



# HELM



## Heritage of East Lake Macquarie

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APR-MAY

### SINGAPORE AND BEYOND

2022



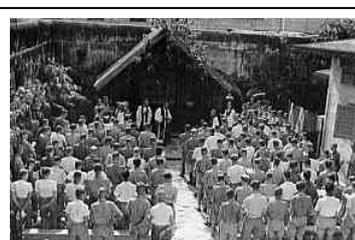
1942. Bombing of Singapore; rescuing injured; partially reconstructed causeway; Japanese soldiers. *whatsup.sg*

In 1939 war broke out in Europe, and Australia again raised volunteer forces to support the British Empire. However, from the outset, Australia was concerned about Japan's ambitions in our area, and soldiers were sent to Malaya in February 1941, to reinforce protection of Britain's largest naval base in the area - Singapore. After a surprise attack on Pearl Harbour, aimed at decreasing American strength in the Pacific; Japan turned its attention to its prime goal of establishing an Asian-Pacific empire. Landing troops on the northern coast of Malaya - 8<sup>th</sup> Dec, 1941, they rapidly advanced towards Singapore; and by the end of January 42, all Empire forces were withdrawn to Singapore island. British commanders misjudged the direction of attack as coming from the NE and S; valuable reinforcements were held back until too late. Singapore fell on February 15, 1942.

After the surrender, many Prisoners of War were sent to Changi. Interests had to be created as a diversion from boredom and poor conditions. A small chapel was built out of anything they could find to keep them occupied; minds off empty stomachs; create a place of solace. After the war the Changi Chapel was shipped to Australia in 1947 to be reconstructed as a memorial. It was rediscovered in a crate in 1987. Most of it was there - bar some posts and roof tiles. Photos assisted rebuilding. The restored Chapel was opened as a Memorial in 1998, at Duntroon Military College. An exact replica was built outside the walls of Changi Prison.



80 years ago 1  
2/10<sup>th</sup> regiment 2  
James C Moore 3-4



Thank you to Pat Conroy and staff, kindly supporting our community; and encouraging the preservation and sharing of our heritage.

## 2/10TH FIELD REGIMENT

Queensland's 2/10<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment was formed at Redbank Army Staging Camp, near Ipswich. Men from across Queensland joined the artillery regiment. From October to December 1940, the regiment conducted field manoeuvres and trained with 18-pounder guns left over from WWI. After being given leave in January 1941, the 2/10<sup>th</sup> began moving from the camp to South Brisbane railway station, to travel to Sydney by train.

After arriving in Circular Quay the troops boarded the Queen Mary which had been converted from a passenger ship to a troop ship. She had been selected due to her size and speed. Nicknamed the "Grey Ghost", her distinct Cunard colours of white, black and red, now replaced by the Royal Navy's "Light Sea Gray" camouflage colour. They sailed to Freemantle and joined a convoy, taking troops to Malaya and Singapore.

The 2/10<sup>th</sup> were disembarked at Malacca, Johore, c.250km north-west of Singapore. Here they were housed in two schools. They carried out manoeuvres at Mersing on the East coast, and were finally re-equipped with 25-pounders. They were training there when Japan entered WWII by invading Malaya; and went into action on January 21, becoming caught up in the disastrous Malaya-Singapore campaign of early 1942. By the end of the month they were withdrawn to Singapore – one gun at a time because of enemy air activity; then the causeway to the island was demolished. They were positioned to defend the North-west of the island and the causeway area to the north.

Japan's main assault on the island began on February 8, after breaking through the defences on the mainland. Even though 30 sampans carrying enemy troops were sunk, this did not deter the Japanese. Commonwealth troops were withdrawn to create a defensive perimeter around the city of Singapore by February 12. The 2/10<sup>th</sup> remained in action at Bukit Timah village; the next day moving to Tanglin golf course, where they came under heavy attack. They ceased firing on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1942 and surrendered the next day.

Most of the men were captured and became Japan's prisoners of war, sent to Changi POW camp. Conditions were poor and crowded. Beds were infested with bugs; lice, rashes, malnutrition and hunger haunted the men. From there, members of the 2/10<sup>th</sup> were allocated to external work parties around Singapore and Malaya at first, but later were sent to camps along the infamous Thailand-Burma Railway; Japan and Sumatra. Of the regiment's 834 POWs, 270 died. Liberation for the remaining survivors came in late August 1945; and they began to return to Australia soon after.

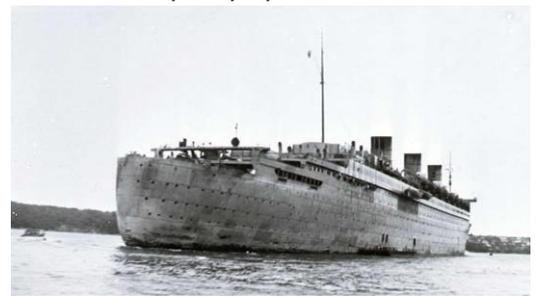
*Sources: AWM, ANMM, Picture Ipswich, State Library Victoria.*



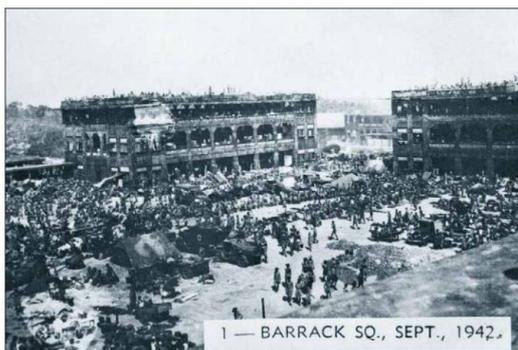
Redbank Army Camp.



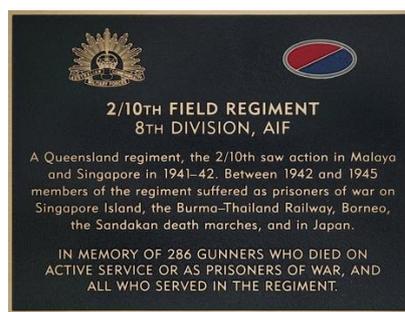
Brisbane to Sydney by train.



Queen Mary, Sydney Harbour, 1941



1 — BARRACK SQ., SEPT., 1942.



Above: 1. Selarang Barracks, Changi, 1942. 2. Memorial Plaque. 3. Welcoming POWs home, Sydney, 1945.

## JAMES CHRISTOPHER MOORE (Gunner QX 17434; b.1915 – d.1989)

Many locals will remember Jim. He lived in Swansea and Blacksmiths, 1964-1989; a member of Swansea RSL.

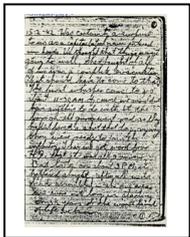


The Australian War Memorial holds: *"Diary, photographs, letters and letter-cards relating to Gunner Moore's experiences as a prisoner of the Japanese. Describes the capitulation, internment in Changi, work on the railway in Thailand at Tarsao, Hintock and other places. In 1944 Moore was transported to Japan where he worked at docks and in coalmines. Covers his evacuation back to Australia. Includes a letter from POW camp commander in Japan."* They tell his wartime story. Jim's story is kindly shared by his sister, Zita Paul.

Jim's grandparents emigrated from Ireland to Townsville, the place where his father, Patrick, and Jim were born. After his wife died, Patrick and his family moved to Cessnock, here he remarried. Jim worked for a time in the mine at Abermain #2, like his father. After suffering an injury, he gravitated back to Qld, working in a Brisbane hotel with relatives. Like many young men, Jim enlisted at Kelvin Grove, north of Brisbane, on July 29, 1940. Assigned as a gunner, to 2/10<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment, Jim was posted to Redbank Army Camp for training. His journey took him to Sydney, boarding the Queen Mary on February 2, 1941, bound for Malaya; and the defence of Singapore.



His diary, written on a very small notepad, begins on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1942, with capitulation to the Japanese – something that surprised his regiment, and had never entered their heads. They had realised that things weren't going too well but were expecting an evacuation. Their first thought that it was a rumour was dispelled by 3pm; *".....we were not long in starting on 3½ years of the worst kind of life I've known. 17-2-42 we all marched to Changi into the barracks of the peace time army. Our stay there was short enough and just as well as our meals were very poor consisting of rice only and very little of that and no cigarettes....."*



After 2 months, Jim and a group of POWs were happy to go as a working party to build a shrine at Bukit Timah, a village they had fired on. They could secretly scrounge for extra food in native gardens as the daily ration was rice and ½ a cup of tinned milk. They brought back green pineapples which they cooked in petroleum jelly and ate green bananas. After about 7 months, there was more work to be done in Singapore; and they were taken back to Changi. A worship ceremony opened the Shrine in 1943 to commemorate the anniversary of the fall of Singapore. 16-3-43. The next call was for a working party to Thailand. *"... little knowing the job they had in store for us ..."* After travelling by train, the last leg of the journey for 500 men was on trucks to a jungle camp at Tarsao. Then after a couple of hours march, they had to make a new camp on the river's edge, calling it "Pebbly Beach".

PARK, STAIRWAY TO SHRINE, 1943  
Destroyed by Japan before surrender to prevent "desecration".



*"...1-4-43 we went to do our first days work on the Rly. As for it being April fools day, we were certainly the fools...."* The first job was to clear bamboo clumps in the Thai jungle – *"Our walk to the job was just as hard as the work as we were ploughing through mud ankle deep all the way"*. After 8 days they travelled by foot to "Ponja Show" – no other means of transport in the jungle. The work was very hard, the treatment harsh, the food was not enough. The boys started to get sick and decline. Jim was relatively lucky. As he had no boots, he worked in the kitchen and carted wood. Moving on again to "Kanu 3", hopes for better conditions were soon dashed – they were worse. This section, of the Burma-Thailand railway which stretched for some 25km, created the notorious railway cutting known as "Hellfire Pass". It was built

with little more than basic hand tools, with the POWs working 16 to 17 hours a day. At night they worked under light from oil lamps or bamboo fires. The cutting was in 2 sections: the first c.450m long, 7m deep; the second c.75m long, 25m deep. Equipment: 8lb hammers, steel tap drills, explosives, pinch bars, picks, shovels. Most of the waste rock was removed by hand, using cane baskets and rice sacks slung on two poles.



9-8-43 Jim finished work due to illness and was evacuated to Tarsao hospital with malaria. On Anzac Day 1944 he left Tarsao destined for Japan. This proved to be a life-threatening journey. "...1-7-44 Boarded boat for Japan. 4-7-44 Sailed (450 men in hold 1300sq. Ft. floor space)..." on the "Rashin Maru". Heading for Manilla they encountered sub attacks, followed by a terrific storm before they reached Taiwan, continuing by train to Fukuoka No 2 camp. Dock work there was followed by work in a coal mine at Nakama camp, about 30 miles from Nagasaki. The miners worked day and night shifts. They were there when the second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, 9/8/45. A rumour started to circulate that the war was over, and it was officially confirmed 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1945. At this stage Jim weighed only 52 kg.

POW camp 21, coal mine, Nakama.



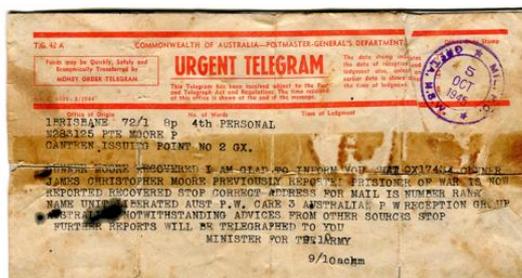
Soon food drops were being made by planes. After about a month they were hit by a tornado and most of their huts were blown in. A train took them to Nagasaki where they had a proper de-lousing, got fully rigged and saw their first movie for 4 years - "it was really good". The drama, however, was not over yet. Jim's hop to Manilla did not happen. The plane crashed 3 feet off the ground and 5 of the 17 personnel died. Their next attempt to leave was by boat, which had to return because something went wrong. They did not manage to leave Okinawa until 3<sup>rd</sup> of October. In Manilla they received regular army rations, vaccines and other needles.

"10-10-45, Went on board aircraft carrier "Slinger" on the last stage of our journey home...." [Right: Photo of the "Slinger" in Sydney, November 1945. The ship's name and badge were inspired by a passage from the Bible about David, slinging a stone which led to the downfall of his adversary.]



"25-10-45 Arrived in Sydney, stayed in Sydney for a week and got a rail pass to Cessnock then to Swansea...."

On the home front, communication was rather fractured. Jim's father, Patrick, also enlisted in the army, and worked in the canteen at Greta Army Camp. Listed as the next of kin, he received 2 telegrams about Jim, firstly advising on 6 Sep 43, that Gunner Moore, previously been reported missing, was now located as a prisoner of war; the second dated 5 Oct 1945, to advise that Jim was finally "recovered". During his time as a POW, a standard Japanese letter card sent was sent to Patrick, addressed to Wills St, Swansea. POWs were only allowed to write their location, and cross out statements that did not apply. The alternatives to choose from were: My health is excellent/ I am ill in hospital; I am working for pay/ I am not working. There was no opportunity to describe the true situation, or to send any other messages.



Jim returned still carrying his St Christopher medal, a symbol of safe travel and protection. His welcome back was celebrated by a dinner/dance at Cessnock; the issue of a returned POW transport pass; marriage in 1964.

