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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 SIX JUNE 2017

Albany Veteran honoured

Mr Rick Wilson, Federal Member for O'Connor and the Hon Dan Tehan MP Minister of Veteran Affairs recently hosted a reception at Mr Wilson's Albany office for three survivors of World War II:

Mr Neil MacPherson, a survivor of the Burma Thailand Railway and a slave worker in Japan;

Mr Harold Martin, an ex-Prisoner of War of the Japanese and survivor of the sinking of the hellship Rakuyō Maru on the morning of 12 September 1944; and

Mr Murray Maxton who flew in a Lancaster aircraft with the RAAF Bomber Command in 1944 over occupied Europe during World War II and was honoured by France for bravery with the Legion of Honour.



Photo L>R: The Hon Dan Tehan MP Minister of Veteran Affairs, Mr Harold Martin, Mr Rick Wilson Federal Member for O'Connor and Mr Neil MacPherson.

Congratulations to Neil MacPherson on his 95th Birthday

Over 30 family and friends gathered in the RAAF Retirement Village Albany on Saturday 13 May to join Neil in the celebrating his 95th birthday. The guests present included centenarian Harold Martin, Local Member of Parliament Peter Watson and his wife Diane Wolfer, who wrote the books *The Lighthouse Girl* and *The Light Horse Boy*.

He people gathered were supplied with the usual Heineken and tasty finger food prepared by the local village residents.

Gypsy O'Dea, Neil's granddaughter, spoke of Neil as a tremendous role model for the whole family and his great strength and endurance. A good time was had by all.

Neil with Harold Martin and Murray Maxon were also invited to a small afternoon tea at the Federal Member for O'Connor, Rick Wilson's, office. Murray Maxon, is a 97-year-old veteran Fighter Pilot who flew over France with his brother in the same plane, both awarded The Croix de guerre by France

The Minister for Veterans Affairs Dan Tehan was visiting Albany and they had afternoon tea together. Neil was very chuffed with this afternoon tea.



Annual ex-Prisoner of War Memorial Service in Kings Park

The memorial service conducted by the Mount Lawley Senior High School was held at the Ex-POW Memorial, May Drive, Kings Park on Friday 5th May 2017 at 1:00pm.

In 1997 the students of Mount Lawley Senior High School adopted the Ex-Prisoners of War Association's Memorial, Kings Park. This ceremony is held as an annual commemorative service. 2017 was the 21st year Mount Lawley Senior High School has been involved with the service.

As in previous years the Principal, staff and students from Mount Lawley Senior High School assisted to conduct the service and provide the band, choir, bugler and logistic support for the event. Many Ex-Prisoner of War Association members attended to pay their respects as well as a large group of invited guests including surviving veterans and representatives of kindred associations. Afternoon tea was provided and the weather was fine, a beautiful sunny day. The Mount Lawley Senior High School band and choir entertained guests prior to the ceremony and in the course of the ceremony hymns and the Australian song were presented by the school.

Surviving ex-prisoners of war present were Association President Arthur Leggett with John Gilmour and Syd Shaw. Eric Wilson, David Piesse and Peter Winstanly of the BTRMA attended.

The number of veterans left is rapidly thinning and it was stressed that we need to ensure we remember those no longer with us. In this regard, the following is an abridged version of an article from The Australian newspaper:

"They're fading away before our eyes, these proud old men who gave so much for Australia. Fewer than 200 of them are left and one sad day soon there will be none at all.

Some still can't bring themselves to speak about what happened after they became prisoners of the Japanese or Germans in World War II to forge a very different Anzac legend to that of Gallipoli.

Their war turned into an elemental struggle against starvation, disease and brutality on the Burma rail- way and in slave labour camps under the Japanese, or to survive the death throes of a blood-soaked Nazi Reich. But the underpinnings were the same: mateship, sacrifice, endurance.

Time, though, waits for no one and new government figures show that only 195 of the 32,000 Australian military personnel taken prisoner in World War II - including 61 female army nurses - were living in January, with an average age of 94.

That number will have slipped further in the lead-up to ANZAC Day.

The fade out of Australia's World War II paws points poignantly to how close we are to losing the last living links to the great generation that waged that seismic conflict.

Veteran numbers are in freefall. Of the 990,000 Australians who joined up between 1939 and 1945, only 19,600 remain of those who saw active war service, according to the Department of Veterans' Affairs. About 7500 died in the 12 months to June 30 last year, though this included spouses.

With an average age of 93 for the surviving World War II vets, the DVA's demographic modelling assumes an annual attrition rate of 5000 through this decade. By 2020, there will be achingly few still with us.

The ex-POWs are generally older because most were captured early in the war in the disasters in Greece and Crete at the hands of the Germans, and in the dark days of 1942, after Japanese forces seized Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, the then Dutch East Indies, the Philippines and menaced Australia from New Guinea and at sea".

Mount Lawley Senior High School have travelled on Quiet Lion Tours to Thailand for some years with generous support by the Ex-Prisoners of War Association, the school, parents and the Burma Thailand Memorial Association.

The following students have toured: Olivia Williams, Clancy Davidson, Cale Wilcox, Nicola Bower, Johanna Battista, Monroe Massa, Alex Scudder, Emma Bromham, Andrea Leonard, Nicolas Hortense, Kate Prast and Emma Giuffre.

RSL WA upcoming events

The RSL WA website hosts a comprehensive calendar that details upcoming events that may be of interest:

www.rslwa.org.au/Events/Calendar.aspx



2017 Quiet Lion Tour Report

The annual pilgrimage to the River Kwai took place from Monday the 17th of April to the 28th of April 2017 for Perth travelers. (Eastern States travelers returned late on the evening of the 27th of April). Day one was the travelling component.

Day Two

After a 7:00am wake-up call followed by our first buffet breakfast in Thailand and a short briefing of the carers for our students on tour we headed for Bang Pa-in to visit the Royal Summer Palace. This is the site of a timber palace that was built over four hundred years ago. The palace and its gardens create a magical wonderland of a bygone era in the Kingdom of Thailand and to be able to step back into the history of Thailand.

After an hour at Bang Pa-In we traveled further north to Ayutthaya, the ancient capital of Thailand prior to 1767AD when it was abandoned after wars with the invading armies from Burma. This area is now an historic park under the charter of the United Nations. A talk there from Ake (our Thai tour Guide) on the significance of the historic precinct and where it fitted into Thailand's story.

Our next move for the afternoon was on to a pier closer back towards Bangkok where we boarded a ferry for the return trip down the Chayo Phraya River to the River City pier in the centre of Bangkok itself. This is a delightful trip for our travellers to relax and get to know each other after flights the previous day from different parts of Australia.

We arrived back at the Royal Benja Hotel around 5:30pm and after a clean-up we had our welcome dinner with all our travelers together as the Quiet Lion Tour 2017. We laid a few ground rules while the group was together and handed out the shirts and caps. Those that needed their beauty sleep moved back to their rooms, Ian and I took a group of students and their carers to Terminal 21, a themed shopping centre which caters for the younger shopper.

Day Three

Six thirty wake up call, bags out, breakfast and on the bus at seven thirty and on our way to Nakom Pathom, the site of Phra Pathom Chedi, the tallest stupa in the world. The significance of Nakom Pathom is that before WWII there was a medical outpost here so the Japanese in their wisdom decided it would be a good place to put a hospital, which they did. It had a capacity of 10,000 beds able to handle all the sick and injured returning from off the Railway and also from Burma. There was a lot of innovative surgery and treatments developed there that save a tremendous lot of lives and relieved a lot of suffering.

From here we move to Nong Pladuk, the place where the Railway to Burma left the main railway line that ran to Singapore. This was also known as the 0 kilometre point where all measurements were taken from on Thailand side of Three Pagodas Pass. There was a large prison camp in this area along with workshops, foundries, fuel refineries. Many British POWs were here as Britain had a big dependence on railways and the obvious choice was to collect experienced railway workers.

A few kilometres away is the town of Ban Pong, the railway station where the POWs got off the train from Singapore on their journey north up the railway line to their various places of work. A few of the earlier work forces were lucky enough to have road transport up to Tarsao and beyond. The rest that arrived after the monsoons set in had no choice but to walk as the tracks became impassable and turned into mud. This was extremely difficult as the later

forces were also suffering from malaria, dysentery, malnutrition and all the tropical diseases known apart from cholera which was yet to come.

We leave the main road and travel to the Mae Klong River east of Kanchanaburi to a camp site known as Tha Maung, this was the main transit camp for POWs travelling up River and for those returning down River. At some stage nearly every POW had contact with this camp, even those returning from Burma. The whole of the camp area is now market gardens for the produce of fresh fruit and vegetables for the Tha Muang and Kanchanaburi city area. This was one of the more pleasant camps to have spent some time in. Food was more plentiful and the pressure of work had eased considerably.

Next place to visit was the Bridge on the River Kwai and lunch at Tida Loa's River Kwai Restaurant. After lunch there was a chance to walk over the bridge.

The tour is starting to come together very well as we have seen some DVDs on our way out from Bangkok. We took an opportunity to visit TBRC (Rod Beattie's Thailand Burma Railway Centre) to let them know we were in the area and then to Pung Waan Kanchanaburi Resort for a swim, welcome dinner and Karaoke.

Day Four

Breakfast, bags out, group photo at the front of Pung Waan Resort then out to the Chungkai Cutting for an explanation of how cuttings were built and the method of clearing the broken rock to be able to drill and blast again using the hammer and tap.

The visit to the Chungkai War Cemetery was well received with time for contemplation walking amongst the headstones. From here we went to TBRC to wait for the train to take us over the Wampo Viaduct and back to Tam Krsea for lunch and waiting to watch the train return across the viaduct on return to Bangkok.

When lunch was finished it was back on the bus to head up to highway 323 with a monkey stop on the way. We headed to the Pung Waan River Kwai Resort which was the site of the Tarsao hospital camp and a large Japanese Railway headquarters camp.

This was the only prisoner of war camp that named their cemeteries, three cemeteries were associated with the Tarsao camp and hospital. Number one, St George's with 206 (19 Australian) graves. Number two, (St Luke's) with 558 graves (120 Australians) and Number three (cholera) with 52 graves (9 Australian). A fourth un-named cemetery had 23 graves.

Of the many atrocities which occurred on the Burma Thailand Railway one was at this camp and has been authenticated was the murder of Pte Eric Bernard Hilton of the Sherwood Foresters.

From the site of the Tarsao camp and hospital our journey took us to the delightful town of Tarsao itself, situated on Highway 323 with the Sai Yok Noi waterfalls in the towns centre. Tarsao is also the terminus for the part of the Railway still in use with the station called Nam Tok. After a visit to the Seven 11 store and street markets to stock up on snacks and nibbles for our five-day stay at Home Phu Toey.

Day Five

It is nice not to have to put your bags out and race for breakfast and the bus.

Today we had the Buddhist Ceremony in the Weary Dunlop Park. This is an event that has taken place for a number of years and is to commemorate and remember the ex-prisoners of war that never returned home from the Railway and particularly to remember those that have passed in the year since our last visit. This year we remembered the members of the Quiet Lion group in Eric Roediger and Milton Fairclough ("Snow") who passed away in October 2016.

This was followed by the obelisk ceremony and a memorial to Khun Kanit and Khun Oonjai without whom we would not have had Home Phu Toey.

We left HPT for the site of The Hintok Mountain camp, now an arboretum. This camp was the home of Dunlop Force and where Weary Dunlop performed his life saving medical skills with very little in the way of medicines and equipment. Fortunately, he had some very ingenious people in the camp with him that were able to build a water reticulation system that meant the cookhouse had running water and the men returning from work on the Railway could have a shower and get washed and feel a little like human beings again. This water system also allowed for the still to be built that provided distilled water with saline that was used to overcome the cholera epidemic that was rampant during the monsoon. This allowed 60 percent of cholera victims to survive the disease as compared to approximately 90 to 100 percent deaths at the start of the epidemic. It was from here that Jim Allpike carried the saline in glass demijohns to the Hintok River camp twice a day saving countless lives.

Next piece of the story is the visit to Sai Yok Yai waterfalls and National Park. A significant place in the Railway history, this is the site of a large camp which included a large contingent of indentured "romusha" which was credited with the construction of a huge embankment nearly two kilometres long to a substantial trestle bridge. This is still visible along with the concrete bridge abutments. There is the preserved remains of a Japanese cookhouse which is worth looking at.

Swimming in the waterfall is rather delightful as the streams are spring fed and the water is quite cool unlike the warm bath temperatures of most of the resort swimming pools. After everyone has had a chance to cool off we then boarded a houseboat for a leisurely trip down the Kwai Noi River accompanied by a long tailed boat for control. After an enjoyable lunch on the houseboat and the beautiful river scenery, we come to Hintok River camp.

It was from Hintok River camp that the compressor cutting, the compressor embankment, the Hintok Cutting and the Three Tiered Bridge was completed.

Owing to the difficulty of building the Compressor embankment and the torrential monsoon rains that kept washing the base away, it was decided to build a trestle detour to the side of the embankment.

This became known as the "Pack of Cards" bridge because it kept collapsing. This was the last section of the Railway to be completed to allow trains access to the full length of the Railway from Nong Pladuk to Thanbyzayat.

The last stop for today is the site of the Konyu River camp. This was the first camp that Dunlop Force was to call home on the Thailand Burma Railway. They were very fortunate that it was January 1943 and the weather was fine and dry, this enabled them to arrive here by motor transport. The next job was to erect a camp from attap and bamboo and on completion the group were moved to the Hintok Mountain (or Hintok Road camp) just as the wettest monsoon that Thailand experienced in the twentieth century, with sixteen thousand millimetres of rain recorded, set in. With that in mind we boarded our bus and returned to HPT for dinner and a good night's sleep in air conditioned accommodation.

Day Six

Slept in until 7:00am, breakfast and a visit to the Hellfire Pass Museum, an institution of the Australian Federal Government, opened in 1998 by the Australian Prime Minister the Rt Hon John Howard. From the museum we headed into Kanchanaburi for the Cadets and Students to have some drill practice for the Wreath Laying Ceremony on ANZAC Day at the War Cemetery.

Lunch at the football, Thailand Tigers versus Singapore, burgers and sausages in rolls went down rather well with a cold drink. Thailand overcame Singapore to win a rather hard fought match, the temperature was a mild 42 degrees. On the bus again to return to HPT for dinner and a quiet night.

Day Seven

Today we had to leave relatively early to travel Highway 323 to the Kao Laem Dam, an impressive structure built by the Snowy Mountain Authority from Australia under the Colombo Plan to help countries after the Second World War to build new infrastructure. This dam inundates the Railway line from the Takanun camps for a distance of ninety kilometres to the Songkurai camps near to Three Pagodas Pass. Today we have lunch at the EGAT staff Club which is a set menu and one of the nicest Thai meals you could wish to have, our thanks go to the club manager and staff for making us so welcome.

Back onto the bus and head back on Highway 323, we pass through the town of Brankassi, site of the Brankassi camp, and a few kilometres further on we pass the site of Hindato camp which has a hot spring on the bank of a small river. This was a favourite place for Japanese engineers and soldiers who had the PoWs build a concrete pool for the use of Japanese staff.

Near Hellfire Pass Museum we turn onto the Hintok Road which takes us to the rest station on the Heritage Walk from Hintok Road back to the Hellfire Pass Museum, a distance of approximately 4 kilometres by the time you have climbed up and down steps, clambered over rocks, walked across trestle bridge sites and bomb craters. One and a half to two hours later, if you have had a look at all the works that were carried out by the POWs to complete this section of the Railway, said to be the most difficult on the entire railway. We have made sure we used the plentiful drinking water available. The men working on the rail trace left their camp at 4:00 am with one-pint bottle (600mls) to last until they got back to camp up to eighteen hours later. Arriving back at HPT at 4:30 pm it was time for a visit to the pool to relax, and prepare for our concert.

This evening after dinner we held our annual concert based on the 1943 Christmas Concert held at Hintok Mountain Camp called Fun With F.A.. The Railway was completed and the pressure had eased somewhat but there was work

parties still required for maintenance work on the track and wood cutting for fuel for the engines. This concert was very well received not only by the prisoners but also by the Japanese and guards.

A guest in our midst this evening was a member of the New Zealand Navy, Commander Trevor Lesley, he was very well received by the Quiet Lions and it was nice to have an NZ component of ANZAC to join us.

Day Eight

We have a free day today, a chance to visit the Weary Dunlop Park incorporating the Weary Dunlop Pavilions and the Jack Chalker Gallery, both very worthwhile exhibits.

There is also a display of a working prison camp hospital with an improvised orthopaedic bed with traction pulleys and a mechanism for raising and lowering sections of the bed independently.

Various other exhibits were a dentist's chair, an exercise bike along with pieces of equipment used for physiotherapy to recuperate injured limbs and bodies. These were made from bamboo.

There is also a working model of the still that was built at the Hintok Mountain camp along with other paraphernalia, intravenous drips made from sake bottles and stethoscope tubing and treatments for tropical ulcers

After the morning spent at Weary Dunlop Park, it was time for lunch and an afternoon at leisure taking in the delights of HPT and repacking bags for a very early morning departure to get to the Dawn Service at Hellfire Pass.

A small group travelled to Three Pagoda Pass to follow in the footsteps of F Force to the Songkurai camps accompanied by Ian Holding whose father, Wally Holding OAM was a member of the 2/4 Australian Machine Gun Battalion AIF and as a PoW was part of F Force. This intrepid group arrived back in time for the Welcome Reception at Weary Dunlop Park.

At 7:00pm we had the Light and Sound show followed by dinner with the Australian and New Zealand Ambassadors and the Quiet Lion Group. Dinner concluded at 10:00pm.

Day Nine

Early morning wake-up at 2:30am, bags dropped at the Lobby of HPT and on the bus for Hellfire Pass and the Dawn Service which is due to commence at 5:30am.

As the sky starts to lighten in the east, the dawn chorus of the birds starts, a call which breaks the silence in a beautiful way, as if there is more to come. At 5:30am, as the Catafalque Party mounts and the service begins, it is almost light enough to read the service books. Dawn Service in Hellfire Pass is a very moving and emotional Ceremony and everyone who attends finds themselves wiping a tear from their eye. The haunting sounds of the Last Post and the Rouse echoing off the Cutting walls are something to behold. The lone Piper playing The Flowers of the Forest usually brings even the hardest undone.

This year the Quiet Lion Students had a chance meeting with a group of Thai Military Cadets who were very keen to interact with our group, maybe something may eventuate in the future.



A quick Gunfire breakfast at the Hellfire Pass Museum and back to HPT, have breakfast and check bags onto the bus. This morning breakfast is served just inside the front entrance to HPT, as we have to go on to Kanchanaburi for the 11:00am Wreath Laying Ceremony. We say goodbye to the staff who have made us so welcome at Home Phu Toey over the last five days and with promises to be back again in 2018 with a new Quiet Lion Tour.

We arrived in Kanchanaburi at 9:45am and time for our Students to have one more drill practice before the main service where they will be presenting the Wreaths to be laid by visiting world dignitaries.

It is a moving ceremony among the graves of those who perished on this cursed Railway, with a scrap of humanity and feeling for our fellow man, there really is no need for these graves to be here at all. We had come here to remember them and to honour them that they gave their lives so we might be able to live in peace and harmony. Neil MacPherson gave a very moving address and received a standing ovation. Thank you Neil.



Our Students excelled themselves with the Wreath Laying as usual, a job that has been given to the Quiet Lion Tour. This was formerly done by members of the Thai Military and they would like to do it again. Thanks to our remarkable group of Cadets and Students who participated in The Quiet Lion Tour of 2017.

After the Ceremony was completed we adjourned to the Ban Rao Restaurant for a set menu lunch which is a really nice meal. Lunch completed it was time to start to relax as we had achieved what we had set out to do in telling the story of the Thailand- Burma Railway, the hardships and the atrocities and the mateship of fellow POWs. The main object was to get the story of the selfless dedication of the Doctors and the medical staff, quite often with no training and just sheer determination to help the sick often ignoring the danger to their own health by just coming into contact with cholera and amoebic dysentery.

Next on the list was the swimming pool at Pung Waan Kanchanaburi Resort, a quiet dinner and retiring for the evening after the shock of a 2:30am wake up.

Day Ten

Today we return to Bangkok via Sampran Riverside Resort and Cultural Show.

A side trip to Damnoern Saduak Floating Market. We leave from the pier, visit the market and return back to the pier without leaving the long tailed boats. Most enjoyed this style of retail therapy coming back with their market goods.

Sampran Riverside, formerly known as The Rose Garden certainly did not disappoint with an enormous range of dishes to delight the palate, there was deserts just waiting to be tried and fresh fruit, surely a gourmand's paradise. This was followed by the Cultural Show showing traditional Thai village lifestyle and dances. Next stage was the journey to the Royal Benja Hotel, approximately thirty to forty kilometres away.

Nothing like a relaxing drive through peak hour Bangkok traffic, after several "are we there yet's" we finally crossed the Suphan Taksin Bridge over the Chao Prayo River. With two kilometers to go, it still takes an hour or more to reach our goal.

Owing to our group breaking up the following day we hold our final day dinner to wrap the tour up and to thank all that travelled on the Quiet Lion Tour for 2017.

A special note of thanks needs to go to Esperance Senior High School and their contingent of Students, Staff and Carers, to Melville Rotary Club and their sponsorship to Melville Senior High School, to Geraldton RSL and local sponsors for their contribution to send Students and Carers, the Three Springs District RSL and sponsors for the Students and Carers, the Peel Health Campus-Mandurah RSL-Holding family group for sponsoring cadets and the Lions Club of Wagin for their sponsorship. Every Student that attended the Quiet Lion Tour of 2017 had local sponsorships and we, the committee and members, thank everyone that helped make the QLT 2017 such a success.

A very special thank you must go to the family of Mr Neil MacPherson OAM for the care and attention given to Neil and enabling him to be available to give the PoW Address at the Wreath Laying Ceremony and to be able to relate his time on the Railway as a PoW to the younger members of our group, and a big thanks to Neil for being with us once again.

Day Eleven

A free day for shopping and rounding up souvenirs and gifts to take to loved ones at home and to see some of the sights of Bangkok. The Students were looked after by their supervisors and had a successful day.

Sydney travellers had to leave at 3:30pm for the airport and Melbourne and Brisbane travellers left at 8:00pm, which only left those going to Perth leaving at 4:30am the next morning.

Another successful tour completed and now we plan for 2018.

David Piesse

Tour Leader QLT 2017

2016 ANZAC Day Wreath Laying Ceremony at Kanchanaburi War Cemetery.

Address by Neil MacPherson WX 16572 2/2nd Pioneer

Good morning,

On behalf of all Ex-POWs, I welcome you to this peaceful location at the Kanchanaburi Cemetery Thailand on this day of remembrance for the Australian dead of all wars in which our nation has been involved.

The first Australians to arrive on the Burma Thailand railway in October 1942 were in Green Force led by Major Green, Commanding Officer of the 2/4th Machine Gun Battalion a West Australian unit.

They were also the first Australian prisoners to arrive on the Burma end of the railway, followed later in the month by my group in Williams Force under Lt Colonel John Williams of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion.

Camps had been cunningly established by the Japanese every 10 kilometres along the surveyed railway trace, this meant no time was wasted travelling from camps to work sites.

The huts were well constructed to withstand the wild weather encountered during the wet season. Generally they were built with split bamboo platforms running the length of the huts with a central passageway, the roof was made of atap, a home for the rats that infested the huts.

Mention should be made here that this type of accommodation was not universal along the length of the railway - for instance at Hintock in Thailand the prisoners were housed in tents that were soon damaged by the wild weather.

Our group of 800 was made up of mostly of Australians, a few Americans and Dutch captured with us in Java. The first Australians to start work on the Thailand side were captured in Java and formed Dunlop Force led by Colonel Dunlop, a surgeon from the 2nd second Casualty Clearing Station.

In Burma the several groups under overall charge of Australian Senior officer, Brigadier Varley, were known by the name of their leader. Our Force was known as Williams Force led by Lt Colonel John Williams Commanding Officer of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion. Anderson Force was led by Lt Colonel Anderson V.C.

On the Thailand end of the railway, apart from Dunlop Force which came from Java, most Australians were part of the 8th Division and were known as D Force and F Force.

In Burma we were initially used to build embankments and excavate small cuttings. There was no great pressure from the Japanese Engineers - however this soon changed as the work got behind schedule and by May 1943 the Speedo initiative started.

Beatings were common place. Australian officers in charge of work parties were especially noted for their courageous actions to protect the men under their control, but they were beaten for their efforts.

Major Bruce Hunt of F Force was an outstanding surgeon. He was also one of the most able and efficient Camp Administrators on the railway. He did a lot to maintain discipline and lift sagging morale of the sick prisoners.

In the early months, despite long hours and insufficient food, we gradually accustomed ourselves to a diet of mainly rice. We lacked the essentials such as meat, vegetables & fruit so malnutrition soon set in and as the wet season arrived with all its pestilence and disease the work hours were extended.

Within 12 months of us starting work, diseases such as Cholera, Dysentery, Malaria, Berri Berri and leg ulcers, worsened by malnutrition and long hours of labour, would decimate our force.

The morning sick parades lengthened to the extent that the Japanese Engineers had to press many of these sick men into the under-manned work parties. At the end of long work shifts men would return to camp and their first destination was the sick ward to see their mates and cheer them up.

During the construction of the railway it contained along its length and beyond hundreds of labour camps - all were bad, some worse than others - not one could be called good.

Japanese camp commandants in these camps and in the transit camps were mostly tyrants, meting out punishments for minor infringements.

In early 1943 we in Williams & Anderson Force were selected to lay the sleepers and rails from Thanbyuzayat through to Konkaita where the two ends of the railway were to be connected- a daunting task.

It was heavy work carrying the heavy sleepers and long lengths of rail. By September 1943 Williams Force of 800 had been reduced to a work party of 300 skeletons of men.

The Japanese started moving prisoners from Burma into camps in Thailand. These prisoners were concentrated in two camps - Tamuan and Tamarkan, as this camp here on the River next to the bridge and this cemetery was then known. Some prisoners were left in isolated camps back in Burma to carry out maintenance work.

On arrival in Tamarkan the prisoners who arrived from Burma were astonished to see the variety of food available here compared to the barren jungle in Burma.

Thailand was always known as the food bowl of Asia, Despite this abundance the Japanese authorities refused to provide sufficient rations to meet the daily needs of the men who were mere shadows of their pre prisoner life.

Thank you for your attention, may I wish you a safe return to your homes.

Neil MacPherson



For those on Facebook, we have recently created a public **Burma Thailand Railway Memorial Association Inc.** Page to share interesting news and articles relating to BTRMA.

Page: www.facebook.com/BTRMAinc

Please feel free to invite your friends, relatives and colleagues to like our Page to promote the work of the Association and memory of the privations and sacrifices of POWs and medical personnel during the construction of the Thai Burma Railway line in WWII.

We also have a **Quiet Lion Tour** Facebook Group for past tour participants to connect and share stories.

Group: www.facebook.com/groups/877471688958808