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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 FOURTY TWO MARCH 2016

The final arrangements are being made for our upcoming 2016 Quiet Lion Tour and we are hoping to have over 80 delegates travel with us to Thailand this year. A copy of the itinerary is located on the final page of this newsletter.



We will be hosting a pre-departure briefing at **2:30pm on Sunday, 3rd April** at our usual location, the Lecture Theatre Room at Hollywood Hospital. Please note there have been renovations at the Hospital so you might like to check for directions at reception. All Members are welcome to join us for a cuppa and a catch up!

For those on Facebook we also have a 'Quiet Lion Tour' Group that you can join by following this link <https://www.facebook.com/groups/877471688958808/?fref=ts> or searching the Group name on Facebook. This Group is for past Quiet Lion Tour participants and those wishing to follow relevant news online.



Photo: Men of Moora. 25th Australian Light Horse Machine Gun Regiment, 14th Platoon, Moora Troop. In an Australian camp prior to embarkation, Woodside SA.

Milton "Snow" Fairclough OAM sitting in front row on the left. Gordon Roberts standing in back row second from left.

Order of Australia Medal (OAM) awarded to Milton Thomas (Snow) Fairclough in the 2016 Australia Day Honours

Milton Thomas Fairclough, a survivor of the Burma Thailand Railway and a member of 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion was awarded an OAM in the Honours List announced on Australia Day this year.

It was recognised that Snow (as he is universally referred to), has served the Australian Community by his outstanding achievements and contributions as a soldier (in particular as a prisoner of the Japanese) in time of war and as a concerned citizen in time of peace. He has assisted significantly in perpetuating the memory of the privations and sacrifices of Australian Military personnel and the selfless dedication of the medical personnel during the construction of the Burma Thailand Railway in World War Two. He has also dedicated himself to service to the community since surviving World War Two and his incarceration with service and support of returned Australian prisoners of war of the Japanese, and participation in youth and community affairs.

Snow was born at Perth on August 28, 1920, and grew up on a farm in Moora; he was a “jack of all trades” working in rural areas of Western Australia prior to World War Two. He was with a group of country boys who were members of the Militia in the 10th Light Horse and enlisted in the AIF on June 19, 1940, joining the 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion, which was mainly raised in Western Australian.

In 1940 the battalion sailed from Fremantle on the Isle de France in a convoy with the Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth 11, Aquitania, Mauritania, Isle de France and the Andes. The convoy called at Colombo and the battalion disembarked at Port Tewfik on the Suez Canal and later trained at Palestine and in Tel Aviv. The battalion saw action in Syria and later at Mrouj, near Beirut in Lebanon.

In February 1942 the battalion traveled on the troop ship RMS Orcades via Durban, South Africa, to Oosthaven in South Sumatra. They disembarked at Batavia (Jakarta) before traveling by road to Bandung. On 9th March 1942 the Dutch surrendered (including the Australians). After nearly a year in Bandung the battalion went to Makasura before being shipped to Changi Prison on Singapore with Dunlop Force under Lt Colonel Edward Dunlop.

In January 1943 Dunlop Force went by train on a five-day journey in cramped steal rice wagons from Singapore to Non Pladuk in Thailand and then to the Konyu River Camp, the Hintok River Camp and the Hintok Road Camp. Dunlop Force worked on the section of the Burma Thailand Railway between Konyu (Hellfire Pass) and Compressor Cuttings.

Members of Dunlop Force suffered similarly to all prisoners on the Burma Thailand Railway with diseases, inhumane and brutal treatment, starvation, overwork, lack of basic needs and terrible conditions.

By the completion of the railway Milton Fairclough’s health was bad and when his group went to Tamuang where men were selected for virtual “slave” work in Japan he was unfit and was admitted to the Nakon Pathom Hospital. He was then on maintenance work and remained in Thailand until the Victory in the Pacific. After discharge on January 31, 1946 Milton Fairclough immediately commenced an active association with supporters of returned Australian Prisoners of War of the Japanese and participating in youth and community affairs.

Milton “Snow” Fairclough has returned to Thailand on twelve occasions as a mentor to students sourced from High Schools and sponsored by the Burma Thailand Burma Railway Memorial Association, the Extremely Disabled War Veterans Association, various Community Service Clubs and the Retired Prisoners of War Association of Western Australia on Quiet Lion Tours.

As with most ex Prisoners of War, Milton Fairclough confined any discussions and recollections of the Prison of War experience to fellow ex PoWs, usually in the confines of RSL clubs, but when it was decided in 2002 to form the Burma Thailand Railway Memorial Association, dedicated to ensure that the story of the “Railway” would not be forgotten, he became an active member. The Association arranges an annual pilgrimage to Thailand for Anzac Day, the Quiet Lion Tour, which is named for Sir Edward (Weary) Dunlop. A feature of the tours is that a large group of High School children and service cadets are taken to Thailand. His Thailand visits had commenced prior to the formation of the Association.

Milton "Snow" Fairclough is renowned for his "mateship", resourcefulness and his compassion for his fellow prisoners. During captivity he spent countless hours foraging for little extras for his mates who were ill, on light rations and unpaid. He would stay with men in their dying hours maintaining the tradition of "nobody must die alone". Even when the dreaded cholera epidemic raged he still nursed cholera patients without any regard for his own health.

In post war years he has regularly visited his mates when they are ill or close to death. He has played a large part in the activities of the 2/3rd Battalion Association.

It is expected that "Snow" will be invested with his medal by Governor Kerry Sanderson in a ceremony at Government House in March this year.

The Thailand-Burma Railway Centre

A particular focus of Quiet Lion Tours when at Kanchanaburi in Thailand is the [Thailand–Burma Railway Centre](#) (TBRC) which is adjacent to the Kanchanaburi War Cemetery in Jaokunnen Road. A comprehensive introduction to the construction of the railway is offered by founder Rod Beattie, Centre general manager Terry Manttan and researcher Andrew Snow.

The TBRC was established in 2003 as the result of many years of passionate research and exploration of the railway by an Australian ex-patriot, Rod Beattie. Rod has lived in Thailand for over twenty years and was employed for more than fourteen years by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as Manager of the Kanchanaburi and Chungkai war cemeteries.

Rod has acquired an unrivalled knowledge of the Thai–Burma railway: including its route, camp locations and original cemetery sites in Thailand and Burma. In the early 1990s Rod also played a role in the development of Hellfire Pass and personally cleared the rail track that now forms the walking trail below [Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum](#).

Rod Beattie has been honoured with an Order of Orange Nassau (Dutch), Order of Australia Medal and Member of the Order of the British Empire.

The TBRC consists of a museum and research centre. The museum provides information on all aspects of the railway's construction and the multinational workforce used by the Japanese. Its displays include artefacts excavated from POW camps, a three-dimensional representation of the full length railway (with camps sites identified by lights), a recreation of a deep railway cutting, a graphic POW hospital, and a statue of Australian POW Ray Parkin's famous sketch of two malaria victims supporting a man dying of cholera.

The Thailand–Burma Railway Centre has been one of the foremost aids in perpetuating the story of the Burma Thailand Railway.

A Research Centre is dedicated to researching the history of the railway and individual prisoners of war. It provides information and personal tours for family members seeking answers about the experiences and deaths of their relatives. Its data base is progressively accumulating information on prisoners from the Thai–Burma railway but also from other regions of the Asia–Pacific during World War II. Its records cover in excess of 115 000 individuals, including Australians, British, Dutch, Americans, Canadians, Indians and New Zealanders.

Data includes personal information about the prisoner, the period of captivity, where worked and with which workforce, and, if the POW died, the place, date of recovery of the remains and any known subsequent information. All information is provided to family members on request to the TBRC.

Travellers on the quiet Lion Tour will have several opportunities to obtain details of any kin they had on Railway.

Earlier in April this year, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to participate in the Thai- Burma Quiet Lion Tour commemorating the Thai-Burma Railway construction in Thailand.

I realise now prior to the tour, my knowledge and understanding of the Thai-Burma Railway was very limited. I was unaware of the brutalities and severe living and working conditions that the Prisoners of War had to endure.

We were fortunate enough this year to have an ex-POW to accompany us on our trip. Neil MacPherson travelled with us to Thailand and shared stories and information about his experiences of working on the Railway and what he endured being a prisoner of war.

One of the most memorable parts of the trip for myself was the ANZAC day celebrations. The day started early with the Dawn Service at Hellfire Pass, this was truly a humbling experience as the ceremony took place on the actual Railway. After a quick breaky back at Home Phu Toey, we made our way to the Wreath Laying ceremony at the Kanchanaburi Cemetery. I felt honoured to be given the privilege of laying a wreath. It was an inspiration to hear Neil deliver the POW address and David Piesse delivered the ode of remembrance.

The tour endeavours to 'perpetuate the memory of the privations and sacrifices of Australian and 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.

I believe the Quiet Lion tour achieves these objectives and much more. Informing current and future generations about Australia's history and in particular the Thai-Burma Railway is imperative to Australia's future.

Having the privilege of learning first hand about this significant event in history and in particular the legend of Sir Weary Dunlop has provided me with much insight into the poor living conditions and lack of health care that was on offer. I endeavour to pass on what I have learnt to the younger generation, especially the story of Sir Weary Dunlop as I believe it is important that young Australians are provided with a role model of such selflessness, compassion, courage and devotion to duty.

It was special to hear David share stories about his father, Ron Piesse and the experiences he had on the Railway. When visiting Kanchanaburi War Cemetery, David kindly showed me where other soldiers from Wagin were buried. The young age of these soldiers is something that continues to resonate with me.

By visiting the Thai Burma Railway I have gained a greater understanding and appreciation for this significant event in our history. I hope to raise awareness to fellow peers and the younger generation of the sacrifices and bravery our soldiers demonstrated on the Thai- Burma Railway. I believe it is very important for young Australians, including myself, to be educated about Australian history and understand how fortunate we are to be living in this great country, appreciating the sacrifices made before us to make this possible.

I feel extremely privileged and fortunate to have been apart of the 2015 Quiet Lion Tour. The values displayed by the Australian Prisoners of War including courage, strength, leadership and bravery are all values, which I hope to continually develop and one day possess.

I would like to sincerely thank Ian and in particular David for their wealth of knowledge and passion they shared with us all on the tour. They really helped us gain an understanding and appreciation of the significance of the Thai-Burma Railway. David thank you for taking the extra time to explain the many stories and experiences to me, your knowledge and passion for the Thai Burma Railway really is amazing.

Finally I would like say a big Thank you to all of you, the Wagin Lions Club for providing me with this opportunity, I appreciate just how lucky I am. Hopefully you are in a position to continue this tradition, as it is a very valuable educational and moving experience.

Movie review – *The Railway Man*



The *Railway Man* is a 2013 British–Australian war film directed by Jonathan Teplitzky. It is an adaptation of the bestselling autobiography of the same name by Eric Lomax, and stars Colin Firth, Nicole Kidman, Jeremy Irvine and Stellan Skarsgård.

During World War II, Eric Lomax is a British officer who is captured by the Japanese in Singapore and sent to a Japanese POW camp where he is forced to work on the Thai-Burma Railway north of the Malay Peninsula. During his time in the camp as one of the Far East prisoners of war, Lomax is tortured by the Kempetai for building a radio receiver from spare parts. This is apparently due to his falling under suspicion of being a spy for supposedly using the British news broadcast receiver as a

transmitter of military intelligence. His only intention, in fact, had been to use the device as a morale booster for himself and his fellow prisoner-slaves.

Years later and still suffering the psychological trauma of his wartime experiences, with the help of his wife Patti and best friend Finlay, Lomax decides to find and confront one of his captors who had escaped prosecution as a war criminal. He returns to the scene of his torture after he has tracked down Japanese secret police officer Takashi Nagase "in an attempt to let go of a lifetime of bitterness and hate".

DVA ex-POW statistics as at 2nd October 2015

Current Residential Location	Ex-POW Europe	Ex-POW Japan	Ex-POW Korea
NSW	37	67	3
VIC	30	37	1
OLD	20	33	1
SA	9	12	1
WA	17	17	1
TAS	3	7	0
NT	2	0	0
ACT	3	1	0
Overseas	0	1	0
TOTAL	121	175	7

Total WW2 Ex-POWs remaining: 296
 WW2 deaths over last 3 months: 29
 Korean deaths over last 3 months: 0
 Average Age of remaining Ex-POWs:
 Europe 94.0 years old
 Japan 94.6 years old
 Korea 87.6 years old

Many POWs on the Japanese Burma-Thai Railway project had specialised knowledge that they used in innovative ways to alleviate the deprivations of internment.

In 1946, Dr E.E. (Weary) Dunlop wrote about his experiences as a POW surgeon in the *British Medical Journal*. In this article, he described the serious nature of the many illnesses that afflicted the POWs. Dunlop described the life-saving and creative solutions that assisted the medical staff to cope with the lack of medicines, surgical equipment and nutritional food. Dunlop wrote,

“Much help in the preparation of drugs and chemicals was given to medical officers by chemists, botanists and scientists. ... Sgt. A.J. Kostermans and Sgt. G.W. Chapman did most valuable work in this respect.”

The Dutch botanist, Dr André Kostermans, was captured and imprisoned in Bandung, Central Java in 1942. An arduous journey started with his group being moved from Bandung to Tjilatjap, then to Singapore. After a few weeks they were transferred by rail to Ban Pong in sealed metal vans, and then in trucks to Kanchanaburi. For the next two years Kostermans' group trekked on-foot up the Kwaë Noi River felling trees and digging earth embankments finally reaching the Three Pagoda Pass.

Despite the harsh conditions Kostermans continually looked for opportunities in their forest environment. His interest in biology dated back to his childhood when he and his family had lived in Central Java. In 1936 he completed his education in the Netherlands, graduating with a doctorate in botany. As he felt more at home in the tropics, he returned to Java. Through his connection with Javanese culture and formal education in biology and botany, Kostermans had acquired a wide ranging knowledge of tropical plants and their uses. Now, as a POW, Kostermans used his knowledge to identify edible plants that supplemented the POWs' meagre rations. One of these was “grass soup”. The concoction contained small amounts of riboflavin, enough to make a difference to POWs' health. Another example was the infusing of guava leaves from which he made large quantities of a “tea” to alleviate diarrhoea.

Sometime in 1944, the deprivations and hard work eventually caught up with Kostermans. Suffering from malaria, dysentery and a large ulcer on his leg, he was told he was dying. Transferred to a camp further down the Kwaë Noi River Kostermans was eventually taken to the large hospital camp at Nakom Paton. Despite his dire condition, he recovered.

With so many seriously ill internees, expertise and knowledge amongst the POWs was critical for establishing and maintaining the Nakom Paton hospital camp. Dire circumstances fostered many ingenious inventions; jungle science flourished. One example was the process for the distillation of alcohol, so vital for surgical procedures. Kostermans' botanical knowledge played a significant part in setting up an alcohol distillation process.

When peace had been declared in the Pacific, a documentary film was produced of the Nakom Paton hospital camp. The film is now available on the Australian War Memorial website. The hospital's alcohol distillery process is featured in the film (<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/F01539/>). Kostermans is shown working in the distillery room. More pictures and explanatory text can be found at (<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/118848/>)

During his time as a POW Kostermans had seen many new plant species that he was keen to collect and document as herbarium specimens. Following his release, Kostermans obtained funding for an expedition and returned to the Kwaë Noi River. In five months he transferred nearly 2000 herbarium specimens to the Harvard University (USA) and Leiden Herbarium (Netherlands). In 1947 he returned to Bogor, West Java, where he lived and worked as a botanist until he died in 1994, at age 88 years, in a Jakarta hospital.

Note from the author: I met André Kostermans in 1984 whilst living in Bogor, Indonesia. At that time, there were many stories circulating about Kostermans' colourful life, in particular, his many plant collecting expeditions into wild places and also a few stories about his experiences as a POW. I became particularly interested in how he had used his botanical knowledge in so many creative ways throughout his life. As part of my post-graduate studies I am researching for a biography of André Kostermans.

Part of my research can be found at <http://historynet.anu.edu.au/ajgh-kostermans>.

Itinerary for the 2016 Quiet Lion Tour

DAY 1 FRIDAY

15th APRIL 2016

6.10 AM Assemble Perth International Airport (Perth Travelers)
9.10 AM Depart Perth International Airport TG484
Melbourne International TG466
Sydney International TG476
Brisbane International TG474
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 to be 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 Karaoke. 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 Phyl Toey

DAY 10 SUNDAY 24th APRIL 2016

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

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 Dinner 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

Melbourne TG465

Sydney TG475

Brisbane TG473

Arrive Australia next day. **Wednesday, 27th April 2016.**

Perth 7.50 am

Melbourne 12.05pm

Sydney 7.20am

Brisbane 11.50am

Itinerary current 22 June 2015