

Member	Tim Bull	Electorate	Gippsland East
Period	01 January 2024 to 31 March 2024		

Regulation 6 - Expense allowance and electorate allowance	
Total amount paid to member for electorate allowance	\$13,549.34
Total amount paid to member for expense allowance	\$3,228.05

Regulation 7 - Motor vehicle allowance	
Total amount paid to member for motor vehicle allowance	\$0.00
Member did not receive the motor vehicle allowance in the previous quarter and member has elected to receive the motor vehicle allowance for this quarter	No

Regulation 9 - Parliamentary accommodation sitting allowance	
Total amount paid to member for parliamentary accommodation sitting allowance	\$7,139.44
Suburb in which the member's parliamentary accommodation is located	Fitzroy

Regulation 10 - Travel allowance claims					
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid	Town or city in which accommodation was located	Value of the accommodation
Total number of nights for travel allowance claims			0		
Total amount paid to member for travel allowance			\$0.00		

Regulation 11 - Commercial transport allowance claims					
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid	Mode of transport	Value of transport
Total number of nights for commercial transport allowance claims			0		
Total amount paid to member for commercial transport allowance			\$0.00		

Regulation 12 - International travel allowance claims			
Date from	Date until	Reason for travel	Total amount paid
22-Jan-24	02-Feb-24	Flight to Bangkok via Singapore and return - Shadow Ministerial research at various locations in Bangkok, Kanchanaburi and Singapore as per draft itinerary attached (claiming 1/4 of flights) - total is \$6387.68, Cover more travel insurance (claiming 1/4) - total is \$646	\$1,758.42
Total number of nights for international travel allowance claims			11
Total amount paid to member for international travel allowance			\$1,758.42
See attached travel report for further details			

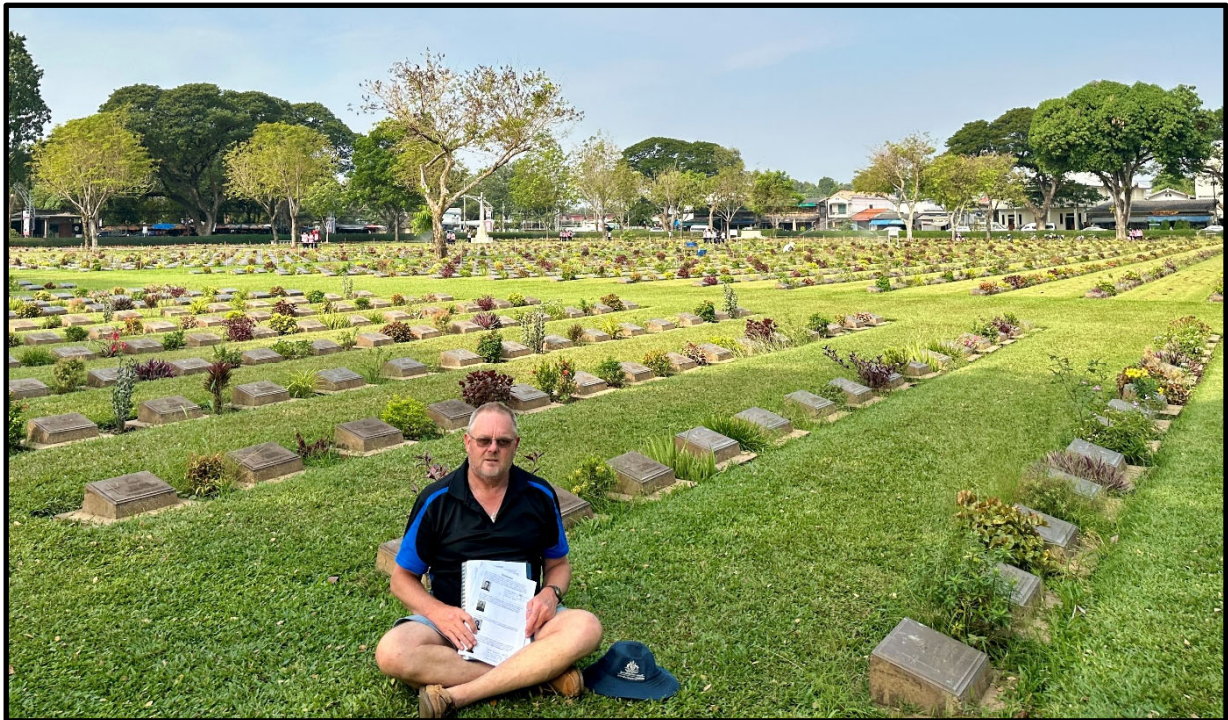
Thai-Burma “Death” Railway, Changi POW camp and Kranji War Cemetery Travel Report

January 22 – February 2, 2024

Tim Bull MP

Member for Gippsland East

Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs



Introduction

When the Allied Forces surrendered to the Japanese at Singapore on the afternoon of February 15, 1942, some 80,000 Allied troops immediately became Prisoners of War (POWs).

That an Allied force of 80,000 surrendered to a Japanese force of around 35,000 remains a point of great debate today and is something we cover later in this report.

These men, many from Victoria, could never have imagined the atrocities that awaited them, not only on the Thai-Burma "Death" Railway, but at other locations across South-East Asia.

It is of some frustration to the author that much of this history and other conflicts our nation was engaged in, are not more widely taught in our education curriculum, noting that some schools do better than others in this space.

It is not about commemorating or glorifying war, in fact quite the opposite. It is about remembering and honouring the sacrifices made and telling the factual history that would indeed instil in our younger cohort that war should be avoided at all costs.

I would hope this report would reinforce that thinking, but also put on the records of the Victorian Parliament, a document that reflects our thanks to these men.

An equally important element of this document touches on the tourism component of our war history, as Thailand and Singapore are home to interpretive centres that not only tell of the atrocities but tell the story of the lead up to the events we now look back on with sadness and disbelief.

There is irony that the stories of Victorians in Singapore, Myanmar (formerly Burma) and Thailand are better told in those countries than in their home state.

While Canberra is home to the National War Memorial and we have a small rotating display at the Shrine of Remembrance here in Victoria, our wartime history as a State would certainly benefit from a more extensive display of those from Victoria who served our country.

As Shadow Minister for Veterans, not only would such a facility prove exceptionally popular from a tourism perspective, but more importantly, as a great educational experience.

As an example of the stories to be told, we will focus a section of this report on some men of the 4th Anti-Tank Regiment from the electorate of the author, Gippsland East.

Background

With Australians at war in Europe fighting with the Allies against Germany and the Axis powers, Japan entered the WWII fray with the bombing of Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941. Australia was also now at war with Japan.

It also launched simultaneous attacks on Malaya and Hong Kong and soon swept through the South Pacific countries with alarming speed.

Due to the quickness of its advancements, it caught many countries and Allied outposts off-guard and unprepared. In the process, it accumulated a huge number of POWs and gathered up a large cohort of “Romusha” (non-military civilians and workers from countries it had conquered).

One of the key events in this rapid Japanese expansion was the capture of Singapore, which we will cover in this report. For many prisoners of war who were captured, the subsequent years were a period of unfathomable mistreatment and hardship.

It is impossible to understand what these men endured and, while one can gain some small snapshot from hearing their stories and visiting these sites, it is little wonder so many refused to discuss what they had endured on their return home.

Acknowledging there are many publications that tell of their experiences in great detail, it is hoped this report provides some insight into the suffering experienced.

Fall of Singapore

Singapore was the foremost British military base and was of great importance to the Allies from a military point of view. Known as the “Gibraltar of the South”, it was considered impenetrable.

In reality, it was exceptionally vulnerable and the capture of Singapore after a short conflict from February 8-15, 1942, was the largest British surrender in its history.

Japanese General Tomoyuki Yamashita had rapidly advanced and, with approximately 30,000-35,000 men, had taken all before him down the Malayan Peninsula.

The British had erroneously considered the jungle terrain of Malaya impassable, but it was in fact conquered with rapid speed.

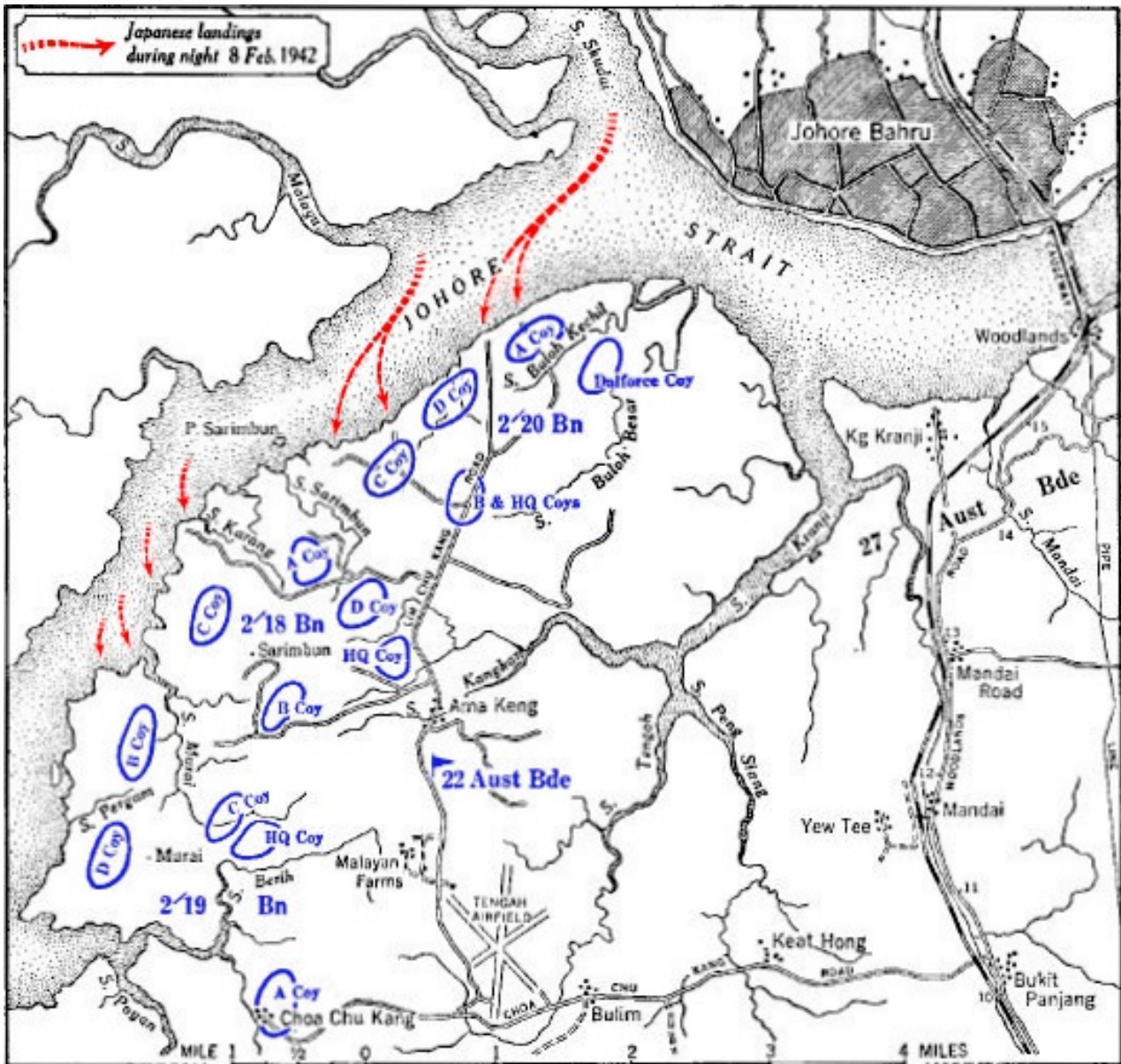
With a significantly increased number of troops at Singapore, including recently arrived Australians, the Allies had a large numerical advantage over the Japanese, although this was not known at the time as Allied command could only estimate the Japanese numbers as they swept all before them.

Singapore was considered so important that Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered his Commander, Percival, to fight to the last man, but this did not occur and troubled the PM for quite some time.

With the aid of excellent intelligence around the location of Allied troops, the Japanese attacked the weakest part of the island defences in the north-west.

They had established a decoy attack to have their opponents believing they were attacking where they'd anticipated (north-east), but then launched their full-scale front in an area with limited protection.

It was not where British command had expected, and the Japanese came up against undermanned and outnumbered Australians who did not have the reinforcements to repel the enemy onslaught.



This map shows the Japanese attack (red) and the Australian positions (blue).

The Japanese established a beachhead on February 8 as the British command had expected a crossing in the north-east and could not reinforce the defenders in time.

Communication and leadership failures beset the Allies and, with few defensive positions or reserves near the beachhead, they could not hold ground.

In this period, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, said *“Percival has over 100,000 men, of whom 33,000 are British and 17,000 Australian. It is doubtful whether the Japanese have as many in the whole Malay Peninsula ... In these circumstances the defenders must greatly outnumber Japanese forces who have crossed the straits, and in a well-contested battle they should destroy them.”*

While Churchill slightly overstated the number of Allied troops, his sentiments were accurate.

However, the Japanese advance continued and by February 15, about a million civilians in the city were crammed into the remaining small area held by Allied Forces, around one per cent of the island.

Japanese aircraft continuously bombed but were almost to the end of their supplies. Knowing this, Japan demanded an unconditional surrender. The British were unaware of the Japanese situation, or that they held such a strong advantage in troop numbers.

In what remains one of the most debated topics in war history today, British command succumbed and surrendered.

The Australians were not spared criticism. Although undermanned with no reinforcements, it was the area occupied largely by Australians where the Japanese broke through and there was a level of desertion from the front line.

Regardless, it is clear command had been outbluffed by the Japanese.

Yamashita later said: *“My attack on Singapore was a bluff—a bluff that worked. I had 30,000 men and was outnumbered more than three to one. I knew that if I had to fight for long for Singapore, I would be beaten. That is why the surrender had to be at once. I was very frightened all the time that the British would discover our numerical weakness and lack of supplies and force me into disastrous street fighting.”*

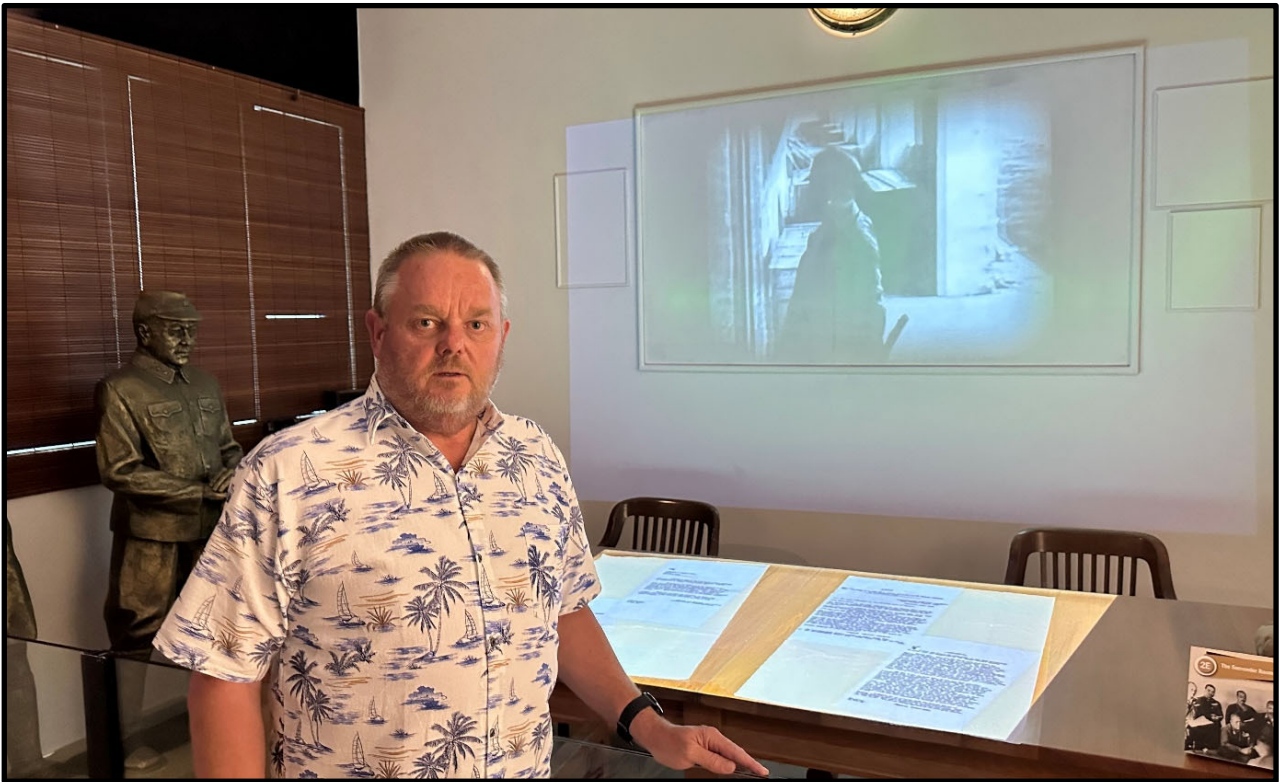
About 80,000 British, Indian, Australian and local troops became POWs, joining the 50,000 taken in Malaya. Churchill called it the worst disaster in British military history.

On my trip, I visited the Ford factory where the British signed the surrender document. This location has been converted into a terrific museum and interpretive centre that tells the story of the fall of Singapore through to liberation in great detail.

One of the key features is the room – still with desk and chairs – where the surrender was signed and a record of the conversation that took place.



Yamashita (seated, left) emphasises his terms of unconditional surrender. Percival sits between his officers, hand to his mouth (right).



The office, desk and chairs where the surrender was signed, remain in place at the Ford Factory, Singapore, today.

On 23 February 1946, Yamashita was hanged at Los Baños, Laguna Prison Camp, 30 miles (48 km) south of Manila, having been found guilty of overseeing war crimes, including massacres and executions.

Following the surrender

Under the terms of the surrender, hostilities ceased and between 15,000 and 20,000 Australian soldiers were captured and in total nearly 80,000 Commonwealth troops.

In the preceding conflict, around 5,000 men were killed or wounded, a majority of whom were Australian, and some the topic of this report. Japanese casualties during the fighting in Singapore amounted to 1,714 killed and 3,378 wounded.

During the 70-day campaign, which included Malaya as well as Singapore, total Commonwealth casualties amounted to 8,708 killed or wounded and 130,000 captured (38,496 United Kingdom, 18,490 Australian of whom 1,789 were killed and 1,306 wounded, 67,340 Indian and 14,382 local volunteer troops), against 9,824 Japanese casualties.

As mentioned, the fall of Singapore astounded Churchill who could not comprehend how 80,000 men could not withstand the far inferior numbers of Japanese.

One evening, months later, when he was sitting in his bathroom enveloped in a towel, he stopped drying himself and gloomily surveyed the floor: 'I cannot get over Singapore', he muttered.

The Japanese occupation of Singapore brought many immediate changes. Firstly, it was renamed Syonan-to, which meant "Light of the South" in Japanese.

Clocks were set to Tokyo time, and schools for both youngsters and adults taught Japanese, with all expected to learn.

These changes were introduced against a backdrop of violence and intimidation with thousands of Chinese massacred and random acts of brutality. It was at this time the horrendous POW life commenced for those captured.

4th Anti-Tank Regiment and the local boys

In moving into the POW period of this report, a little on this Regiment and a personal connection.

When I started work at the Bairnsdale Advertiser in 1984 as a 17-year-old cadet journalist, I was introduced to the Yeates family, owners of the paper and well respected in the area. This included John Yeates.

He never said too much and my recollections of him are doing work in the bindery and compositing, and he was also a printer. However, I have clear recollections of him being kind, gentle, possessing a good sense of humour and witty. He retired after I'd been there a few years.

I found out at some stage he was a POW, but it was never mentioned in conversation – John never spoke about it, even to family.

It was only after his passing, did I become aware of elements of his story and only in recent times, almost 40 years later, was I provided with a few notes he'd written for a family friend that was passed on to his own family after John's death.

There were also others from the electorate and following is a summary of their story.

With the intention of joining the armed services, John undertook a medical in Bairnsdale on June 29, 1940 and then the very next day travelled to Melbourne and enlisted on August 1.

He became a member of the 4th Anti-Tank Regiment and allotted service number VX47375. He was posted to Singapore, embarking on May 25, 1941, and disembarking from "Zealandia" in Singapore on June 9, 1941.

He travelled with and was close to David Potter VX47359, also of Bairnsdale and most likely Cecil Marriage VX40541, of Hillside – all were on "Zealandia". The three were almost certainly involved in the skirmishes in Malaya leading up to the Singapore surrender on January 15 and, on January 16, were all listed as "missing".

The reality is that they were now POWs in Changi, where conditions were horrendous, but it was about to get worse.

On May 15, 1942, the three were part of "A" Force that was being sent to work on the Death Railway. The three local boys were among the first Australians to be sent to the Burma end of the line for work.

Parts of A Force were offloaded at Victoria Point, Mergi and Tavoy for initial jobs (mainly road and airfield works) before then moving on to the railway line.

As stated, this was a period of John's life he rarely spoke about, but this is no surprise due to the scale of mistreatment and death he was exposed to, something no human should have to endure.

The only records were some notes he left with long-time friend John Humphrey, which are as follows, noting the information in brackets has been added to John's notes:

"After the surrender and on regaining my unit, we worked on the docks and our diet quickly changed to nearly rice only. On the 15th of May 1942, we boarded the ship "Tohohasi Maru" and were known as "A Force", under Major Green.

Our first stop was Victoria Point where some of our men were taken ashore, and the rest continued to Tavoy.

We were camped at the airfield and worked there for some time and were then transported to a village named Ye (100 miles north of Tavoy), where we worked constructing a road.

After a couple of months, we returned to Tavoy. Our next move was to Moulmein by boat, and then marched to Tambyuzavat (now spelled Thanbyuzayat), the main camp for POWs (this is 158 miles north of Tavoy and 58 miles north of Ye)

A few days later we marched to our first camp (on the railway) at the 14-kilo peg (this camp was called Thetkan). We slept in huts.

The first task was an embankment, about 4 ft high. We worked in threes, one used a chunkle and a minus shovel, the other two carried the bag.

We had to dig a hole equal to one metre per man per day. This continued until we were finishing at noon. The Japs then decided to increase it to 1 and 1/2 metres and not long after to two metres per man.

Next move was to the 75-kilo camp (this camp was called Meilo) where the work was similar, except for larger cuttings and a few bridges.

Speedo (explained later in this report) started and we worked from daylight to dark, then shift work daylight to dark and dark to daylight.

Life was starting to get harder, not much to eat, received boxes of salted meat and yak which was covered in crawlers but when boiled up tasted good. More men were sick, and the Nips wanted more work done.

We moved to the 105 kilo camp (this camp was called Auganang) and worked until the forming of the line was finished. Then we were sent to a quarry to make ballast for the line.

The work was completed, so they said, and we moved by train to Thailand, to camp Tamarkan. The food improved, more vegetables with rice, and only light work.

We moved to Chunghai (Chungkai) across the river and helped to repair bridges each time they dropped bombs on them. (The area around Tamarkan and Chungkai, near Kanchanaburi, is as far as the trains run from Bangkok currently, the rest of the rail has largely gone back to jungle).

From there by barge to Nakom Paton, a hospital camp, where the worst of the sick were being treated.

No work there. Back to Tamarkan and went to a camp named Kinsayok to do maintenance on the line, hammering spikes and packing ballast around the sleepers (Kinsayok was just north of the area known as Hellfire Pass).

Back to Tamarkan for a while and then by train to Ratburi (Ratchaburi) and marched about 20 kilometres to an airstrip, which we helped to finish.

Only a few light Jap planes landed there, before the first Dakota landed and we had chocolate and bully beef for the first time in 3 and 1/2 years.

We flew back to Singapore in September and sailed home on the "Morton Bay" on the 15th of October 1945".

After the war, John returned to Bairnsdale where he lived the rest of his life, but the locations and timelines indicate he lived through and saw the worst of the worst, where death was daily, tropical ulcers resulted in amputations and grave sickness and malnutrition was the norm.

He was a tall man at six-foot one inch or 185.5cm, but on returning home was 38 kilograms.

While he survived these atrocities, his friend David Potter did not. He was one of the more than 12,000 prisoners of war who died, succumbing to cholera on July 29, 1943 – however the date of his death is not certain.

A message was broadcast by Japanese radio on October 28, 1943 (four months after his death date) from Gunner David Potter to his mother, that read *"Am safe and well but miss good Australian Tucker. John is also safe (a sure reference to John Yeates). Mail and comforts would be welcome. Love to all – David"*.

Regardless of his date of death, which was not recorded until 1945 and could be incorrect, Potter's remains are in the Kanchanaburi cemetery. He was the son of Charles and Louise Potter and is buried in grave 1.H.70. His grave was one of the many Gippslanders I visited.

Cecil Marriage also succumbed on July 2, 1945. He almost made it. He was the son of John and Janet Marriage, of Bairnsdale, and he too is buried at Kanchanaburi cemetery, grave 10.B.6.

Cecil died of Malaria working on the Mergui Road, which was south of the railway and being hastily constructed at the end of the war as a means of retreat for the Japanese army in 1945 as the rail lines were being bombed.

Records show his place of death as 26kms west of Kirikan (Khiri Khan).

The official history of the 4th Anti-Tank Regiment mentions a handful of its members being sent south to Mergui Road and, while Cecil's name does not appear on the 'official list', the place of death on his war records indicates he must have been in that group, or perhaps been in a second transfer.

However, his place and date of death are quite specific and he was later reinterred at Kanchanaburi. There appears only one reason he was in this location, that being the construction of the Mergui Road in the final months of the war.



The graves of David Potter and Cecil Marriage at the Kanchanaburi Cemetery.



Left to right: John Yeates, David Potter and Cecil Marriage.

Changi Prison and Kranji Cemetery

Backtracking a little from the railway – after the surrender. Yeates, Potter and Marriage, like many, initially found themselves at Changi Prison, which was a prison before the war and remains a prison today.

Each cell at Changi was originally built for one prisoner but, due to numbers, were forced to hold a minimum of four. In this small room, one would sleep on the slab that was intended to be the bed, two either side in the small spaces between the slab and the wall, and one right next to the squat toilet in the corner.

At times, up to eight were forced to share a cell when there was simply no room for any more than four at best.

At one stage 100,000 POWs crammed into Changi, over 16 times its original capacity, with many sleeping in the corridors and wherever they could find space.

The POWs were responsible for their own cooking and cleaning, but it was soon apparent the food and medicine shortages would become the major issues.

On my visit to the Changi prison site, there is a terrific display outlining its history and a replica of the Changi Chapel, which was erected by Australians and became a focal point of prison life.



There is a comprehensive display at Changi Museum including a number of the POWs subsequently sharing their stories and memories. Adjacent to the museum, the prison continues to operate today in the same location where our troops were held in the early 1940's.



A replica of the Changi Chapel has been rebuilt at the museum. Many POWs said the chapel became a focal point of the camp where many would reflect and pray. That is was built by those being held in captivity was an additional reason for it to become a place of solace.

Kranji War Cemetery, in the north of Singapore, is close to the area where the Japanese initially attacked and gained foothold.

It was previously a military camp and then, after the Japanese occupation, became a POW camp and a hospital was located adjacent.

Due to the horrendous conditions and mistreatment, those who died at the hospital were buried on the site and, after the war in 1946, it was decided Kranji would be designated as Singapore's War Cemetery. Bodies in war graves at Buona Vista, Changi, and other cemeteries were re-interred at Kranji.

Among those buried here is Oliver John Armstrong VX29137, of Johnsonville / Delegate, in East Gippsland.

He was killed on February 15, 1942 – the day of the surrender, noting the decision to submit was preceded by heavy fighting and significant casualties.

It is understood Armstrong was killed in this period of heavy fighting. If he'd survived another 12 hours, his life would have been spared.

He was the son of William Hamilton Armstrong and Mary Ann Armstrong, of Johnsonville and was 33 at the time of his death.

A photo of Lance Sergeant Armstrong's grave appears later in this report, at the Kranji War Cemetery with John Powell of Sale nearby. He was killed three weeks prior to Armstrong and was the son of Francis and Elizabeth Powell, of Sale.



The grave of Oliver John Armstrong, of Johnsonville / Delegate at Kranji War Cemetery.

Reading the story of Armstrong and then visiting his grave was surreal. I also took the opportunity to visit the graves of others from the wider Gippsland region.

In addition, a number who were killed in action, but never had their bodies recovered, are listed on the Kranji Memorial wall of honour.

This included brothers Frederick (VX55873) and David (VX55871) Dean, of Bairnsdale, and also Joseph Marshall (VX13254) of Bairnsdale.

Frederick was killed on May 15, 1941 in Malaya as the Japanese advanced, David was killed on January 22, also in Malaya as the Japanese pushed towards Singapore, and Joseph on February 11 in the period when the Japanese moved into Singapore.

TH M TV AJ	SLITS W.G. SHEPHERD H.T. SHUTT L.L. SLATER W.R.	CAPTAIN MAHER M.B.	PRIVATE CLIFFORD W.A. CLOHESY J.	O'NEILL R.E. OPIE W.C. SERVED AS ERWIN W.C.	SMITH L. SPOLDING R.J. SPURRELL F.S. STEPHENS H.C. TAAFF F.R.C.
TH SERVED AS AGES G. S.J. W.G.	SMITH A.G. SMITH G.W.J. SMITH J. SORBY T.W. STUBBINGS W.A. SWAIN F.D. TEALE J. THOMSON G.A.	LIEUTENANT BUTT A.W. COOTES R.J.G. RICHARDS J.R. TIBBITTS A.H. WASTELL B.H.	COLVIN G. CONDON J.O. CONOLE M. CRACKNELL H. CROOKE J.A. CRUICKSHANK DAY F.A. H.W.	O'SHEA B.J. PALLARES J.H. PANTON T.R. PARKER E.M. PATERSON R. PERCIVAL PICKERING T.J.A.	RICHARDSON THOMAS W. THOMSON J. WADDINGTON
1	TIPPING L.A. TOIGO R.E. TOMKINSON A.S. TURVEY D.C. WARE E.E. WARNER C.A. WHITE T. WILLIAMS C.G.	SERGEANT CROFT R.E.T. IRVINE A.P. MURRAY R.R. CORPORAL BARKER S.A.	DEAN D.R. DEAN F.V. DEVERELL H.C. DOHERTY H. DRISCOLL L.A. DUNBAR A.J. ENKE A.C. EVANS L.S.E.	POWER C.F.L. POWER J.H. PULLEN R.S. QUICK R.E. RAE M.S. RANDS J.A. RICHARDSON	WAINWRIGHT WALKER T. WEBB G. WEST B. WILLOUGHBY WILSON T.
POULCOCK A. D/21ST BN. AN INFANTRY PRIVATE	WILLIAMS J. WILLIAMS W.V. WONSON J.W.	BRAY H. CLARK W.J. CLARKE R. CLINCH A.W. GORDON L.S. GORDON R.H. HILLAS L.I. MEAGHER D.F.	FARNES V.L. FITT L.J. SERVED AS DIXON R. FLOWER R.H.G. FORRESTER R.G. FOSTER A.C. GAMBLE R.G. GOONAN A.	RICHARDSON L.H. N.R. 2ND/30TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY LIEUTENANT BEALE E.E.	WOODHEAD WORRALL CAVANAU
RATCLIFFE E.M. SHIELDS L.A. STAFFORD E.T.G. STOKES F.A. HS H.A. 6TH BN. N INFANTRY	RICHARDS J.N. STEPHENS N.H. LCE CORPORAL CORR S. DENNETT R.A. DOBSON D.H. FINN E.N.	GRANVILLE S.A. GRASS W.H. GREEN W.C. GUEST F.L. HALSON R.N. HAMILTON N. HANSEN T. HANSON F.B.J.	CLEMENS P.W. WARRANT OFFR. 2 SMYTH F.M. SERGEANT CHRISTOFF G.J. D.C.M.	CEELY K. CHOAT G. COCHRAN COLLETT COOKE I. CROUCH FERGUSON FOSTER	
PRIVATE DIXON L.B. DOYLE J.F. EMMERSON W. FERNANDO G. FORCE A.W. GREAVES V.J.	HUNTER E. KEEBLE W.D. LARPENT S.H. DE H. McDONALD M. PRIVATE ALDERSEA J.	HAWKINS G. HOLDEN J. HOSIE A.A. HOSKIN T.B. JOHNSTON J.I. KELLEY D. KENNEDY D.M. KENNEDY J.	THOMAS L.C.H. LCE SERGEANT NAGLE A.G. CORPORAL ALEXANDER M.A. ENRIGHT A.C.	FRANK GALBRAITH HARRIS HAYNE HENDRICK HOLDE HUDSON	
GUY A.G. HENDERSON P.E. HOY S.J.O. VERSON J.G. JONES W.H. KIELY J.W. AINE C.J. UCAS E.A.	ANDERSON S.R.T. ANNETT R.A.W. ARCHER A.A. BARRY L.G. BEARD A. BENNETT L.C. BENNETTS A.G.	KNIGHT R.J. LAFRANCHI L. LALOR A.G. LAWRIE G.J. LENNOX K.J. LITTLEWOOD A.L. LONDON D.G. McARTHUR G.N.	McGREGOR A.G. SHARP F.C. LCE CORPORAL AUSTIN C. BLACKWOOD L.B. MULLIGAN C.F. PEARCE N.E.	JAMES JOYCE KELLY LAND LUCA McGLINCHY MAW O'HARA	
UCHT N. McGUANE D.A. McLEAN R. McNAMEE H. McNATEIT A.J. McCHOLS F.A. McORMAN A.H. McSTREICH E.W.	BENNETTS K. BOURKE K.H. BOXHALL W.H. BOYLE F.L. BREDIN W.W. BREW P.J. BROOKER A.C. BROWNING A.J.	McDONALD C.J.W. McELROY G.S.P. McGOVERN H.P. McKENZIE C.M. McSWAIN B. MADDEN W. MARSHALL A.C.	PONT W.J. ROBERTS F.L. STARK R. WHITBREAD N.H.C.	PEARCE PHILIP PURVIS RAE RAE	
THECARY L.E. SS L.B. LEY J.A. TH R. LL W.R. MM E.C.	CALLAGHAN F.X. CAMERON J. CAMPBELL W.J. CANT W.T.T. CATTANACH K.A. CLEMENTS W.R.	MARSHALL J. MARTIN H.J. MARTIN J.J. MAUGHAN E.C. MOODY P.A. MOORFOOT R.G.	ALBURY H.R. ALCORN A.C. ALEXANDER R.N.I. BEATTIE R.G. BLAND J.R. CAMERON H.I.J.	SA SA SA SC SM	

The names of the Dean brothers and Joseph Marshall on the wall of honour at Kranji War Cemetery.

The Thai – Burma “Death” Railway

As the Japanese accumulated more POWs, it became evident that to avoid an uprising, it was best to have them spread out across a range of locations. In addition, they also had some military tasks requiring rapid completion, so on two counts it made sense to utilise this POW army of captors.

But why build a railway from Thailand to Burma (now Myanmar)?

Japan was in search of raw materials to support its war effort. It was largely a shortage of minerals and oil that was its reason for commencing the conflict.

The Japanese sought the oil and mineral supplies of Burma, and the obvious mode of transport was by sea, but with the regular loss of merchant shipping, they sought a safe land route.

Despite the mountainous landscape, they pursued a plan to link the railway networks of Thailand and Burma, and the Death Railway would be the result.

The full length of the railway no longer exists, with most of it now overgrown by jungle. It is still in use from Bangkok to Nam Tok, and I travelled from Bangkok to Kanchanaburi on the train, which still largely follows the original Death Railway line.

In early 1942, when the news first came through that they were going to move POWs (to what was to be the Death Railway), the Japanese told a range of stories including that the prisoners were being moved to the Cameron Highlands in Malaysia and to other camps with better conditions.

In May 1942, 3,000 men (A Force) became the first POWs shipped, followed by B Force and right through to L Force

Yeates, Potter and Marriage (mentioned previously in this report), were all part of A Force.

Some were sent to other camps in Japan, Formosa and Borneo, but of course most were sent to work alongside civilian labourers on the Death Railway. Here is a short list of where the “forces” were relocated to:

A Force: Sent to Burma, initially to construct airfields and then the Death Railway

B Force: Sent to Borneo to construct airfields

C Force: Sent to Japan to work in shipyards, factories and mines

D Force: Sent to Thailand to work on the Death Railway

E Force: Sent to Borneo to construct airfields

F Force: Sent to Thailand to work on the Death Railway

G Force: Sent to Japan to work in shipyards, factories and mines

H Force: Sent to Thailand to work on the Death Railway

K Force: Sent to Thailand to provide medical services to Asian labourers on the Death Railway

L Force: Sent to Thailand to provide medical services to Asian labourers on the Death Railway

Men considered unfit for work were left behind at Changi and, although the death toll began to mount, they would have a far better chance of survival than on the railway.

If they thought Changi was bad, the Death Railway was another level. They were forced to work for up to 18 hours a day under brutal punishment, while often suffering a variety of illnesses, having meagre rations and squalid conditions – many dying as a result.

It was not long before disease mounted, but against the odds, the Australians generally managed to maintain a level of morale as many called on their pre-war occupations to assist with existence and survival, including dentists, engineers and gardeners.

Conditions that would be considered serious illnesses in civilian life were commonplace, but rarely kept POWs from being forced to work.

Few, if any, escaped starvation and malnutrition and, when other common afflictions impacted these men, like dysentery, malaria, dengue fever, beri-beri, pellagra and Cholera, it became too much.

The smallest of cuts or skin breaks often became tropical ulcers that quickly ate away flesh and would result in amputations. Doctors tried different treatment methods including making ointments, bandaging with banana leaves, maggots, and even very regular and painful scooping with a spoon.

For Romusha (the non-military civilians and workers from countries it had conquered), it was often worse as they had no leadership or structure to assist in dealing with these conditions.

A total of 44 Australian POW doctors spent time on the railway, the most famous being Sir Edward “Weary” Dunlop. They did their best, but watched patients die through lack of food or medical supplies.

When the Japanese demanded workers, it would often fall to the doctors to choose the sick men who were most fit, noting none should have been working and this would often be fatal. “We played God everyday” said one.

Major AE Saggars later recalled *“the men taken from hospital were lined up. Many would break down and cry, others would vomit, others would defecate from nervousness or illness. Others just sat in the mud, awaiting an order to move and pitifully conserving their strength.”*

The doctors would also have to deal with the victims of Japanese brutality and the regular bashings that took place.

With no supplies, the doctors had to improvise on almost everything and the display at the Railway Museum in Kanchanaburi has some terrific exhibits to highlight this.

Improvisations included creating drips from bottles, tools for amputations and using bamboo for splints, crutches, bed pans and even cannulas!

As the Japanese became more desperate to finish the railway due to pressure from military command above, they demanded increased effort, which was not possible. The POWs referred to this as the “speedo period”, which was in place from April to August 1943.

Ironically, work on Hellfire Pass commenced on ANZAC Day 1943, and took in the speedo period.

Demanding more speed and quicker results, the Japanese and Korean guards would shout the term “speedo” at the workers and hand out more severe beatings to obtain results. It was a time of enormous suffering and death.

In this period, the prisoners and Romusha knew that a small mistake could result in a beating that would take their life, or a rock fall or collapse could be fatal, while disease and malnutrition constantly lurked in a period of greater physical effort being requested. Willpower and survival skills were pushed to the limit in often impossible situations.

All this was occurring in an environment where the POWs and Romusha knew the importance of the railway to Japan, but did not want to contribute to their war effort.

Many reported a constant thought process of trying to sabotage the line, but not risk a beating that could result in death. One of the activities engaged was placing termites from nests on the wooden elements of the bridge.

However, through all this, they knew they could also be potentially prolonging the pain, as they would be required to fix any areas that failed – a significant mental dilemma.

Any POW caught documenting their experience, whether via photo drawing or diary, would be severely punished. Some tried to escape, but none made it and those recaptured were executed as a message to others.

By the time the railway was finished, around 100,000 had lost their lives and when survivors returned to Singapore, the men who had remained there were horrified at their condition, finally realising the horrors of Changi had perhaps been not so bad in comparison. This was despite starvation, illness and many deaths at Changi.

There were 13,000 Australian POWs working on the railway and 2,802 died – 22%.

Of 30,000 POWs from the UK, India, or Crown Colonies, 6,904 or 23% died. Of 18,000 Dutch, 2,702 died (15%). Of 686 United States POWs, 133 died (19%).

In total, there were nearly 62,000 POWs and 12,600 were killed (20%). However, the biggest loss of life was the Romusha. Although hard to gauge, it is believed up to 300,000 were forced to work, with estimates of 50% succumbing.

From visiting the various interpretive centres and reading some of the recollections, it is clear survival on the Death Railway was influenced by a number of factors relating to each individual.

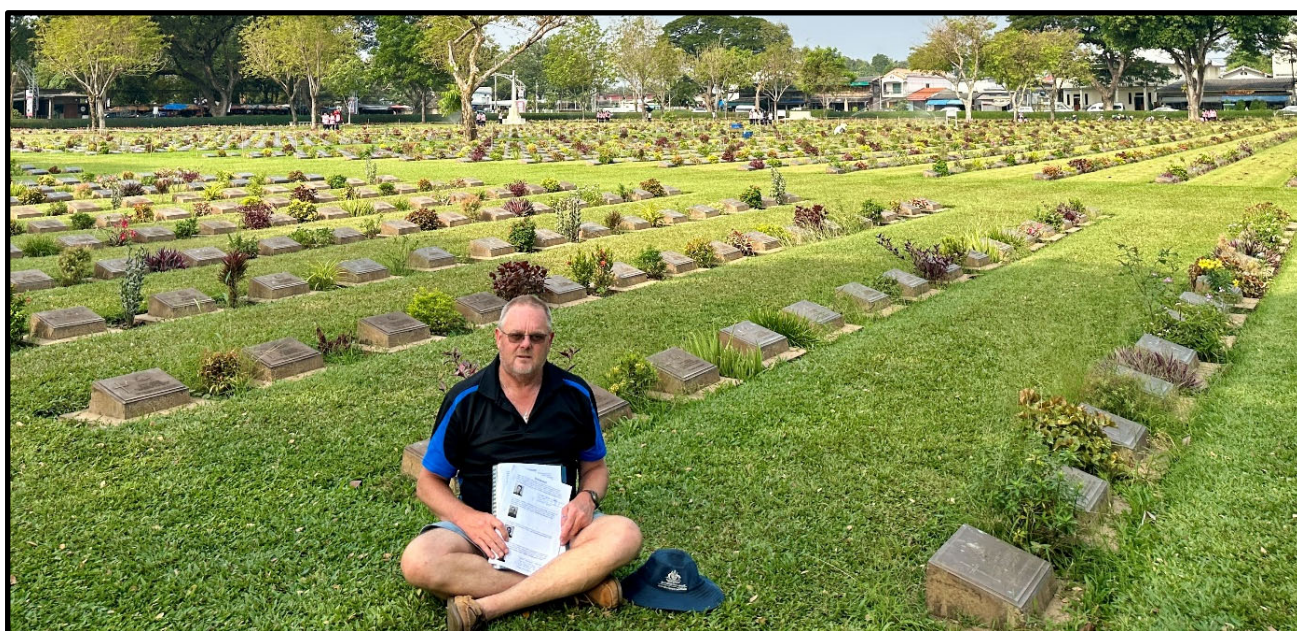
These included physical and mental strength; the effects of having been previously engaged in battle, early captivity or transport to the railway; location of worksite and type of work; conditions in the camps; any punishments dealt by the Japanese or Korean guards; efficiency of the camp’s medical personnel and officers, availability of food and medicines and the advent of disease or illness. It was in many cases a lottery.

Supplies to the men of any kind were problematic from the outset, underpinned by the Japanese belief that their prisoners did not deserve the merit of having good food, but there were also other factors like availability and local conditions. It is clear lack of any reasonable basic diet contributed greatly to the onset of disease.

Previously mentioned in this report are David Potter and Cecil Marriage, two from my electorate who succumbed. Their graves are among many from the Gippsland area at the Kanchanaburi War Cemetery. Some other Gippslanders located in the cemetery are:

- William Harper, 2/29th Battalion, of Ensay. Died 10/8/1943 as a POW in Malaya, aged 41. Buried in collective grave 1.O.43
- James Woodhouse, 8th Division Signals, of Stratford. Died 22/10/43, age 43. Buried in grave 1.L.26
- John Marshall, 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion, of Newry. Died 10/10/1944, age 29. Buried in grave 1.F.33
- James White, 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion, of Briagolong. Died 1/8/45, aged 35. Buried in grave 1.O.47
- Alex Saunders, 2/9th Field Ambulance, of Glengarry. Died 5/12/43, aged 36. Buried in grave 1.B.25
- Neil Douglass, 2/2nd Pioneer battalion, of Sale. Died 12/9/45, aged 24. Buried in grave 1.N.71
- Bill Tuck, 2/3 Machine Gun Battalion, of Rosedale. Died 24/10/43, aged 23. Buried in grave 1.M.75
- James O'Bryan, 8th Div Petrol Company, of Yarram. Died 3/4/43, aged 32. Buried grave 1.D.78
- Cecil Graham, 4th Res MT Company, of Traralgon. Died 5/1/44, aged 25. Buried grave 1.C.71
- Lionel Gapes, 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion, of Warragul. Died 6/4/44, aged 26. Buried grave 1.D.75

Kanchanaburi War Cemetery is meticulously maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and contains the graves of a high number of Victorians. A short distance away is the Chungkai Cemetery, in which the British and Dutch soldiers lay.



Searching and locating the graves of East Gippslanders at Kanchanaburi War Cemetery.



Chungkai War Cemetery holds the graves of Dutch and English veterans who died on the Railway and is on the site of the former POW camp.



Grave of William Harper, of Ensay.



Grave of John Marshall, of Newry.



Grave of James Woodhouse, of Stratford.



Grave of James White, of Briagolong.



Grave of James O'Bryan, of Yarram.



Grave of Alex Saunders, of Glengarry.



Grave of Cecil Graham, of Traralgon.



Grave of Lionel Gapes, of Warragul.

Adjacent to the Kanchanaburi Cemetery is the Death Railway Museum, which houses extraordinary displays and information on the railway – it is a must see.

Also, within Kanchanaburi township is what is known as the “Bridge over the River Kwai” made famous from the film of that name. All who were there say the movie is a major misrepresentation of the truth.

Regardless, it is an important structure put together by POWs. It was a bridge that pre-existed in Java, was dismantled, transported and reconstructed over the Khwae Yai River. It is an incredibly popular tourist attraction and patrons can still take the train across the bridge.

It was famously blown up in the latter stages of the war and the Japanese had lined up POWs on the bridge as a deterrent, but it had to be taken out and many were killed by what could be termed as ‘friendly fire’. Those who witnessed it said the water turned red.



A surreal feeling walking over the “Bridge over the River Kwai”.



An hour north of Kanchanaburi is Hellfire Pass, known also as Konyu Cutting. It is now infamous for its heavy loss of life and was constructed in the “speedo” period (previously explained).

Apart from the loss of life from illness and malnutrition, 69 men were beaten to death in this area in the six weeks it took to build the cutting. Trains no longer run through Hellfire Pass as the line stops at Nam Tok station just south.

The Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum, and the preservation of the Hellfire Pass itself, had its origins in 1983 when former POW Tom Morris toured the area in Thailand and convinced the Australian Government that portions of the Thai-Burma Death Railway should be preserved as historical sites.

As a result, we now have an incredible interpretive centre packed with displays and information and the opportunity to take the short walk to Hellfire Pass itself and further if you wish. Headphones are supplied to hear the history and stories of those who served and returned.

There are other major sites around Kanchanaburi, including the sites of former POW camps, one where a market now operates, and the Jeath War Museum has a number of relics from not only WWII, but other conflicts.

Many more Victorians and East Gippslanders rest on the Burma (Myanmar) side at Thanbyuzayat Cemetery. They are the ones who succumbed on the northern end of the railway and that may, in time, be part of another journey.

After the railway was completed, the POWs still had almost two years to survive before liberation. During this time, most were moved to hospital and relocation camps where they could be available for maintenance crews or were sent to Japan to alleviate the manpower shortage there.

Sadly, some were killed when the Atom bombs were dropped on Japan.

At the end of World War II, 111 Japanese military officials were tried for war crimes for their brutality during the construction of the railway. Thirty-two were sentenced to death.

Japanese surrender

After the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Emperor Hirohito formally announced Japan’s unconditional surrender on August 15, 1945.

In Singapore, Japanese troops reluctantly complied with the order, and some refused to comply initially. Others could not accept the surrender and committed ritual suicide.

In Burma and Thailand, the Death Railway had been completed some time before, with many of the surviving POWs being moved on to other locations.

When the British returned to Singapore on September 5, they were greeted with jubilation and on the 12th, the official surrender ceremony took place in a building that is now part of the national gallery. Many of the Death Railway survivors were back in Singapore by this time.

The individuals involved were General Seishiro Itagaki, who surrendered to Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten.

The remaining Japanese were imprisoned as POWs just as the Allies had been.

With liberation, the thoughts of many prisoners immediately focussed on returning home, while some who had lived in Malaya previously, returned there. Most stayed in their camp areas until travel arrangements could be made.

This was a massive logistical effort as in all, there were around 100,000 prisoners across 250 odd camps.

Three months later the war crimes investigation commenced. After the hearings, seven Japanese officers from Singapore were found guilty (for predominantly the massacre of Chinese) and two received the death penalty, the others life sentences.

The fact so relatively few were charged and held accountable angered many.

Additional sites visited

In addition to the sites mentioned in the above report, the trip allowed visits to a range of additional sites in some way related to the war history of the countries involved.

Thailand

In Thailand, this included the railway museum in Bangkok where restored trains from the Thai-Burma Railway can be viewed.

The National Memorial provides a comprehensive history of Thailand (Siam's) war time involvement and, while it includes a significant section on WWII, it covers back to the ancient conflicts. It hosts both internal and open-air displays.

Victory Monument, erected in 1941, commemorates victory in the Thai Franco War and has since become a location for democracy protests.

There is also the Monument to the Thai expeditionary force that fought in the European battlefields during WWI against Germany.

While mentioned briefly previously, the train from Thon Buri to Kanchanaburi passes through Ban Pong and from there the stretch to Kanchanaburi follows the path of the Death Railway and is a great way to travel from Bangkok.

On reaching Kanchanaburi, both the Death Railway Museum opposite the cemetery, and the Hellfire Pass Interpretive Centre, are world class presentations.

Visitors could easily spend the best part of a day in both, and the former contains a service where you can look up and have printed out the details of any prisoner of war connections.

Features of these locations are recorded interviews with POWs, artefacts from the railway itself, dioramas, various exhibits and what are confronting but necessary photographs.

It remains a point of contention that Australians must travel to this site to obtain such a detailed insight into the war history of these heroes and what they endured.

They are stories that should be told within our own country and state and used to educate the youth of today. While the National War Memorial in Canberra fulfills this purpose, it is

not accessible to many and there remains a strong rationale for state-based memorials and museums that tell the stories of these men from each jurisdiction within this country.

Singapore

In addition to the display dedicated to involvement in WWII, the National Museum of Singapore also has a significant amount of floorspace dedicated to other conflicts, as well as a host of other attractions.

The Cenotaph was erected in 1922 in memory of the 124 British soldiers born in, or residents of Singapore who gave their lives in WWI.

An extension with a second dedication was added in remembrance of those who died in WWII. It is now recognised as commemorating the fallen from all conflicts.

Just a short stroll away is War Memorial Park, which is dedicated to the 50,000 civilians and servicemen who were killed in WWII.

It was unveiled by former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew on 15 February 1967 - the day that Singapore fell to Japanese forces 25 years before.

It was constructed after mass graves of civilian war victims were found in several locations around Singapore in 1962. More than 40 of these mass graves came from what is known as the Valley of Death.

The Civilian War Memorial is built over a burial chamber that contains these exhumed remains from the mass graves.

Although mentioned previously in this report, the presentation of the events of 1942 in the Ford Factory Museum are exceptionally detailed and easy to understand as the chain of events is laid out chronologically.

Complemented by video footage and photographs, it is a must see.

Summary

This report touches on the key elements of the Singapore surrender, Death Railway and the POWs more generally, but provides only a small snapshot of the basic background, and just a couple of the thousands of stories of bravery against the odds.

It is hoped that it may become the stimulus for more of our national war history, including that of Victorians, to be taught in the education system. It will be forwarded on to my local schools for their consideration.

It is my hope, like some have already done with Kokoda veterans from our area, that they adopt some of these local men and their experiences, as projects.

However, from a wider perspective, it is apparent that while we have the annual national ceremonies to commemorate those who served, there is little in Victoria to tell the full stories of all those who have served in conflicts.

The Shrine, as mentioned earlier, has a small rotating display and there is support for an expanded Vietnam Veterans' Museum on Phillip Island.

Given the popularity of the National War Memorial in Canberra, there is scope for a stand-alone facility in this State to honour the involvement of Victoria in our war history.

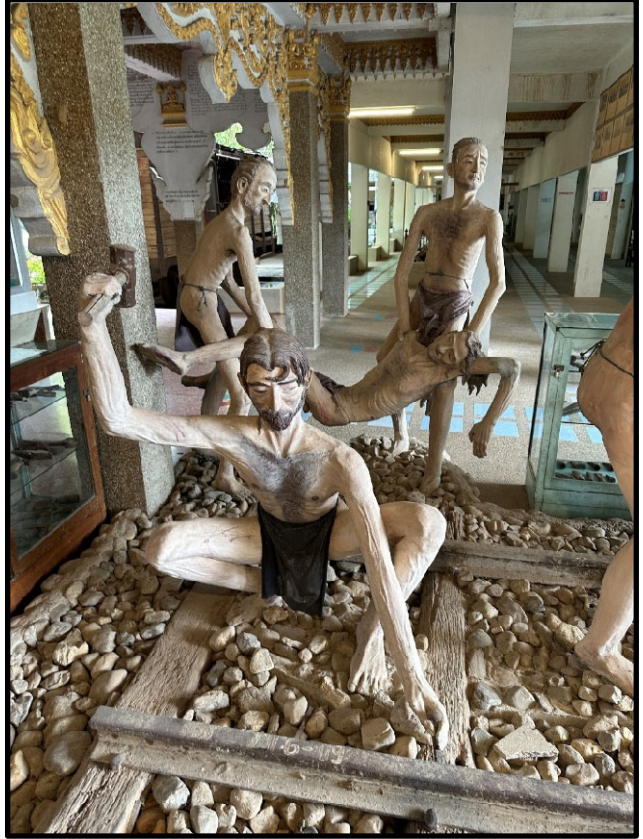
Based on some of the interpretive centres visited in Singapore and Thailand and their popularity with Australians on foreign shores, I have no doubt it would be a viable proposition from a tourism and visitation perspective.



LEFT: On the train from Thon Buri to Kanchanaburi. From the time the current train hits Ban Pong (between Bangkok and Kanchanaburi) to its end point at Nam Tok (north of Kanchanaburi), it follows much of the original Death Railway line.

BELOW: A carriage used for rock removal at Hellfire Pass remains in place today for visitors to the area. It is one of many artefacts on display in an area attached to the Hellfire Pass Interpretive Centre.





Above and below: Some of the wartime exhibits and re-creations at the Jeath War Museum in Kanchanaburi.

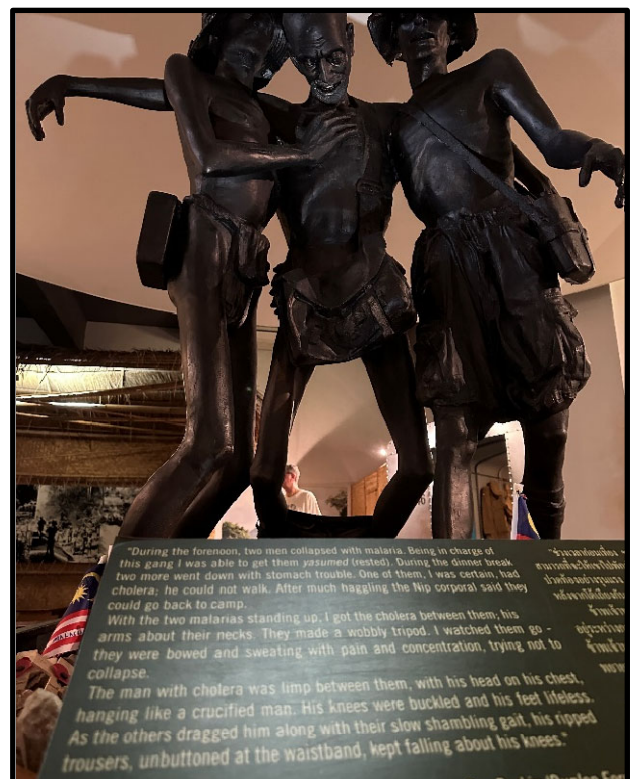




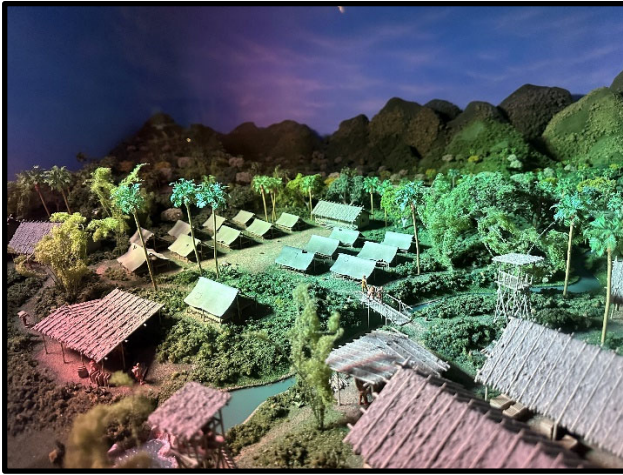
A memorial service is held annually at the War Memorial Park, Singapore.



The grave of Sale's John Powell in Kranji War Cemetery.



LEFT: Spikes from the areas of the different camps on the Death Railway and RIGHT: A statue depicting an event when two men with malaria dragged a man, who had collapsed with cholera, back to camp, pants down and feet dragging. Both displays are in the Death Railway Museum.



LEFT: A diorama in the Death Railway Museum of a typical POW camp and RIGHT: A WWII tank in the grounds of the Thailand National Memorial.



LEFT: The grounds of the Thailand National Memorial host a range of internal and external displays and RIGHT: The Thai Railway Museum, in Bangkok, hosts a display of trains from the Burma Railway era.



Inside the Thailand National Memorial, which hosts a range of displays, and I was pleased to be shown around by the Curator.

Addendum to main report

The visit to Singapore and Thailand also included discussion with the Australian High Commission in Singapore and the Australian Embassy in Thailand.

Topics discussed included the level of war-related tourism from Australia, as well as trade and international relationships.

The Covid period decimated international travel, but since that time, both jurisdictions predictably reported increasing visitations. Here is a short precis of those meetings.

Singapore

I was delighted to be hosted by the Australian High Commission and His Excellency Allaster Cox, who outlined a great period of change for Singapore.

The country has a target of zero emissions by 2050, but there was commentary in the local media at the time raising doubts as to whether this was achievable.

His Excellency outlined that Singapore is a significant gas importer from Australia and refines a high percentage of our crude oil.

He explained Singapore had a target of producing 30 per cent of its own food, and aquaculture would play a considerable part in achieving this. He outlined the potential for sharing of expertise with Australian producers.



With His Excellency, Allaster Cox, Australian High Commissioner at Australian High Commission, Singapore.

Discussions took in the strong military ties between the two countries across the three services and, while the United States had what was considered the strongest military relationship, interactions with Australia were also solid.

His Excellency also outlined the major tourism expansion plans for Singapore, which included increasing airport capacity at Changi from 90 million visitors per year to 160 million per year.

Following this meeting, I was delighted to be accompanied by Warrant Officer, Peter Brine, from the High Commission, on a visit to Kranji War Cemetery.

WO Brine was very knowledgeable in this area, having conducted a number of tours for Australian visitors.

Thailand

Unfortunately, the visit to Thailand corresponded with Her Excellency Ms Angela Macdonald, Australian Ambassador to Thailand, being in Australia.

However, we were delighted to be hosted at the Embassy by Group Captain, Ritchie Cunningham, Australian Defence Attaché to Thailand.



With Group Captain, Ritchie Cunningham, Australian Defence Attaché to the Kingdom of Thailand at the Australian Embassy, Thailand.

Group Captain Cunningham was joined by members of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in providing a very detailed presentation on our arrival.

This outlined some of the key industry relationships between the two countries, with car manufacturing being at the top of the list of imports into Australia from Thailand. Agriculture and education were also key sectors.

The impacts of Covid were outlined, with many small businesses being forced to close due to the tourism industry being decimated and the economic impacts more generally.

Whilst tourism has returned to 80 percent of pre-Covid levels, the economic recovery will continue for some time.

Group Captain Cunningham explained the military ties between the two countries remain strong and provided detail on many of the joint operations that have taken place in recent years.

Like Singapore, it was explained that the strongest ties sit with the United States, but joint operations were also held with China in an effort to remain neutral.

Other discussions included the relative volatility of government.



This graphic outlines the rapid Japanese advance through the South-Pacific that caught many Allied outposts by surprise.

ACCOMMODATION (AUD)

Monday, January 22 | Tuesday, January 23 | Wednesday, January 24, 2024

The Quarter Hualamphong by UHG

23/34-35 Traimit Road, Taladnoy, Bangkok, Thailand \$ 718.46

Thursday, January 25 | Friday, January 26 | Saturday, January 27, 2024

Good Times Resort - SHA Extra Plus

265/5 Maenam Kwai Road, Tha Makham, A. Muang Kanchanaburi City,

Thailand \$ 596.55

(Claim will be for half of \$596.55)

Sunday, January 28 | Monday, January 29, 2024

Bliston Suwan Park View

9 Soi Tonson Ploenchit Road, Lumpini Pathumwan, Pathumwan,

Bangkok, Thailand \$ 494.64

Tuesday, January 30, 2024

Robertson Quay Hotel

15 Merbau Road, Singapore \$ 638.01

Wednesday, January 31 | Thursday, February 1, 2024

Park Royal on Beach Road, Singapore

Beach Road, Singapore \$2,547.19

(Claim will be for half of \$2,547.19)

COMMERCIAL TRANSPORT (AUD)

Monday, January 22

Taxi – airport to accommodation \$ 93.20

Tuesday, January 23

Taxi – accommodation to Thailand National Memorial and Museum \$ 84.73

Wednesday, January 24

Taxi - accommodation to National Museum Bangkok and Thai Railway Museum \$ 63.55

Taxi – Kanchanaburi to Kanchanaburi War Cemetery and Chungkai War Cemetery \$ 21.18

Saturday, January 27

Good Times Travel - taxi to Erawan and Hellfire Pass \$ 102.58

Sunday, January 28

Taxi – Kanchanaburi to Bangkok \$ 101.68

Tuesday, January 30

Taxi – accommodation (Bliston) to airport \$ 42.36

Wednesday, January 31

Grab – taxi – Changi Museum to accommodation \$ 26.59

Comfort Transport – taxi to Changi Prison \$ 30.57

Comfort Transport – taxi to War Museum \$ 25.84

Thursday, February 1

Comfort City Cab – taxi to Former Ford Factory \$ 17.10

Friday, February 2

Maxi Cab Singapore – taxi to airport \$ 95.33

This trip was completed for both electorate and Shadow Ministry purposes/business.



Erawan Falls, one of the magnificent natural attractions around the Kanchanaburi region.