IAN PERRY'S WAR

Lieutenant Ian A.H. Perry QX20040 2/1 Heavy Battery Artillery.

Ian Arthur Harcourt Perry was born in Brisbane 16 December 1916. In 1934 he served in the Militia in the Light Horse for 2 years. Then in 1938 he rejoined the Militia as a member of the Coastal Artillery. Subsequently, he was commissioned, enlisted into the AIF on 18 April 1940 and posted to the 2/1 Heavy Battery. Later he became a member of Sparrow Force which was to defend Timor. The story of Sparrow Force will be covered elsewhere. Following the Japanese invasion of Timor (the Japanese outnumbered the defending force by a ration of around seven to one), the allies capitulated and Ian became a POW on 23 February 1942.

In April 1943 Ian moved to Thailand as part of "F" Force. The story of "F" Force is of 7,000 POWs sent to Thailand. On arrival in Thailand they were forced to march around 300 kms to the border with Burma. There was a very high illness rate and ultimately a high death rate (amongst the British around 60% and the Australians less than 30%). A Hospital Camp was created in Burma for around 2,000 desperately ill, of which over 700 died in a matter of months. Ian was at this Hospital Camp as a "Wardmaster". Following the completion of the railway the surviving members of "F" Force were returned to Singapore.

With the end of the war, Ian returned to Australia. He was discharged from the Army on 13 November, 1945 and died on 27 July 1985.

This story is a combination of a historical summary of his military career, copies of various letters and copy of a significant newspaper article written by Major Bruce Hunt, who was the Senior Australian Medical Officer on "F" Force.

I am indebted to Ian's daughter Viki Perry for providing me with this material. It was originally written, at the behest of his wife, as an historical account for his family. It was actually written in the last years of his life, as he battled cancer.

Preparing this information has for me been a great pleasure, and I would like to acknowledge the help of Bernie Berry for proof reading certain chapters and providing the map, my mother Leah for assisting with details, Will Gout for the photography, and Donald for his patience with setting up the book and printing it.

All the writings contained on these pages (except for the explanatory footnotes, the descriptions of P.O.W. diseases, and the final page) were written by Ian Perry, or were taken from other correspondence and newspaper articles kept by him or his mother at the time.

We should, as a family, be very glad these things were kept so that we could <u>see</u>.

Viki MacKenzie (Perry)
24th August, 1989.

Contents

His Introduction.

Queensland in the Thirties, when the school leaving age was 13 through 19. Adulthood and its responsibilities so often achieved before there was even a dream of adultery.

Careers planned by circumstance.

If you were the son of a worker, you were probably out of work - or if working, putting in the first years doing the menial tasks that low wages could justify, only to be "put off" when the award rose to a point where the employer remembered that his family had to eat too.

If you were "middle class" and your father was in a business or fringe profession that had survived the crunch years of the depression you could get a job with him - and it's amazing how well fathers and sons got on together. The sons of fathers in banks and insurance companies got jobs in banks and insurance companies - not always the same ones as their fathers, but it did pay Dads to stick together so there was usually a job somewhere in the system. Doctors' sons became doctors - their fathers usually made enough to 'put them through'. Farmers and graziers' sons became farmers and graziers; there was plenty of work for them but not much money.

And as things improved, most of the fringe professions sold jobs - 'accepted article clerks' they called it - somehow the money was acquired by the family to pay the premium (?) and the lucky young man under articles - for truly lucky he was - got it back in wages in the first few years and by the time he could contribute to earnings in the business (as opposed to savings) he was really paid by his employer.

There was a public service - entrance to which depended on excellence at examinations - or political patronage.

And a University which seemed to be there for other people to attend, but not many of them.

Further education, such as it was, was a matter of individual effort, attending technical college lectures, taking correspondence courses, even just plain reading. If you wanted it you got it but you had to want it badly enough by other people's

standards, preferably not your own because it was a lot easier that way.

Education for females? Sure - short hand and typing, nursing, but please nothing requiring intelligence, there was very little place in the work force for females, and then only at cut rates.

From such a background then, emerged the Australian Armed Services of World War II - and this story.....

The First World War was "the war to end wars", and because too many people believed it, so the Second World War became inevitable by 1930.

In hindsight one can say that most of the world ignored the implications of the inventions and the industrial developments engendered by the First War, and while they accepted all the resulting material benefits for an easier life, they shut their eyes to their war-making potential and concentrated on the good life, applying to their concept of war the time honoured principles that were tried and proven.

The United States relied on isolationism and ascendancy in the Americas. Great Britain, the training ground of the North West Frontier, had Gibraltar, Singapore, Tommy Atkins[1], (dare I say the Afghans) and the last Indian who would always be available to defend the Empire; while France was busy building the impregnable Maginot Line (where the generals could put their ostrich like heads below ground).

Australia was doubly fortunate - because everyone knew that if war did by chance erupt, Australians were natural soldiers, all you had to do was give them a rifle, and there was plenty of rifles - even machine guns left over from war. Australia was prepared for anything. Anything at all.

The Victors, the Allies from W.W.I, knew that Stalin was too busy liquidating the Kulaks[2], Japan was too busy moving about in

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[1] The name given to your every-day British soldier.

[2] The prosperous Russian farmers who were against the new government.

China (Japanese couldn't see in the dark anyway[3]). Germany had been beaten, and that fellow Mussolini wasn't such a bad type anyway, he'd certainly fixed up the Bolshies with his castor oil treatment.

The boat started to rock when Mussolini set about enlarging his empire, that caused a few ripples, and a few people found their way into the Citizen Forces, a "free uniform" - on issue of course, and to be paid for if you lost it, a rifle and a bayonet, often times the rifles came without bolts, because civilians could not be trusted with rifles that could be used in anger, but there were some rifles complete with bolts kept under lock and key for issue on the occasional days when there was a target practice on the range.

Pay was nominal of course, five shillings a day, not for every full day training, because the beggars were pretty keen anyway and certainly didn't do it for the money, they got just enough to make it a binding legal contract, but not so much it would make "defence" expensive.

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[3] During the war officers were all given, in specially secured rooms, documents to read called "Memoranda of War", which were immediately destroyed afterwards. Often some of this priceless information had appeared in the Press weeks previously, but amongst some of the secret information revealed about the Japanese was that they could not see in the dark, and consequently would avoid night battles, so that little importance should be placed upon night training. As it turned out, the Japanese fought almost always at night so the research was bad, or Japanese propaganda was accepted ridiculously easily.

1st Writing

To understand my World War II service it is really necessary to visualize how militarily oriented my generation was.

In 1930, only a little over eleven years after the armistice of World War I - then known as the Great War - I was, at thirteen, in The Southport School Cadet Corps - I was in for approximately two and a half years when we learnt to drill as Infantry - with old Service Rifles - to march and fire a rifle on the school rifle range.

In 1934, I was 17 and two years below enlistment age, when I put my age forward and joined the Light Horse. It was at this time that Italy under Mussolini invaded Abyssinia, and it seemed quite feasible to us that we could become involved. I was discharged at the end of 1936 when I changed my place of employment.

In 1938 immediately after Hitler and Chamberlain met at Munich, it was obvious that war was imminent, so most of the young joined the Citizen Army again. I had tried the Infantry and was not impressed with the amount of marching, and the Light Horse and realized I would never be a horseman, so I decided this time to opt for comfort and joined the Coast Artillery, where one could look to live in huts with guns in fixed positions, and pending the outbreak of the war, look forward to a two week a year paid holiday on unspoiled Moreton Island.

Before war was declared in 1939, but after Germany had invaded Poland, we were mobilized and sent to Cowan Cowan on Moreton Island. After about four weeks, I was given four weeks leave to fulfil my obligations to my employer, and do my final subject for admission to the Institute of Chartered Accountants - I did both satisfactorily.

From then until November 1945, I was in the army - as a member of various Coast Artillery units, and my record of service only shows service from March 1940, this being the time it was decided to discharge us from the old Citizens Forces, and re-enlist us in the Duration of War Citizens Forces (not to be confused with the A.I.F., which was for overseas service.) for service in Australia.

(We were to man an "Examination Battery", that is to say man the guns on the approach of any vessel towards the port of Brisbane, while a naval vessel "examined" the ship, and if necessary, her papers and cargo - if they were not passed we were to fire a shot across their bows - and if they did not stop, sink them - it was never necessary to fire a shot.)

Had I really been determined at this point, I imagine I could have been released to the A.I.F., as at that stage I was of very junior rank, first a gunner then a Bombardier, but the war in Europe had bogged down, and it seemed that the two sides were just going to stay in their concrete emplacements indefinitely. So when I got the opportunity to go to Darwin, I went, for at least I was going to see somewhere I would never have been able to see otherwise, and after all there was time for the war in Europe - if it ever got going, later. We were taken - myself a first class passenger - by the S.S. Marella, owned by Burns Philp, and on a regular run between Sydney (or Melbourne) and Singapore. She was a small but comfortable old ship, having been the Kaiser Wilhelm's (the German Ruler's) prior to the Great War, and given to Burns Philp in place of a ship of theirs that had been sunk.

Almost as we left Brisbane, the war in Europe started in earnest, and in the fortnight it took us to get to Darwin, France fell and the British evacuated through Dunkirk - so we all volunteered immediately to go and fight in Europe, only to be told that our job was Darwin, and we had better learn to love it.

We were sent to East Point Battery at Darwin where I really started to learn something about life, and what being a sergeant in a rough, mainly regular army unit meant.

Some of the troops were living (off the battery) with aboriginal women, and having families with them, and then just walking out on them when they got transfers back south. (Regular army personnel were wanted in the south to train A.I.F.)

It was not unusual to have to intervene in fights in the canteen, where fellows had broken the bottom off bottles on the bar counter, and were threatening to jam them in one another's necks.

Some of the Darwin local toughs who had enlisted were taking the pay from young soldiers from the south, and threatening to beat them up if they reported it, and do worse if

they gave evidence in the orderly room against them. We successfully stopped that.

Discipline generally, in the area, was so bad that our unit, apparently being regarded as one of the few reliable ones at that time, was given the job of guarding army prisoners in our "off" time - there was a detention unit, but they had been caught taking the prisoners to the pictures at night in Darwin !

There were a number of riots in Darwin over the period . Some time after we arrived, A.I.F. units that had thought they had enlisted for the European war, were sent to Darwin, and as they (although they were relatively late enlistments), referred to us non A.I.F. personell as "Chocolate Soldiers" or "Chockos" - you can imagine what happened on pay night in Darwin, with troops the worse for liquor.

There was really nothing to keep the troops occupied - all the prostitutes had been emptied out of Darwin even before we arrived. There was one small movie theatre designed for peace time Darwin, an Australian Inland Mission Club for Soldiers also only designed to cater for a peace time garrison, and a couple of illegal Chinese gambling houses. The whole situation was aggravated by the garrison mentality of the civilian population.

The population was divided roughly into three sections, the Asians (mainly Chinese), the workers (mainly waterside workers), and the Administration. There were of course others, but they mainly fitted with these groups, or lived a lonely existence. There was a clear line of antagonism between the workers and the Administration.

I learnt of the Garrison mentality very early in the piece. A bridge-playing friend of my mothers, whose husband had recently been the manager of Vesteys in Darwin, gave me a letter of introduction to her good friends, the Assistant Administrator of the Northern Territory and his wife, saying that they had a couple of nice daughters and a son. On arrival in Darwin I contacted them, and shortly after they took me for a day trip pig shooting down the Adelaide River. At some time during that day it was made abundantly clear to me, that people in their position and sergeants just could not mix socially, and that this day was a "once".

A few months later, I drove my Battery Commander - a Major - and a friend from civil life, in his car from hospital

(where he had just had an operation) to these people's home. I carried his gear up the front steps, and when it was taken from me, was told that if I liked to go round to the back door, there would be a cold beer waiting for me.

Darwin in those years was an education. I think it was early 1941 that Arthur Fadden (a friend of my father's) became Prime Minister for six weeks. My family did not like me being in Darwin, and had some idea I would be better off, and safer, around Brisbane. One day I was paraded before my C.O. and he asked me - "What would you say if I told you your father had written to the Prime Minister, asking for you to be transferred back to Brisbane", and I told him I did not believe him, so he showed me copies of the correspondence, and a recommendation from Army H.Q. that I be transferred South and commissioned. He said it was up to me, I could go or stay, and that I would be commissioned in any case. I was completely taken aback, resentful that my father had interceded on my behalf, but I recognized very quickly that if I was ever to have the opportunity of serving overseas, I stood a much better chance in Brisbane than I ever would in Darwin, so I said I'd go. The C.O.'s response was, to say the least, insulting. He did not pay me the compliment of thinking I was looking for A.I.F. service, and made scathing reference to the fact that I obviously could not take the rough conditions of Darwin.

When I arrived back in Darwin some six months later in the A.I.F., waiting to go overseas, he had the decency to seek me out and apologize.

I paid my own airfare from Darwin to Brisbane, rather than wait for a ship going to Brisbane. Time seemed to be the important thing.

I got back to Brisbane, and was sent back to Cowan Cowan, and later commissioned. One day, as a sergeant, I was calling the roll and a man was missing, he had not returned from leave. By the time he had been located by the Military Police, he was in the A.I.F., and I was an officer. He had to appear before the C.O., and I had to go to Brisbane to give evidence that he had failed to return from leave. He was finished, and returned to Cowan Cowan, and as he was marched out of the Orderly Room, the C.O. said what a silly fellow he was, because if he had made application to him, he would somehow have released him to the A.I.F. in the future. As soon as I got outside his office, I asked the Adjutant to parade me to the C.O., whereupon I told him I wanted to be released to the A.I.F. He had the decency to laugh, and said there was no hope for

an officer to go, but nevertheless, if the opportunity did turn up, I would be the first choice.

Within a couple of weeks, Brisbane was asked to supply one officer and thirteen other ranks, all trained heavy artillery men for overseas service. The C.O. fulfilled his promise, and I was told very unofficially that we were to be part of a Siege Battery, for service in the invasion of Europe, and when we had been assembled as a unit in Sydney, we would be off to Shoeburyness in England for special training.

For some unknown reason we were gathered together under wraps at Fort Lytton, and never saw an A.I.F. camp. After pre-embarkation leave we got on the train at Wynnum Station, changed at the Interstate Station to the Sydney train, and went to Sydney. There we were met and taken to the Quarantine Station at North Head, still not to an A.I.F. camp.

We were the first detachment to arrive, and I was taken before a staff major - he and I were alone in the room , and all doors closed, while he told me under strict security, for my ears only, that we were to be part of a special force to go to Koepang in Dutch Timor, and that while we would be manning a coastal battery of two guns from that point on, as we were trained Coast Artillery men, we would be trained as infantry men because if there was any action on land, that was how we would be fighting.

I gave my troops leave to go on the ferry from Manly to see Sydney that night, and they got back to the Quarantine Station absolutely bubbling over, they had got into conversation with some girls on the ferry, who had told them they were going to Koepang in Dutch Timor! Such was the security, obviously the girls had known some clerks in the Major's office.

2nd Writing

I was mobilized with the Coast Artillery twenty-four hours before war was declared - but after Germany had invaded Poland. My first posting was as a Gunner at Cowan Cowan on Moreton Island - apart from four weeks to sort things up where I worked - for Ray Hartland - and to complete my final exam for the Institute of Chartered Accountants, I spent from then until November 1945 in the army, and sometime about Christmas 1939 I was promoted to Bombardier.

Early in 1940 I contracted some unknown disease, and as there was at that stage no army hospital, I was sent home on sick leave, and an Army Doctor (a civilian in uniform for the occasion) attended me. Subsequently it was decided I had hepatitis.

In March 1940 I was put on transfer to Darwin, and promoted to Staff Sergeant. As the only way to get there was by sea, and there was a six week wharfie strike on, I spent some of the six weeks in Brisbane waiting for a ship. From memory, I arrived in Darwin in May 1940; I was posted to East Point Battery as a Gunnery Staff Sergeant, and remained there until February 1941, when I had a chance to transfer back to Cowan Cowan and a promotion to Lieutenant. In June 1941 our H.Q. in Brisbane was asked to supply one officer and thirteen other ranks for overseas service, and as I had already volunteered in anticipation of such a thing happening, I was given the posting.

In late June we went to Sydney where we became part of 2/1 Heavy Battery, a part of Sparrow Force, destined for Koepang in Dutch Timor.

In July we travelled by train from Sydney, through Broken Hill to Terowie in South Australia, then up to Alice Springs where we changed to motor trucks for the trip overland to Birdum, where we changed to trains, and there I was five months later back in Darwin.

We were the second troop convoy to go through the centre on the "new" north-south road. In Darwin our troops were quartered in Larrakeyah Barracks, and we officers were put in tents at Emery Point. For about three months our troops were put through the indignity of providing working parties around the Barracks for the H.Q. Staff, while we officers had to carry out the job of orderly officers around the barracks.

In September we officers told our Battery Commander we were going to move out with the troops, we would like him to accompany us, but if he would not we would go just the same. We managed to acquire some tents and (with the Battery Commander) finished up on the site of my old battery at East Point, which was already manned, but we doubled watches with the existing battery to keep our men in training.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour, we were loaded onto the H.M.A.S. Westralia - a passenger vessel "converted" into a cruiser. We went to Koepang, and there went ashore at Kalapalima (Five Coconuts), where there were some six inch guns installed on a sort of coral outcrop, one hundred or more feet high, where it was impossible to put defensive slit trenches or anything for our own protection.

It was here, for the first time, that we met the rest of Sparrow Force, although we had all been in or around Darwin for five months.

From that December, until the Japanese landed, we spent our time trying to establish defensive positions along the south east shores of Koepang Bay.

Fighting around Koepang lasted only four days - we were a force totaling about 1200, plus some Dutch troops. 250 of our troops thought they were cut off from us , and never found out otherwise, as they were not taken prisoner and escaped through East Timor, after fighting with the Independent Company (Commandos) who were in Portugese Timor.

The official history is substantially correct - it studied the action in the Koepang area, and in that respect is correct. It ceases to be however, shortly after the "white flag confusion", and the bombing after capitulation. It overlooks the implication of the action taken to reinforce Koepang in February, 1942.

The intent to reinforce Koepang confused the Japanese, and quite possibly delayed any move across to the Darwin area, at least until the Coral Sea battle (which they reported as a Japanese victory), after which time it was too late.

Japanese intelligence on Timor was not good; we had unconfirmed reports of parachute sightings in the Tjamjong[4] Koepang area prior to the landing and we were of the opinion that the Field Telephone lines (our only communication) were being monitored. Timor had been used by the Dutch for the exile of dissidents, and such people were repatriated to Java on the same ship that I was taken to Batavia on in July 1942. It is possible they were used as agents but I would think their lack of military expertise would have made them of very doubtful value.

In the last week before the Japanese landing, we had :-
1. The arrival of Brigadier Veal, Major Cafe, and other Australian Brigade staff, with red braid and all, and the establishment of Brigade H. Q.
2. On the 19th February, the day of the Darwin bombing, we were visited by Colonel Philips (and I think, some of his staff) of the U.S. Artillery Regiment which was to join us - in fact they gathered some souvenir bomb fragments to take home that afternoon, little knowing how many there would be awaiting them in Darwin, as it was raided that night.
3. The British A/A Battery that had been allocated actually did arrive.

So before the Japanese had landed, the people in the Koepang/ Tjamjong area had seen new impressive looking staff offices, an American presence and British troops - the possible presence of a Brigade was established.

The English Bofors Anti-Aircraft gunners were veterans of Dunkirk and they played a part in the action well beyond their numbers. They were seasoned and experienced troops - the Japanese had absolute aerial superiority as there was no R.A.A.F. presence. All Japanese aircraft used in low level anti-personnel attacks appeared to be sea borne. The experienced English gunners would attract their attention by waving sheets at them and as soon as the aircraft decided to attack they would get it on their predictors and more often than not they would shoot the aircraft down. Their success rate was much higher than their small numbers would have indicated.

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[4] Ian, in his spelling of place names, uses the Dutch form in contrast to the Malay. An example is Tjamjong which in Malay is spelled Tanjong.

The effect was a wonderful boost to Australian morale, and by the third day the Japanese low level aerial attacks had virtually ceased.

By the time the force got to Aukom the Japanese paratroops and their seaforce reinforcements had been either eliminated or routed - this we did not realize. We had a night's rest at Aukom prior to going on the Tjamjong which we understood from the last manager to be in Japanese hands and we travelled on a road with swamps on both sides.

As is recorded, in the morning a patrol was sent up towards Tjamjong to make contact with the enemy to enable Lt.Col Leggatt to make further plans.

At that time, being a Fixed Defence Officer, I was located at the rear of the column. Out of the distance, up the straight road between the trees, came a mechanized - and by our standards armoured - column. The leading light tank carried a white flag. Naturally we did not open fire - the whole column was alerted, but we could not tell if they were Japanese or hopefully our own reinforcements. When we saw they were Japanese, we presumed (ever optimistic) that by some miracle our own people had landed around Koepang and this Japanese column preferred to surrender to us.

It was only when we were point blank that the white flag fluttered to reveal a red centre - and I will always believe this was a deliberate manoeuvre, because shortly afterwards when Japanese planes started to bomb us (and the Japanese), Japanese flags appeared from everywhere.

Our interpreter - Capt. Terence East - went forward to converse with the Japanese interpreter, then returned to Lt. Col. Leggatt and said "They want to surrender", to which the former replied "We haven't enough food for ourselves - anyway - tell them to lay down their arms."

When it was found that Capt. East had things very confused, Leggatt asked for them to withdraw (or for us to withdraw) to a point equivalent to that where they were first sighted with a white flag, as their action was dishonourable.

This was refused and we were given time (one hour I think) to make a decision - we destroyed everything in our possession (money, photos etc.) that would have been of use to the enemy and

then laid down our arms - and shortly after were bombed very accurately by high level bombers, both the Japanese and ourselves suffering heavy casualties.

The combination of the white flag, the surrender confusion, and finally the bombing, together with the fact that the initial wave of Jap troops had been eliminated, was the basis of a strange future relationship between us - to the degree that until the day I left Timor in July 1942, while we had to salute the Japanese Guard House going in and out of camp - the Japanese always saluted us as officers.

We were imprisoned in Timor at Oesapa Besar, in a small barbed wire area on the edge of Koepang Bay. Our senior medical officer had been with the 250 troops at base, and he and his men waited to be captured so that they could care for the wounded. With them was a Methodist padre.

It was an unhealthy area, and a bad start to three and a half years in captivity. There were a variety of diseases available, and virtually no drugs, priority in the use of which went to the wounded. I settled for a tropical ulcer and several bouts of malaria.

Our transports full of wounded were towards the Japanese - its a long story, and there was little choice but suicide to no avail.

Shortly after we had reached the Oesapa Besar enclosure and for some time thereafter we were subjected to two main questions -

1. What did you do with our paratroops?
2. Where are the rest of your brigade?,

until finally they threatened to starve us all if we did not tell them, which fortunately they never did.

It is easy to understand why the Japanese could not account for their dead - we were allowed back into the battle areas soon after capitulation to seek our own dead - most of the evidence had been removed by wild pigs.

On 25th April, 1942 an escape attempt was made by Peter MacAlister, Lt.Col. Leggatt and others. Undetected they actually boarded a Japanese DC2 which MacAlister knew he could fly - unfortunately they were unable to start the engines, but fortunately were able to get back to Oesapa Besar just before the

Japanese put on a check parade. This too tended to add to the Jap belief of other troops in the area, particularly as those now in the Dilli region were making their presence felt.

In retrospect I can only say that our captors were fighting troops and of a completely different calibre to any encountered later.

In July 1942, I, together with Lt.Col. Leggatt and a small group of other personnel selected by the Japanese were taken to Java.

In September 1942, a small group, totaling about 45, were taken by ship to Batavia in Java (now known as Djarkarta). There we were taken to Bicycle Camp, the peacetime barracks of a Dutch bicycle battalion. It was a good camp, grossly overcrowded. The occupants were some Australians from the Middle East, dumped on Java at the last minute, others were survivors of H.M.A.S. Perth, others were Australian Troops actually brought there from Malaya, and also others who had actually forced their way onto ships evacuating civilians. There were also some U.S. Troops.

Here we were made to have our heads shaved, and give all drill orders in Japanese. After six weeks, some of us (I forget how many, it may have been 25, and all from Timor) were put on a Japanese Troop ship, and travelled under their conditions, excepting we were allowed only a very limited time on deck daily. By chance the Japanese were from Timor, and we recognized each other, they were sorry for us as we were being guarded by the Kempe Tai (Secret Police), and where possible shared with us any special issues they had, beer I do remember. They were kind to us.

We believed that there was a more than reasonable possibility that the Brigade Staff, the American Presence, and the activities of the Independent Co. in Portugese Timor (after augmented by our base troops from Tjamjong) bluffed the Japanese into keeping a presence in Timor and probably delaying a landing in Darwin.

On arrival in Singapore, we were taken out to Changi - Selarang Barracks, to the rest of the Australians, with instructions to A.I.F. H.Q. that we were to be accounted for separately on the daily strength report. Here I met up with Harry Jessop whom I hadn't seen since 1940 in Darwin.

Here we got good medical treatment, which did a lot towards undoing the harm that had been done in Timor.

Early in 1943, the Japanese interrogated us few from Timor. Intentionally or unintentionally, while waiting outside the building, a map fluttered to our feet, and as the old Darwinite, I recognized it immediately as a 1939 Australian Army Map of the Darwin Peninsula, which showed none of the defence works which had been carried out, or the location of the water supply which was not completed until late 1940.

This made our job easy. We had been ordered by A.I.F. H.Q. to answer any questions (as evasively as possible), as not long before two men had been shot, and the entire British and Australian Troops concentrated on one barracks square for some days, until they signed a form promising they would not escape.[5]

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[5] The incident arose when the Japanese demanded that the prisoner's sign an agreement: 'I, the undersigned, hereby solemnly swear on my honour that I will not, under any circumstances, attempt escape.' As all prisoners have a duty to escape, a confrontation between prisoners and guards was inevitable. This was done at all the camps, but the worst incident occurred at Changi, on August 31st, where after two hours of argument, the officers had not signed and the Japanese were adamant that every prisoner would do so. Suddenly on the night of September 1st the Japanese ordered that every prisoner assemble in Selarang barrack square. The 15,400 men remaining in Changi, carrying their personal gear, cooking utensils and kitchen stores, filed into an area of 120 by 240 metres. The square was serviced by two water taps. Some senior Australian and other Allied officers were ordered to go to Changi beach. On arrival they found that they were to witness an execution. Either out of perversity or nervous indecision the Japanese kept shifting the position of the victims, the firing squad, and the spectators. At last Lt. Okasaka, the chief Japanese was satisfied. The four men facing the rifles included two Australians, Corp. R. Breavington, and Priv. V. Gale who had attempted escape, suffered extreme deprivation, been recaptured and returned to Changi. The Indian riflemen only managed to wound three after the first volley, after another five or six shots Breavington shouted "For God's sake, shoot me through the head and kill me". The Indians fired another ten shots before Okasaka ordered them to stop, and said "The Japanese army does not like to put to death prisoners but unless you obey our orders you must be put to death."

We answered the questions truthfully in relation to the information we knew they already had, and they were apparently satisfied. A.I.F. H.Q. were taking no risks, so they took the first opportunity to get rid of me, (as I knew more of Darwin than anyone else) and the West Australians, so if the Japs came back for more information on north Australia, they would not get anything of value.

Comparing our questioning afterwards, there was little doubt in our minds that the Japanese plan was to land paratroops down the peninsula at about Hennekeys Lagoon then support them with a seaborne landing.

That is how I finished on "F" force. We were being moved, the Japanese said, to a healthier place, in a good camp with healthier food, a good place for unfit men. We travelled about four days in rice trucks by rail to Bampong in Thailand. We were overcrowded, and took turns sitting by the open doors to get some air. The toilets were the countryside, when the train stopped for long enough.

We walked for 170 - 180 miles up to Shimo Sonkurai[6], which was near the Burmese border, the beginning was on a road of a type, but seemingly the longest part was through jungle tracks, and a lot of that in rain and mud, as it was the beginning of the monsoon season. All stages were covered at night, and sometimes it was so dark we had to put glow worms or phosphorescent roots on the back of our hats, so the people following behind could see.

Corralled like cattle, waiting to be slaughtered, the men in the square queued endlessly for water through September 2nd. With an increasing chance of the men being decimated by an epidemic, the Allied officers agreed to sign. They had secured one subtle concession: the Japanese agreed to make it clear they were ordering the prisoners to sign. On September 5th the men returned to their former areas. One unexpected result of the Selarang Barracks incident was an immediate lift in morale. Other ranks and officers, British and Australian prisoners, had been united. Normally so conscious of their own ineffectiveness, all had been invigorated by the chance to make a gesture of defiance against the enemy.

[6] There were three Upper Thailand camps (Sonkurai) - Shimo Sonkurai being the most southern of them.

In all there were about 8 trainloads, and each trainload marched separately. We were harassed throughout by the Thai people, who seemed to think they could steal something of value from us; and by the Japanese guards who made no allowance for the sick. Some trains lost people on the way, either to Thais or to Japanese. Our train lost none except the sick we got the Japanese to allow us to leave at other P.O.W. camps we passed.

At Shimo Sonkurai - the end of the march, we arrived to an incomplete hutted camp, only one hut had a roof and there were no ablution or latrine facilities.

All the troops were worn out from the march, even the fittest, but we were expected to commence work on the Railway immediately, without thought of completing the camp.

I went on the Railway Working parties. As an officer I did no physical work, but stood between the Japanese engineers and our men. It seems to me I did this for some time[7], but it can't be so because cholera broke out fairly soon after our arrival, and the number of sick soon grew to a point where the Medical Corps personnel could not handle them.

I was the first officer taken to help in this area, and started up the "Wardmaster"[8] system, where a combatant officer oversaw the needs of between 150-200 sick men in one "hut", and looked after their medical records.

At the peak of the cholera epidemic, 25 or 27 (I can't remember which) died in one day, and at about this time the monsoons really broke. There was mud and slush towards Thailand, and mud and slush towards Burma. The Japanese (nor I guess anybody) did not have transport capable of getting through, and everyday a group of volunteers would walk through the slush to the nearest point where rice was available, fill up their packs with it, then bring it back. This was supplemented by bamboo

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[7] From the dates provided by Bernie Berry's diary written at the time, they arrived at Shimo Sonkurai on the 15th of May, and Ian did not become a Ward Master until the end of June, so he did spend some 6 weeks out on work parties.

[8] M.O. Bruce Hunt started the Ward Master system, but Ian Perry was the first officer chosen.

shoots, and hearts of wild banana palms which grew around the camp.

All this time working parties were wanted for the railway, and if the correct number was not available on the morning parade, the engineers would race through the hospital huts taking anyone they could frighten to their feet.

By July, even the Japanese could see there was little hope of getting any work from most of the men, and they arranged for 1800 British and Australians from the three camps on the Thai side of the border, to go to Tanbaya in Burma. On the 21st August I went with the advance party, whose job it was to prepare for the arrival of the sick.

We walked most of the way, doing the last stretch by train, and it took us two days. The camp was an improvement on Shimo Sonkurai, but by no stretch of the imagination a hospital.

The sick started arriving in open railway trucks - they usually arrived at night, and we had to account to the guards for the numbers we received, so many alive and so many dead.

That was the pattern for the next four months. Every morning we had to account for the number of bodies alive and dead under our control. Over 8000 men in that camp died in those few months. Most of the doctors were wonderful, only one was out of his depth and for the last couple of months I was given charge of the convalescents (those not actively suffering from any bad illness) with the one doubtful doctor to look after the medical side. I had to do the rounds with him, and if I did not agree with any of his diagnoses I had to tip off Major Hunt, who would come and look at the patients concerned himself.

While we were in Tanbaya I developed what appeared to be an abscess on the base of my spine. I was admitted as a patient with little hope of walking out. In the middle of the night someone came to me and said - "Here, take this, I have been keeping it for someone worth saving" - one dose - and within two days I was back at work , although the infection did not come under control in my system until 10 years later in 1953.

On the 22nd November we were moved by train in open goods trucks (with the exception of those who would definitely not stand the trip, and medical personnel to care for them) to Kanchanaburi. Then in rice trucks from Kanchanaburi to Singapore

on the 20th December, in time for Christmas, leaving ill and dying men in Thailand.

I learned afterwards how shocked the Singapore people were to see us on our return, but we were so thrilled to be back in the congenial confines of the Selarang Barracks with Christmas coming up, it never occurred to us.

I spent a lot of time in hospital while they tried to clear up the staphylococcal infection in my system, nothing would work and when the troops were moved to Changi Goal, I was in hospital, so I was not involved in the move.

I was discharged from the hospital when it had to move to Changi Goal, and although I was on some form of treatment till the end of the war, I was put straight on to taking charge of a working party to level ground in the Changi area for an aerodrome. As an "unattached" officer with no troops of my own, I was always given troops who had no officers, I regarded it as an imposition at the time. I felt that the Malaya 8th Division were looking after their own officers, but as the war moved on I realized that it was a compliment. Many of the troops had been left behind when their units had gone on parties to the many places the Japanese sent them, some through illness and some by design. They were not a disciplined group, and took some handling, and I felt that maybe I had been picked to take charge of them.

Work on the aerodrome was a breeze, we kept on recommending changes to the drainage plan, on the principle that our unskilled ideas must sabotage the job. We also cleared as many coconut palms as possible, because the hearts of these (millionaires cabbage) were delicious. I understand that when the R.A.F. finally got back to Singapore they found our aerodrome useless.

The final years 1944/45 were fairly uneventful in Changi. Apart from working on the aerodrome (we were called a ground leveling party, as we were not to be used for war works), we worked in the "gardens" where our vegetables were grown, fertilized by the urine from the camp. It was a prize job because we had our mid-day meal on the job - a "rich" vegetable stew. Officers were employed on "wood" parties - getting firewood - even then there was not a lot of timber on Singapore, and our supplies came from some distance from the gaol, where we dug stumps out of the ground. We carted them on old truck chassis

pulled by the men, who would dig out the stumps and then pull them back, down hill was easier than up.

After Victory in Europe, things got tense - our rations were reduced, and we knew that after Burma would come Malaya and Singapore, so did the Japanese. Rumours of what was to happen to us abounded.[9] We had a number of overflights by Allied Forces, and once in an engagement over Singapore Island, some of the explosive bullets landed in the Gaol area, and some men were killed and wounded.

From June 1945 on I was set up with a typewriter in a garage, in the medical officers living area (ostensibly Red Cross), and typed out war crimes evidence from a number of people. There were a series of lookouts so that I would have warning if any Japanese approached, none ever did.

When the A bombs were dropped, we knew but the Japanese troops did not - it was about two weeks before they knew the war was over, and then they produced the Red Cross parcels[10] that

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[9] Big trenches had actually been dug around Changi, and petrol in drums stored in the jail, which the prisoners had good reason to believe were designed to bury their executed bodies if an invasion of British and Americans came. This was true of many other P.O.W. camps in Japan and elsewhere. Because of the A Bombs, a directive came down from the Emperor that the war was over and Japan had lost, so their lives were saved.

In an address by Roy E. Whitecross, HQ 8th Division, on 15th Feb., 1989 at Martin Place, he said - "Documents recently found in the National Archives in Washington D.C. confirm that the High Command of the Imperial Japanese Army ordered the massacre of all Allied prisoners to take place on the 15th August 1945. Mass graves were dug in all jungle camps and other measures taken in the first week of August, 1945."

"The orders were, (to quote the Japanese document) '(a) Whether they are destroyed individually or in groups, or however it is done....and(b) In any case it is the aim not to allow the escape of a single one, to annihilate them all, and not to leave any traces.' (end quote)"

"The Japanese Emperor made his speech ending the War at midday on 15th August, 1945."

[10] Although the arriving British thought the P.O.W.'s looked dreadful, they did not realize that many of them, because of these

they had been holding in store mainly because they said they were starving the allies. They were short of food themselves and could not afford anyone, let alone their own troops, see that the allies had enough to send some to their P.O.W.s. They also requested that one of our people be made available to travel in every Japanese vehicle as they (and we) did not know quite what would happen in Singapore without any definite authority in power.

Eventually British troops arrived with a special unit R.A.P.W.I., it really meant Rehabilitation of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees, but it soon became known as Retain All Prisoners of War Indefinitely, which wasn't really fair, as they did a difficult job well.

We were free and in Changi - our freedom was empty, we had really nothing to do. I went into Singapore one day, by car - which someone had undoubtedly stolen, but the tyres all went flat, so did the trip.

By mid September, we were organized to leave. I was supposed to come home on a Hospital Ship - but I didn't feel too bad, and knew how my family would worry if I did, so I managed to get transferred to a Troop Ship.

We came home, stopping at Darwin where the fellows I had left behind in 1941 were back on a second tour of duty, and somehow knew I was coming. They were running the place, so I was able to ring home and drive around and see what had happened to Darwin.

I arrived in Brisbane on October 4th, my father was waiting on the wharf - he thoughtfully had a Staff Car (he was now a Field Commissioner of Red Cross attached to the Army) and spirited me away to Greenslopes Hospital to a private room where my mother was waiting with some milk (and thank God, some XXXX - I did not see the milk), but through their thoughtfulness I missed out on the welcome home crowd lining the streets, so have no idea of what kind of reception we got.

I had four weeks leave from the next day - the 5th of October - I had to go back to Greenslopes Hospital on the 5th of November for a comprehensive health check, and have always

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Red Cross parcels had actually put on up to 30lbs. of weight in a very short time.

resented the fact that I was given a very rough check, and was one of the first two discharged from the Army the following day.

Most other troops were kept on until the following year ... on full pay.

Correspondence

Q x 20040 Lt. Ian Perry,
2/1 Heavy Battery,
Australian Imp. Force,
ABROAD.

10th February 1942.

Dear Mum and Dad,

(Or should I say Maw and Paw - with all the influence you have locally at present?)

Well I'm through with love forever - here I've been this last month or so, picking myself out a good sort of a coloured girl so that I can get married and settle down here if the damn war lasts too long, and today I thought I'd found her - good figure, nicely dressed (scarlet sarong and green jacket), didn't chew betel nut, almost European features, and very very light brown, just what I'd been looking for - and now I just found her sitting down with one of her cobbers taking it in turns (like monkeys) scratching one another - most disheartening - think I'd better call the war off and come home. I'm missing the moving pictures too much anyway.

Talking of movements, a few ill advised visitors (friends) arrived yesterday and dived out of the clouds on top of us - Alan Carrick and I bit the dust at the same time as the A.A. blokes gave it their damnedest (we thought the L.M.G. stuff was the planes) and boy did they seem to be coming close to me. I felt sorry for Alan, for as he was beside me I felt sure he must be getting the lot. One of the boys knocked his tin hat off as he went for cover, and it rolled round on its edge and finished up by falling over on his ankle - nothing would convince him they hadn't got him. Fortunately although the planes looked like camouflaged sieves afterwards, no one was hurt.

Geoff Gregory had his head peering out of a shelter with a rifle in his hand, waiting to have a pop at them as they came back - no doubt Geoff is a hell of a good cove - he's a tower of strength.

I believe the last three weeks outward mail left by boat - so what I said before must be coming true - a long wait between mails. Incidentally I got parcel No.3 the other day, which filled my store cupboard up again nicely - at the time I got it could not help feeling it had been posted since I had last received a letter - (Dad 7th Jan. then 28th Dec.) - still maybe I'm wrong.

I think I told you earlier that our mail had a sticky end - a little while back - I met the survivors, poor devils must have had a sticky time and were certainly lucky to still be alive.

We are still getting a bottle of beer a day, and recently got quite a few dry goods. I ordered shaving soap and razor blades (I'm right out of them) and they sent me shaving soap and apologized for the fact that there are no blades - so I'll probably have a beard ere long - just imagine it.

We are awful fools - I left all the things I'd be likely to need on an occasion such as this (and bought for this purpose) at base. I guess soldiers have done it for wars immemorial anyhow. A beard ought to make me quite terrifying.

We are of course working like hell, but thank goodness everyone is getting used to the presence of enemy planes very regularly - and their effect on work has been nil - or morale - well the boys are really wanting them to come a bit lower so that they can individually have a pop at them.

Anyhow there is one thing I am glad of - the boys here - every one of them has decided that this is to be the Jap Waterloo, and it certainly won't be our fault if the Japs ever see Australia.

I did six days on a job recently with only my shaving water to bath in - boy did I stink. All the others with me did too so none of us minded - we didn't have crawlers - that was the main thing.

The rain still rains, and the monsoons are still trying to blow us about, and the mozzies are even trying to give us the great fever - but we seem to be standing up well - our only worry is as ever - that you people at home aren't worrying about us - I guess we'll get over that in time - for I guess you're not.

Well folks, so long for the present, I'll do my darnedest to write again soon. Regards to all of you, especially Mike, Joan and Henry - and of course old Barney.[11]

Have a good cold bottle of XXXX and a fresh lettuce for me

Yours

Ian.

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[11] Barney was Ian's much loved Red Setter.

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

District Records Office,
Warwick, Queensland,
20 th May, 1942.

Dear Sir,

I have been directed by the Minister for the Army to advise you that no definite information is at present available in regard to the whereabouts or circumstances of your

son Lieutenant Ian Arthur Harcourt PERRY
(Number QX20040) 2/1st Heavy Battery, A.I.F.

and to convey to you the sincere sympathy of the Minister and the Military Board in your natural anxiety in the absence of news concerning him.

It is felt that you will readily appreciate, owing to the nature of the present operations in the theatre of war in which he was engaged and the difficulties which have arisen in communicating with units which are located in territory now held by the enemy, that some time must necessarily elapse before further information becomes available.

You may rest assured however that the utmost endeavour will continue to be made through every possible source including the International Red Cross Society to obtain at the earliest moment a definite report which, when received, will be conveyed to you by telegram immediately. In the meantime it would be appreciated if you could forward full particulars to this office as quickly as possible of any information whatsoever you may receive from any other source, as it may be of the greatest value in supplementing or verifying the official investigations which are being made.

Yours faithfully,
P.D. Jones Major
Officer in Charge Records.

Mr. A. Perry,
14 Kitchener Rd.,
ASCOT.
Brisbane.

Q187761 W.O. (11)
G.A. Ludinski,
Coast Defences,
N.T. Force,
Home Forces - Australia.

15th June, 1942.

Dear Mr. Perry,

I am still trying to obtain some news of Ian and have at least succeeded in finding out what happened to his unit.

I obtained my information from a chap who has just been brought back from Timor, wounded. It appears that Ian's unit were surprised by the Japs and routed. Approximately one third were killed including Major Wilson and Lieut. Gunn, one third were taken prisoner and the remainder escaped to the hills where they joined up with an Infantry Unit (here half a line censored)

This chap is in a fairly bad way from a bayonet thrust in the thigh, and is rather delirious at present and cannot concentrate, of course he wasn't conversant with all those members of Ian's unit who joined them, but I'll still persevere and find out whether I can jog his memory when he gets better. I am still confident though that Ian was able to get away and is carrying on. I might add that the chaps still fighting over there are well organized (here two and a half lines censored). That is all I can tell you at present ------- in the meantime I will keep at this chap.

(Balance of letter purely personal)

P.S. The Infantry Unit were the 2/40th so you may be able to find someone who has been able to get back.

Postcards to Home

Ian Perry QX20040 Lieutenant 21 - 2 - 43

DEAR MUM AND DAD
UNWOUNDED AND WELL
REGARDS JOAN AND FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

HOPING TO HEAR FROM YOU SOON. DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME

Ian

3
PASSED
BY
CENSOR
400

QX20040 Lieutenant Ian Perry 2/1 Heavy Battery A.I.F.
22 - 12 - 43.

PAT AND I ARE STILL WELL AND IN GOOD SPIRITS.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT US. HAVE RECEIVED ONE LETTER
THANKS. REGARDS TO ALL MY FRIENDS

100 Doncaster Rd.,
North Balwyn,
Victoria E.9
2/6/44.

Dear Arthur,

It gives me great pleasure indeed to inform you that yesterday I had a long chat with a personal friend of your son Ian, a man who was with Ian until a year ago. He told me that when he last saw Ian, he was as fit as a fiddle and his morale was 100%, in fact at the time he was playing at sport with some of his men who idolize him for his sterling leadership and magnificent example. He is in a good camp where conditions are of the best. I shall let you know of his location in another letter. My informant is a high ranking officer of outstanding qualities and character and his statements about Ian are in no way exaggerated. Unfortunately I cannot give you his name at present nor can I communicate any other information he gave to anyone. In fact I obtained special permission to release this news to you and Mrs. Perry and I gave an assurance that you would not mention me or our organization to anyone.

I hope you are all well up there Arthur and that some day I shall be fortunate enough to get a share of the fine weather you are enjoying instead of the cruel cold at present prevailing down here.

Kindest Regards,

Yours Sincerely,

Jack..

IAN PERRY QX20040 LIEUTENANT A.I.F.

9th. AUGUST 1944

GORDON STRONACH AND I WELL. HAVE RECEIVED TWENTYONE LETTERS LAST FEW MONTHS FROM YOU DAD, JOAN, DENISE. DONT WORRY ABOUT ME
LOVE TO YOU ALL

Ian

TO:
Mr/.s A.H. Perry
14 Kitchener Rd. Ascot Q

40 Bayview Road, Fivedock,
Sydney, N.S.W.
5/1/45

In reply please quote. 517

Dear Sir/Madam,

On listening to a radio message from Prisoner-of-War and Civilian Internee Camps to-night I heard one addressed to you. These messages are not given at dictation speed and at times I have difficulty in writing the complete message or accurate names during the transmission. However I am forwarding to you that which I was able to get in case you did not hear it yourself. In replying it would be appreciated if you would enclose a postage stamp in order that this service may be continued, as quite a large number of these messages are forwarded on by me each week.

Yours sincerely, Frederick G. Young.

Reg.No. and Name QX20040 Lieut. T.A.H. Perry
Location Malaya Message from Radio Shonon (Singapore)

I am very lucky to have received 24 letters & 2? messages from Dad, Joan, and (Some other name here) Congratulations Joan, love and best wishes to all including the latest addition.

[NOTE
During the period early January, 1945, correspondence between Arthur Perry and Qld. Echelon and Records took place relating to the above message and others similar to it in this period, which were Japanese Propaganda Broadcasts. Part of the letter from Lt. Col ? O.i.C. Qld Echelon and Records states....

"The information is conveyed to you with the warning that, in view of the nature of its receipt and that it emanates from an enemy source, it should be accepted with the reservation that, even if the message is partly authentic, parts of it may have been added or taken away to suit the purpose of the Japanese Propagandists."]

Changi Camp,
SINGAPORE.
16.8.45

Dear Ray,[12]

How are you, old cock, and how are the wife and family. Well, I hope - I guess Ralph is quite the man now.

Well, it's been a long time - and I'm glad it's over. I leave you to guess - over six years since I left Hart and Co. - and then I'd only been working seven years - boy! have I forgotten lots - a coolie's life is not inducive to the mental retention of facts and figures - also between you and I - I cannot even imagine myself settling down to a normal regulated life again. However I guess that a few weeks or months back in civilization will alter all that. I reserve my opinion.

I've been a long way since I saw you and I've seen more countries and travelled further than most P.W.'s. I went from Timor to Madora, to Java, to Singapore, to Thailand, to Burma, back to Thailand, and eventually back to Singapore. I've held down a few jobs - even to that of a Medical Officer up in Thailand. We were short of them so I turned my hand to it. Boy! am I good at it. I know all the symptoms - if a bloke has a temperature you know he's got a fever so you give him quinine if you've got any in case it's Malaria, and if you haven't you're just a bit more sorry for him; if he has over half a dozen motions a day and passes blood you know he's got dysentery (or diarrhoea and piles) but as you haven't got anything to heal him with you try and scrounge food to keep him alive and give him a chance to get over it; if a bloke tells you he feels sick and wastes away and either dies or looks like he's going to die within two hours you know he's got cholera - so you see the rules are simple. I doubt if they'd go down at the Medical School but they're simple I can promise you that. I've also been a coolie digging out stumps in a swamp, a gardener, a buffer between the Japs and the men. That's simple - you simply try and out bluster the Japs - it works always - the only trouble is that you generally draw the wrath of Bushido[13] down on your own head instead of the men. I did a long distance hike across Thailand but damn it all maybe you don't want to hear of these things - all I

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[12] Although Ian had written to his family before Ray Hartland, the information was censored, so this was the first letter by dates.

[13] The Japanese way of valuing honour over life.

can say is that I'm damn lucky to still be alive. Of 7,000 of us that left here in '43 less than 4000 returned - from one camp there were 1600 men went in and by the end of the War (V.P.Day) - a lot of them having died since as a direct result of that trip - only 250 were left - a few of the aforementioned 4000 have died since - and the thing that distresses us most is that messages are coming over the air daily for fellows that died years ago - there are going to be thousands of miserable people in Australia soon.

Well, that's a cheery little paragraph I must say - but it's an impression of the picture of the last three and a half years, and as I can't hope to write the whole story on paper I guess that's the best way to put it. By the way would you mind giving Dad a look at this letter - I haven't mentioned the darker side of things in my letters home as they are not quite the thing for women.

I believe Roy Penhaligon got home all right. I hope Noel and Roy are well, also B.H. and Morris - I hope he's O.K. Please give my regards to Isla and any of the others - I suppose Isla is a Wing Commander now - tell her I promise to pay due respect to her rank but to remember she will be a civvy again one of these days and if she is too tough on me I'll try and get square. I learned memory training from the Burmese elephants. Please give my regards also to Roy Hill and Ron Dixon and the Davies - I hope young Bill is O.K. - or I suppose it's Old Bill now.

I've seen most of the whips in the Military world lately - and spoken to them - perhaps I should say they've spoken to me - Lord Louis Mountbatten - a man you would follow anywhere - Generals Slim and Christison - they're the finest types of men you could ever hope to see - and they say the British race is becoming decadent - b.....s.

Burnett Clarke has been here all the time - he's a skin specialist now - and a damn good one too.

Well, Ray, I guess there's not too much more to say until I see you which I hope won't be too long now.
Maybe some lunch - maybe you could even take a day off - I hope so.
My regards to Watty Thompson and any of the others you may see.

All the best,

Ian.

By the way, I think today is Isla's birthday - if it is, wish her many Happy Returns - that is unless she has a jealous husband.

c/- No. 2 R.A.P.W.I.
HQ. SEAG
6.9.45

Dear Mum, Dad, Joan, Henry, the Kids,

Well, for the moment words fail me - I've thought quite a lot about the writing of this letter ever since the Japs tossed it in, and I drafted quite an informative little note, only to find that peace or no peace, we are still, for the moment under "security", [See note on front (RAF Censor 474)], however, as soon as we can tell "all", I'll use it up on you - for the present the past three and a half years will have to remain a blank.

You'll be glad to hear I'm well, and am even at the moment still doing quite an effective days work, actually I've come out of this more or less unscathed, apart from irritating things like boils (I had them for 18 months - but not from rich food), the odd attack of malaria and a rather tender unmentionable part of the torso owing to the lack of some obscure vitamin (quite cured about two and a half years ago). I've been little else but hungry. My figure is rather attractive, quite sylph like, seeing as I was only 10 stone about a week ago - but as I am expanding like an inner tube I guess you won't be able to admire me. Actually even at 10 stone I was one of the heaviest about the place, as I still managed to retain my name as "fat".

I've had a few letters from you all but naturally only few and very intermittently so I shall be glad if you and all available friends can all write me everything since 8.12.41, as I received very little mail after I arrived in Timor and I'd like to know if there's anyone who isn't married or got children, for from your letters I got, it seemed to me everyone was going off fast. Incidentally the last letter I got was a card from Mum dated Dec. or Jan. last, mentioning Denise Bostock being engaged, however it would be better if you could assume I have received no mail and then I'll get all the scandal. By the way the address here is rather of a tentative nature so if you don't know where I am when you get this - by all means use it for a reply - however I gather that I'll possibly be on my way home ere you receive this.

Pat is with me here and particularly fit, also same for Burnett Clarke, and Gordon Stronach and Harry Jessup, also Bryan Hoare.

I hope the Vauxhall is still on tap, also Narbie.[14] I've got lots of plans for the use of them both, I hope we can all spend a few weeks together soon at Southport - we'll have to try and hire a boat Dad, or perhaps Dud Pike may be persuaded.

Things have been rather like a holiday here the last three weeks - we have been receiving Red Cross parcels sent to us back in 1942, cigarettes, clothes and soap and not doing any work and being allowed free access to and from the beach nearby, to swim. The Japs have also allowed us to have wireless sets (we've had them all along under pain of severe penalty if caught) and with a hook of loudspeakers through the camp, life has been much brighter - what with music etc., our first Australian (or for that matter any) papers have also been a joy.

Needless to say I've thousands of questions to ask you, about people and things. I guess a lot of the lads must have gone so I'll brace myself for the shock. I can only hope that some of them have been lucky - thank God it's all over. Anyway I ought to be home soon to find things out and boy, am I excited. After trying not to think of those comforts and pleasures we have all taken for granted for years, it is wonderful to be able to let your mind run riot - I'd like very much to have a small sherry, beer (or whatever rationing will allow) party one evening soon after I return, just to see the old mob again. I hope it'll be possible - if not then they'll just have to put up with tea.

When you write I'd be glad if you can tell me the prospects of a job - business conditions generally Dad, for I can see I'll have to get the nose to the grindstone as soon as possible. I'm looking forward to it anyway.

I'll have to refit completely. They took everything but the fillings out of my teeth, so if it is possible to buy such things as a watch and a fountain pen, I'd be grateful if you could lay your hands on them before the rest of this 8th Division get home all after them; clothes etc., I'll get when I get home. I'll wait and see what shape I am, anyway maybe the moths have left some of my old clothes - if I remember a'right I even have my winter uniform at home.

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[14] Narbie was the Perry house at Narrow Neck, the main house in Brisbane was called Narbethon.

Well I'm sorry this is so terribly disjointed, but I find it really hard to concentrate on writing sense when I feel excited as I do at the moment and when I can't tell you all the things that I have been doing and the places that I have been to, and to cap it all I've two blokes arguing about how much leave we'll get when we arrive home. It makes it darned near impossible.

Anyway I'm fit and well and that's the main thing and I guess you all are too, so once again salutations - hope to be with you soon.

Love to you all,

Ian.

Regards to Ray Hartland and anyone else you see.

Urgent Telegram

9 Sept 45.
Telephoned Warwick 6 p.m.
Personal Mr. Arthur H. Perry
14 Kitchener Rd. Ascot Brisbane

LIEUTENANT PERRY RECOVERED
I AM GLAD TO INFORM YOU THAT QX20040 LIEUT IAN ARTHUR HARCOURT PERRY PREVIOUSLY REPORTED PRISONER OF WAR IS NOW REPORTED RECOVERED AND AT SINGAPORE STOP CORRECT ADDRESS FOR MAIL IS NUMBER RANK NAME UNIT LIBERATED AUST P W CARE 2 AUST P W RECEPTION GROUP AUSTRALIA NOTWITHSTANDING ADVICE FROM OTHER SOURCES STOP FURTHER REPORTS WILL BE TELEGRAPHED TO YOU....MINISTER FOR THE ARMY 5.30PM. EB

Changi Gaol,
10th September
1945.

Dear Mum and Dad,

Please excuse the notepaper but I feel sure you won't mind it - it's the only paper available - as yet things are not properly organized but I feel sure they soon will be.

I've had a visit from Monty Wade within the first 24 hours of the troops landing, which was very good of him and bucked me no end, as he had a message direct from you - something I'm not used to.

Well yesterday I went on leave to Singapore - the first time I have seen the place in daylight although it is three years this month since I arrived here.

By the way, security is off, so I can tell you my movements and roughly a little of the past three years or so.

Firstly I've had a wonderful opportunity of studying the coolie working conditions in the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere[15], and like every other coolie, black, fawn, or white I think they were lousy, the Nips have done the British Empire more good in their years of occupation than efficient propaganda, administration and any other means of impressing Orientals could have done in five decades. We really owe them our thanks, the little b.....

All this doesn't tell you where I've been -

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[15] The first official statement on the planned railway was by Lt. Nagatomo, on 15/9/42, part of it reads:-
"The Great East Asiatic War has broken out due to the rising of the East Asiatic Nations whose hearts were burnt out with the desire to live and preserve their nations on the account of the British and Americans for the past many years.
There is therefore no other reason for Japan to drive out the anti-Axis powers of the arrogant and insolent British and Americans from East Asia in co-operation with our neighbours of China or other East Asiatic nations and to establish the Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere for the benefit of all human beings and to establish ever lasting peace in the World."

I was taken a prisoner at Aukom, Timor, with the remainder of the force, on 23.2.42 (your birthday, Mum I believe) from there we moved back to a compound near Koepang - right on the edge of the bay, where we arrived on the 24th. On 26th July, I together with other officers - specially selected by the Nips to be separated from the troops - left Timor on a ship and travelled hold class to Caliengate on the Island of Madocia where we stayed for two days loading salt. They had now filled the holds with salt, so our small party - only 45 strong (we had 30 troops with us) graduated to the forecastle head and travelled on there to Batavia where we stayed some six weeks in a camp of mixed Americans and Australians. We arrived there on the 5th of August and left on the 12th of September, leaving 20 of the party behind and 10 officers, and 15 O.R.s of us then proceeded to Singapore on a Jap troopship, being quartered with Jap troops - they crowd them about as much as they crowd P.O.W.s We arrived at Singapore on 17th September and were taken to the Australian camp, then situated on the North East corner of the Island in the old barracks of the 1st Gordons. There I met up with lots of old friends, Pat Garde, Bernie Schulte, Harry Jessup, Charles Huxtable, Burnett Clarke and many others. There I spent a fairly uneventful seven months, the only excitement being that I was questioned by the Japs on the Darwin Defences, they still had ideas of invasion even then - but I'm glad to say I told them nothing although I must admit they nearly caught me - their intelligence are very smart little fellows - or perhaps they're not - because I was a bit smarter and I feel confident that if they had been really smart they would have caught me out.

On 21st of April 1943 I went off on the working party to Thailand to make the railway, we went to a place called Hampong by train, and then marched to a camp at Shimo Sonkurai up near the three Pagoda Pass on the Burma Thai border, a distance of 300 klms., where we arrived on the 15.5.43. I stayed there until 24th August when I left for Burma and arrived at a place called Tanbaya two days later - having been on every conceivable form of transport in those two days. Then we were about 50 miles from Moulmein. I stayed there until 24th November and then went back to Kanburi in Thailand, taking 5 days to cover the 300 odd klms. by train. I stayed there for three weeks and then left there by train for Singapore on 15th December and arrived there on the 21st December to spend one of the best Christmases of my life - My God it was good to be back, those eight months were not very pleasant.

From then on things were comparatively uneventful. We moved from the Gordons Barracks to the civil gaol (designed to take 7-800 Asiatics and European civilians) where there were at varying times from 6-13,000 of us, but one gets thankful for small mercies, so it was not so bad. We are still there but needless to say conditions are much improved.

I went on leave yesterday - into Singapore - as we are about 14 miles away transport was a problem - however we managed to acquire an old Morris 8/40 but by 10 a.m. (we left at 7.30 - we had had three blowouts and a puncture and had "borrowed" a spare off another fellows car, but as we couldn't get any more spares we had to abandon the car and proceed on foot. I managed to get a nice little sedan with a Chinese driver for the next hour - but I found it belonged to a fairly senior officer, so I thought discretion was the better part of valour and discharged him (the driver) with his car to report back to his boss. Anyhow, by that time we were at the docks where we looked around without success for an Australian ship - eventually we hitch-hiked back to camp where we arrived very hungry - in time for dinner (Gordon Stronach was with me).

Well, I have just found a bloke going home by plane tomorrow so I must close this letter down and make sure it gets away.

I mightn't get away from here for some time - some damn fool has mucked up the roll and the classification and I am at present booked for a hospital ship - yet it is only a month since H.Q. refused to release me for a staff job for the M.O. as they said I was one of the only ones in the camp fit enough to work on a job of clearing stumps out of a swamp - since then I've got really fit. I'm trying to get it altered, but as the rolls are already made out, and the shipping requisitions, so they are loth to alter it. So, if you find me on a hospital ship, don't for lord's sake worry.

I will close now as I hope to get another letter out by official mail today also.

Hope you are all well, but I guess you wouldn't feel as well and happy as I am - certainly no more because it's not possible.

Love,

Ian.

Incidentally I am marching three miles to work and back again each day.

Tell Col Hughes to release a vat of XXXX especially for me - at least a 5 gallon keg.

Please congratulate Brian Arrowsmith on his engagement.

CHANGI
SINGAPORE
10/9/45

Dear Mum and Dad,

This is my third letter to you (my second today) I hope you get them all.

Things are beginning to happen, I told you in this morning's letter that I had been classified for a hospital ship - by mistake - well since I wrote that I have been put on a local records job and although it should get me put back on my correct classification of fit - it will probably mean that my return may be delayed by a week or so or alternately I may leave here later than the transport convoy - I may fly home and get there earlier after all. Anyway don't worry - after so long away from home you can rest assured I'll be getting there as fast as I can. My job relates to Timor reports and records so I am afraid no one else can do it - I couldn't morally refuse - although I would have been allowed to - but one just can't leave any loose threads regarding casualties etc. I don't feel it's fair to their relatives anyway so you will understand of course if I'm delayed a bit. I hope I don't get caught up in the Burma Thai show - as I was right in the midst of it and one of the few who remained on my feet throughout. I know most of the areas where remains will be found - I always feel glad I went up with that party for although I was only fighting in Timor for four days and didn't feel we'd accomplished much, I went through the eight months there without so much as a quaver and felt that I had been worth my commission and done the job you would have expected of me. I have a letter from one of the senior officers who was with me (or who I was with) and really one of the most outstanding men I have ever met (Bruce Hunt - he is a Major A.A.M.C. and brother in law of Jean Douglas) that I'll be proud to keep.

Well back to here - I met an old boy the other day who gave me a copy of the Old Boys Review - I was sad to see about poor old Tom Enright but I was glad to know before I got home - a lot of the lads I knew really well were on the lists as killed - I expected that - I suppose one has to expect these things and it is good to get them as gradually as possible.

Yesterday in Singapore I saw the most glorious sight I have ever seen - the Jap working parties - they really looked a beaten army - something we never looked or behaved like - that is why - perhaps - we managed to get so many men through - but I hope the world isn't huffed - I hope they have people that really understand them controlling them for at least 50 years, forcing them to be

human - we know them very well. I can see that more, even now that our own troops are here, they DO NOT understand the Jap psychology as we do. A few people I've heard over the air do, but they are Oriental. They can and will bide their time, if they are given half a chance - they don't have to be badly or inhumanely treated - we can treat them in a civilized manner and teach them - but we must teach them or in 50 or even 100 years time they will be back at the same tricks. I know you will feel that I'm telling you nothing when I say that they are treacherous, ruthless, cruel and two-faced - but it's knowing just how much each of these things is in their make up that counts - I hope that people will listen to us when we get home - and not just think that we are embittered Prisoners of War. Harsh treatment of war criminals will not be enough, non fraternization by occupying troops will be ineffective to a degree, they will by their apparent wish to co-operate (and they will do that for 50 years if necessary to allay suspicions) eventually disarm us and then they will wait, and then - well why go into it. I only hope that everyone at home realizes it.

I know it will not be an economical proposition - but I really would like to have the opportunity of going to Japan - not so much with the occupation forces but more with administrative services - it is not through bitterness - I have not personally received bad treatment at their hands - but I have learned to some degree their national psychology, their beliefs, and the rottenness which must be bred out of them for the good of the world. This sounds like an editorial or a sermon, but I am sincere and unless I suffer a severe change of mind I will endeavour to try to carry this out - maybe you can hear of some opportunity for me - or know someone who can help me - please give it some thought.

I've had an interesting few days, seen Lady Mountbatten, a very unassuming person and most charming - we're having more excitement and entertainment than I ever saw or had before I was taken prisoner. I don't think it is such a hard army to serve in now. They really have made wonderful advancements in providing for troops and keeping them contented, and when I see the equipment and rationing provision, their transport, the utility of uniforms, and the sea transport they now have in our armies, I cannot help but wonder how we had the bloody hide to oppose the Japs on Timor even if we did get licked - as fast as we bumped them off they pushed in fresh ones - you know our small forces of 1700 spread all over the Island opposed between 30 and 40,000 Japs - starting with 1000 paratroopers who cut our group off from our ammunition, food and stores, being beaten so quickly we felt

depressed until we read the Jap account of the battle - well it's a long story and maybe I'll bore you with it soon.

I'm still as well as when I wrote my other letter a few hours ago.

Love,

Ian.

You'll note we have no paper or envelopes, please excuse the paper .

Changi Camp,
Singapore.

12th September,1945.

Dear Mum and Dad,

This letter is going out through India, the C.O. of our force is leaving through there tomorrow and he may post this letter there or alternately, post it when he gets back to Australia towards the end of this month. So this letter will in all probability reach you out of order.

Well, firstly I've had my classification fixed now - and I'm "Fit" Transport - not Hospital Ship - it will probably result in a later departure as the Hospital Ships are here now - however as much as I would have liked to get out early I don't think I could have gone on a Hospital Ship, and perhaps have kept some sick bloke off it. Incidentally I haven't got to do that job I spoke about, it's being done at home or on the way home - so I won't be delayed.

Yesterday Lady Nancy and Grace Muir arrived here to see us (the Gunners) and we had an afternoon of homeside scandal, they tell me you are a bigshot now Dad - Congratulations. It was good to hear about the old home town, and Grace was very good - she gave me her undivided attention and I found out lots - it really is grand to hear the latest, and to see people from home after so long. Grace volunteered the information that of all the people she had seen - I had changed the least - you may be glad to hear that - although I feel sure that four years must have made some difference in all of us.

I have been invited onto an Aircraft Carrier tomorrow, but I don't think I'll go - fourteen miles is a long way to go, and I have no clothes other than those I've preserved since I was captured (a pair of long pants I bought before I went to Darwin in 1940), and a shirt I scrounged, and a very dilapidated old pair of shoes. I have no desire to go in those - when I get a new uniform and some money in my pocket to return hospitality - then I'll go - if I'm still here. But you can guess how it feels to get there in little better than rags - other people don't mind us that way I'm sure - but I feel that I am sympathy hunting or at least may be suspected of it - so here I'll stay for the time being, hoping for clothes and transport to get in - I don't think that officers, anyway, should appear in rags - bumming lifts on the back of trucks from Asiatics.

It is rather funny - there is an aerodrome near here that we built for the Japs - it is 3 klms. long, and we had to move complete hills in little baskets - and a few small P.W.D. skips - to make it. It took from Sept '43 (it was started when we were in Burma) to Feb '44 to make - as we delayed them, and broke their equipment as much and as systematically as possible. It was wonderful they got it finished so soon, we gave them advice regarding construction and use of equipment, layout of modern aerodromes and drainage etc. and made such a good job of the drome that although the Japs used it (and incidentally lost a number of planes in accidents on it) our people have condemned it. We're rather sorry now we were so free with our advice to the Japs. who never used it operationally, and so all our good work went for nought.

Our people are taking over St. Pats for a hospital and all our sick blokes will be moved there shortly - it will be grand for them having been so long in such dreary surroundings to get in a bed between sheets with nurses to look after them. I'm almost hoping I get a dose of malaria after I get home so as I can have an attack in comfort, cool clean sheets, cool lemon or orange drinks, and maybe some cold chicken and oysters. I'd hate to tell you how many times I've thought of those things, you see I had lots of malaria of all types - Timor is a pretty foul place and even Singapore is pretty malarious now - but strangely enough in Burma and Thailand (reputed to be the worst places in the world) I had no malaria[16] although all around me men were dying of it or its complications - and yet when we went up there I was one of the only ones with previous infection, we have our lucky breaks in strange ways - anyway nowadays I rarely get a dose and if I do it's not as bad as the headaches I used to have in the old days - when I was studying, its wonderful how your body will build up resistance to it. Anyway if the cool weather brings on an attack when I get home, I'm going to lie back and enjoy it.

During the past years I've seen lots of people that you know but I hesitate to mention their names in case something may have happened to them, but among them were Frank Rutherford (June

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16 This seemed fairly surprising when compared with Bruce Hunt's letter, and Bernie Berry , who said Ian like all of them suffered almost continuously from malaria; so this statement is either selective memory loss or an attempt to make his parents less worried.

'44), Brian Fitelly (Sept '42) Don Tynan (March '43) Ian Fairbaum (March '43) and I have also made some very good friends here - very naturally I suppose - the main one is Bernie Berry (he lives at Clayfield) and a fellow called Claude Kinder (an officer in the Malayan Colonial Police) who was attached to the A.I.F. as a Malay interpreter. He is coming out to Australia - he is a complete convert and is more Australian than any of us.

Well so long for the present - hope to be with you soon but we have no definite news of departure yet, it maybe up to a month - that's all we know. Hope you are all fit and well.

Ian.

This letter is glued down with the breakfast porridge - it's a good thing we didn't have eggs isn't it.

SINGAPORE
12th September, 1945.

Dear Mum and Dad,

This is my second letter to you today - Lt. Col. Leggatt, my C.O. has taken out the other via India so you may not get it for a few days so I won't repeat myself except to say that I've had my medical classification corrected. I'm not Hospital Ship now but "Fit" - that may set you at ease - I have a feeling you didn't believe my previous classification was a mistake.

I went out for a long walk this morning, about 8 miles, and in the course of my perambulation I acquired a Jap aircraft compass - should be useful in a boat - if I get it home, if we have a boat, however it makes up for my prismatic compass which I lost of course - actually all I managed to save out of all my gear was your Sam Browns[17] Dad - I wouldn't let the devils have that.

Things are beginning to move now, more people are flying out in the morning, so maybe I'll be lucky and get out soon (I haven't got that job now - so I'm free to go any time) anyway here's hoping.

Today was surrender day at Singapore - there was quite a display of aerial strength, naval and military might but I couldn't be bothered to hitch hike into town to stand in shabby patched clothes amongst the thousands that would be expected to attend - maybe when I get some clothes - but I take a poor view of hanging around town in my old rags, also hitch hiking does not appeal to me - I'm just dying to be a gentleman again. I'm afraid (or glad I should say) that I was only a very temporary coolie.

I'm told that Digger Thelander[18] and Brian Arrowsmith are engaged - the Women's Weekly is getting us up to date - and both evidently to Sydney lasses. Grace Muir who was out here yesterday tells me that there have been a lot of interstate marriages and that as a result most of the old crowd have split up and gone on their ways. Someone said they should have sent casualty lists of female entanglements with nominal rolls and

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[17] A Sam Brown is an Army Officer's belt/shoulder strap.

[18] Digger's eldest daughter, Lynelle, maried Ian's son, George.

availability figures - anyhow we've decided to do a survey of the girls schools and get em young and train em right.

The stories about leave are hopeful - looks like we'll get about four months if we need it - Lord knows what I'll be doing for a living now - I'll bet I'm about the most unqualified qualified Chartered Accountant in South East Asia - it's certainly not that I don't want to settle down, but I just can't imagine sitting down in an office again - still maybe this is the exception to the rule of distance lending enchantment.

Looks like we'll be coming home direct to Brisbane - and of course to aforementioned leave - I hope so - but I hope as equally that people don't want to be too kind to us and delay us from getting home. Some fool of a Major who arrived here from A.H.Q. spoke of lunch and a nice cup of tea - a very nice thought but every minute counts. See if you can work any dodges Dad, to save me such an ordeal[19] - you must have thought of some way out of such things in the last war. They're damn good for the men but I'd rather get out of the milling mob.

Well I'm afraid this is an awfully newsless letter but its damn hard to write two letters in one day and just as hard to let pass the opportunity of writing one.

I'm looking forward to seeing young Michael and Susan (hope that is the right spelling) and Carol the redhead, I suppose Michael is quite the man now - but I don't expect the other two to recognize me.

By the way, my regards to John McNaught and the Davies - and of course the Isles and the Munros.

Well, so long for the present,

Ian.

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[19] When this is compared to Ian's second writing, and his disappointment at missing the 'welcome home' crowd lining the streets, it shows how the memories of what happened can change with time.

Changi Camp,
Singapore,
14.9.45.

Dear Mum and Dad,

Please excuse the pencil, but all the people with fountain pens have left - so we make the best with this.

I'm rather dissapointed today, we were down for first draft home - but now we have been moved down the list, and will have to wait for other ships - so. I only hope that the Army at home don't think we've left and hold our mail in Australia, I must admit I thought they'd have got through some mail ere this - a few letters have got through for the A's and C's so the P's didn't get any, but surely it must have been possible for the authorities to get some through on all the planes that have been sent in to fly the sick out. Next war I'm going to enlist under the name Aarons and get near the top of the rolls. It really does pay.

Well, that's my day's whinge over. Things are going on pretty much the same here so I'm afraid there is absolutely no news, and I'm sure I could write a lot more to you if we could get some mail in, but it's so darned hard to think of things to say.

The first draft arrived in from Bangkok last night - the sick they were supposed to be - but they look a damn site fitter than anyone here. They have had good food all the time up there, since Jan '44 so they are not too bad. Thailand is a rich country you know. They must have several hundred million ducks up there all laying an egg a day, so one can at least acquire eggs quite easily. I had three weeks there late in '43 on my way back here and must have created an all time high egg eating record by eating 30 in 24 hours - it was on the train on the way back actually - and on my birthday - it's surprising where they all go to. Eggs there cost us 8 to 10 cents each, latterly eggs were costing $12 each here, and as we were only getting $15 a month, we didn't run to eggs. It took all our pay to buy tobacco (you could get stalks from which the tobacco leaf had been stripped for about 50 cents an ounce, which we then used to soak and then flatten it out with a hammer, cut up as fine as we could and then smoke in a pipe (home made of course) and cigars (the only other form of tobacco available) cost $1.75 each, we cut them up and made cigarettes out of them with newspapers, bibles or any other available paper. I suppose that sounds a terrible smoke - it was - I tried giving up smoking but found I got too hungry so I took the easy way out - you could get

sufficient tobacco or substitute with your money - but you couldn't get sufficient food to satisfy you.

On that score I spent 150 good Australian pounds cash buying bad Jap dollars (2 to 5 for a pound) to buy myself vitamin foods etc. over my P.W. life - maybe in the last year. I reckoned it was better to spend the money here than to have a cheque for my back pay and a note of regret sent home to you.

Mountbatten visited us this afternoon - he is a fine type of man - a heavier build than his pictures show - but an absolute film star in his looks - absolutely the dashing commander - chock full of personality - the sort of man you'd follow anywhere. As you can see I was most impressed. His wife is charming also - from what we hear - from the Yanks as well - he has been the outstanding operational brain of the war. He organized - or so they say - all the amphibian operations of the war. North Africa, Sicily, Italy , Normandy , Leyte, and Okinawa. He told us he had a big show teed up for Malaya and gave us the general outline of his plan - some plan too - he was planning the campaign to be over in three weeks starting from the 9th September last.

I hear Frank Rutherford is (or was) in Japan, and O.K., he was a very good friend to me in the early days after I arrived in Singapore - we went to Thailand in separate parties and I didn't see him after March '43, although I had a note from him in July '44 when he passed through Singapore on his way to Japan.

It looks like Gordon Stronach and I will be of the few Queenslanders in our draft and the only Queensland officers, so we may arrive through Sydney - Burnett Clarke left tonight and will be ringing you should he arrive before me.

I think and hope most sincerely that the draft I took away from Brisbane with me in 1941 have been very lucky - one was on a ship that was sunk near Japan last year - but is not definitely dead, and another one was missing in Timor (not Le Strange) and I have not heard of him - but other than those two - I have reason to believe that up to a few months ago the rest were O.K. - but as we are spread all over Asia it is impossible to be sure - I am hoping against hope anyway.

15.9.45
I believe we can get this out tonight so I will close it now.

Nothing else has happened - except that I should be leaving here on one of Uncle Smiths[20] old tubs in a few days, but you'll hear all about it in good time no doubt.

Also I hear there is inward mail today so I should hear from you - this may well be my last letter before I get home so put some beer on the ice , buy some steaks, and book a few seats at the pictures.

Hope you are all well,

Ian.

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[20] Ian's mother's uncle was a ship's captain, who Ian had last seen in Brisbane as the Captain of the 'Esperence Bay', a ship of the Commonwealth lines. When the ship was sold to new owners pre-war she was renamed 'Arawa'. At the outbreak of war, the Royal Navy (not the R.A.N.) commissioned both the 'Jervis Bay' and 'Arawa' and converted them to armed merchant cruisers. At some time during the war 'Arawa' ceased duties as an armed merchant cruiser and concentrated on troop transport while the 'Jervis Bay' went on to make history in the Atlantic attacking the 'Admiral Von Scheer'. Ian and Bernie Berry came home on the 'Arawa'.

Almost on the Way,
19th September, 1945.

Dear Mum and Dad,

Well this will of necessity be short, but it's just to let you know I will be going aboard today - other Brisbane coves will be on board. 2/10 Field Regiment (remainder of Frank Rutherford's unit) are coming, or what of them are here - we are the first fit fighting troops to leave Singapore - the first out being Sick and L of C. [21]I hope the others come with us.

I got a letter from you Dad (per mail) and I was very lucky as only very few got through - thanks for the news - you're right, I am planning on using the Vaux and Narbie just as much as rationing will allow. Thanks very much for not selling Vaux - it has been one of my minor worries for 3 and a half years - I should have known. Relieved also to hear of Whitco being on the up, I have also been rather worried regarding the future - your assurances were welcome. I am looking forward to discussing the future - I can tell you I want to be a civvy just as good as I can. I am sure I am a much better civvy than soldier.

Well as I said this is short. Thanks to Ray and Nancy Fitz for their letters and apologize for not answering.

I am so fit I have been classified as temporarily unfit for tropical service. I hope no one has ideas of sending me back to the tropics. I have had 5 and a half years of them now - and those coconut palms, blue sky and beaches are just hooey,

Well for the time being,

So long,

Ian.

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[21] Usually meant 'Line of Communication', although this does not make a lot of sense here.

"H.M.T. ARAWA"
OFF SOUTAWA,
24.9.45

This is the first letter of this series.

Dear Mum and Dad,

Sorry I have ceased writing but it is worth while. I'll post this when we arrive in Darwin - I hope to go ashore there and acquire a pair of glasses - I still have a pair of lens but frames don't last forever.

Well, the last time I was in these waters, says the now much travelled temporary gent - was about three years ago. Conditions were not the best - quarters a bit cramped, a bit embarrassing sharing the lavatories and showers with the native women - but then one soon looses any sense of false (?) modesty - I'll have to be careful on the Main Beach won't I? - and the table - well the table was not quite up to present day standards - still we always had at least a two course meal - we and pumpkin wala[22] and if the service was poor - it was only because of the exigencies of the service. It had its funny side - this trip - for the Japs on board ship never tell their right hand what their left is doing - much less tell their own troops where they were going to - so as we had homemade charts and compasses and were laboriously plotting our course regularly - we were constantly being asked "Apa nama paloh etc." meaning "What's the name of that island" and we found that at a cigarette a time, it paid us to introduce as many new islands as possible - of course the silly little fellows did not report us to their officers, as they wanted to keep the source of information going. It was always the same - if they were not being pressed by their officers to greater efforts - the Nip rank and file were just too easy to handle after you had time to gain their confidence - and in spite of their so-called "non" discipline they were fairly easy to coerce, just so long as you dealt with them financially for long enough, then you could get them to steal, buy stuff for you, or sell stuff for you - until their officers found out - then they'd change over night and it was a case of watch out for yourself.

But no matter what were the circumstances, they always had their inherent sense of inferiority and though at many times it was this that caused their bestial behaviour, and their barbaric attacks on defenceless men - it was this that enabled us to stem

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[22] The natives.

them, and enabled us to take control of situations that had got out of hand from their point of view, and of course we never let up on them - or failed to take advantage of their complexities - if an officer in charge of a working party turned out in a good uniform, flashes on, brass and leather polished - it worked wonders - but go out dressed as a coolie, and they treated you as one. Unfortunately our clothes and polish supplies did not last forever.

Well, back to the present - I guess I'll keep wandering like this for years to come - things are more normal now, I'm beginning to realize that not only am I free to follow my chosen occupation - what it is I haven't chosen - but I have ideas that may bear a closer inspection when I get home, but I quite realize and I suppose you do too, that I'd be a fool to make a snap decision - I must wait until I settle down and readjust myself - even the first two and a half years of war affected my sense of judgement - so Lord knows what a three and a half year battle for mere survival has done - although when asked what had impressed him most amongst P.W.'s in Changi Camp - one of the first outsiders who arrived said :- "The outstanding sanity of everyone - they seem much more sane than the people we left behind in Colombo", so maybe it will be a matter of only a couple of weeks.

Changi really was a remarkable place - and when I tell you all about it I think you will agree with me - it was a little centre of Western civilization set right in the middle of the co-prosperity sphere, and try as the Japs would they could not destroy the spirit that existed there.

It was funny really - quite a snobbish sort of class consciousness developed - mainly in early '44 - those who had been up on those parties building the Burma-Thai Railway regarded themselves as superior beings - "Up Country Party" you know, while they looked down their noses at fellows who had remained at Changi as "Changi Pensioners" - it was said that to wear a watch was a sign that you had never travelled.[23]

This ship we're on is quite comfortable - I am sharing a cabin with Brian Hoare, Gordon Stronach and Fred Wilkins (2/1 Heavy Battery - West Australian). They're a good crowd so I am lucky. This ship is about 15,000 tons (the old Esperence Bay) and

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[23] The "Up Country Party" members had long since sold their watches, and anything else of value, in an attempt to buy food to survive.

although redesigned and fitted to carry 1700 troops, there are only about 200 of us on board, so we are being treated well. She carried more passengers than this in pre-war days. The food is excellent [24]but a bit much for our jaded tummies. At present I am happier with an egg flip than with a steak - we are enjoying the food, but we have to watch ourselves otherwise we get a very sore tummy. I hope we are back to old time diets and appetites by the time we reach Brisbane. In our convoy is the Duntroon and the Hawkesbury - the Duntroon having approximately another 2-300 troops on board.

Incidentally I have just devoured a large sized dose of castor oil to cure my tummy upset. I was astounded at the ease with which I downed it. But thereto attaches a story, there is another officer[25] on board who has been mistaken for me, and me for him for 3 years past - even by people who know us well. Last night he put up rather a poor show in the lounge, through drinking too much. The M.O. obviously decided to get square with him and teach him a lesson, and who should walk into his sick parade but me with all the symptoms - unsettled stomach, headache etc., so he ordered a large dose of castor oil. Now he finds he has taught me the lesson by mistake. I hope he'll be more careful next time. Of course I thought the treatment a bit drastic, but I had downed it before the explanation dawned on me. The M.O. said it will do me good anyway.

For the present,

So long,

Ian.

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[24] One of the problems on the way home was that the men simply could not take all the excellent food provided, but having spent the previous years on starvation rations could not bare to see it wasted, and despite warnings, caused a real vermin worry by hiding any left over scraps in various unusual hiding places all around the ship. Old habits could not be broken so quickly.

[25] This fellow not only drank too much, he also tried to break into the nurses' quarters.

This is my second letter on board

On board "Arawa" off Timor
25th September, 1945.

Dear Mum and Dad,

While I think of it Dad - would you mind, if it still exists, getting the shoulder strap of my (your) Sam Brown polished up - Rothwell's boot department should be able to do it. I did leave it at home when I left - so perhaps it is still around somewhere.

Funny I find now, that the last three and a half to four years are receding in my memory - while I can picture quite clearly and remember little things that happened before I left you in '41.

I was very glad to hear old Barney is still alive and kicking. I really felt back in '41 when I was leaving home - that I was saying goodbye to him for good and all - I never expected him to live this long - it made my throat feel rather lumpy all the time.

I've been wondering lately if all my clothes are still on deck - if they are I'll be in civvies as soon as possible - that is of course if they'll go anywhere near me, I've lost 5-6 inches in my chest measurement alone - so I guess they'll just hang on me. Funny thing how you lose weight when you are starved.

It might interest you to hear my progressive weight figures - by July '42 I had lost three and a half stone, mainly through having malaria with inadequate treatment, then I went up to 10 stone 7 lbs. in Singapore. Then I went to Thailand where I dropped to about the 8 stone 7 lbs. mark[26]. I picked up in Burma, and by the time I had eaten my fill for three weeks at Kanburi following my stay in Burma, I was up to 11 stone 7 lbs. for my return to Singapore. I held that weight for over 12 months until early this year when I started to lose weight again, and at capitulation on the 15th of August last, I was down to 9 stone 9 lbs., only in the first six months of my captivity could the loss of weight be attributed to sickness, at all times after that it was directly attributable to starvation - and planned starvation at that - they always endeavoured to keep us so weak that while we could work,

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[26] Bernie Berry tells me that their sense of humour helped keep them alive, as you might expect; and at one point when it seemed impossible that things could get worse, he remembers Ian, himself, and others laughing as they hung their hats off their hip bones.

we would never have enough strength to escape or cause trouble - and in the last six months, when they were fearing attack, they made decently sure of it - that is the main reason, I feel sure, why we were never allowed more than a token receipt of Red Cross parcels from Vladivostok - you see they provisioned their submarines with Red Cross tinned goods.

The Japs really do believe in the Red Cross - they realize it's advantages - one of the survivors of "Perth" who was washed ashore on one of the Islands in Sunda Strait after the final battle of the Java Sea found amongst cases containing Japanese and Australian money, cases with Red Cross supplied medical stores, marked I think 1923, the year of the big earthquake, when Australia shipped to Japan aid with relief for the Jap peoples - what fools they played us for. Mercy gifts used 19 years later to try and destroy the very country that gave them to her. You see the Japanese are long term planners like all Orientals, they are not as impatient as we Europeans, it matters not to them if their aims are not fulfilled in their lifetime - or even in their grandsons' lifetime - they are patient. Looking back in retrospective, I do not think that the Japanese ever expected to win this war - as early as February 42 - a few days after we were captured, one said "This war will last a hundred or more years, your grandson will fight mine, there will be setbacks, Japan will probably lose the present conflict - but eventually Japan will win " (oh yeah??), while throughout their occupation of these South East Asian countries, they have never given any real indication that they were there to stay - but more as bandits on a pillaging expedition - they removed everything that wasn't a natural part of the country - machinery plants, every wireless, household furniture and refrigerators, and they made very little attempt during the whole of their stay to work the mines (other than petroleum), plantations etc. That is certainly not the action of a power that has come to stay. So you can see - not so much because I have personally suffered at their hands - but more in the cause of commonsense, I feel that we must hold them down.

They don't deserve anything but firm treatment - I remember one of them saying "You use the word co-operation - you have no right to use that word - co-operation is only possible between equals - you are our 'inferiors'; and that was when we were asking for the barest possible necessities, food and cover for men down with cholera in the middle of the jungle. It is something which makes you sick, and I think that even if there are decent Japs, and I firmly believe that there are somewhere - they must be taught their responsibility towards the rest of mankind,

and their responsibility to exterminate, if necessary, men of the calibre we met up with.

I'll write another note tomorrow, and maybe continue the sermon.

Ian.

[NOTE
Unfortunately, for whatever reason, this was the last of the letters kept.....]

Urgent Telegrams

26 Sept 45.
Oriel Park
Personal Mr. Arthur H. Perry
14 Kitchener Rd. Ascot Brisbane

I HAVE TO INFORM YOU THAT QX20040 LT IAN ARTHUR HARCOURT PERRY EMBARKED SINGAPORE FOR RETURN TO AUSTRALIA & IT IS EXPECTED HE WILL ARRIVE BRISBANE SHORTLY STOP FURTHER TELEGRAPHIC ADVICE WILL BE GIVEN YOU OF TIME & DATE OF DISEMBARKATION.
MINISTER FOR THE ARMY 3.45

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27 Sept 45.
Arthur Perry
Ascot Brisbane

GUESS WHOSE REALLY BACK IN DARWIN ONLY TEMPORARILY HOME SOON

7.20PM

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2 Oct 45.
Oriel Park
Personal Mr. Arthur H. Perry
14 Kitchener Rd. Ascot Brisbane

ANTICIPATED THAT QX20040 LT IAN ARTHUR HARCOURT PERRY WILL ARRIVE BRISBANE & MAY BE MET AT 112 BRISBANE MILITARY HOSPITAL GREENSLOPES AT 11 O'CLOCK ON 4TH OCTOBER 1945

Bruce Hunt's Reference

A.J. Hancock Esq.,
Chartered Accountant,
Collins St.,
MELBOURNE.

Changi P.O.W. Camp
29th June, 1945

My dear Justin,

I remember at the end of the last war having dealings with a young accountant, well qualified but not yet with any professional connection, and who was much concerned about the prospects for his future. He came home, found a favourable opportunity, and his brains, his energy and his driving power did the rest.

During this show I have had much to do with just such another young accountant, a man in my judgement of similar latent possibilities and needing only opportunity. Of his purely technical training I have no personal knowledge; the accompanying chit suggests to me that this is probably adequate. On the other hand, of his character, his power to improve something out of nothing at short notice, his endurance of intense physical and psychological stress and often severe pain for months on end, his unfailing cheerfulness and his complete imperturbability in the face of angry, hysterical Japanese, monsoon rain, semi-starvation and epidemic cholera I have a very intimate personal knowledge.

I met Lieut. Ian Perry, 2/1st Heavy Battery R.A.F., in Changi in Sept 1942. He had been captured in Timor and transported thence to Singapore in Aug '42. Major Stevens A.A.M.C., who had been S.M.O. Timor, and who came up with him, spoke very highly of his care of his men under very trying P.O.W. conditions in Timor. It was in connection with some of his troops who were in my wards that I first met him. The solicitude which he showed for his men was by no means universal, and it was this that first drew my attention to him.

In April 1943 we were in the same detachment of "F" Force, a body of 7000 British and Australian P.O.W.s sent up to Thailand to build a section of the Thailand-Burma railway. Such were the hardships of this Force - you may have heard something of this affair - that within seven months, three thousand of the men were dead and only by tremendous efforts had we been able to keep many of the survivors alive. We started off by a most

arduous march of 200 miles, at night, along jungle tracks - little food and no shelter at the breaks - monsoonal rain - men falling sick by hundreds and being driven along the road by relentless guards. I always, as M.O., marched at the rear of the column to keep along the stragglers, and in this difficult and thankless task my two most valuable fellow workers were Ian Perry and Norman Couch, 8th Div. H.O., another subaltern of the same calibre. These two always finished up the 15 or 16 mile stage carrying two or three men's' packs in addition to their own, and generally had a poor broken down crock hanging on each shoulder. That sort of thing takes a lot of doing night after night for 2 - 3 weeks on end.

Bad as that march was, conditions in the working camps were far worse. Incessant rain, cholera, universal malaria, dysentery, tropical ulcers, beri-beri and starvation took a very heavy toll of men already debilitated by their year's captivity, by their long march and by the brutal slave-gang methods of the Japanese controlling the working gangs. As S.M.O. of a camp of 2000 Australians, I soon had nearly 1000 sick on my hands and only 2 other M.O.'s and a handful of A.A.M.C. to help me in trying to look after them. Assistance from non-medical personnel was vital, and I arranged with the Camp C.O. that I should take over a number of officers to act as "Wardmasters" and control the messing, hygiene, record keeping, discipline and general administration of my "wards" (partly roofed bamboo huts). Ian Perry was my first selection of the 70 officers in the camp, and of all the "Wardmasters" who served under me in Thailand and later in Burma where I commanded a hospital of 1900 beds, he did the most consistently satisfactory job. He himself was frequently smitten by malaria and by a plague of boils but I don't think he ever took more than a few hours off duty during the whole of his stay in the North. His "ward" was always clean, his men fed, washed, and their various requirements met, and no sudden demand for a new return at fantastically short notice ever found him at a loss, so methodical were his ward records kept (on strips of bamboo by the way - paper had ceased to exist).

I saw a reasonable amount of fighting in the last show, and I have seen a fair amount of hardship in this one. To my mind a man who came out of Thailand and Burma with an unblemished reputation - and there were a hell of a lot who broke under the strain - has been through a more severe testing than action is ever likely to provide, or than he is likely to meet in his life again. Perry was one of the small number of combatant officers whose names appeared on the list which I submitted to the

Commander A.I.F. as having done an outstanding service with "F" Force.[27]

Perry is now approaching 30 and is anxious to start out either on his own or with a show in which he has a good chance of coming to the top. I don't know how far or how wide your net has spread now, but I imagine you are always in need of first-class young men. I have told Perry that whether or not there is an opening in your business for him, your advice about his future career will be well worth having, and said that you will advise him to the best of your ability, both for my sake and for his own. He's worth it. He will make it his business to get in touch with you personally as soon as the "exigencies of the service" will permit, and will come down to Melbourne to see you personally.

Just at the moment we none of us quite know how many will get out of this show alive. Food is bad and getting worse - most people are upwards of 50-60 pounds below their normal weights - disease is rife - and their are prospects of battle, murder, and sudden death in the offing. Under these circumstances I am giving this letter to Perry now, to forward on to you as the occasion may offer, even if by mischance I am not about the place myself at the time.

On the other hand if I am, you will be giving me a large and alcoholic dinner at the Australia just to celebrate my getting out of this bloody hole alive.

I do hope that the lad has come out of things all in one piece, and that his father is still the same cheery soul as of old. It will be nice to see you again,

With warmest regards - as always -

Bruce Hunt.

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[27] Bruce Hunt had recommended Ian Perry and others for medals, however although Hunt was a hero to his men, his senior officers saw his actions differently, and his advice did not go through.

The following extract is taken from Stan Arneil's book "One Man's War"; he was also at Shimo Sonkurai, but was not an officer.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Tropical Diseases of Prisoners of War.

Cholera

Cholera is a most frightening disease. The senior Medical Officer, Dr. Bruce Hunt of Western Australia, told us at Sonkurai that Cholera was transmitted through the mouth by eating excreta (he did not use that word though.)

He told us that the millions, and there were millions, of huge blowflies which swarmed in the camp fed on excreta and in turn carried the germ to cooking utensils and subsequently to food. He also told us that the disease was absorbed into water, again into which excreta had been washed, and, as it rained continuously and the excreta polluted water flowed into the creek, from which we drew our water, it was obvious that Cholera was everywhere.

Bruce Hunt proposed a solution to our problem. Firstly he said that we should dig new latrines below the huts and seal them tightly with wooden lids. Major Johnston, our commanding officer, was able to obtain permission from Chief Korean Guard Toyama to do this. We were allowed two days off work on the road as the guards were worried that their labour force would die before the Railway could even be started in our area.

The closing of the old latrines gave us a psychological lift. The new latrines were made completely fly proof by fashioning heavy lids from local timber; wooden pegs were driven into the lids and made satisfactory handles. We probably placed too much emphasis on the closing of the old latrines as a method of reducing Cholera but it was a feeling of tremendous relief and we needed a boost.

Each morning, all excreta on the ground, from dysentery sufferers who had not been able to make it to the latrines during the night, was cleaned up.

Bamboo tables of trestles were made to hold the containers of rice and every grain of rice which fell to the ground was picked up to prevent flies from breeding or feeding on it. As each man lined up for his ration of rice he plunged his food container into a cauldron of water kept boiling for this purpose. In addition all drinking water was boiled.

The Australians were absolutely meticulous about these precautions but the English troops with us were a happy go lucky

lot and did not take the same care. They died in the ratio of two to one to the Australians.

Cholera is a disease which causes dehydration of the body by vomiting and by loss of bowel and body functions. The loss in weight was so rapid as to be visible to the eye and a Cholera sufferer became unrecognizable in three to four hours. To ensure identification of the body a bamboo name tag was bound to the wrist immediately cholera was detected.

Our normal treatment was to give a patient a teaspoon of boiled water after each vomiting spasm, which was continuous.

The Guards provided a little salt, for the water, from time to time. Sometimes a solution of boiled creek water and salt was run into the patient's veins through stethoscope tubing and a small syringe.

Those who died were cremated in pits, using the inevitable bamboo to burn the bodies. A piece of the remains was then placed in a small bamboo container about a foot long and buried in the small patch of ground we called a cemetery. The containers were moved to Kanchanaburi Cemetery after the war.

[Also on cholera, from the book from the A.B.C. radio series - "Prisoners of War, Australians Under Nippon":-]

Cholera was the most feared disease. It was sudden and random : it took weak and strong. 'The boys used to say cholera makes dysentery look like an attack of constipation.'

Ray Parkin: One of the symptoms of cholera is a white stool. And I remember one day out on the line, I was sitting having my bit of rice up on the topside when a fellow came along and he squatted down just on the other side of the railway line to me. There was no false modesty there, it was quite natural, in fact we were all very clinical. This fellow looked down and saw a milk-white motion; and he saw that I saw it. He just gave me a look, and it went right through me; it was the look of a condemned man. He knew he had it. He was dead the next morning.

Cholera is dramatic in its onset. There are intense cramps, the voice fades and fluids flow from every orifice. The eyes sink and the cheeks fall in as the dehydrated body 'shrivels up like a walnut'.]

Beri Beri

Beri Beri was caused by lack of vitamins and 'wet' beri beri as we called it, as against 'dry' beri beri, or cardiac beri beri, was the most prevalent form. Probably the majority of prisoners suffered wet beri beri most of the time in Thailand, in varying degrees.

The symptoms were swollen feet and legs as the moisture contained in the body flowed down towards the feet. Ankles disappeared altogether and left two large feet almost like loaves of bread from which sprouted legs like small tree trunks, in bad cases the necks swelled also so that the head seemed to be part of the shoulders.

Beri Beri increased when there was no vitamin to counteract the effect of plain rice. We became quite expert in what we could eat to partially offset this deficiency in our diet. Tender green leaves, native plants such as 'byam' when we could obtain it, and of course if we were lucky, a tiny piece of fish paste (blachan).

The effect of fish on Beri Beri was almost miraculous, and we regarded it as a prize to be issued with 'blachan' even though it always stank to high heaven.

The worst case of wet beri beri I ever saw was one of my friends sleeping near me in the ulcer ward at Sonkurai. He was almost completely helpless because of the great size of his body due to his inability to pass water.

The patient, due to his great size, was almost unable to move at all and three or four of the other sick men used to carefully move him from one side to the other during the day. The condensation in his body was unbelievable; his penis was measured at five inches in diameter and his testicles were the size of a small soccer football.

The sufferer was treated with great sympathy and tenderness. We prayed that he would be able to urinate so he could rid himself of the water in his body, and one night he did so, at least for a couple of minutes.

We all cheered and explained to him and to each other that this was the beginning of a change for him and that he was on the way to good health.

He died shortly after and was cremated.

Malaria

Malaria is a killer disease but apparently can now be controlled by the use of new drugs. We had a little quinine and not much else.

Almost every prisoner of war contracted malaria at some time, many suffering ten to thirty attacks of the disease, or more, during our period of captivity. Perhaps for many the attacks were not new infections but a re-occurrence of a previous infection.

The most dangerous type of malaria in our eyes was "M.T." - so called because the germ or Tertia which entered the body was "Malign", it caused great damage to the body.

M.T. malaria on the surface caused less physical discomfort than B.T. or Benign Tertia.

M.T. did not cause the sufferer to undergo rigors and did not raise the body temperature to astronomical heights. Nevertheless, M.T. Malaria was a savage killer and we were frightened of it.

B.T. Malaria was immediately recognizable and came in different strengths. It was classified by the staff as "B.T." for a "normal" bout of Malaria with pluses added as the Malaria germs built up in the body. Towards the end of our period in captivity we were so saturated with Malaria germs that many attacks were classified as B.T.+++.

Malaria sends the body into violent shivering and loss of body temperature followed by extremely high temperatures and heavy sweating. The shivering at times was so violent that we had to try and hold the sufferer to try and stop the physical discomfort and at this time we always placed as many blankets as we could find around the patient in an effort to raise the body temperature.

Quinine for most of the time of captivity was available in reasonable quantities but was almost non-existent in Thailand. After the shivering or "rigor" had ceased the sufferer entered the high temperature stage. The main treatment then was to wash the patient continually with a damp cloth in an effort to reduce the body temperature.

Our spleens became badly infected by the Malaria germs and the medical staff usually diagnosed an impending attack by simply feeling the spleen with their hands to the side of our bodies.

Cerebral Malaria was not uncommon. It attacked the brain and for us almost always meant death.

Tropical Ulcers and their treatment

Ulcers almost always broke out on the legs and feet as a result of a cut from bamboo or a sharp stone. The flesh became infected from the foul earth and began to putrefy almost immediately.

It was a type of gangrene and the odour of the putrescence was nauseating.

We had no drugs and no bandages. Some of us were able to tear a shirt into strips of cloth and use those.

The ulcers were usually covered with large leaves in place of bandages and bound on with strips of cloth. The pus would flow from the ulcers in unbelievable quantity and on removal of the leaves the ulcers would be cleaned as much as possible and covered with fresh leaves.

Each man had a bamboo receptacle (cut straight from the joint of a bamboo trunk) and was issued twice daily, when possible, with some boiled water to allow the ulcers to be cleaned. We did our best to remove the pus and then washed the strips of cloth in the water in the bamboo container. The bamboo containers could not be cleaned properly under the circumstances.

The main treatment of the ulcers was to scrape them with a silver teaspoon which the medical orderlies used not only to clean out the pus but to make the healthy flesh bleed. The pain of the treatment was mind splitting but the flow of fresh blood was believed to be beneficial.

The ulcers just seemed to grow and grow. One ulcer on my heel, just near the Achilles tendon ate right through the foot.

The ulcers on the shin sometimes stretched from just below the kneecap to the foot and very often required amputation. All amputation cases at Sonkurai died; the flesh or flaps of flesh, to use a layman's term, would not heal or knit together and usually split so that the bone would protrude through the flesh.

Back to the ulcers, the gangrene would also attack the leg bones. One night the shin bone of one of our Unit snapped with a loud crack. It was sufficiently loud to be heard throughout the hut. He died a few days later.

Dysentery

Dysentery is a killer disease and accounted for a large proportion of the deaths of the prisoners of war.

We suffered from two types of dysentery, bacillary and amoebic.

Bacillary dysentery resulted from the presence of bacillus in the bowel and was highly transmissible from one person to another mainly through, in our case, the flies.

Bacillary dysentery meant a ghastly loss of bowel control with almost a complete surrender to toilet functions. It was weakening to the point of debility and wasted men into living cadavers so weak that they were often unable to find the strength to walk.

We had no drugs for this disease and the famous "charcoal and duties" of Thailand was a reality. Sufferers were told to grind charcoal into a fine dust and consume it with rice, a teaspoonful at a meal. It was thought that the charcoal would assist in providing a strengthening of the bowels and perhaps at times it did. In Thailand the first stages of dysentery were considered insufficient cause to be given time off work and so in addition to the prescription "charcoal" the rider "and duties" was added.

Amoebic dysentery, unlike the above type, did not cause quite so much bodily discomfort in the short term and men were

able to work with it without the dreadful weakness of bacillary dysentery.

Amoebic dysentery however was named from the amoeba which lodged in and eventually destroyed the bowel walls.

Many prisoners of war suffered for years from amoebic dysentery and died long after the war from this scourge.

The irony of dysentery was that on our receipt of the sulpha drugs after our release, prisoners who had suffered from bacillary dysentery on and off for three and a half years were cured in a few days by this magical drug.

Pellagra

Pellagra is a dietary deficiency disease and is not uncommon in the tropics or where the diet is lacking in protein, because of the lack of the Vitamin B2 complex in the diet.

Afflicted patients developed a scaly dermatitis and ulcerated sores on the mouth and tongue. It was extremely painful in the mouth whilst the itch of the dermatitis was a constant worry.

Some of the symptoms, a pigmentation of the skin, worried us a great deal. Some unfortunate prisoners were literally covered in great brown spots over their bodies. The disease disappeared rapidly after the release of the prisoners with a consequent balanced diet.

In the book "Prisoners of War - Australians under Nippon" in the final section titled "Lost Years and Wounded Minds" , some of the comments are particularly relevant to Ian Perry:-

Sir Edward Dunlop: It's quite surprising the achievements of prisoners-of-war all over the country: they've done well in all sorts of occupations and activities. And unhappily, of course, there are men who are damaged psychologically, who went on the booze or smoked themselves to death. I think that my major worry has been that the years have found out a lot of them that started off pretty well. They bounded back into civilian life, they didn't want pensions, they didn't want to be cushioned, but they were very tired men and they came home exhausted in the evenings. They didn't go back to tennis, bowls, and golf, they put on weight and got a bit flabby. So I think that early heart disease and the diseases which overtake the middle aged and the elderly have taken a lot of them off before their time.

Geoff O'Connor: My main war was with the young doctors in Repatriation. They know nothing about us, and they don't want to know. They go by the text books and there is nothing in the text

books that says what happens to the human body when you're three and a half years working at full pace, starved and suffering from one thing and another. Unfortunately the ones that were battling for us are getting older and they are not in the Repat now. We're getting all the young smartarses.

UNDER THE HEEL

[From the West Australian, Thursday, November 29th, 1945.]

THE SIAM-BURMA RAILWAY

How Australian P.O.W. Suffered.

Towards the end of April, 1943, a total of 6,998 Australian and British prisoners of war who had been held in Changi camp since the fall of Singapore, were sent north through Malaya to Thailand. When they set out they imagined they were destined for a health camp in a pleasant climate, but 3,087 of them, including 1,058 Australians, were dead and there was not a survivor who had not suffered privation, cruelty and sickness. In the intervening period they had helped to build a section of the now notorious Burma - Thailand railway and had lived and died under the most appalling conditions imaginable.[28]

The story of that awful 12 months has now been told by Maj. B.A. Hunt, A.A.M.C., formerly a Perth physician who was one of the medical officer prisoners attached to the ill-fated "F" Force, as it was called. His story tells of the suffering of the men, their courage, and the fight which was waged against the Japanese overlords to obtain better conditions, more food and sufficient medical supplies to alleviate the general sufferings. Had even a little humanity been displayed, many hundreds of lives could easily have been saved.

Maj. Hunt arrived back in Perth recently on a short visit. Early in the New Year he and other medical officers will return to Singapore, where they will give evidence at the trial of Japanese war criminals who were responsible for the suffering imposed on "F" Force. It will be remembered that Maj Hunt was the first West Australian whose voice was heard over the Singapore radio following the Japanese surrender.

Maj Hunt's narrative, which follows, is the general story of "F" Force from the time of the departure from Singapore until the last body of the survivors returned just a year later. It is compiled from records[29] kept and observations made at different labour camps by Major Hunt and other senior officers. It must be remembered that the events narrated took place, not in the comparative security of a permanent P.O.W. camp, but in the remoteness of the Thailand jungle and at the hands of a callous and vindictive enemy. The conditions existed over a long period to which, at the time, no end could be seen except the likelihood of death by starvation, ill-treatment and disease. Here was no heat and excitement of battle, and yet the hardships and privations endured by all were as bad as any likely to be met with an active service and the casualties were, unfortunately, at least as great.

"In these conditions," said Maj Hunt, "the unbroken spirit of the force and the steady devotion to duty of many officers, N.C.O,'s and men, themselves often seriously ill, was indeed remarkable."

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28 About 70,000 of the mixed race native labour force also died. They had no knowledge of disease prevention, and their story is another untold horror of that war.

29 Medical records made on strips of bamboo, in Ian Perry's handwriting, are kept at the Australian War Museum in Canberra.

Move to "Health Camps."

In April, 1943, Maj-Gen Arimura, who was G.O.C. Allied prisoners of war in Malaya, issued orders that "F" Force, to be composed of approximately 3,600 Australians and 3,400 British (the ultimate figures were 3,662 and 3,336 respectively), should proceed by rail from Changi camp, Singapore to a northern destination. These orders further stated that 30 percent of these men were to be unfit.

In answer to enquiries, Maj Gen Arimura's headquarters explained that the journey would entail no marching, and that the force was not required for labour, but destined for "health camps" in a good climate where food would be abundant and the unfit would have a better chance of recovery than at Changi. These orders and the shortage of fit men at Changi, caused the inclusion in the force of 2,000 unfit men, while the majority of the remaining 5,000 also had some kind of medical history since the surrender, many of them being recent convalescents from such diseases as diphtheria, dysentery and beri-beri. All were already reduced in strength from malnutrition during the previous year and the promise of better food and treatment put everyone in high spirits at departure.

The Japanese orders for the move north stated that bands were to be taken as well as all tools and cooking gear, and an engine and equipment for an electrical light plant. Gramophones, blankets, clothing and mosquito nets would be issued at the new camps, where a good canteen would be available after three weeks.

The force entrained at Singapore during the latter part of April, 1943, in 13 separate parties at one day intervals. The men travelled crowded into steel rice trucks, 27 to a truck, and arrived after a journey of from 4 to 5 days at Bampong, in Thailand. So crowded were the trucks that it was impossible for the men to lie down. Food and water were scarce throughout, and none was available during the last 24 hours of the journey.

The march from Bampong

As each party arrived at Bampong, it learnt, to its astonishment, that the force was faced with a march of indefinite length, as no transport was available. Consequently , all heavy equipment of the force, including hospital equipment, medical supplies, tools and cooking gear, and all personal kit which could not be carried on the man, had to be abandoned in an unguarded dump at Bampong. Practically the whole of this material (including three-quarters of the medical stores) was lost to the force throughout the eight months spent up country, as the immediate advent of the monsoon - which always begins in early May - prevented the Japanese from moving more than a negligible portion of it by lorry.

The march which followed would have been arduous for fit troops in normal times. For this force, burdened with its sick and short of food, it proved a trial of unparalleled severity. The route, of about 200 miles, started as a metaled road, but after two stages degenerated into a rough elephant track through hilly jungle. The parties always marched at night; the monsoon broke in earnest soon after the march began, and conditions rapidly went from bad to worse. Everyone was loaded to capacity, and such medical equipment of the force as could be carried was distributed to individuals. Men toiled through the pitch blackness, sometimes knee-deep in water, sometimes staggering off bridges in the darkness; sprains and bruises were common, broken arms and legs occurred and stragglers were set upon and looted by marauding Thais. Of the large and growing numbers of sick many fell by the wayside, and they and their kit had to be carried by their comrades.

At the staging camps, which were merely roadside clearings in the jungle, there was no overhead cover, it was sometimes a long carry for water and it was impossible for the men to rest properly. Food generally consisted of rice and onion stew (often the onion stew was missing), with hot water to drink. This was insufficient to maintain health, and

entirely inadequate to support the physical strain of a march of this description. These staging camps were in charge of truculent Japanese N.C.O.'s who forcibly drove the sick to continue the march night after night, in spite of the protests of their officers.

Conditions of the Labour Camps.

The ultimate destination of the force was five jungle camps spread over a distance of about 30 miles close to the Thailand-Burma border. When the men arrived at these camps it was found that the camps had not been completed and all ranks were housed in unroofed huts, exposed to the continual downpour of the monsoonal rains. From most of these camps, men were taken out to work by the Japanese as soon as they had arrived, without opportunity to rest, although many of them had just completed six successive night stages.

Unlike nearly all other P.O.W.'s in Thailand, "F" Force remained nominally under the administration of Maj Gen Arimura's headquarters in Changi. The local Japanese commander was Lt-Col Banno, who proved incapable of either administering the force, or protecting its members from the outrageous demands of the Japanese engineers under whom it was put to work. The camps were commanded by junior Japanese officers or N.C.O.'s of the Malaya P.O.W. Administration, and the guards were Korean. The former, with one exception, were entirely subservient to the engineers, or were themselves actively hostile, while some of the Koreans also treated the prisoners with senseless cruelty. The officers and men of the engineers, whose sole responsibility to the men was to make them work, behaved with calculated and extreme brutality from start to finish.

Cholera Outbreak

Cholera broke out at the first camp early in May at a time when parties were continually passing through on their way to more forward camps. In spite of an urgent appeal to Lt-Col Banno to stop all forward movement or to by-pass the infection point, nothing was done. The march forward continued and by the end of May cholera was epidemic in all five camps.

The work demanded of all men, without consideration of their physical condition was heavy navvy labour on the rush construction of the 30-miles stretch of the railway through hilly and flooded jungle immediately south of the Three Pagoda Pass on the Burma-Thailand border. This work was arduous in the extreme, men having to carry logs far beyond their strength and pile-drive up to their waists in water. The hours were generally from first light to dark, but frequently men were kept out as late as 2 a.m.[30] the following morning. Men working in quarries without boots had their feet badly cut and these cuts developed into tropical ulcers. Through incessant work in deep mud, trench feet became practically universal and rapidly developed into ulcers.

There were daily beatings of officers and men at work, some of them even being beaten into unconsciousness. These beatings were not for disciplinary purposes but were intended to urge sick and enfeebled men to physical efforts quite beyond their remaining strength or to punish officers for intervening on their behalf.

A Grim Spectacle.

Every morning the same grim spectacle was repeated in the camps of parading men for work at first light. Emerging from their crowded huts or leaky shelters in the pouring rain, even the fitter men appeared gaunt and starving, clad in rags or merely loincloths, most of them bootless and with cut and swollen feet. In addition, some 50 or 60 sick men from hospital, leaning on sticks or squatting in the mud, would be paraded to complete the quota and would become the subject of a desperate argument between their

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[30] Hence stories can be told of P.O.W.'s who lived in the same hut or next door, who never knew each other. All concentration was on survival.

officers and the Japanese engineers. Sometimes all of these, sometimes only a part, would be taken out to work and would leave the camp hobbling on sticks or half-carried by their comrades. Many of the fitter men had not seen their camp in daylight for weeks and had had no opportunity of washing either themselves or their clothes.

The P.O.W. headquarters, under Lt-Col S.W.Harris, O.B.E., of the Royal Artillery, was handicapped by the obstinacy of the Japanese in refusing access to the various camps and by Lt-Col Banno's failure to make protests felt by the engineers or to ameliorate conditions himself as required. Written protests to Maj-Gen Arimura were never answered. Only once was direct access to the regimental commander of the engineers obtained, and that by chance, when a personal appeal by Lt-Col Harris and his staff resulted in the postponement of an order which would have caused the immediate and permanent expulsion of 700 desperately sick and dying men from their hospital hut into open jungle during the worst of the monsoon rains to make way for a native labour force. This order had already been endorsed by Lt-Col Banno's administration.

The hospital, so called, in every camp was nothing but a dilapidated hut with leaky roof, no walls or lighting and with split bamboo flooring on which the men were crammed, their bodies touching one another. In these grossly overcrowded conditions even such few mosquito nets as the Japanese provided could not be used, with the result that over 90 percent of the force were speedily infected with malaria. Sleeping mats and blankets were never made available except in negligible quantities.

The Japanese Attitude

The attitude of the Japanese guards toward the sick was a mixture of callous indifference and active spite; for by their sickness the men were regarded as impeding the Japanese war effort. Remarks made by Lt Fukuda[31], commander of one of the camps, to Maj Hunt at official interviews gave an indication of their attitude of mind.

During one interview Lt Fukuda had asked for co-operation when stressing the need for hard work by the P.O.W. Later in the same interview Maj Hunt asked for co-operation in securing better hospital facilities, Lt Fukuda replied :"You used the word 'Co-operation'. You have no right to use that word. Co-operation is only possible between equals. You are not our equals; you are our inferiors".

On another occasion, in reply to complaints about the brutal slave driving of P.O.W. labour, Lt Fukuda said :"At present Japanese soldiers are working very hard to complete this road and railway. P.O.W. must work hard, too. Japanese soldiers are prepared to make sacrifices to attain this objective. P.O.W. must make sacrifices also. Japanese soldiers are prepared to die, providing the job is done. P.O.W. must have the same view. Some Japanese will die in the making of this railway. P.O.W. will die also."

Before Maj Hunt left Lt Fukuda's camp to go to Burma he had a final interview with that Japanese officer who, in the course of the conversation remarked: "You have in the past spoken somewhat boastfully of the Geneva Convention and humanity. You must remember that you are our P.O.W.; you are in our power; and that in present circumstances these things do not apply."

Lt Fukuda was also responsible for the remark, "International law and the Geneva Convention do not apply if they conflict with the interests of the Japanese army" when replying to another officer who had protested against the Japanese practice of ordering officers out of the camp to perform manual labour.

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31 Both Fukuda, and Toyama (an extremely cruel Korean guard) were hung at the War Crimes Trials in Changi after the war.

Prevalence of Dysentery.

Although cholera killed about 750 of the men of "F" Force, by far the most deadly disease was dysentery, aggravated by malnutrition and generally complicated by malaria or beri-beri, or both. Over a long period no food was available for such patients except rice and beans, and the quantities provided for the sick were deliberately reduced by the Japanese to starvation point in the expressed belief that this would compel them to go out to work. The inevitable result was that hundreds of men died in a condition of extreme emaciation and complete despair.

By June 20th, two months after leaving Changi, only 700 of the men of the force were out at work, and most of these were sick. The remainder, except for the small medical and administrative parties, were lying in improvised medical hospitals in each of the labour camps.

At the end of July, the position of the force was desperate. Communication between the camps and with either Burma or Thailand had practically ceased owing to impassable roads and bridges; 1,800 of the force had died. In one camp alone the following diseases were prevalent: cholera, typhus, spinal meningitis, small pox, diphtheria, jaundice, pneumonia, pleurisy, malaria, dysentery, scabies, beri-beri and tropical ulcers. With the exception of quinine,there were very few drugs and no dressings available throughout the area, and severe tropical ulcers were dressed with banana leaves and puttees, or with dressings improvised from old shirts and shorts. The result was that some 70 amputations of limbs were necessary, entirely due to lack of dressings and because the men suffering from ulcers had been forced out to work by the Japanese. Deaths in one camp averaged 12 a day.

Return of the Survivors.

Work at the labour camps ceased about the end of November and the majority of the survivors of the force were returned to Singapore by the end of December. Left behind were about 700 men (comprising about 550 desperately ill cases and 150 medical staff) at Kanburi in Thailand, and about 320 (including staff of about 100) at Tanbaya hospital camp in Burma. Of the 220 sick men in hospital in Burma, 96 died before the camp was evacuated down to Kanburi in February. From Kanburi both parties returned to Singapore in April.

Of the survivors who eventually returned to Singapore, 95 per cent were heavily infected with malaria, 80 per cent were suffering from general debility, and 50 per cent required hospital treatment for a long period, chiefly through dysentery, beri-beri, chronic malaria, skin diseases and malnutrition.

On that "health trip" the force lost 3,087 out of its total of 6,998. The Australians, who had totaled 3,662 , lost 1,058 men, representing 29 per cent of their number, while the British had lost 2,029 out of a total of 3,336, representing 61 per cent of the total.

Medical Staffs' Difficulties.

Following the train journey from Singapore to Bampong and the arduous March to the labour camps, Major Hunt was the Senior Medical Officer at one of these camps, Shimo Sonkurai , from May to July 1943. On the march itself, the medical staff had an unenviable task. Little rest could be obtained at the staging camps along the route, particularly by the medical officers and the orderlies, most of whose time was taken up in attending to the sick from their own and previous parties, and in dressing hundreds of blistered and ulcerated feet.

Treatment of the troops, particularly the sick, by the Imperial Japanese Army guards varied from march to march, and from camp to camp. At some camps the M.O. was allowed to leave behind, without interference, such men as he considered unfit to march. On other occasions he was subjected to much interference and in several places men with active malaria or dysentery or with large infected ulcers on their feet were impelled to do a whole night's march.

"One such episode is worth recording" said Major Hunt . "At one of the staging camps I was informed that all sick men had to be submitted for inspection to the I.J.A. medical officer. There were 37 sick - 27 of them with infected feet and 10 with malaria or dysentery. The Japanese officer agreed that none of these men was fit to march, but the corporal of the guard only gave permission for the ten to remain. He even refused to accept a letter of instruction from the Japanese M.O.

"At the time scheduled for the parade, I fell in the 37 men apart from the main parade and Maj Wild (an Indian Army officer with us who acted as interpreter) and I stood in front of them. The corporal approached with a large bamboo in his hand and spoke menacingly to Maj Wild, who answered in a placatory fashion. The corporal's only reply was to hit Maj Wild in the face.

Another guard followed suit, and as Maj Wild staggered back the corporal thrust at him with his bamboo. I was left standing in front of the patients, and was immediately set upon by the corporal and two other guards. After knocking me to the ground, they set about me with bamboos, causing considerable bruising and breaking a bone in my left hand. After I was disposed of the corporal then made the majority of the sick men march with the rest of the troops.

Most of these men, including an Australian chaplain, died during succeeding weeks, largely as a result of this calculated brutality.

Heroic Nursing Volunteers.

At Shimo Sonkurai camp conditions were far from satisfactory, but repeated pleas for improved treatment and better medical facilities were without result. The cholera epidemic which struck the camp in the same way as the others during May, aggravated an already desperate position. The epidemic, however, served to show the extreme courage of the men.

"At first the outbreak was mild" said Maj Hunt, "with just a few cases for the first four or five days. Then, suddenly we had 35 cases in 24 hours and, owing to the shortage of medical orderlies, it was quite impossible to cope with the nursing problem unless we could get volunteers."

"The men were out all day working on the railway and came back after dark soaked and exhausted, having done about 12 hours work in the drenching rain. When they were on parade before being dismissed, we asked for volunteers. We explained to them the nature and severity of cholera and pointed out the extreme danger anyone would face in nursing the sick cases. We told them, however, that volunteers were wanted urgently to start nursing that very night."

"As soon as parade was over we started taking volunteers. I stopped after I had taken the names of 75 men who were prepared to start straight away and there were then still 20 to 30 men still waiting to volunteer."

"I never on any occasion asked for volunteers for nursing the sick without getting all the men I wanted. Those men, drawn from combatant units, did a wonderful job. Twenty of them lost their lives to cholera during the epidemic, yet the supply of volunteers to fill the vacant places never failed."

Hospital Camp in Burma.

At the end of July, a hospital camp was set up at Tanbaya, in Burma, 50 miles from the labour camps. The object of the Japanese in setting up this camp was not to remove from the labour area men who were too ill to work. The carrying of food for these men was putting too much strain on the available transport. The administrative side of the camp was under Lt-Col C.T. Hutchinson, M.C., of the Royal Artillery, and Maj Hunt was in charge of the hospital.

To that camp was sent the greatest number of desperately sick men from the labour camps. The conditions of transport of these men were appalling and every time a batch of patients arrived from the labour camps it would be found

that 5 to 10 had died on the journey. Any hopes that had been held out for better conditions for these men were quickly shattered and conditions there were almost as bad as every where else.

Between August, 1943, and January, 1944, a total of 1,924 ill men were sent to Tanbaya hospital camp. Of these 750 died.

At Tanbaya, as at other camps, a system of "wardmastering" was instituted with outstanding success. As there were insufficient medical officers and N.C.O.'s to staff the hospitals, officers from combatant units were employed to take charge of wards, being responsible for everything in those wards except the actual medical treatment. One of the wardmasters at Tanbaya was Capt G.W. Gwynne, of Perth, who had been with the 2/4th Machine Gun Battalion.

Tributes to Co-workers.

Maj Hunt pays heartfelt tributes to the work and devotion to duty of officers and men with whom he was associated during his 12 months in Thailand and Burma. Many British officers worked hard and well in the interests of their troops. Outstanding were such men as Lt-Col Hutchison, Lt-Col F.J. Dillon, M.C., of the Royal Army Service Corps, Maj Wild, Maj W.J.E. Phillips, R.A.M.C.. (who was 2 IC of the hospital in Tanbaya), and Assistant-Surgeon P. Wolfe, of the Indian Medical Department. The last mentioned officer, under incredible conditions, saved the lives of 19 men who had been left to die by the Japanese.

Amongst the Australian officers, he particularly mentioned the work of Lt I Perry, of Queensland, Capt E.R. Howells, of N.S.W., Capt Ben Barnett (the former Australian Test cricketer), of Melbourne, Lt G. Bourke, of Queensland,(who took charge of a hospital dispensary when he was so ill he could not stand up), Capt Gynne, Capt S. Roberts of Queensland, Capt F. Stahl of Victoria, and the medical officers Capt R.L.Cahill of N.S.W., Capt R.M. Millsof N.S.W., Capt J.L. Taylor of N.S.W., and Capt F.J. Taylor of Victoria.

Several N.C.O.'s and men also did wonderful work. Sgt. A.J. Buttenshaw of Sydney, was so competent he was at one time placed in sole medical charge of 400 patients. L/Cpl K.R. Marshall of Sydney, worked tirelessly and saved the lives of many men suffering from cholera. Sgt J. Gorringe of W.A., an N.C.O. from the 2/4th Machine Gun Battalion, displayed outstanding nursing ability. Others who worked tirelessly and cheerfully amidst terrible difficulties included Pte G. Nichol, N.S.W., Pte. D.W. Murray , N.S.W., Pte A.E. Staff, N.S.W., Sgt. A.R. Deans of Victoria, and Sgt C.H. Boan of Victoria.

Reasons for Fewer Deaths.

There was a big disparity between the deaths amongst the Australians (29 per cent) and the British troops (61 per cent). Maj Hunt advanced several reasons for this big difference. Firstly, he said the general physical condition of the Australians was higher because they had originally been selected more carefully than was the case with the British Army. The Australian administration had adopted the policy of sending whole units, or sections of units away together when movements of troops was ordered, whereas the British selected the required number of bodies without worrying about units. The unit spirit amongst the Australians was thereby retained and assisted greatly in keeping up morale and also in controlling the men.

Another factor which assisted the Australians was that they were more adaptable than the British soldiers. They could settle into a camp quicker and could improvise much better. The discipline amongst the Australians was also more rigid. This particularly applied in the enforcement of regulations about sanitation, and the sterilization of messing gear. It became widely recognized that the more strictly discipline was enforced in these jungle camps, the lower was the death rate. Finally, there was in general a closer bond between officers and men amongst the Australians, and the tougher the conditions, the more closely that bond was forged.

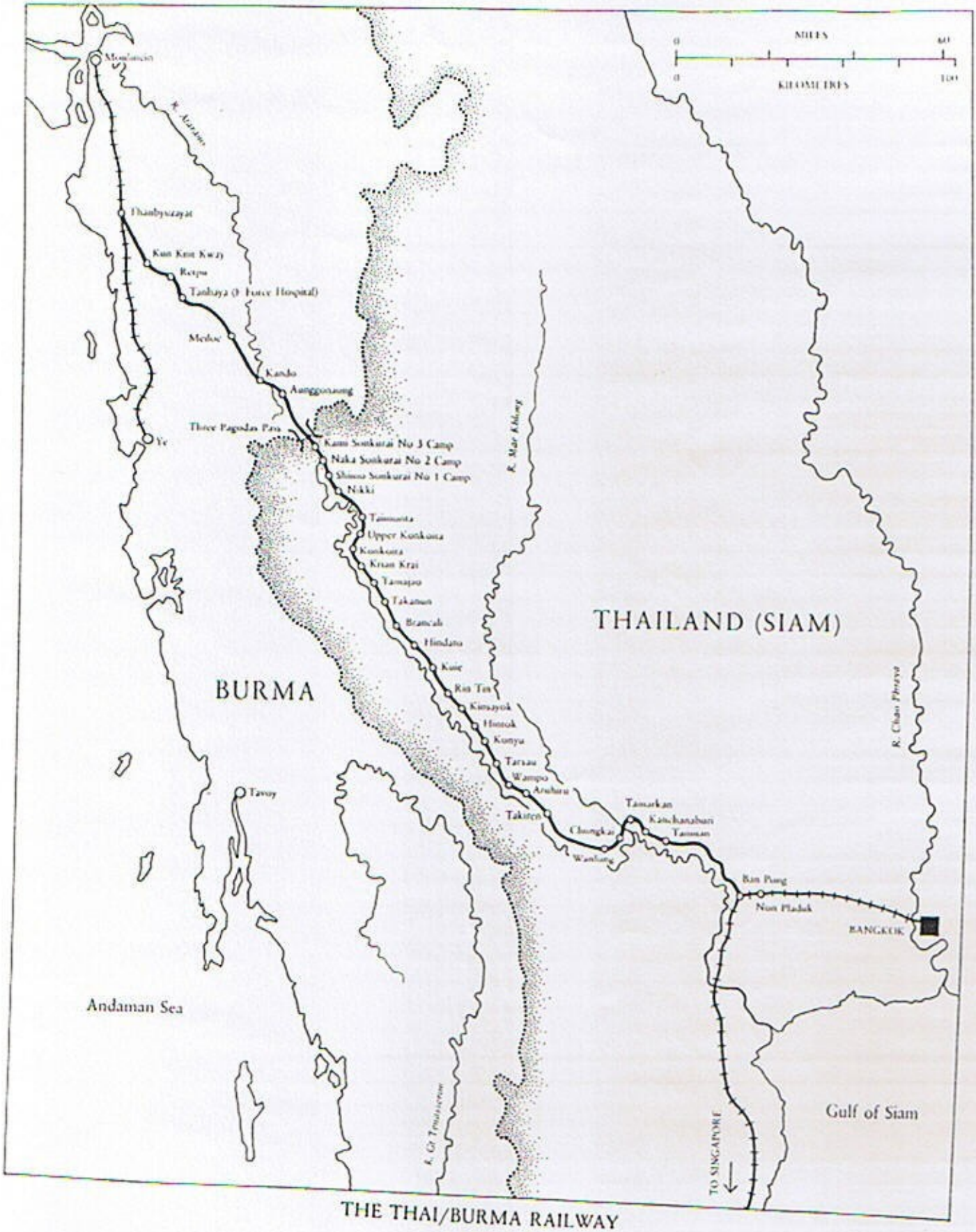
The Japanese Menace.

As for the Japanese, Maj Hunt has had an opportunity to study him as great as that of any soldier who was a prisoner of war. His comments on the Japanese are therefore of considerable interest and importance.

"The Japanese" he said, "are a race apart from us. I have had many dealings with them and have run camps where the Japanese were in command, and I do not know of any common ground where we and the Japanese can meet together. They do not see things the way we do, they do not think the same way, their instinctive reactions in given circumstances are different, they're attitude towards life, towards honour, and towards keeping one's word are different. I do not see how we can ever establish a relationship in which there can be mutual trust with the Japanese, and for that reason as an Australian I am still in deadly fear of the Japanese menace in this country."

"If you are dealing with a Jap, the only argument he can understand is one where you can 'put it across' him, preferably with a Tommy gun. He understands 'force majeure' and so the only way to meet him is to have that 'force majeure' yourself."

Map of POW Railway



THE THAI/BURMA RAILWAY

3rd Writing

David Byrne relaxed in the chair beside the speaker and took in with satisfaction the scene before him.

A keen looking bunch of men in their late thirties and early forties - leaders, and about-to-be leaders in their industries, businesses, unions, installations, yes, and organizations even including the churches.

No group of W.A.S.P.s these, but an elect group of society's (in the better sense of the word) leaders, selected as it were by natural process. And all because of a flash of genius, or perhaps just a good idea of his.

History told of the demise of the British Empire, one had seen the planned destruction of what was best about the United States, the gobbling up, if not digestion of Africa and some of the Islamic countries; and lived in an atmosphere of uncertainty in the South Americas and South and Eastern Asia.

And here in Australia there was apathy, an uninformed self-indulgent population expecting the lucky country to retain its freedom from oppression, at the same time automatically to continue pouring into their laps more and more of its riches for less and less work.

A knowledge of some of the problem areas in the rest of the world, gained in his work as a T.V. news correspondent, developed a concerned David, and so his flash of genius and the determination to initiate a looseknit group of thinkers of all interests and persuasions to meet on a regular basis to hear informed concerned speakers on group selected subjects.

So with him sat the rest of the group listening to their current speaker - a demographer - nearly at the end of his series.

"And so you will see from the figures I have given you, and the facts expressed at different times - that our population - like that of many other developed - or perhaps I should say European countries - is not growing older, or for that matter living much longer - it is merely having less and less young people added to it - an affluent self indulgent society is utilizing the weapons of birth control and abortion, voluntarily, either through selfishness, or through an induced insidious propaganda campaign from

outside, and is destroying itself; and is allowing the other countries of the other world to out-populate it."

"Given another two generations at most we will have too few young people coming forward to support the elderly that will comprise the bulk of the population - let alone defend them."

"The end is obvious, our neighbours with a predominance of young hungry people will not just look with envy at our continent and its riches, where lack of thought and co-operation between the echelons of both management and workers is denying them the necessities of life."

"They will know that to develop the full potential of this country they must come and take it over."

"You will ask me what is the solution - obviously the solution is in the hands of the people themselves, and that is the alarming part of it all. A nation of people that has become lethargic and sleepy like the aborigines (and no doubt their predecessors before them) has to be shaken out of their trance, encouraged to improve their population pattern, and taught to accept that if they - like any of God's other creatures - don't set about to defending their territory they will lose it - it is as simple as that."

There were few questions - the speaker had made his point and sobered his listeners.

David Byrne rose slowly to his feet as seemed fitting to the atmosphere, thanked the speaker, and the meeting broke up with David and the Steering Committee - as the speaker's selection panel had come to be known, moved to the adjoining room, there to entertain their guest.

Inevitably conversation kept circling back to the demographer's conclusion, and in what direction any future plans for speakers should be encouraged

It was then that David turned to the guest - "Mac" he said "It has occurred to me all along - since I catalysed the formation of this group - that the people of this country by and large, let alone our politicians, have not a realistic idea of what is involved in militarily defending anywhere."

"Sure we took part in the Boer War, the two World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam - but we were always part of a greater British or American Force, sooner or later supplied by them, with them in overall command - nowhere have we ever fought on our own with our own weapons and depended solely on our own lines of supply and learnt just how rough it can be when you are on your own."

"Surely somewhere, sometime, some Australians must have experienced what we should know about - just what can happen when our politicians who after all only reflect the attitude of the people, pay lip service to defence, and seem to think that training, and equipping the populace to fight can be avoided because it may be unpopular."

"True David, true" said Mac, "and I think there may just be some borderline cases - and I think I can track them down when I get back to Canberra."

Last Writing

I would like to offer a fourth scenario where people, sickened of the materialism and doomsday predictions of the 70's come to the realization that mankind has the privilege of choice, and that whether he believes in God or not, goodwill, cooperation, and willingness to help one's fellow men cannot help but produce a much better atmosphere in which to approach the problems of the 90's.

A society of self discipline where there is no place for 'Big Brother', the tax evader, the financial manipulator, and those that endeavour to orchestrate the emotions of the masses, will be recognized for what they are, the enemies of rational society, and shunned as such.

Those persons able to influence opinion will not be grasping statistics which are supportive of their predictions, but looking at them to see in what other ways they can be expressed so that by intercomparison the lessons of the past can be used to enlighten the future.

Technological advances will not be feared, and they will be fully exploited for the good they can do, where this is not believed to be outweighed by the bad.

Education will be recognized as not merely the development of the intellect, but also manual and artistic skills so that excellence is paramount and the consumer society gives way to one where excellence and durability are the primary requirements, innovation for innovation's sake is abhorred, and replacement only considered because of real technological advance.

A society in which, despite all the utopian advances, sociologists and futurologists have enough faith in mankind to predict an even brighter future which is now evident in such an enlightened community.

Ian Perry

Ian Arthur Harcourt Perry was born on the 16th. December, 1916, at Miegunyah (now a National Trust property), Bowen Hills, Brisbane. He was a fourth generation Australian. Ian was a chartered accountant before the war, as he explains in his introduction. Despite the hardships he endured, and the time he planned to have enjoying himself on his return from the war, (4th. October, 1945), his father was so concerned about his future that Ian went back to work in February 1946, working for the family companies.

Ian had met his future wife, Leah Saywell, early in December 1945, proposed to her three weeks later, and they married in August 1946. He organized the family companies - Whitco Hardware and Perry Brothers - and built them into a thriving business which became part of National Radiators in 1958 (later a part of National Consolidated Ltd). He agreed to stay for two years after the takeover.

Ian and Leah had three children - Jennie (1947), George (1949) and Viki (1953). George was found to be severely deaf and the family moved to Melbourne for a year -1953/4, so he could receive oral deaf training as early as possible. The family moved back to Brisbane as soon as an Oral Deaf Centre was set up there. (The benefits of this today allow George to practise as a Veterinary Surgeon).

Ian retired from active business in early 1960, but continued directorships of National Consolidated Ltd and H.H. Webb Ltd, and later, Evans Deakin; positions he held for some years. He was also Honorary Treasurer, then Senior Vice President, of the R.A.C.Q.

In August and October 1960 he suffered two coronaries for which he received Repatriation benefits. He reduced his weight, changed his diet and moved permanently to his property at Morven in 1967 to change his life style. The effects were so good, that for the first time ever, the Repatriation Dept. decided to reduce the benefits given to a recipient. His appeal against this decision was denied.

Ian was found to have a melanoma on 27th. July, 1982. Some time later he commenced the effort to have this recognized as being a result of prolonged exposure to the sun during War Service. This was only finally acknowledged a short time before his death.

On 27th. July, 1985, exactly three years after first discovering the disease, Ian Perry died.