my mates and asked where the rest of boys were I was

informed that the men that got back were the only ones who could travel the others were so sick that they could not make it. I will never forget the gaunt look in their eyes, if they get over it, it will be a miracle. The men who have a few cents tossed in to get men fruit and eggs to help them along. They have also given a portion of their ration to help boys. I have never in all my life hated anyone or anything as I hate these yellow heathen mongrels today. The prices here have sky rocketed lately. Tobacco is up to 10 bucks, eggs up to 50 cents. The only cigarette paper we get is that split from reading books, bibles and prayer books. I have been discharged from hospital after 21 months on my back. The old stump has healed up and I can get about under my own steam. We have had news of the Hun turning it in so this yellow man can't beat the world on his own. It's only a matter of time now. I don't know what's come over the boys lately as there have been a lot of fights and discipline seems to be getting out of hand. We had a visit from a big Nip general a few days ago. When passing through our hut he stopped in front of a leggie and asked him if he would like to be back in Australia. The leggie told him he would. The general next asked would he fight again. The leggie told him he definitely would if his country needed him. The general looked at him for a while and then handed him a packet of cigarettes.

20th JULY – The planes are exceptionally busy now and they come and go at will. They are having the time of their life. Every Wednesday we have a plane come over which we call the mail plane, as he drops thousands of pamphlets over the town and of course we get our share. First day he circled camp and while over two black objects were seen to leave the plane. The boys dropped where they were, there were 2 loud reports and to our relief the sky was filled with pamphlets, a few dropped in the camp and boys got them like a shot before Nips got on scene. We were disappointed as they were written in Burmese, and Siamese but picture showed allied planes bombing Japan, Jap ships being sunk and landings being made somewhere, but some amazing conclusions have been arrived at. Nips have been handing out bashings by the score, which means there must be good news for us and the reverse for Nippon.

News came in from jungle that Nips are retreating from Burma; trucks, guns and equipment are dumped on road and sick and wounded are battling out on foot. The wet season is on again and things are very miserable. There were 100 men leaving camp a few days ago, before they left they threw an English officer in the duck pond. They said he had not treated them fairly. Up at the officers' camp the Nips have been doing officers over. One English officer had a very bad time as he was bashed, tortured and made to stand at attention for hours on end. For the last month has had to live in a slit trench and he is not allowed out and no one is allowed near him. They give him just enough to exist on. Reports say he is in a very bad way. A lot of the men are suffering from T.B. and are in a very bad way, Nips have a staging camp in one corner of our camp now, and have trucks, tanks and armoured cars. Hope our reccy plane does not see them. Nip guards are training very hard, plenty of manoeuvres and rifle drill. There was a funny turn a few days ago. Some of the guards stole red parcels from store room, took it out on work party to sell to Boongs. Our boys found their plant and sold it to Boongs. The guards nearly went mad when they missed it. They threatened the boys with all sorts of punishment if they did not give the money back. Boys told them they would tell Nippon Officer and bluffed

guards. Another incident happened one night at 2.30 a.m. One of the men in the mental ward went off his head, and yelled, 'air raid'. Men half awake yelled 'air raid' and jumped up and ran to slit trenches before you could say Jack Rice, three quarters of the camp were racing. The Nips took a hand and screamed and yelled and came racing in with machine guns to see what was going on. Well out of the thousand men no one knew what the trouble was and what caused the panic they were like a mob of sheep, one followed the other, just a case of nerves. The Nips thought the boys were making a break. All ended well. There have been a couple of suicides lately, poor devils. It's a wonder to me there have not been more. The Koreans are beginning to come round our way and are giving a bit of news which is a good sign. We scored some very old mail, I received a round dozen.

16th AUGUST – Peace! What a day. At last our prayers have been answered and we are once again free men. No longer slaves to these yellow dogs. It's still very hard to realise. To go back a couple of days we were hearing a lot of rumours we could not get confirmed. Yesterday morning we again got good news but could not find where it originated. Men could not settle down and camp was seething with excitement, we were 99.9% convinced war was over, but we had just a little doubt as we had been caught before. That night all hut sergeants and M.Os were marched out of camp, Col. Coates leading them. Every man in camp was out on road to see what was going on. It did not take us long to find out as Nips guards jumped down from the bund and saluted our men. That was enough for us. Colonel Coates came back and told our men to assemble at concert theatre for some important announcement to be made. We had just got there when out of the blue came a Union Jack. The boys just stared for a minute and then let go yells and shrieks that could be heard in Aussie. The men went mad. It was a sight I shall never forget. Some of the men cried, some laughed and some just stood sort of bewildered like myself with a lump in my throat the size of a cricket ball. I had never known until that moment just what the old Union Jack meant to me. Then along came Col. Coates to give his talk. The boys went mad again and cheer after cheer rent the air. The old man at last managed to have his say. He informed us officially that the war was over, and once again we were free men (more cheers). He told us also that it would be some time before we got out of camp and on our way but he would do what he could to make our life happier than it had been for us. He had just about finished when more yelling and cheering broke out. Some of the boys thought of the Ghurkies in the other compound and raced over and pulled down barbed wire, and brought them over. They were more excited than we (if that was possible). They wanted to shake hands and kiss all hands and the cooks. When speeches were over all hands sang God Save the King, the first time for years. Didn't they put some volume into it. Everyone was that excited that night that sleep was out of the question. Men just wandered round shaking hands with everyone. 300 of our fittest men were detailed to go out on bund to prevent our boys going out of camp and keep Nips out, just in case. The Nips just across the bund could not make it out, they did not know that the war had ended till they were informed by our boys. We are all anxious to know what will happen now, and waiting to see our first white man from outside. He will have a lot of questions to answer.

24th AUGUST – Another week has gone by and we are still here in camp, but things are much different now, the food is very good and no Nips to order us around. The

work in camp goes on as usual such as camp fatigue etc. We got a great thrill yesterday as six Dakotas came over and dropped tons and tons of supplies to us. Medical, food, tobacco, cigarettes, chocolates, clothes and blankets. We have all been issued with a brand new issue of jungle greens and underclothes. Men have been coming in from jungle work camps and we are crowded out. We have met up with mates we have not seen for years. We had a visit from Lady Mountbatten and what a marvellous sight, the first white woman we have seen for years. She inspected the camp and had a talk to a lot of men. She is a marvellous woman. There was another white woman in camp today who had been interned by the Nips, when she saw the men she completely broke down. Several white men have also visited the camp and are astounded to see men in such a pitiful plight. They should have seen us in '43. Out of 1000 men who went away on Mergui job 250 have returned in very bad shape, 300 are dead, 200 beyond human aid, 250 may get out in M.O's report. The animals kept pressure right to the end. On 14th August, Nips bashed brains out on two Aussies and two English men with a sledge hammer. The officer whom they had living in the slit trench is still alive, but he is in a very bad way. He is suffering from malaria, black water, pleurisy and dysentery. God alone know how he has lived so long.

4th SEPTEMBER – At last we have been able to get out of prison camp. I cannot explain the feeling as I walked out those gates a free man after 3.1/2 years. We went into town of Nakon Paton and had a good day. We celebrated by indulging in some native whiskey, it was terrible tak, but it had the right effect. A lot of the lads were sorry next day. We had a look over the pagoda, we had to hop over 60 concrete steps which was a stiff climb on crutches. The Thailanders were very good to the boys and took them into their homes to have a feed which was very good. We were informed by a Thai lawyer that we were very lucky men as Nips intended to execute men on 22nd August. He also informed us that the Thais were going to try and help us and they had 1700 full trained and armed men who were to try and take camp before Nips started massacre. Anyhow our luck held and the war finished.

10th SEPTEMBER – At last we have said goodbye to Nakon Paton and I assure you there are no regrets. We are now in hospital at Bangkok. Our first night there was marvellous, as we were in real beds, clean sheets, pillows and mattress. The first for years. As we expected we were unable to sleep well with excitement and good conditions, they were too much for us. The little Siamese nurses were very kind and could not do enough for us. When we came through Bangkok the natives gave us a wonderful welcome. One would have thought we were the relieving bunch instead of a crippled bunch of P.O.Ws.

We had a lot of visitors to see us, mostly white women of all nationalities, Dutch, Swedes, Danes, English, French and German. They were very kind and gave men cakes, lollies and cigarettes. General Bill Slim came along and gave the boys a pep talk, he was very popular amongst the men. We are getting a little of our own back, not from the little yellow men. There are thousands still walking around Bangkok. To a man, from Generals down to a private they bow and salute us, whenever we pass. Quite a few of them have been done over since our [their?] capitulation. It is not an unusual sight to see a Nip body floating down the river. The American boys were the first to get away on their journey home. A lot of English have been flown out to Rangoon. We are booked to go any day

now. The Ghurkas have arrived here now and have taken over the town. I would not like to be in Nip shoes if Johnny gets annoyed with them. We had a look around Bangkok yesterday, it's a very large city which has a lot of large pagodas and some very beautiful temples, especially the Chinese. We saw parts that had been flattened by our bombs. They were really flattened, believe me.

22nd SEPTEMBER – We are on our way home. It still seems hard to believe, after all we have been through, that we are on our way home and will soon see our loved-ones. We were taken out to Bangkok drome where we waited very impatiently for four days, till we were told to prepare to get on plane for Singapore. There were 24 leggies in my party and none of us had never [ever?] been up before, anyhow they could not have kept us out of the plane for all the money in China. We left 8 a.m. on a beautiful day and arrived in Singapore after a marvellous trip at 2 p.m. We are all unanimous that planes are the only way to travel. We had only landed a few minutes, when another Dakota landed bringing more P.O.Ws from Sumatra, amongst them the Australian sisters. The sight of them made the men mad. Men cried when they saw them, cried for guns to shoot every Jap they could find. I will never forget those girls and have nothing but admiration for them. At drome we had first decent feed of good Aussie food, dished up by our own Aussie girls. From drome we were taken out to change where we stayed till 24th September. We were then taken down to boat 'Highland Chieftain'. We embarked 10 a.m. and to our disappointment boat did not sail till 12 noon the next day. There are a lot of Aussie and English nurses on board and they are mixing freely with the men, to try to get accustomed to mixing with people from the outside world. It is quite a pleasure to talk to a good Australian woman again. We had our first drink of Aussie beer last night, it was beautiful. We get one bottle per day per man. We put in time on board listening to lectures, concerts and pictures. We are heading for Darwin and the greatest place on earth, Australia. There are a few civilian internees on board, women and children who look as if they have had a bad time. We stayed two days at Darwin and are not allowed to leave the ship, troupes and A.A.W.S. came aboard and entertained troops.

We got a lot of news from them as to what happened in the past. We got a very good welcome back to our native land, it's too hard for me to explain my feelings when we first sighted land. Things are quiet on board and everyone is in a good humour. We have all been issued with a full kit of clothing again and it's good to be dressed up. We are now in the Barrier Reef and are to pull into Brisbane, where Queenslanders will disembark. It is very pretty cruising along here, hundreds of little islands and scores of whales are to be seen. The Queensland coast is very rough and rugged from what we can see of it. We pulled into Brisbane where we received a warm welcome from the people. We were allowed 6 hours shore leave and had a good time. We were astounded to see all the pubs closed as we had not heard of the rationing. We had a good look around Brisbane and it was pleasure to walk around and get away from Boongs and Wogs and hear our own language spoken. We sailed 4 p.m. and struck our really first bad sea. The old boat certainly pitched about. Next day was calm again, and seemed longer than any other because it was our last day on board and then Sydney. Well here we are, Home at last. What a day!



Returning POWs on the *Highland Chieftain* arriving into Sydney.

10TH OCTOBER 1945 – This day is the happiest day of my life, and one I will remember for many years. We were to come through Sydney heads 6 a.m. but boys were lined up on decks at 4 a.m., too excited to wait below and have breakfast. We first spotted Barrenjoey Lighthouse. What a thrill! Our next thrill was old Manly beach and then the heads, well you can imagine our feelings. We had been longing and praying for this for 5 weary years. Then the ‘Captain Cook’ (pilot boat) came out with a lot of smaller craft cocka-doodling on siren and every one cheering and waving flags. We came down harbour to a marvellous welcome, everything seemed to be there to meet us. We landed Woolloomooloo wharf where we were taken by bus to Ingleburn camp. The whole population of Sydney seems to be there cheering as we went through. Anyhow we got through and then the greatest thrill of all we met our loved ones.

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