

Chapter 9

Second World War

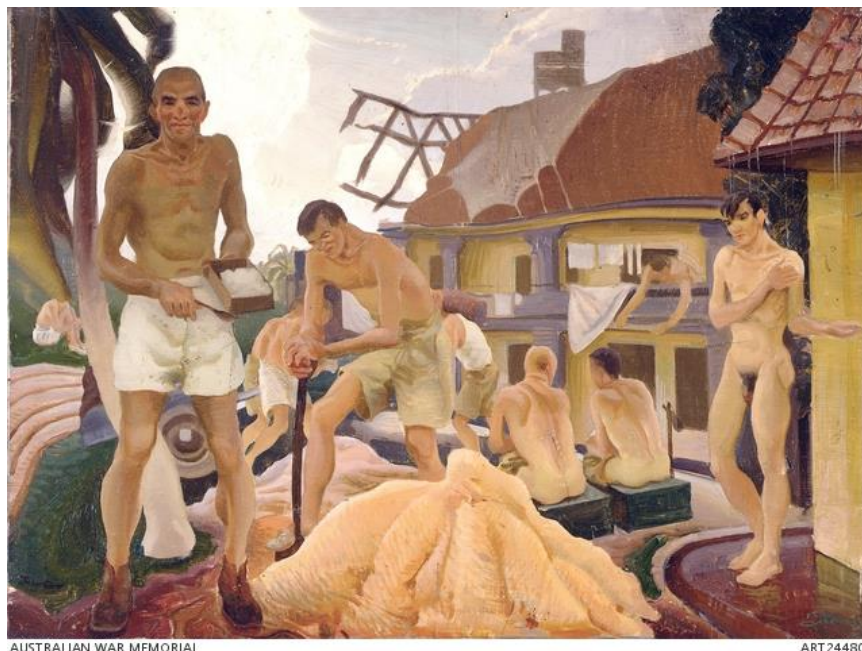
Prisoners of War - Japan

*Flowers are symbols of beauty sublime
Moments of love pressed in pages of time.
The daisy however so simple and pure
Reminds us of hardships men had to endure.
It's statement is merely that "daisies" won't tell,
Neither did the soldiers who lived through the hell.
Name, rank and number was all they would give,
In silence they'd suffer, in anguish they'd live.
Month after month turned to year after year
Of bitter imprisonment of pain and fear.
And when it was over soldiers came home to stay,
People took it for granted that they were okay.
Now they were safe and their wounds could be tended
But the pain in their souls can never be mended.
Memories of horrors that torment the mind
Leave scars on a man of a different kind.
How quickly forgotten are prisoners of war,
Once peace is achieved no one cares anymore.
Please remember the daisy and think of the men
who suffer today for what happened back then.*

Dedicated to her father, John M. Prochak, and all POWs
Cathy Evanovitz

There were many CRB staff members who were prisoners of war of the Japanese. When I first started at the CRB in the early '60s, Frank Jackson worked in an office fairly close to me. Occasionally, Ian (Paddy) O'Donnell, who was the Chairman at the time, would appear out of the blue to see Frank – a Pipe Testing Officer. Together, they entered the specifications office and closed the door behind them for half an hour. Someone explained to me that they were both prisoners of the Japanese in Changi.

It is impossible for anyone who didn't experience the horror of the Japanese POW camps to fully appreciate the bond that developed between men who experienced this sort of Hell and that bond extended well beyond their time in camp. I came to realise that Paddy was providing support to Frank.



Painting by Murray Griffin in 1942 entitled 'Changi Prison Camp, early days'.

Over 22,000 Australian men and women became prisoners of war of the Japanese. Most were Army personnel - about 21,000. There were about 350 RAN men and about 370 RAAF aircrew. There were also 40 nurses and hundreds of Australian civilians.



Troops de-bugging their beds, Changi, by Murray Griffin, 1942–43: Lice, rashes, 'happy feet' resulting from malnutrition, hunger and trips to the bore-hole latrines constantly disrupted sleep.

The Army prisoners were largely from the 8th Division captured at the fall of Singapore. Australian troops were also captured on Java, Timor, Ambon and New Britain. Prisoners of war were formed into work parties to provide forced labour for the Japanese army. Throughout the war, Changi in Singapore was the main camp from which working parties were sent to other destinations and through which prisoners of war captured in other areas were staged.

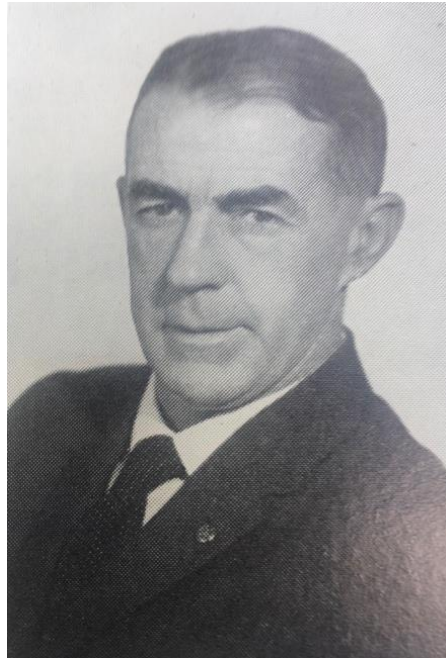
Australian prisoners of war were sent from Singapore to Burma, Thailand, Japan, Borneo, Manchuria, Indochina, Formosa and Korea.

According to the Australian War Memorial, of the 22,376 Australian prisoners of war captured by the Japanese, 8,031 died while in captivity. The Japanese indifference and brutality to their captives was palpable and after the end of the war, War Crimes Trials were held to investigate reports of atrocities, massacres and other causes of death.

These are some of the stories of the men of the CRB who survived these horrors. Because of his special place in CRB history I have mentioned Ian O'Donnell first and thereafter, they are in alphabetical order.

Lieutenant Colonel Ian (Paddy) John O'Donnell OBE, VX43938

Ian was always affectionately referred to as 'Paddy' and I will continue this tradition.



Paddy O'Donnell – 1962.

Paddy had an illustrious career at the CRB. He was throughout his career, Chief Bridge Engineer, Assistant Chief Engineer, Chief Engineer and Chairman of the Board (from 1963 to 1971). He was born in Myrtleford in 1905 and he married Irene Munro in 1931.

Paddy joined the CRB in 1927. He was a diminutive man. When he was Chairman of the Board he invited the Minister for Roads at the time, Sir Thomas Maltby, to open a conference. Maltby made a remark about Paddy to one of the CRB officers, "There is not much of him, but what there is, is all above the neck". It showed the regard, even affection, he had for Paddy.



Ian O'Donnell – from the CRB staff photograph 1930.

Amazingly, I could not find a record of Paddy in the National Archives apart from the single item shown below. It is a Japanese internment card for prisoners of war. As you can see, it is printed in Japanese but filled out in English. It records details of the prisoner and was provided to the International Red Cross so that families at home could be informed of the incarceration of loved ones. I was impressed by the accuracy of the English but I was told at the Australian War memorial, that a prisoner fluent in English was usually chosen to fill them out.

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善通寺 18. 8. 3. 善本 924 煉修II支502 廣工 善本 654

收容所 Camp	善通寺 昭和三十七年八月三日	番 號 No.	臺 III 537
姓 名 Name	O'Donnell, Ian John オドネール イアン	生-年月日 Date of Birth	1905. 5. 6
國 籍 Nationality	澳	所屬部隊 Unit	No. VX 43938 H.Q. Royal Australian Engineers 8th Aust. Division
階級身分 Rank	Lieut. Colonel (C.R.E.) 陸軍中佐 (工兵隊長)	捕獲年月日 Date of Capture	昭和17年 月 日
捕獲場所 Place of Capture	昭南島	父ノ名 Father's Name	Sydney
父ノ名 Father's Name	Sydney	母ノ名 Mother's Name	Letitia
本籍地 Place of Origin	Myrtleford Victoria Australia	職 業 Occupation	土木技師
通報先 Destination of Report	Mrs. I. O'Donnell 16 Finsbry Way Camberwell Victoria, Australia	特記事項 Remarks	

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National Archives of Australia NAA: A14171, VX43938

Ian O'Donnell arrived in Singapore on 18th February 1941 and was appointed Commander Royal Engineers 8th Division on 22 July 1941. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on 27 August 1941.

The 8th Division was an infantry division formed during World War 2 as part of the all-volunteer 2nd A.I.F.. Consisting of three infantry brigades, the intention had been to deploy the division to the Middle East to join the other Australian divisions, but as war with Japan loomed in 1941, the division was divided into four separate forces, which were deployed in different parts of the Asia – Pacific region. All of these formations were destroyed as fighting forces by the end of February 1942 during the fighting for Singapore, and in Rabaul, Ambon and Timor. Most members of the division became prisoners of war, waiting until the war ended in late 1945 to be liberated.

I know little of Paddy's enlistment details, his progression in the army, and his postings. I do know however that he was captured in Malaya and incarcerated in the notorious Changi Prison in Singapore. According to the website of the Australian War Memorial, the name Changi is synonymous with the suffering of Australian prisoners of the Japanese during the Second World War. It went on to say that this is ironic, since for most of the war in the Pacific Changi was, in reality, one of the more benign of the Japanese prisoner-of-war camps; its privations were relatively

minor compared to those of others, particularly those on the Burma–Thailand railway. Nonetheless I contend that it was horrific enough and many of its inmates did not survive its cruelty and unhygienic conditions.

Many of the POWs were sent to Changi initially, and from there they were transported to other camps such as the Burma-Thailand railway where their treatment and conditions were egregious. In the absence of a file in the National Archives and after discussion with a few colleagues, it is thought that Paddy was at least incarcerated in Changi to start with. But it is definite that he was transported to Japan. I have read in the past that it was not all that unusual for senior officers to be sent to Japan. Perhaps their captors thought that separating the officers from the rank and file made it easier for discipline – or it might be better insurance against attempts to escape. Whether Paddy spent time at another camp I cannot say with any confidence.

Tom Glazebrook recalled a story about Paddy's leadership. Paddy realized that if they were to survive in camp they had to make sure that they could maintain the highest standard of hygiene as possible. The Japanese were not the least bit interested in doing anything to help. So Paddy approached the Commander of the camp and sought his approval to provide transport for some of the prisoners so that they could go outside to scrounge some equipment from the locals. They agreed and Paddy and his men were able to gather some shovels and picks and the like. Paddy then organised his men to dig latrines and rubbish disposal pits – and to maintain them properly for the duration of their internment.

In the archives I found an entry regarding War Crimes and Trials and I noticed that VX 43938 Lieutenant Colonel Ian J. O'Donnell had submitted an affidavit and sworn statement after the cessation of the war.

Paddy received an Order of the British Empire (OBE) for exceptional service in laying out and constructing camps and constructing defensive positions. This was promulgated in the London Gazette in January 1942 while Paddy was presumably serving in Malaya and he must have been captured soon after. He finally received it in December 1946. Down at the bottom of the notice it indicated that he was mentioned in dispatches twice. Paddy was also the recipient of the Imperial Service Order (ISO) in 1972.

I also found this charming portrait of Paddy drawn by a fellow prisoner. It is in the collection of the Australian War memorial.



Pencil portrait of Paddy drawn by Murray Griffin.

In 1950 Paddy was instrumental in establishing the 22nd Construction Regiment sponsored by the CRB, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission and the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. He was the first Commanding Officer. His task was to establish the unit and recruit sufficient officers, non-commissioned officers, and other ranks to create a viable unit.

Paddy's life, more than others, had many unfortunate aspects. His experience as a prisoner of war of the Japanese was exacerbated when his wife died shortly after his return to Australia leaving him to raise, single-handedly, a small family. His son, Michael, also a civil engineer, died in his 30s in November 1971 after an accident on a bridge construction site. Despite these setbacks, Paddy was a leader who felt at ease with people of all walks of life and he was much more outgoing and approachable than earlier Board members. His big interest was the army. His assistant, Lilian Moon, said in *Reminiscences of Life in the Country Roads Board*:

'There are many men walking around today who would not be doing so if it had not been for Paddy's assistance to them in Changi during the war. With his counselling of them he was able to talk them out of things and he stood up for them against the Japanese much to his own detriment at times.'



1971 - 21st Anniversary of 22nd Construction Regiment.

Major Tom Glazebrook, Colonel Ian O'Donnell, Major General K.D. Green and Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Addis.

In the same book, Norm Haylock said:

'The other characteristic of Mr O'Donnell was his heart. I have seen a contractor, in great trouble, cry before him and that seemed to melt his heart. He received very helpful treatment from Paddy. His loyalty to his staff was almost to a fault, the way he supported people he believed in.'

Paddy O'Donnell had a very soft and very loyal side which not everyone saw. When he was a Lieutenant Colonel in Malaya he had a batman who had a rough time at the hands of the Japanese, and a very serious stomach operation in the POW camp. After the war he was put on as a bridge overseer but was later caught out padding the payroll. He was sacked and for the next 15 years he struggled on working as a nightman. When Paddy became Chairman in the 1960s the man returned as a bridge overseer. Some years later I visited this man's home and found that he had a child who was very ill, requiring many costly operations, and this had been the reason for his dishonesty. Paddy had known this and had shown loyalty and softness when the occasion had warranted it by reinstating the man. He later turned out to be one of our best bridge overseers.'

Paddy died in Camberwell on 26 November 1984.

Corporal Douglas Leslie Brumley, VX64333, V42108

Douglas was a 25 year old Clerk at the CRB when he joined up in October 1941. He was born in Sale (in 1916) but he enlisted at Royal Park leading me to think that he worked in one of the CRB's Melbourne offices. He is one of those on the list in Appendix A but we know nothing but his name – and what is in the archives. He was a Sergeant in the Citizen's Military Force with a Service No. of V42108. Douglas was a fully qualified accountant.



Douglas Brumley's paybook photo.

Douglas was taller than most – six feet one and a half inches – with fair hair. No doubt because he was an accountant, he was posted to 8th Divisional Head Quarters Command Pay Office and he remained in that unit when he embarked for Malaya on the SS *'Marella'* which arrived in Singapore on 26 January 1942.

The next entry, two months later, simply states "Missing". This came from the AIF in Malaya. In June 1943, his file is stamped in capital blue letters which can't possibly be missed PRISONER OF WAR and then Malaya is written after it. The last entry in his archive came six months later. It was handwritten and said 'Now imprisoned in Osaka camp'. To be more precise, it was the Osaka 6B – Akenobe Camp.



Four Australian Prisoners of War at Osaka Camp.

All the prisoners from the camp worked for various transportation and stevedoring companies of the Osaka Port. They loaded and unloaded ships, transported materials, worked in warehouses and loaded and unloaded railroad cars at the docks. They worked on all kinds of goods, usually foodstuffs and clothing but sometimes military equipment consigned to Japanese armies in the South Pacific.

A sample day's rations was:

Breakfast - Rice and soup.

Lunch (carried by the POWs to work) - Rice, sometimes bread, seaweed.

Dinner - Rice and soup, fish every 10 days, meat once or twice a month; vegetables (one kind each night either onions or potatoes).

Douglas married Mary Elizabeth Cooper in 1946 and the electoral rolls show that he shifted to Bendigo and then, in the 1960s, to Canberra.

He died in Canberra in October 1976 at the age of 60.

Captain Wilfred (Bill) Hamlyn Dolamore, VX 27638

Before the war, Frank Jackson worked in Bairnsdale Division and there were many from that office who became prisoners. Bill Dolamore, who was later to become the Divisional Engineer was one, along with Frank, and an overseer, Andy Wilson. They were all on the Thai-Burma Railway. Jack

O'Keefe was reputedly one of the best overseers in the region, but he developed a drinking problem. Peter Lowe, who worked in the region for a time, told me that Bill Dolamore looked after Jack fiercely and if he was having problems, Bill would immediately drop what he was doing and hop in his car and travel hundreds of kilometres to collect him and minister to his needs. Jack's welfare was more important to him than anything else.



Bill Dolamore and Frank Jackson at the Bairnsdale Office in 1936.
Bill was Assistant Divisional Engineer at the time and Frank was a Junior Draughtsman.

Wilfred (Bill) Hamlin Dolamore was born in Gardiner in 1909. Bill served under Paddy O'Donnell in the 2/12th Field Company. His file in the National Archives comprises only one entry – his internment record. It is similar to Paddy's. It says it all in a way. Prisoner of War!

馬來

收容所 Camp	馬來 昭和19年8月15日	番 號 No.	馬來 第11750 774
姓 名 Name	DOLAMORE, Wilfred Hamlin	生 年 月 日 Date of Birth	27 April 1909
國 籍 Nationality	AUSTRALIAN	所 屬 部 隊 Unit	No. VX 27630 2/10 Fl'd Coy A.I.F.
階 級 身 分 Rank	Captain 陸軍大尉	捕 獲 年 月 日 Date of Capture	昭和19年8月15日
捕 獲 場 所 Place of Capture	SINGAPORE	母 名 Mother's Name	
父 名 Father's Name	Alfred William	職 業 Occupation	官吏 CIVIL SERVANT
本 籍 地 Place of Origin	Kenilworth Road Gardiner, Victoria AUSTRALIA.	特 記 事 項 Remarks	
通 報 先 Destinations of Report	Alfred William Dolamore 217 Beach Rd. Mentone Vic. AUSTRALIA.		

National Archives of Australia NAA: A14171, VX27630

Bill Dolamore's only war record.

Bill's younger brother, Max, also served in the war. He was an accountant at the Transport Regulation Board in Carlton. Max enlisted in August 1939 but was discharged in June 1940 and transferred to the AIF Pay Corps.

Bill spent a significant part of his career in Bairnsdale. He joined the CRB in 1927 as a Junior Assistant Engineer at Bairnsdale and in 1935 he was appointed the Assistant Divisional Engineer. After returning from the war, he worked briefly as Assistant Asphalt Engineer, and in November 1947, he became Bairnsdale's third Divisional Engineer. He remained in that position for 27 years until he retired in 1974. He owned a holiday house on Raymond Island in the Gippsland Lakes and after the war, Paddy O'Donnell used to take his children down to Bill's holiday home for the Christmas holidays.

Bill served in the Royal Engineers 8th Division under Paddy O'Donnell. In fact Bill was promoted to Captain on the same day (27 August 1941) as Paddy was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.

When Bill was captured and imprisoned, he had a serious wound in the ankle and it probably needed immediate attention lest it became septic in the steamy, tropical environment. It may be a CRB myth, but lucky for him, he was in the company of an excellent surgeon, Albert Coates. The bones in Bill's ankle were so smashed up, it was impossible to reconstruct them, so Coates fused

the ankle to enable Bill to walk but the operation left him with no flexibility in his ankle. Thereafter Bill walked with a limp.



1972. Vice Regal inspection of roads in Bairnsdale Division by Sir Rohan Delacombe. Sir Rohan and Lady Delacombe with Patrolman H. Goudie (left), Mr. W. H. Dolamore, Divisional Engineer, and Mr. R. E. V. Donaldson, Chairman (right). All three CRB men served in the A.I.F.

Bill shared a sad and similar history with Paddy O'Donnell in that his wife died early. He married Charmian Langlands in 1946 but she died in 1952 at the age of 32. He did marry again, to Jean, who died in 1980.

Bill served the CRB for 47 years, before and after the war, and he retired in 1974 – in poor health. He was a highly respected servant to the Board. He died in Bairnsdale in December 1976 at the age of 65..



Jack Thorpe, Bill Dolamore and Ted Donaldson – all 2nd AIF soldiers
– at Bill's retirement in 1974.

Lance Corporal Frank Wolfe Jackson, VX 29148

Frank was born in Bairnsdale. He was 21 when he enlisted at Sale in June 1940. His occupation was a draughtsman. He trained in Albury and Seymour and was promoted to Lance Corporal. He disembarked for Singapore in February 1941 and moved directly to Malaya. He was reported missing in March 1942 and on 9 June 1942 his record was stamped PRISONER OF WAR. Below this, in barely visible type, it said 'Rec. from Jap at Changi P.W. Camp 5/9/43 Singapore' and below that, 'Disembarked Sydney 10/10/45'. We can only wonder what the intervening period was like for Frank.

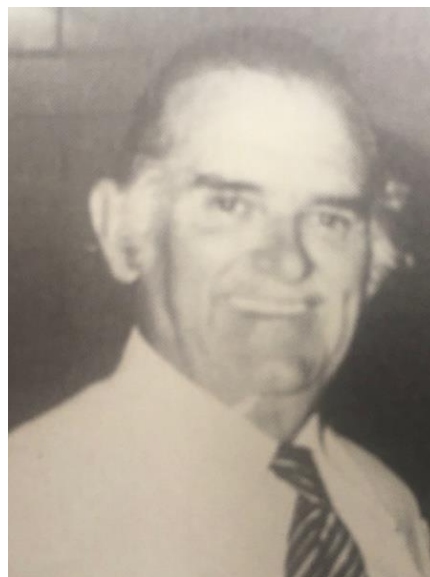
There is nothing in the archives about the period of time spent as a POW but I suspect that Frank remained in Changi for the duration of the war. Because he was a draughtsman, Frank was asked to draw a map of the camp. At War's end, Frank brought the plan home with him. Sometime in the 1960s he thought he would visit Singapore and Changi. He was curious to see what it was like and to see if his hut was still standing. However the prison governor would not allow Frank to enter the grounds but he did allow him to view the camp from an elevated position in a nearby tower. When Frank reached the viewing area he unrolled his plan. The governor was curious to see what it was and Frank explained the background to it. The governor demanded it from Frank, but Frank refused to hand it over saying that if he was not allowed to enter the camp, the governor

could not have it. The governor changed his mind and let Frank into the grounds. Frank had intended to donate it to them at any rate.



Frank Jackson's enlistment photo.

Frank had one shoulder lower than the other. This was a result of an unprovoked beating he received from a Japanese officer. In October 1946, Frank became engaged to Shirley Weaver of Brighton and they married in October 1947. This leads me to think that Frank did not return to Bairnsdale after the war but remained in Melbourne where he resumed his career with the CRB.



Frank Jackson at his retirement in 1979.

In 1947, Frank married Shirley Lorna Weavell at Melbourne Grammar School Chapel.

The Electoral Roll of 1949 lists him as a draughtsman but later he was appointed the Pipe Testing Officer in Bridge Branch. I recall Frank as a tall, handsome man with impeccable handwriting.

Frank retired in 1979 having given the Board 42 years of service. He died in Beaumaris in December 1995.

Corporal Jack Joseph O'Keefe VX 5869

I found a one page entry only for Jack O'Keefe who was born in 1918 in Garfield. He enlisted in November 1939 and called himself a labourer. He was a Corporal in the 6th Australian Division Salvage Unit.



Jack O'Keefe – 1939.

He was taken on strength On 4 November 1939 at the Showgrounds and two days later, he was transferred to Puckapunyal.

Jack was a bit of a naughty boy in that there are four recordings on his file of conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline – two for obscene language to a superior officer, one for absent without leave and one for neglecting a general order. He embarked from Melbourne on 15 April 1940 to Kantara in Egypt.

He was admitted to hospital in Kantara for an appendectomy. He served at Kilo 89 and Hill 69 in Palestine. During the Second World War, Palestine was under a British Mandate and Australian and New Zealand soldiers supported the British Army to prevent the Axis forces from capturing Egypt and the Suez Canal. They fought alongside several Palestinian brigades enlisted into the British Army.

The purpose of a salvage unit was to scavenge a battlefield for equipment, arms and ammunition after the fighting in the area had moved away. They would then be responsible for the repairs and redistribution of the equipment, arms and ammunition they had 'salvaged' from the battlefield to other fighting units in the Division.

Jack left the Middle East in March 1942 for 4 Military District (South Australia). He went absent without leave again. He was admitted to Fortress Camp Hospital in Fremantle late in 1942 suffering from dengue fever. By this time he had transferred to 12th Division Salvage. In February 1943, the division shifted to the Northern Territory returning in April 1944. Thereafter, Jack was moved around Victoria and NSW until he was discharged in April 1945.

Driver William (Bill) Edward Miles VX 30505

Bill was born in Dunolly and at the age of 29 he enlisted in 1940. On his Attestation Form he described himself as a road foreman and then crossed it out and inserted 'Clerk'. Bill worked in the CRB's South Melbourne store yard.

The remarkable thing about Bill's story is that before the war he had an accident and had his right foot amputated. He wore a prosthetic foot. It is alleged that he arranged for someone else to attend his medical for him and he was enlisted.

But reality must have caught up with him because his service and casualty form states under the heading of Distinctive Marks - 'Left leg amputated below knee'. It was claimed by people in

Bairnsdale that Bill was the only Australian soldier with a wooden leg that was sent overseas. He belonged to the 2nd/2nd Pioneer Battalion and when it sailed for the Middle East, Bill was not permitted to go. However he was the RAP orderly and he somehow persuaded the doctor to let him go.



Bill's enlistment photo.

He became a driver and was initially sent to the Middle East in January 1941. He suffered from two bouts of diarrhoea which required hospitalisation and in February 1942 he landed at Batavia (Jakarta) in Java. He was declared missing three weeks later and in August that year he was officially declared a Prisoner of War.

In August 1945 it was recorded 'Alive in Siam Recovered from Japanese' and in 1946 he was fitted with an artificial limb at Heidelberg Hospital. John Gibney said that he had a tough time in Changi and the Thai-Burma Railway. He described how the Japanese beat him with bamboo staffs and with the butts of their rifles because they accused him of cutting his foot off to avoid working.

After the war Bill went down to Bairnsdale where many CRB staff were fellow POWs. John Gibney recalled that he went down there to do some work and he stayed at the Marlo Pub with Bill. The pub had plywood walls so that you could hear people in adjacent rooms. That night, Bill was about three rooms away but he woke John up early in the morning with his screaming and thrashing around. He relived in his nightmares the horrors he went through at the hands of the Japanese. It took him about 20 years to get it out of his system.

Bill became a road inspector and he died in Bairnsdale in 1995.

Lance Sergeant Frank Eric Watts, VX47550

Frank was a Bridge Construction Overseer in the CRB. He was born in Bendigo in 1915 and enlisted in July 1940. In his Attestation Form it states his occupation as bridge carpenter and indicates that he was married to Phyllis. He was a Lance Sergeant in the 2/10th Field Company.



Frank Watt's paybook photograph – 1940.

He did his military training at Seymour and Bonegilla. He embarked from Sydney on 2 February 1941 for Malaya and arrived in Singapore on 18 February.



Members of the 2/10th Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers, on board a troopship *en route* to Malaya.

In August 1941, he was hospitalised in the Australian General Hospital at Malacca with otitis media. This is a middle ear infection behind the eardrum caused by fluid in the ear which causes the eardrum to bulge. He was hospitalised again, a month later, with otitis externa – a similar condition causing swelling of the external ear canal.

But his archive is short, like all those poor souls who became prisoners of war of the Japanese. It abruptly states “Reported missing 16/2/42” followed by “Confirmed POW at Changi 13/9/43”.

The next entry is embarkation from Singapore on the MV *Duntroon* on 5 September 1945 and his arrival in Sydney on 7 October 1945. He was discharged on 14 December 1945.

Stan Hodgson (ex-Divisional Engineer Dandenong) told me that Frank was a remarkable man and that Paddy O’Donnell gave great support to Frank and his family after his return. Paddy was able to secure a job for Frank constructing the runways at East Sale Aerodrome.

He also had a reputation as an excellent bridge overseer.

Frank died in December 1990.

Gunner Andrew (Andy) James Wilson VX47352

Andy was born in Bairnsdale and enlisted in Sale in July 1940. He was a labourer. He joined up at Sale when he was 20 and arrived in Singapore in August 1941. He fought as a Gunner in the 4th Tank Attack Regiment in Malaya. This regiment was an anti-tank regiment formed in November 1940. In early 1942 the regiment took part in the Malayan Campaign and the Battle of Singapore before being captured when Singapore fell to the Japanese. Most of its personnel became prisoners of war and 170 of them died in captivity.



2-pounder anti-tank gun in action in Malaya, 1942.

Andy's archive indicates he went missing in action in February 1942. During the period leading up to his capture, he was hospitalised with appendicitis. In June 1943 his record was stamped PRISONER OF WAR. On 15 September 1944 his family received a message which said; *'Safe and well, also Dave. Send parcel and mail. Love to all at home and friends, Andy'*. I don't know how he got this message out.

There is another entry in the file relating to the identity of Dave, written by Andy's father. It said: *'The "Dave" referred to would be, in all probability, Gnr. D.F. Potter VX 47359 4th Anti Tank A.I.F..*

Gunner Potter and my son have been together since enlistment and my son often mentions Dave in his letters previous to him being taken prisoner’.



Gunner Andy Wilson and Gunner Dave Potter.

Andy was repatriated in 1945 but Dave didn't make it home. Dave was a farm labourer in Bairnsdale and he joined up with Andy in Sale on the same day. He was 8 years older than Andy. Their files are almost identical with the ubiquitous PRISONER OF WAR stamp but, in Dave's file, it said underneath 'Died of illness (Cholera) whilst P.W. Thailand'. This must have been a shock to his family because the following message was heard over shortwave radio from Singapore on 28/10/43. It was sent to his mother. "Am safe and well but miss good Australian tucker. John is also safe. Mail and comforts would be very welcome. Love to all, from David".

Andy was incarcerated in Changi but was relocated to Japan at the time of the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima.

Andy married Hazel McCoy at Shepparton on 22 December 1947. Hazel died at the age of 39 in 1966 and Andy did not remarry.



Hazel Josephine McCoy with her maternal uncle, Thomas Chalker, on her wedding day.

Most of Andy's early career in the CRB was gained as a grader Driver in Bairnsdale Division and after progressing through the various supervisory classifications became an Overseer Grade A some seven years before his retirement in 1973. He was by all accounts a very outgoing character. After he left the CRB, he became the doorman at the Windsor Hotel in Melbourne, complete with a bell topper hat.



Andy Wilson (left) being congratulated on his retirement in 1973 by Bairnsdale Divisional Engineer. Bill Dolamore.

Andy died in Bairnsdale in January 2005.