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BURMA THAILAND RAILWAY MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION (Inc)

OBJECTIVE. To perpetuate the memory of the privations and sacrifices of Allied Prisoners of War and the selfless dedication of the medical personnel during the construction of the Burma Thailand Railway by informing current and future generations through all forms of education and particularly with Quiet Lion Tours to the Burma Thai Railway; The River Kwai; The Three Pagoda Pass; Anzac Day at Hellfire Pass and Kanchanaburi War Cemetery.

NEWSLETTER FORTY MAY 2015

VALE - TOM UREN

We honour the passing of Tom Uren a past member of the Australian Federal Parliament

War Years.

Tom had applied to join the army in May 1939 and was accepted soon after World War II broke out in September, but took leave to fight for the Australian heavyweight title in 1940, aged 19. (He had been suffering from the flu and, although he knocked Billy Britt down in the sixth round, was beaten in the seventh).

Tom went to Darwin, then to Timor in December 1941 with the 2/1 Heavy Battery. As the Australian force was being over-run in February 1942, Tom volunteered to go forward in a vehicle armed with a single Bren gun to support a Tasmanian battalion, the 2/40th, which was making what has been described as the last bayonet charge in Australian military history. Witnessing the Australian advance up Oesaoe ridge under machine-gun fire marked the 20-year-old for life.

Forced to surrender, the prisoners were in prison camps in Timor for some time before being taken early in 1943 to Singapore, from where Tom was loaded into a railway goods truck which ended up at Konyu River camp, where the surgeon Lieutenant Colonel Edward "Weary" Dunlop was commanding officer of the men slaving to build the Burma-Thailand railway for the Japanese. Tom moved later to the Hintok camps.

One man is said to have died for every sleeper laid on the railway. Tom prayed every day, frightened that cholera would take him, as it had so many others. Yet he rejoiced in the Australian egalitarianism. He believed that the British officers cared above all for themselves, while Dunlop and other officers funded what passed for a hospital.

Tom was transported in 1944 to work in a copper smelting plant at Saganoseki, Japan, owned by the Nippon Steel Company. Conditions were terrible with the basic huts located on the slag heaps of the smelting works. "Beds" were mats full of lice. Toilets were pits which had to be cleaned out every ten days. Food was very scarce for both prisoners and the local population. Despite the conditions and strict discipline there was little of the brutality that characterised the Burma-Thailand railway and earlier camps. The prisoners were eventually moved to a POW camp at Omuta in the Fukuoka group of prison camps to work in coal mines.

With the dropping of the Nagasaki bomb a form of freedom came. He never forgot the colour of the sky over Nagasaki after the atom bomb was dropped: "We didn't hear any noise, just witnessed that vivid crimson sky."

Post War.

Tom met Patricia Palmer (her brother had shown him her photograph when they were prisoners) and they married in 1947. (Patricia died of breast cancer in 1981). They moved to Port Kembla where Tom worked at the steel works.

He later attempted to resurrect his boxing career including a trip England, working his passage by ship as a stoker. After little success (wartime malaria had left effects) he returned to Sydney by sea working as a donkey-greaser.

He came home, worked as a labourer, then as a trainee executive at Woolworths. He decided to join the Labor Party in 1951 on the way from Lithgow, where he managed the Woolworths store, to Bathurst for the funeral of Ben Chifley, the former Labor Prime Minister.

His political views were founded on his mother's sense of social justice, Weary Dunlop's example of leadership and F.D. Roosevelt's New Deal. He was to add Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Ho Chi Minh and Nelson Mandela to his list of influences.

Living in Guildford, he won the western Sydney seat of Reid in 1958. When he retired from Parliament in 1990, he had been father of the House for eight years.

Tom quietly married Christine Logan, a singer in the Australian Opera, in 1992.

Uren was made an Officer in the Order of Australia in 1993, then a Commander in 2013. On Anzac Day 2011, near his 90th birthday, he returned to Hellfire Pass, on the Burma Thailand railway, with the Governor-General, Quentin Bryce and her party of exP'sOW.

Then Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced at that time that the government would meet Uren's long campaign for a supplementary payment to Australia's 900 surviving prisoners from World War II and the Korean war.

Tom Uren, a Life Member of the Burma Thailand Railway Memorial Association, is survived by Christine and Ruby, and his adopted children, Michael and Heather.

(A full version is available on the BTRMA website)

Eric Wilson APM OAM

The Association is delighted to confirm the recent award of an Order of Australia Medal to our Chairman and long time tour leader of the Quiet Lion Tour. Congratulations Eric.



W.A. State Governor Kerry Sanderson AO with Eric Wilson.

Eric Wilson first went to Thailand in 1999 at the request of an ex-prisoner of war friend, Mr. William Haskell, who had been returning regularly to Thailand from 1985 onwards with ex prisoners of war, including Sir Edward (Weary) Dunlop, identifying the location of many camps, cemeteries and other features of the Burma Thailand Railway, including Hellfire Pass.

Due to advancing age and reduction in numbers of surviving Prisoners of War, assistance was sought from capable volunteers to further the cause of perpetuating the memories of the Burma Thailand Railway.

After assisting with Quiet Lion Tours from 1999, in 2002 Eric Wilson played a role in creating the Burma Thailand Railway Memorial Association (Incorporated). He was the inaugural Secretary.

In 2004, he assumed the roles of sole organizer and leader of the Quiet Lion Tours to Thailand.

Eric was able to search out, process and systematically record details of much of what took place during the construction of the Burma Thailand (Death) Railway, organize and lead tours and help to establish an incorporated Association to provide a base for the cause.

During his career in the Western Australian Police Service, Eric had advanced to a prominent role in the senior administration of the Service with a substantive rank of Chief Superintendent and acting rank of Assistant Commissioner. He had completed tertiary studies as a mature aged student in Personnel Management and Public Administration. He retired in 1991 and was later awarded the Australian Police Medal for his distinguished service in the senior administration of the W.A. Police Force.

In the Australia Day Awards 2015 it was announced that Eric had been awarded the Order of Australia Medal for service to veterans and their families.

REPORT ON THE QUIET LION TOUR 2015

A group of twenty-two congregated at Perth International Airport, smaller than the usual contingent but the rest of the group (bringing the total to 65) were coming together at Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne Airports ready to arrive in Bangkok to start the Quiet Lion Tour of 2015. There were 24 juniors on the tour, including Miles School in Queensland, Carnamah/Three Springs/Mingenew, Mount Lawley High School, Melville High School, Mandurah Service Cadets and a Wagin Lions sponsored young person.

Day Two we had the traditional trip to the Bang Pa In Summer Palace and then to the Ancient Capital of Siam at Ayutthaya now a UN Place of Historical significance of which our Thai Guides are very proud of and it allows the group to take in a little of Thai history. From here we went to a pier and caught a ferry back into Bangkok with lunch and a cruise on the Chayo Praya River to the River City pier about one hour from the Royal Benja Hotel. After a pleasant day most of the younger ones went out for some shopping in the street markets.

Day Three saw the tour travelling from Bangkok to Nakhon Pathom which is dominated by the Phra Pathom Chedi. The city was the site of the Nakhon Pathom hospital built here to take the seriously sick P'soW that were coming south after the completion of the railway. Armed with aerial photos and a description of the camp, location was self explanatory. Then on to Nong Pladuk to the zero kilometre point of the Thailand end of the railway where the line to Burma leaves the Bangkok-Singapore railway line. Next was Ban Pong, the station where the P'soW alighted after the horrendous train journey from Singapore up the Malay peninsula and the Kra Isthmus over five days, a lot spent a few days in the Ban Pong transit camp which became known as the "stinking camp" because of the foul condition of the camp with sleeping platforms sagging beneath the level of the mud and non-existent hygiene in the camp.

We visited the Tamuang camp where nearly all P'soW passed through, either travelling up the line to start work and most coming back off the line returning to Singapore or being selected for the Japan parties to go onto Japan.

Time for lunch at the Tida Loa Restaurant overlooking the Bridge over the River Kwai (Mae Klong). After lunch we visited Chungkai Cemetery and Chungkai Cutting to learn about building a cutting using hammer and tap and also embankment building. Arrived at Pung-Waan Resort, Kanchanaburi, for a Welcome Dinner and overnight accommodation.

Day Four, the tour visited the JEATH Museum then to the Thai Burma Railway Centre and Kanchanaburi War Cemetery before catching the train to Wampo Viaduct at 10:40 am (11:30am Thai Time). After a walk along the Viaduct to the Buddha Cave and a photo opportunity at the bridge and lunch we travelled on to the Tarsau hospital camp where the more seriously ill and injured PsOW were treated as the camp doctors in the work camps couldn't and didn't have time or medicine to treat these cases. This camp is now the site of the Pung-Waan River Kwai Resort, a far cry from its former use.

Owing to the lateness of the train we stopped at Tarsau to get supplies of snacks and drinks for the next five nights at Home Phu Toey. At Tarsau we visited the Sai-Yok Noi waterfalls, the site of the Tonchan South POW camp and the Mitsubishi C56 Steam Locomotive.

Enjoyed a welcome dinner at Home Phu Toey and a chance to relax and not have to pack bags to move on for a while.

Day Five. Breakfast and on the buses to Khao Laem Dam (now Vajiralongkorn Dam named after the current Crown Prince of Thailand). We travel here as guests of EGAT the electric generating authority of Thailand. This dam and hydro generator were built by the Snowy Mountain Electric Commission from Australia under the Colombo Plan for developing countries after WWII. Quiet Lions is the only group allowed to travel in this restricted area in coaches. Lunch was served at the Staff Club of the Dam workers.

As we returned we passed the sites of the Brankassi and Hindato camps to the rest station at Hintok road to walk the Thai-Burma Railway Memorial Track through Hintok Cutting to Hellfire Pass Museum. As you walk this trail you see all the engineering difficulties endured on the construction of the railway. From the rest station there is excavation to get the rail bed below the natural surface leading into the Hintok Cutting to the site of the Hintok Bridge, a massive structure thirty metres high and some two hundred metres long built in a long curve to bring the railway from the top of the seven metre bank directly into the Hintok Cutting.

From here you can see the torturous route taken from Hintok Mountain Camp to the railway line, down the "big hill". This becomes evident when viewed from the other side when we visited the mountain camp next day. As we go down the steps into the footings of the Three Tier Bridge and look between the cutting and the top of the seven metre bank, we realise the enormity of this project. After the bank is another bridge site which crosses onto a shelf and the sites of several trestle bridges which included a lot of dry stone walling to build up and make footings for trestle bridges, a tireless and very difficult task. Finally you reach Konyu Cutting and walk up the steps to Hellfire Pass Museum, thankful for the bottles of water and step into the air conditioning at the museum. Then we returned to HPT for dinner and bed.

Day Six started with the Buddhist Ceremony, something different for those that have never experienced this before. It is done to honour of those that have passed during the previous year especially our dwindling Ex-P'soW. A simple Obelisk Ceremony was performed to honour the doctors and medical staff who tended the sick and injured in the camps without whom very few would have survived. We then held a small ceremony in the Weary Dunlop Park, to honour Khun Kanit and Khun Oonjai Wannachote, the founders of Home Phu Toey, stressing the involvement of Home Phu Toey and the connection to the Quiet Lion Tour. We are very grateful to the Wannachote Family for their hospitality and friendship.

Next stop. Hintok Mountain camp also known as Hintok Road camp where Lt Col Dunlop had his hospital and cholera treatment area known as cholera gulch. It wears here that Major Allen Woods (Queensland) and Lt Fred Smedley (Western Australia) worked their magic building the water reticulation system complete with showers and running water to the cookhouse. It was from this system that allowed them to make the still for producing intravenous saline for the use of rehydrating cholera victims allowing sixty percent to survive.

After Hintok Mountain we travelled to Sai Yok Yai waterfall and national park, the site of the Kinsaiyok POW camp, here are the remnants of a Japanese Kitchen with fire pits and remnants of kwalis used for cooking rice. There are also bridge abutments and the start of an embankment that runs for nearly two kilometres. After a pleasant swim in the springs at the falls we got onto rafts for a pleasant lunchtime trip down the Kwai Noi river to the site of the Hintok River camp, it was from here that the Three Tiered Bridge, Hintok Cutting, Compressor Cutting, Compressor Bank and the Pack of Cards bridge were built. This is now an Eco Camp Resort run by Serenata Resorts.

A short distance away is the site of the Konyu River camp which was built by men of Dunlop Force. The first Australian group to come to the Thailand side of the railway in January 1943. It was here on the first night that Col. Dunlop performed abdominal surgery on a burst duodenal ulcer, giving the men under his command the confidence that their chances of survival were better than most.

Day Seven was a free day to spend time at Home Phu Toey to look at the Chalker Gallery and wander around Weary Dunlop Peace Park. It also allowed time to take in the sights and activities offered by Home Phu Toey. Those that had an interest in members of F Force and medical groups that went beyond Takanun took a trip to Three Pagodas Pass on the Burmese Border (Myanmar) with Thailand to see the camps F Force occupied and worked from. These camps are Kami Songkurai, Songkurai which covers the site of Dr Bruce Hunt's hospital where many men owed their lives to the efforts of this tenacious medical team under extreme difficulties. Closer to the border is Shimo Songkurai, then the border itself.

Following this we had the farewell dinner from HPT as guests of Khun Suparerk and the concert which was a delight and very pleasing to see so many participants, fantastic effort.

Day Eight, left HPT early and picked up Sai Yok Noi waterfalls, the site of Tonchan South PoW camp and engine number 704, a Mitsubishi C56 Steam locomotive that ran on the Thai-Burma railway during the war and continued in service until 1956 AD or 2499BE (Thai calendar). Back on the buses to Tha Dan Elephant Park for elephant rides and to see the site of a road bridge built over the Mae Klong River at Tha Dan after the railway was completed.

On to Lat Ya Shinto Peace Park built by an interest group from Japan and is close to a transit camp that was used by P'soW walking from Ban Pong further up the railway. This camp is significant to members of F Force.

The junior members of QLT were then taken to Kanchanaburi War Cemetery for a drill for the wreath laying service under the supervision of W/O Ken Long RAN.

Lunch was on a raft that took us up the river Kwai Yai under the rail bridge over the river after which we headed back to HPT for a press conference and media interviews followed by a reception for special guests and the Quiet Lion Group. At 7:00pm we attended a light and sound show followed by dinner for guests and Quiet Lions, fortunately this came to an early conclusion which allowed us to get packed for an early start in the morning for the Dawn Service at Hellfire Pass.

Day Nine saw everyone on the buses to Hellfire Pass at approximately 2:30am to arrive by 3:00am. We managed to get into the pass before the cut off point and most got a view of the service. People had been arriving from midnight and some had arrived the night before.

The group then returned to the car park to a welcome "Gunfire Breakfast" of coffee and rum with an ANZAC biscuit, returned to the gate at HPT where breakfast was laid out and our bags were ready to be loaded onto the buses. After breakfast, we said our goodbyes to Home Phu Toey and headed to Kanchanaburi for the Wreath Laying Service at the War Cemetery. The junior members had another quick run through of the drill in preparation for the service. The students carried out the task of presenting the wreaths to the Dignitaries to be laid with an air of professionalism that astounded the the Government of Australia representatives as well as the Embassy staff. A big Thank You to those that took part. We received nothing but praise from all those that were at the Service.

With time pressing and the football match, Thailand Tigers versus Myanmar Fighting Cocks to kick off at 1:45pm we had arranged a boxed lunch to be picked up from the Baan Rau Restaurant which we had while we watched the footy. Tigers showed the Fighting Cocks a clean pair of heel despite the help of our Carnamah/ Three Spings contingent. Thanks to Brendan Cunningham and the Thailand Tigers for the arranging the ANZAC Cup.

Arrived in Bangkok at 7:00pm and held our farewell dinner at the Royal Benja Hotel as our Sydney contingent was leaving mid afternoon as well as others extending and heading for other destination.

A very special Thank You must go to the Man of the Tour, Mr Neil MacPherson OAM. Your dedication and the way you are able to pass on your experience to the tour have certainly left everyone with the credibility and memories they shall never forget. Thank You Neil. To Ian, Krishna and Allan, without you're planning and expertise there would not have been a tour at all and to the organising committee for having confidence in the management team to run the tour.

Day Ten, shopping, lunch, more shopping (got everything). Back to the Benja for dinner; check out, on the buses for Suvarnabhumi Airport at 8:30pm for flights to Australia leaving around midnight.

Thank you for all who attended the Quiet Lion Tour for 2015.

David Piesse.

Tour Leader.

ITINERARY QUIET LION TOUR OF THAILAND 2016

DAY 1 FRIDAY

15th APRIL 2016

- 6.10 AM Assemble Perth International Airport (Perth Travelers)
- 9.10 AM Depart Perth International Airport TG484
- 3.30 PM Arrive Suvarnabhumi Airport Bangkok. (Welcome and arrival dinner).
Overnight accommodation at Royal Benja Hotel Bangkok

DAY 2 SATURDAY

16th APRIL 2016

- 6.30 AM Wake up call. Breakfast.
- 8.00 AM Teachers and Carers briefed by Committee
- 8.30 AM Visit the Royal Summer Palaces at Bang Pa-in & the ancient capital Ayutthaya.
Lunch cruising down the Chayo Phraya River. Free time after cruise to shop. (Juniors under supervision)
Overnight accommodation at Royal Benja Hotel

- DAY 3 SUNDAY** **17th APRIL 2016**
- 6.30 AM Wake up call. Breakfast.
- 8.00 AM Visit Teak Factory, Palm Sugar Factory, Floating Markets. Lunch and Cultural Show at Rose Garden Resort
Overnight accommodation at Royal Benja Hotel
- DAY 4 MONDAY** **18th APRIL 2016**
- 6.30 AM Wake up call. Breakfast.
- 7.30 AM To Nakom Pathom, Ban Pong, Nong Pladuk, Tamuang and Kanchanaburi Burma Thailand Railway Centre (TBRC). Lunch at Tida Loa Restaurant. Visit Chungkai Cemetery and Cutting
Welcome Dinner and Karoke. Overnight accommodation at Pung Waan Resort
- DAY 5 TUESDAY** **19th APRIL 2016**
- 6.45 AM Wake up call. Breakfast.
- 7.45 AM Group Photo
- 8.00 AM Visit Jeath Museum and then to TBRC
- 10.40 AM Train to Wampo Viaduct with lunch on grassed area at Jungle Training Centre. Visit Tarsao hospital and camp sites (Pung Waan Kwai Noi Resort) and Tarsao.
Overnight accommodation at Home Phu Toey
- DAY 6 WEDNESDAY** **20th APRIL 2016**
- 6.30 AM Wake up call. Breakfast.
- 8.00 AM Takanun Camps and Khao Lam Dam (lunch at Dam staff club). Pass Brankassi and Hindato camps. Walk the Burma Railway Heritage Trail from Hintok Road through Hintok Cutting to Hellfire Pass Museum.
Overnight accommodation at Home Phu Toey.
- DAY 7 THURSDAY** **21st APRIL 2016**
- 6.45 AM Wake up call. Breakfast.
- 8.00 AM Buddhist Ceremony. Kanit, Oonjai and POW Remembrance. Visit scene of Hintok Road POW Camp, Kinsayok Camp area, Sai Yok Yai Waterfalls, Houseboat trip and lunch on River Kwai terminating at Konyu River Camp or the Hintok River POW Camp. Return to Home Phu Toey via Konyu River Camp or Hintok River Camp.
Overnight accommodation at Home Phu Toey.
- DAY 8 FRIDAY** **22nd APRIL 2016**
- 7.00 AM Wake up call. Breakfast.
- 8.30 AM Group Photo
Visit Sai Yok Noi Falls (Tonchan South Camp). To Kanchanaburi via Thadan Elephant Park, Thadan Bridge, Lat Ya Shinto Shrine (Japanese Peace Park). Lunch on 2 rivers.
Overnight accommodation at Home Phu Toey
- DAY 9 SATURDAY** **23rd APRIL 2016**
- 7.00 AM Wake up call. Breakfast
- 8.30 AM Visit Hellfire Pass Museum.
- 11.30 AM Juniors practice drill for wreath laying ceremony (at Cemetery).
- 1.00 PM Australian Rules Football Match – Thailand Tigers verses Lunch at Football ground.
Overnight accommodation at Home Phy Toey

DAY 10 SUNDAY**24th APRIL 2016**

Free Day. Three Pagoda Pass Tour. Visit Weary Dunlop Museum and Jack Chalker Gallery.

Lunch on two rivers—

- 5.00 PM Media interviews for exPOWs and families
 - 5.30 PM Reception for special guests and Quiet Lion Group
 - 7.00 PM Light and sound show. Dinner for special guests and Quiet Lion Group
- Pack bags before retiring
Overnight accommodation at Home Phu Toey

DAY 11 MONDAY**25th APRIL 2016**

- 2.15 AM Early wake-up.
 - 2.40 AM Bags at reception and leave for Dawn Service in Hellfire Pass
 - 7.15 AM Breakfast at Home Phu Toey front entrance
 - 8.00 AM Group Photograph and leave for Kanchanaburi for juniors practice for wreath laying and 11AM Anzac Day Ceremony at Kanchanaburi War Cemetery
 - 1.00 PM Lunch at Baan Rao Restaurant
 - 2.20 PM Depart for Bangkok
- Final Diner and overnight accommodation at Royal Benja Hotel

DAY 12 TUESDAY**26th APRIL 2016**

- Free day for shopping. Juniors under supervision
- 2.00 PM Late Check out with arrangements for access to some rooms for shower, toilet, change of clothes and luggage access
- 7.00 PM Dinner
- 8.30 PM Leave city for airport
- 11.55 PM Depart Bangkok for Perth TG483

Arrive Perth International Airport APPROX 7.50 AM. **Wednesday, 27th April 2016.**

AUSTRALIAN PRISONERS OF WAR ON THE BURMA THAILAND RAILWAY

COMPENSATION PAID TO PRISONERS OF WAR OF THE JAPANESE.

Frequently there have been questions regarding any payments made in the form of compensation. Obviously there is no amount that would compensate for the experience but it was part of the demand for reparations demanded universally from the Axis Governments following World War 11. While many prisoners did not want to be seen as needing special treatment, there were ongoing battles for compensation. Although they were paid their wages by the Australian government for the time they had spent in captivity, POWs had missed out on food, clothing and other allowances. Many felt they had been short-changed and that they had actually saved the military money while they were in captivity.

In the immediate post-war period prisoners of the Japanese received some compensation under the terms of the 1951 peace treaty with Japan. This money was raised from the sale of Japanese assets in the Pacific, such as the Thai–Burma railway. However, this amounted to only £102 (about \$2000 in 2015 money).

Former prisoners such as 'Weary' Dunlop took a prominent role in advocating on behalf of captives of the Japanese. However, it was not until 2001 that former POWs received significant compensation from the Australian government (not the Japanese or German Governments), in this case \$25,000. Footnote. Ex an obituary for Tom Uren. Tom Uren never forgot his fellow POW survivors and fought a battle over 23 years to grant them extra benefits, arguing that they died younger and suffered greater illness than other returned servicemen. In 2011, Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced that all remaining POWs would receive a supplement of \$500 a fortnight to their pensions.

Of the 22,000 Australian prisoners of the Japanese, only some 400 were alive then, but Mr Uren said Ms Gillard's action displayed compassion and justice, which he valued above all else.