



AWM 126515

Of the many prisoner-of-war camps set up by Imperial Japan during the Second World War, the one at the small city of Naoetsu in central Japan ranks as one of the most notorious, some saying it was the worst of all. Officially known as Camp 4-B Naoetsu, it existed from December 1943 until the end of the war. Originally housing some 300 Australian POWs, by 1945 it was holding some 700 Australian, Dutch, British, American and New Zealand prisoners. The appalling living conditions, the utter cruelty of the guards, and the slave labour in nearby factories produced a very high mortality rate, one in

five of the Australians succumbing to the misery. This picture of camp parade was taken on Christmas Day 1944. Addressing the men from behind the table is Captain Jim Chisholm, the Senior POW Officer at the time. The Japanese camp personnel seen in the first row (lighter uniforms) are Private First Class Hiroaki Kono, camp interpreter (left); the camp quartermaster, name unknown (second from left); Sergeant Major Tadeo Shibano, nicknamed 'the Bull' by the inmates (centre), and camp commander Lieutenant Narumi Oota (far right, with sword).

JAPAN'S WORST POW CAMP

By David Mitchelhill-Green

Shortly after Japan opened hostilities on December 7, 1941, British and American officials inquired through Swiss intermediaries whether Tokyo would comply with the 1929 Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war. Foreign Minister Shigenori Togo answered that although Japan had not ratified the convention, it would nevertheless abide by it. In reality thousands of Allied prisoners were flagrantly beaten, starved and worked to death. Of the 32,418 prisoners held in camps in Japan, roughly 3,500 died. Arguably the worst was Tokyo Area Camp 4-B Naoetsu which had the highest proportional POW death rate, with 60 Australian soldiers losing their lives, and the most guards later tried and executed as war criminals.

Right: Naoetsu lies on the west side of Honshu, Japan's main island. The largest and most populous of Japan's home isles, it is divided into five regions and 34 ken (prefectures). Naoetsu is part of Niigata Prefecture in Chubu (Central) Region. Hence Camp 4-B was often referred to in Allied documents as 'Naoetsu (Niigata Ken)'.

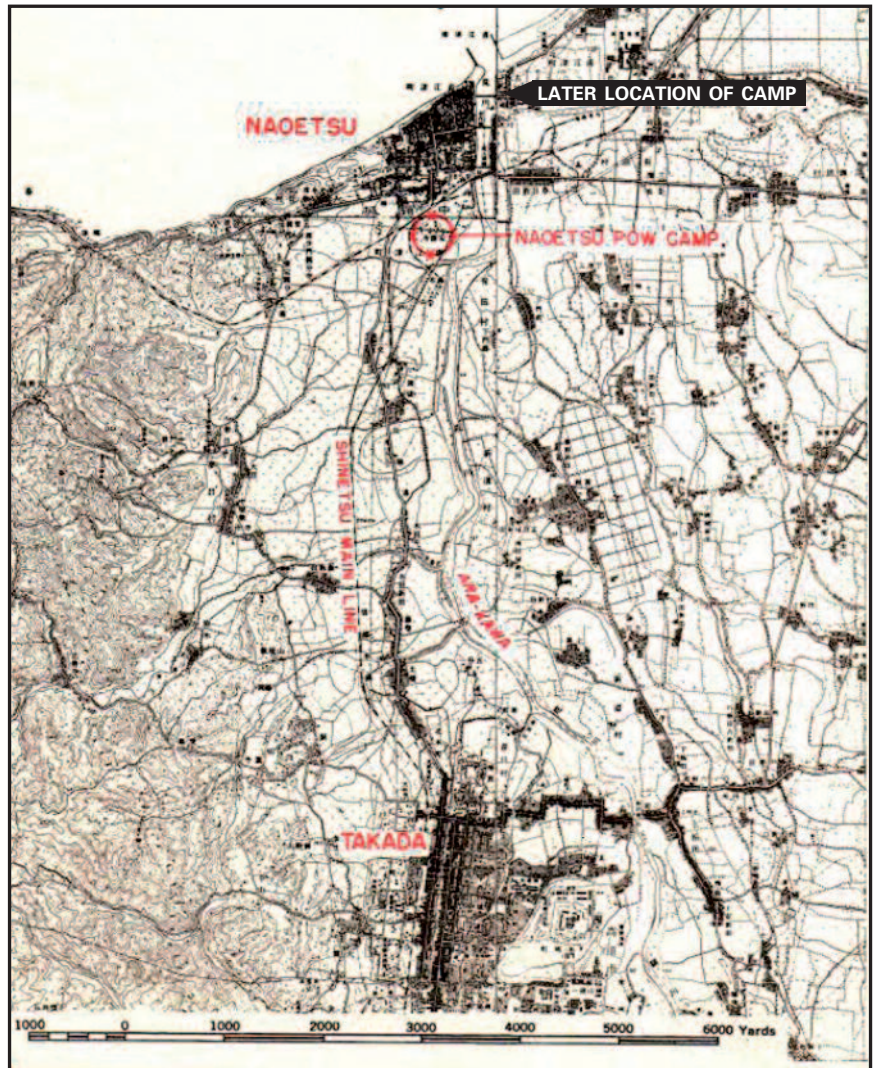


Right: For most of its existence, the POW camp was located on the eastern edge of town, on the east bank of the Ara river, a few hundred metres inland from the Sea of Japan. However, before it settled in this final location, it was moved several times within Naoetsu, which may explain why this Allied intelligence map has its location south of town, west of the Ara, and some two kilometres from the sea. Obviously, the map dates from the earlier period.

CONVENTIONS ON THE TREATMENT OF POWS

Efforts to define and regulate the conduct of individuals and countries during war date back to biblical times. More recent laws to improve the treatment of prisoners were first drafted during the 18th century. The 1785 Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Prussia and the United States prohibited the housing of POWs in convict prisons and the use of manacles. Prisoners were allowed to exercise and receive the same food rations as the soldiers who had captured them. A century later, Union armies in the American Civil war were guided by the Lieber Code (also known as Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field), which governed the treatment of spies, traitors and prisoners of war.

An international convention on the humane treatment of POWs was first broached during the Brussels Conference of 1874 and subsequently adopted in the Hague Regulations of 1899 and 1907. Conditions in German, Russian and Ottoman Empire POW camps during the First World War, however, were particularly harsh. Disease was rife, mortality high. Successive agreements undertaken in Berne in 1917 and 1918 to correct this abuse were followed by an appeal at the International Red Cross Conference in 1921 for a new convention. A draft proposal, to complement the provisions of the Hague regulations, was presented at a conference in Geneva held on July 27, 1929 — otherwise known as the Convention



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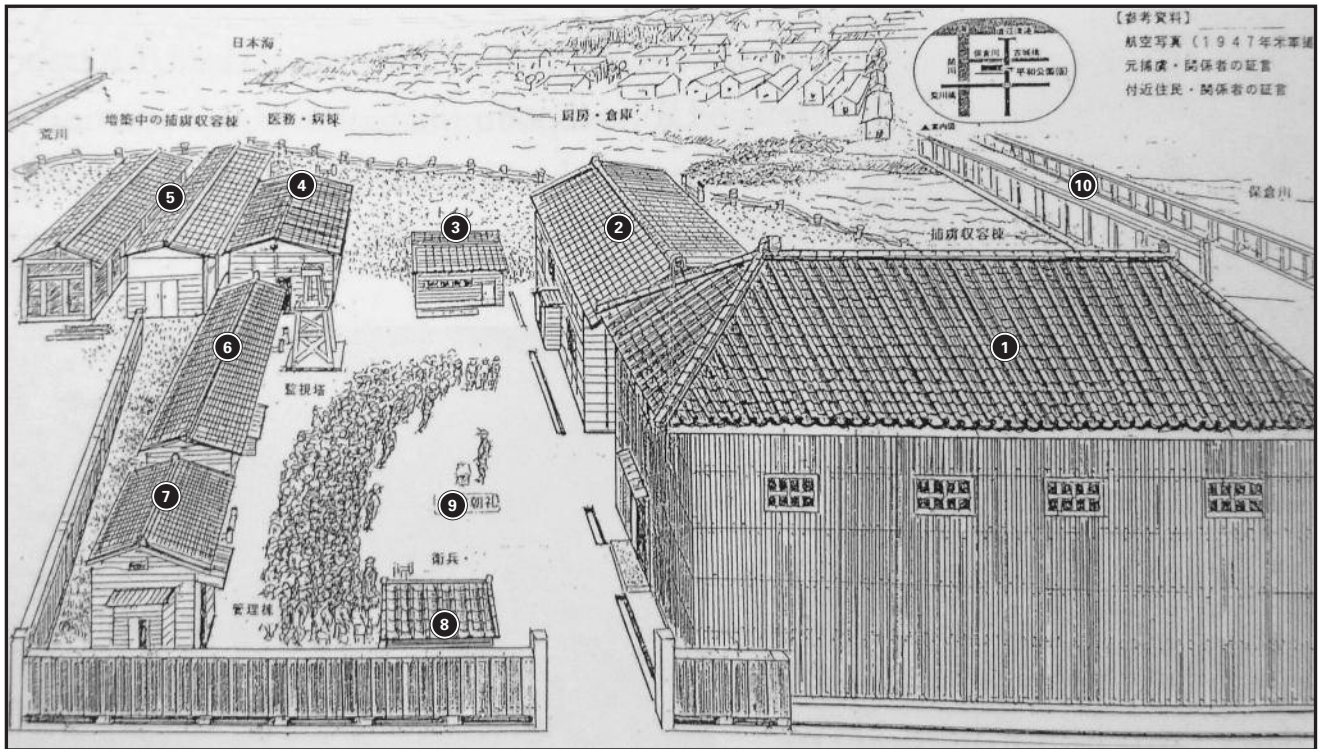


The final camp lay at the confluence of the Ara and the smaller Hokura river, in a small plot delineated by two bridges, one over each river.



GOOGLE EARTH

The same view today. Since the war, Naoetsu has joined with another village to form Joetsu City. The Ara river is today known as the Seki.



A sketch of the camp looking towards the main entrance, with the Hokura river in the background and the Ara river on the far left. The two-storey POW quarters was a wooden structure clad in old rusted corrugated iron. Open and drafty, prisoners would paste scraps of paper over cracks in the walls to make it more air-tight. Upstairs rooms had no ceilings and the room partitions did not reach the roof. None of the rooms were equipped with doors and

during an influenza epidemic in the spring of 1944, blankets and mats were hung to separate quarantined prisoners. Latrines were holes over wooden floors in concrete pits. [1] POW Quarters. [2] Camp Kitchen and Warehouse. [3] Ablutions. [4] New Infirmary. [5] New POW Barracks (under construction). [6] Guards Quarters. [7] Camp Commander's Office [8] Guardhouse. [9] Parade-Ground. [10] Kojo Bridge over the Hokura.

relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. The Convention's 97 articles covered the conditions in which prisoners could be captured and evacuated, the organisation of camps, the provision of adequate food and clothing, hygiene, religious practice, mental and physical recreation, discipline, labour (by healthy individuals in non-war-related industry), mail, penal sanctions and repatriation.

Japan's record of POW treatment was consistently superior to that of the West at this time. The exceptionally humane treatment of prisoners captured during the Russo-Japanese War (February 8, 1904 to September 5, 1905) was greeted with international commendation; 400 Russian officers

were even permitted to return home after submitting an oath not to re-join the fighting! Criticism of the hastily-erected camps holding German POWs during the First World War motivated Japanese military authorities to merge the 12 existing camps into six new ones. The most well known of these — the Bando camp in Tokushima Prefecture — was regarded as a model of prisoner detention. Under its empathetic commandant, Major Toyohisa Matsue, the camp came to resemble a miniature German village with prisoners running shops, tending crops and even introducing new methods of farming and livestock cultivation to local farmers. In March 1918 the prisoners even ran a 12-day exhibition of food, sport and engineering

that attracted some 50,000 visitors and even elicited enquiries from the Imperial household.

Japan's benevolent attitude towards POWs changed radically following the ascension of Emperor Hirohito (whom the Japanese refer to as Emperor Showa since all deceased emperors are referred to by their given reign name) in 1926. Shifting from a moderate, pro-Western stance to a right-wing nationalist position, the new regime fostered national solidarity through the belief of a divine leader — the father of all Japanese children and a descendant from the sun goddess Amaterasu — and centralised state veneration of dead combatants as Shinto *kami* or spirits at Yasukuni Jinja (see *After the*



Left: The camp kitchen was a wooden building with a clay floor. Food was prepared by six prisoners until May 1945 when this number was increased to 13. Wheat mixed with rice, soy beans or cane was the dietary mainstay — compressed to a serving about the size of a cricket ball. Meat, when available, was mostly horse or dog. A small amount of fish was served roughly twice a week, usually in soup or



stew. Vegetables in season were added to the stew with each man receiving 500 grams of food daily except for those too weak to work who received a third less rice. The last of the original structures that comprised the POW camp, the kitchen building survived until the 1980s. Right: Today, a single building housing a small museum stands on the plot that once was the camp.

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Battle No. 129). Pride in the military was buoyed by the annexation of Korea and recent victories against Russia and China while the resurgence of samurai codes of honour taught absolute obedience and the ethos that surrender was a disgraceful act far below a cowardly death.

THE SENJINKUN

The crushing defeat of the Japanese Sixth Army at Nomonhan by Soviet and Mongolian forces on the Mongolian steppes in August 1939 (which the Russians refer to as the Battle of Khalkhin Gol) stunned Japan's military leaders. A plan to 'Strike North' into Mongolia and Siberia was shelved in favour of the Japanese Imperial Army expanding into South-East Asia and across the Pacific. The 'intolerable' number of soldiers who surrendered to the Red Army (as well as to the Chinese Nationalist Army) pushed Tokyo to dictate standards of battlefield behaviour. As a result, Hideki Tojo, Japan's then War Minister issued the *Senjinkun*, or 'Field Service Code', on January 8, 1941. 'Those who know shame are weak', the pocket-sized handbook declared. 'Always think of [preserving] the honour of your community and be a credit to yourself and your family. Redouble your efforts and respond to their expectations. Never live to experience shame as a prisoner. By dying you will avoid leaving behind the crime of a stain on your honour.'

The extensive propaganda campaign accompanying the *Senjinkun* further instilled a fear in Japanese troops that their families would be ostracised if they surrendered to the enemy. Although the Imperial Japanese Navy never formally adopted the *Senjinkun*, it nevertheless embraced it. Just how deeply the *Senjinkun* was embedded within the Japanese military is illustrated in the tiny number of Japanese soldiers subsequently taken prisoner. This same philosophy fostered the view that Allied prisoners were soldiers without worth.

POW CAMPS IN JAPAN

The first POW camp in Japan after Pearl Harbor opened in early 1942 at Zentsuji, in Kagawa Prefecture, to accommodate mainly US personnel captured on Guam and Wake Islands. Further camps opened after April 1942 following the decision to use forced POW labour in war-related industry. The



A concert party staged by the Australian prisoners soon after their arrival in December 1942. The Japanese vetoed future concerts as they thought some of the performances were ridiculing them (which they were). Several prisoners were badly beaten up by the Japanese following the concert.

Imperial Japanese Army's principal POW camps, in the cities of Osaka, Fukuoka, Hakodate and Tokyo, operated three types of secondary labour camp: *bunsho* or Branch Camps, where the Army supplied accommodation, food and clothing; 'Detached Camps', a smaller type of Branch Camp; and *hakken-sho*, literally 'Dispatch Camps', where Japanese firms supplied shelter, food and clothing and the Army supplied guards. The smaller sub-camps were typically located in industrial or mining hubs such as Keihin (Tokyo and Yokohama) and Hanshin (Osaka and Kobe). The Imperial Japanese Navy opened a single camp at Ofuna, in Kanagawa Prefecture, to interrogate Allied prisoners, mostly airmen and submariners, before transferring them to an Army-run camp.

TOKYO AREA CAMP 4-B, NAOETSU

A POW branch camp was established in the town of Naoetsu, in Niigata Prefecture, after several local companies requested the use of prisoner labour. Administered by Tokyo *Horyo Shuyujo* (Tokyo Area POW Camps), Camp 4-B Naoetsu ('B' standing for *bunsho*) opened in December 1942 in a former warehouse of the Shin-Etsu Nitrogen Fertiliser Company. The first prisoners were a subset of the 130,000 Allied servicemen and women captured when Singapore fell on February 15, 1942 (see *After the Battle* No. 31). After nine months of incarceration, a party of 23 officers and 550 other ranks from 'C Force', mostly men of the Australian 2/20th Battalion (8th Division), together with a mixed band of Australian, British, Dutch and American servicemen (plus a group of repatriated Japanese civilians) were shipped to Japan aboard the former liner *Kamakura Maru*.

Far from a pleasure cruise, the C Force prisoners were crammed in the open on the aft end of the ship's B deck. Conditions quickly deteriorated as the ship entered colder climes. Subsisting on two meagre meals a day, the prisoners' discomfort was aggravated by a dangerous makeshift toilet jutting out over the open water; 'If you fell off, it was too bad', recalled one former POW. Distinctly nervous, one of the outnumbered Japanese guards repeatedly beat the prisoners without provocation, a warning of future treatment in Japan.

Disembarking at Nagasaki on December 7, C Force was divided into two groups. One party of 300 Australians, mostly New South Welshmen from the 2/20th Battalion, under Lieutenant-Colonel Andrew Robertson, was alphabetically selected to go to Naoetsu; the remainder would work in a Kobe shipyard. After a 52-hour train journey, Robertson's men finally arrived at Naoetsu during the night of December 10/11, 1942. Trucked through snow to the camp, each prisoner was given a hessian work uniform, shoes, mess gear, seven blankets and a sleeping space on a straw tatami mat. At first conditions were relatively bearable despite the freezing weather. In between medical inspections, paperwork and an official photograph, the men passed time smoking, playing cards and savouring a hot bath.



Considering the cruel treatment meted out by the Japanese guards to the Allied prisoners, it is almost strange to see this picture of prisoners and their tormentors posing together in a group photograph on the occasion of the camp concert. Identified are Lieutenant Asao Sakata, the first camp commander (middle row, second from left), Yukio Nakayama, nicknamed 'Baby Face' by the inmates (third from left), Private First Class Hiroaki Kono, the camp interpreter (seated third from left) and Sergeant Major Tadeo Shibano, 'the Bull', the camp's senior NCO from December 1942 to December 1944 (seated far right). The few musical instruments — the only available recreational equipment — were brought to Naoetsu from the Tokyo main camp.

AWMI P00142.003

AWMI P00142.006

Right: The prisoners at Naoetsu were put to work at a number of industrial sites. One was the Nippon Stainless Steel factory (known as the Imperial Special Steel Factory during the war), a vast conglomeration of blast furnace sheds, machine shops, foundries and mould-shops threaded with narrow-gauge lines. The concern is today split up in two separate factories: Sumitomo Metal Industries Naoetsu and Nippon Stainless.

Surprised by the apparent hospitality of his new hosts, Private Dudley Boughton (POW No. 80) confided in his 'official' diary: 'To date it's like a holiday resort here, except for the cold. The Japs are all really fine fellows, as are all the Japs here in appearance and treatment of us. They seem to be only too pleased to do anything for us which is quite the reverse to Singapore and especially the boat.' However, in time, a second illicit diary would record a far grimmer picture of camp life.

A week after their arrival the commander of Tokyo area POW camps, Colonel Kunji Suzuki, assured the Australian POWs of just treatment. Church services were allowed, concerts could be staged and food would be available to purchase. Any pretence of a 'holiday resort', however, was quickly shattered during the week beginning December 18, 1942. Reveille at 5.30 a.m. was followed by exercises on the snow-covered parade-ground. While doing push-ups an order was given for 'all weak men to stand'. Those who did — an admission of weakness in the eyes of their captors — were forced to do an additional ten minutes of exercise and forego breakfast.

The POWs were separated into parties to work shifts at the nearby Shin-Etsu Nitrogen Fertiliser and Nippon Stainless Steel factories. The first group of 150 men was marched off at a brisk pace to the steel plant at 7 a.m. Work outside in the bitterly cold weather required them to break up slag and scrap metal before moving it in carts along a railway line to the foundry. Prisoners inside the factory sweltered under layers of heavy protective clothing as they fed blast furnaces or toiled in the steel-rolling and ingot-checking works. Outdoor work at the Shin-Etsu factory entailed transporting and smashing quartz and other mineral rocks by sledge-



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The other main site where the prisoners were put to work was the Shin-Etsu Nitrogen Fertiliser Company. Founded in September 1926, it manufactured chemical fertiliser and limestone nitrogen, both products vital to the war effort. Of the original 300 Australian POWs, half went to Nippon Stainless and half to Shin-Etsu. The latter firm is today called the Shin-Etsu Chemical Company and produces cellulose derivatives, silicones, synthetic quartz, caustic soda, etc.

hammer for the manufacture of silicon carbide, while inside the factory prisoners shovelled rock and coke into the six white-hot furnaces.

NIIGATA 90.9, FUKUSHIMA 90.10 TARGETS 1101, 1651, 1667 (OUTLYING)		DESCRIPTION OF TARGETS
CONFIDENTIAL equals British Confidential		
<p>TARGET 1651</p> <p>NIPPON STAINLESS STEEL, NAOETSU PLANT NAOETSU (IRON AND STEEL)</p> <p>37° 11' N 138° 16' E (Approx)—One of four plants of this Co. Cap approx 16,000 metric tons stainless steel tubes annually. Produces its own steel—cap 20,000 metric tons. Planned (1939) 15,000 metric tons expansion. Located on E outskirts of Naoetsu approx 1/8 mi from the coast just W of Shinetsu Nitrogen Fertilizer Co (TARGET 1667). (See map on page M-13.)</p>	<p>TARGET 1667</p> <p>SHINETSU NITROGEN FERTILIZER CO, NAOETSU PLANT (Shinetsu Chisso Hiryo KK) NAOETSU (CHEMICALS)</p> <p>37° 11' N 138° 16' E (Approx)—Calcium cyanamide plant. Estimated carbide cap (1943) 63,000 metric tons, less than 10% Japanese cap. Nitrogen fixation 10,000 metric tons, less than 10% Japanese cap. Small magnesium and ferro alloy production reported. Located on W side of Kuroi station. RR spurs extend along S and E side of compound which covers an area approx 1/4 mi E-W and 1/2 mi N-S. Critical points: Electrical equipment, air liquefaction plant. (See map on page M-13.)</p>	

USNA

The two factories lay side by side on the north bank of the Hokura, some two kilometres east of the camp. Both were listed as bombing targets by the Allied air forces, this USAAF target chart identifying them as objectives Nos. 1651 and 1667.



AVMM PG3840.001

Left: Identification photograph of Captain Alex 'Sandy' Barrett taken at the Naoetsu Camp. A Medical Officer serving in the 2/18th Battalion, Barrett had been taken prisoner after the fall of Singapore. Each inmate at Camp B-4 was assigned an identifying number, which was sewn as a square patch onto the front left breast pocket of his jacket. Lieutenant-Colonel Andrew Robertson, the first Senior POW Officer, was No. 1 and Barrett No. 2. *Right:* Private Frederick Beale, prisoner No. 84. An Aboriginal serviceman from the 2/20th Battalion, he had been captured along with his brother, Private George Beale, after the fall of Singapore. Both had spent time in Changi POW camp before being sent to Naoetsu. George died on May 28, 1943, from injuries sustained in an accident while working at the Shin-Etsu steel furnaces. Grievously wounded by getting caught in a coke escalator, he was rushed to Takada Military Hospital but died on the operating table. Frederick survived the war and was released in September 1945.



AVMM P01649.005

The guards at both factories set upon any man deemed not to be working to his 'maximum effort'. The 280 or so Australian POWs who returned from work that night received a stern warning from the first camp commander, Lieutenant Asao Sakata, that an even greater effort would be expected the following day. Relatively few serious incidents occurred although the situation immediately worsened after Sakata's posting to active service at the end of the year. His replacement, Lieutenant Narumi Oota (the camp commander from January 20, 1943 until January 23, 1945) was habitually absent, leaving his senior NCOs to run the camp as they wished. The callous nature of the guards — particularly the civilian ones hired by the local companies to escort the working parties — now emerged.

The core group of military guards, despised and nicknamed by the Australians, included Sergeant Major Tadeo Shibano, dubbed 'the Bull', the senior NCO in the camp from December 7, 1942 to December 21, 1944; Sergeant Yuzu Aoki, 'the Faith Healer', the camp doctor; Private Yoshio Taguchi, 'the Germ', a medical orderly from the 23rd Regiment; Private Kengo Katayama, 'the Cat', an interpreter from the 23rd Regiment; and Private Michio Kuriyama, 'Snake Eyes', an interpreter from the 77th Regiment. A host of sardonic nicknames were similarly bestowed upon the detested civilian guards. Mostly disabled veterans, they included: Hiroshi Obinata, 'Boofhead'; Masaji Sekihara, 'Fish Face'; Yonesaku Akiyama, 'Horse Head'; Akira Yanagizawa, 'Gummy'; Yoshihiro Susuki, 'Hoppy'; Eiichi Ushiki, 'Whiskey'; Yukio Nakayama, 'Baby Face', and Morimasa Oshima.

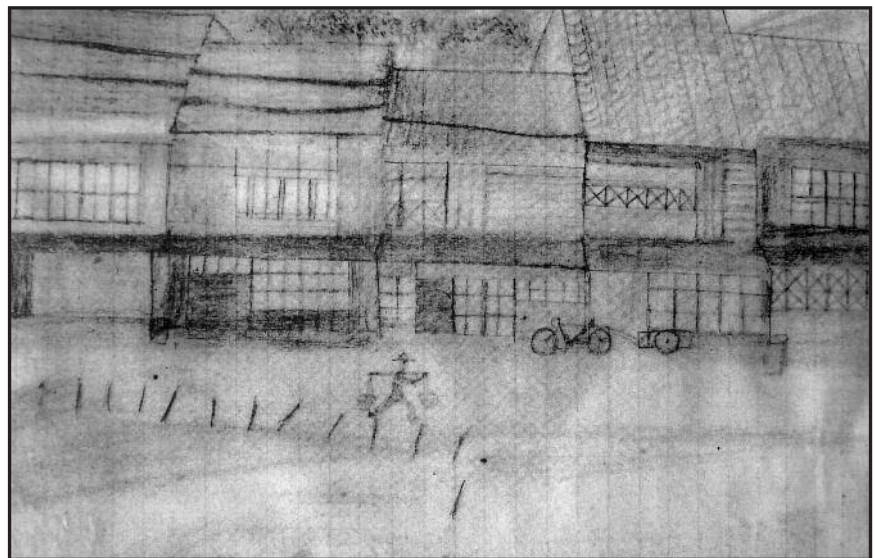
Armed with bamboo batons, the civilian guards, or 'dog wallopers' as they became known, revelled in the prisoners' misery. A POW later testified that the daily march to the factories was a 'cattle drive'. 'Those who lagged behind were mercilessly pushed and beaten. If you fell, you were kicked. Many of the men were again severely and indiscriminately beaten at roll call.' Another former prisoner recounted that 'it was made very clear to us that if anything went wrong, everyone would be punished'.

'A VERY BLACK WEEK . . .'

Even though captured officers were not required to work outside the camp at first, they were nevertheless required to undertake an arduous regimen including an eight-kilometre run each morning together with demanding chores within the camp. Protests against having to empty the prisoners' and Japanese latrines were met with a beating. Captain Jack Hepburn (Prisoner No. 6), a

solicitor in peacetime, was accused of stirring up trouble among the officers by quoting the Geneva Convention. Refusing to sign a state-

ment of guilt, as a fellow officer later testified, he was 'thrashed again until he finally signed'.



One of the Australian inmates, Private Colin Nicol of the 2/20th Battalion, prisoner No. 257, drew this sketch of the row of terraced houses across the street from the camp through his prison window.



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The same row of houses rebuilt post war and pictured by David Green seven decades later.



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Sometime during 1944, a Buddhist priest named Enri Fujito visited the camp and inquired if he could help. 'Fujito was a cultured gentleman and spoke beautiful English', a former POW remembered. On learning that the ashes of the cremated Australian POWs were being held in the camp, stacked up in small white boxes in the prisoners' quarters, the priest was horrified. He turned to camp commander Lieutenant Oota, also a Buddhist, and insisted that the ashes be transferred to his temple, the Kakushin-ji, located some 800 metres from the camp. Oota agreed and the ashes were kept in the shrine until the end of the war. The original temple was destroyed by fire after the war but has since been rebuilt.

Robertson's protests over the long shift hours his men were forced to work — nine, ten, 12, eventually 19-hour days — plus having to run to and from the factories served only to inflame the wrath of Private 'Snake Eyes' Kuriyama. Subjected to ever-increasing abuse, Robertson was pushed to perform a series of gruelling exercises including lengthy hikes through deep snow-drifts. Semi-delirious, he was finally admitted to Takada military hospital where he died from spinal meningitis on March 31, 1943.

News of Robertson's death shocked the POWs. A grieving diarist lamented how 'this has been a very black week for us and most of the men will remember it for many a long day after this war is over'. A memorial service followed Robertson's cremation, and in a rare show of respect, a bugler played the *Last Post* while black crepe was hung around the camp.

With the prisoners' health steadily flagging, 'Sandy' Barrett and his medical team faced an escalating incidence of beri beri (a thiamine or Vitamin B1 deficiency) and chronic diarrhoea. The Japanese unsympathetically reduced rations for the gravely ill through the perverted view that a man not working would require less food. The debilitating effects of malnutrition, disease and chronic exhaustion continued to worsen until they inexorably became fatal. Private George Beale died on May 28 from injuries sustained in an accident while working at the furnaces at Shin-Etsu. As a former POW wrote, he was 'caught in a coke escalator which cut up his stomach and cracked his pelvis. They tried to wire it together but he died on the operating table [at Takada Hospital]. He had just worked a 24-hour shift!' Two days later Corporal George Sheridan succumbed to acute bronchitis and beri beri and on June 7 Private Jack Eddison died from pleurisy.

'THE GREAT SHEET BLITZ'

The camp was moved to a temporary location in spring 1943 before being relocated to a two-storey warehouse beside the Sekigawa river. Freezing in winter, the warehouse was an oven during the hot and humid summer months. A huge influx of flies was drawn to

the large open latrine situated beside the kitchen. In an attempt to counter the plague, each prisoner was expected to kill five flies each day. On one occasion Sergeant Aoki, 'the Faith Healer', was dissatisfied with the 'fly lists'. Those men who failed to deliver their quota were ordered to run in a circle for roughly four hours. Any grievances were met with the order to exercise on the ground until they collapsed. The guards would then walk on them. Anyone collapsing from exhaustion was revived with water and made to continue.

One of the worst episodes experienced during the summer of 1943 was the collective punishment known as the 'the Great Sheet Blitz'. Originating from a directive given by Sergeant Aoki, all prisoners inside the swel-



DAVID GREEN

A small memorial outside the temple records Fujito's words: 'Among the dead there are neither enemies nor allies'.

tering barracks were required to sleep under five heavy blankets. Patrolling guards would haul those who disobeyed out onto the parade-ground for an immediate dressing-down. Matters came to a head when 22 'guilty' prisoners were caught on the night of July 8/9. Formed into a circle while their 'innocent' companions in an outer ring looked on, the 'guilty' were made to run for three hours while being relentlessly beaten. The guards, as a former POW later attested, worked themselves into a frenzy, many shrieking like dogs or hyenas. Hysterical, 'Snake Eyes' Kuriyama stood in the centre of the inner circle with his sword drawn, yelling: 'My sword is hot, my sword will kill, I will kill'. The beleaguered POWs were then ordered on their hands and feet to impersonate an animal. Then, as a finale, both circles of men were instructed to pair off and beat each with fists. If a guard did not believe they were hitting each other hard enough, he would step in and demonstrate.

One of the severest individual beatings observed in the camp that summer was meted out to Lance-Corporal John Magin, who was bedridden with severe dysentery. In a moment when the prisoner attending to his care was unavailable, Magin, as a fellow prisoner described, 'had no alternative than to relieve himself in bed. His excreta passed through the blanket he was lying on and through the floor onto Taguchi, [the medical orderly known as 'the Germ'] whose bed was immediately under Magin's room on the floor below.' Enraged, Taguchi 'hit him with a stick like a mattock handle and equally as heavy'.

'I CAN ONLY SEE INCREASING SICKNESS . . .'

After months of fatigue, sickness and malnourishment the death rate began to soar. Stricken with beri beri, Corporal Alexander 'Jock' Kerr was required to wear a red ribbon on account of his illness, a sign of 'weakness' that only invited extra brutality. As one POW recounted, 'it soon became apparent to the men that to be given a ribbon to wear was almost the same as getting a death sentence'. Another diarist recorded: 'The treatment the sick men receive here is brutal. There is hardly a day that passes without some of the men collapsing. The hard work is robbing them of every bit of energy.' Collapsing at work, Kerr died on August 1, 1943, followed by Private James Perkin on August 23 from a combination of overwork and malnutrition. Wracked with beri beri and diarrhoea, Signalman Jack Baker was bashed by a civilian guard until he collapsed and died on September 13. Six days later Signalman Alfred 'Jack' Martin perished from pneumonia.

A visit by a Japanese doctor produced a minimal improvement in the POWs' diet, though insufficient to fortify Private Frederick 'Pop' Hawkins, who died on September 30. Private John 'Jack' Crandall died less than a fortnight later on October 11.

The onset of colder weather at the end of 1943 further exacerbated the suffering. Many prisoners' feet were so swollen by the effects of beri beri that they were unable to wear shoes, and at night they shivered in unheated barracks. Two Japanese civilian guards — 'Gummy' Yanagizawa and 'Fish Face' Sekihara — became especially cruel towards the ailing prisoners. (It was later discovered that Yanagizawa had vested interest in their demise having taken over the paid job of making the pinewood boxes used to hold their ashes.)

Six prisoners died in November and 11 in December. 'What a pity we were not taken prisoner by a civilised people', Barrett mused. 'Many of us would have disobeyed the surrender order if we had known or even guessed at things we have been ordered to do here.'

AUSTRALIAN SERVICEMEN WHO DIED AT NAOETSU POW CAMP 1942-45

Lt-Col Andrew E. Robertson	2/20th Battalion	31.03.43	Pte George P. Lubey	2/18th Battalion	05.01.44
Pte George Beale	2/20th Battalion	28.05.43	Pte Leslie W. Cobban	2/20th Battalion	05.01.44
Cpl George K. Sheridan	2/20th Battalion	30.05.43	Cpl Frank H. Warren	8th Div Signals	07.01.44
Pte Jack O. Eddison	2/20th Battalion	07.06.43	Pte Neville A. H. Buffett	2/20th Battalion	08.01.44
Cpl Alexander Kerr	2/20th Battalion	01.08.43	Pte Albert H. Johnson	2/20th Battalion	09.01.44
Pte James E. Perkin	2/18th Battalion	23.08.43	L/Cpl Wallace Blackaby	8th Div Signals	14.01.44
Sigmn John H. Baker	8th Div Signals	13.09.43	Pte Frank Bunnett	2/18th Battalion	15.01.44
Sigmn Alfred A. Martin	8th Div Signals	19.09.43	Pte Leonard T. Jones	2/18th Battalion	17.01.44
Pte Frederick Hawkins	2/20th Battalion	30.09.43	Cpl Colin E. Bowman	2/18th Battalion	18.01.44
Pte John J. Crandall	2/20th Battalion	11.10.43	Pte Donald Macleod	2/20th Battalion	19.01.44
Pte Thomas M. Comerford	2/18th Battalion	26.10.43	Pte Joseph L. Ianna	2/20th Battalion	19.01.44
L/Cpl Leo S. Cleary	8th Div Signals	05.11.43	Pte Frederick O. Bayliss	2/20th Battalion	20.01.44
Cpl Garnet J. Judd	2/20th Battalion	13.11.43	L/Cpl Thomas Edmunds	8th Div Signals	20.01.44
Pte Daniel Quinn	2/20th Battalion	15.11.43	Sigmn Donald Frazer	8th Div Signals	21.01.44
L/Cpl Geoffrey G. Allanson	8th Div Signals	16.11.43	Cpl William L. Ashford	2/18th Battalion	21.01.44
Pte Clarence C. Kingham	2/20th Battalion	24.11.43	Pte Wallace C. Lewis	2/20th Battalion	21.01.44
Pte Edward J. Gentle	2/20th Battalion	30.11.43	Pte Dennis L. Connor	2/20th Battalion	21.01.44
Pte William G. Hale	2/18th Battalion	04.12.43	Pte Thomas A. Power	2/20th Battalion	25.01.44
WO2 Joseph K. Ainsworth	2/20th Battalion	04.12.43	Pte Robert G. W. Farley	2/18th Battalion	27.01.44
WO2 Jack C. Hogarth	2/18th Battalion	12.12.43	Pte Dudley Boughton	2/18th Battalion	28.01.44
Pte Alfred V. Burns	2/20th Battalion	15.12.43	Pte Alan F. Cleasby	2/20th Battalion	28.01.44
Pte John J. Miller	2/20th Battalion	20.12.43	Pte Ralph S. Corderoy	2/18th Battalion	29.01.44
Pte John Hurley	2/20th Battalion	22.12.43	Sigmn Eric T. Bell	8th Div Signals	30.01.44
Sigmn Robert C. Chaney	2/18th Battalion	22.12.43	Sgt Errol S. Wannan	2/20th Battalion	04.02.44
Cpl John B. Huntington	2/20th Battalion	22.12.43	Pte Alan T. Healy	2/20th Battalion	09.02.44
Pte Mervyn B. Herps	2/20th Battalion	23.12.43	Sigmn Francis J. Roberts	2/20th Battalion	12.02.44
Pte Joseph G. Harper	2/18th Battalion	30.12.43	Pte Albert E. Barber	2/18th Battalion	17.02.44
Pte Ernest A. Rudd	2/18th Battalion	30.12.43	Pte Lloyd E. Ball	2/20th Battalion	23.02.44
Pte Leonard A. Louis	8th Div Signals	03.01.44	Pte Robert W. Griffin	2/20th Battalion	13.03.44
L/Cpl Cecil T. Tracey	8th Div Signals	04.01.44	Cpl James A. Griffin	2/20th Battalion	08.08.44

The appalling toll continued. Private John Hurley was beaten unconscious on five consecutive nights by Taguchi, 'the Germ', only to be revived with water and beaten again. Compelled to work during the day he died on December 22. An anonymous diarist noted on January 5, 1944: 'Thirty dead of 300 in camp. 90 men off sick.' Private Wallace Lewis, a comedian, had offended the Japanese attending a concert he gave on New Year's Day 1944. Already suffering from dysentery and broncho-pneumonia, Lewis was ruthlessly persecuted until he died on January 21.

Twenty-four more men were to die in January — the gravest month for the C Force captives. Private Robert Farley was one of the unfortunate individuals. Beaten across the face by Taguchi with a shovel for stealing bread from a storeroom, he spent the next 30 days in detention. Upon his release, a desperate Farley swallowed pills he believed were poison. The attempted suicide infuriated the Japanese, as a later war crimes affidavit declared: 'Made to strip and stand in the snow in front of the guardhouse naked for over ten hours', Farley was 'blue and could not have stood up except for the support of the snow'. Having dragged himself to the entrance of the guardhouse, the guards 'fell upon him and kicked him about the face and body until he was quite unrecognisable, so battered and swollen was his head. The following night he was brought into the barrack room by [Private] Hiroaki Kono [an interpreter at the camp], who ordered all POWs to punch him'. He was unrecognisable. Returned to the guardhouse and then to the sick room, Farley died on January 27.

While Oota and his guards were seemingly unmoved by the increasing death toll, Tokyo was alerted to the prisoners' plight as a consequence of the dwindling workforce being unable to meet local labour needs. Besides the two original factories, the POWs were now also employed by the Naoetsu Marine Transportation Company, the Joetsu Land Transportation Company and Nippon Soda, which smelted and forged pig iron. An outspoken Captain James Chisholm (now the senior POW officer) told an investigative delegation from Tokyo in early February 1944 that the guards were directly responsible for the horrendous mortality rate. Five more deaths were recorded the same month, followed by another one in March.

The average death rate for POW camps in Japan was about 11 per cent, but out of 300 Australians at Naoetsu, 60 died at the camp — a mortality rate of 20 per cent.

The thinning ranks of the original C Force cohort were reinforced by 50 English and Dutch prisoners, who arrived in May 1944 from a camp in Hokkaido. Conditions improved marginally after a visiting Japanese doctor found three-quarters of the surviving Australians bedridden. Meal portions were enlarged and food previously plundered from Red Cross parcels was finally distributed. There was a week's respite from work and sanitation began to improve after a visit from the Red Cross. Notwithstanding an overall improvement in the prisoners' health, Naoetsu's final Australian casualty, Corporal James Griffin, died on August 8. . . 60 of the original 300 POWs had now died.

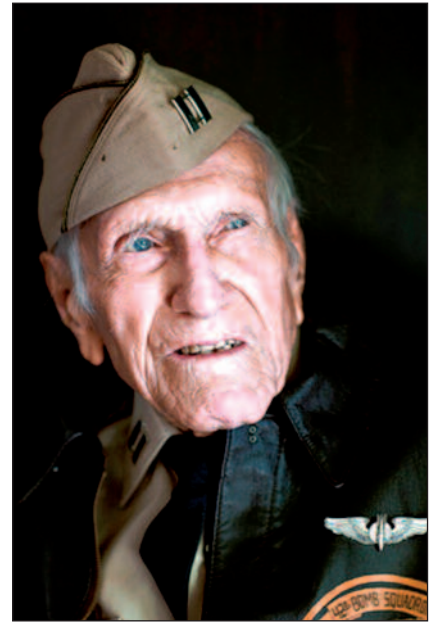
The beatings continued. 'The brutality that we have to put up with since we came to Japan, from some of the guards and the camp

staff, are unbelievable', Private James 'Jimmy' Houston clandestinely noted. 'We've been told many a time by someone on the staff that this is the strictest POW camp in Japan. I pity the poor creatures who are in a worse place than this'.

Christmas 1944 was celebrated with a concert, church service and the sharing of Red Cross parcels. In a changing of guard, Oota, Shibano and several of their subordinates were transferred out of Naoetsu in early 1945. The new camp commander (from January 23 to September 18, 1945) was Lieutenant Tsuneo Ishikawa. His second-in-charge, Sergeant Mutsuhiro Watanabe, had already viciously punished POWs at the main Omori camp in Tokyo. Asserting his pitiless authority, one of the first men to be beaten was Sandy Barrett, the current senior POW officer.



Left: One of the most-cruel and feared guards at Naoetsu was Sergeant Mutsuhiro Watanabe. Of wealthy parentage (his family owned real estate and mines in Nagano and Manchuria) and well educated, Watanabe had enlisted in 1942 sure he would become an officer. Being turned down and made a lowly corporal instead deeply humiliated him, and being assigned to the ignominious POW branch of the army in 1943 felt like an added disgrace, and this resentment probably influenced his subsequent attitude towards the prisoners under his rule. His first posting was to Omori, the main POW camp in Tokyo, where he quickly made a reputation for his irascible and sadist behaviour and frequent brutal thrashing of POWs, earning him the nickname 'the Bird'. In December 1944, promoted to sergeant, he was transferred to Naoetsu, where he continued his reign of terror, building up an endless record of beatings, emotional torture and cruel punishments. (Although he ended up No. 7 on the list of 40 most-wanted Japanese war criminals after the war, Watanabe was never called to justice. He disappeared in August 1945, hiding out until the Allied order for the apprehension of fugitive Japanese war criminals was officially lifted in March 1952. He died in April 2003.)



Left: Among the some 350 American servicemen incarcerated at Naoetsu was a 28-year-old airman, 1st Lieutenant Louis 'Louie' Zamperini. A track athlete and collegiate national record holder on the mile, who had participated in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Zamperini had become something of a celebrity in the US before the war. Serving as a bombardier, first in the 372nd Bomb Squadron, 307th Bomb Group, and then in the 42nd Bomb Squadron, 11th Bomb Group, on May 27, 1943, his B-24 Liberator 41-24212 *Green Hornet* had made a forced ditching in the Pacific Ocean, only Zamperini and two of his crewmates surviving the crash. After enduring a record 47 days at sea in two small life-rafts, threatened by sharks and strafed by Japanese aircraft, Zamperini and his pilot, 1st Lieutenant Russell A. Phillips (the third man, tail gunner Sergeant Francis P. McNamara, had died after 33 days), were picked up by a Japanese Imperial Navy ship and, after six weeks of solitary confinement and interrogations on the island of Kwajalein, were shipped to Japan together with 200 other POWs. Arriving in Yokohama in mid-September, they were taken to the Ofuna camp, the Imperial Navy's POW interrogation centre, where they spent a year under ever-worsening conditions. On September 30, 1944, Zamperini and several others were transferred to Omori camp outside Tokyo. Here, probably due to his fame as an Olympic athlete, he became the favourite

target of Sergeant Watanabe, who beat and thrashed him almost on a daily basis. The terror resided after three months when Watanabe was posted elsewhere but to Zamperini's extremely bad luck he was then himself transferred to Naoetsu on March 1, 1945, only to find 'the Bird' in charge there. The sergeant was on him immediately and for the remaining six months of the war made Zamperini's life a hellish agony, daily assaulting him with his belt or Kendo stick and picking him out for special cruelties. It was a miracle that Zamperini survived until the end. (This picture of him inspecting shell damage to his B-24, *Super Man*, was taken on April 21, 1943, one day after the aircraft had made a crash landing on its base on Funafuti Island following a raid on Nauru Island.) *Right:* Like many Pacific POWs, Louie Zamperini returned from the war both physically damaged and mentally traumatised. He eventually picked himself up, becoming a born-again Christian in 1949 and committing his life to forgiveness and to organising summer camps for troubled boys. Acknowledged both as a sports legend and a war hero, he was chosen to carry the Olympic torch for five different games, including the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano when, at age 80, he carried the flame on the leg through Naoetsu cheered by throngs of Japanese admirers. Zamperini passed away at his home in Los Angeles on July 2, 2014, aged 97.

LOUIS ZAMPERINI AND 'THE BIRD'

In April 1945, Japan's POW camp districts were reorganised and three new primary camps were established at Sendai, Nagoya and Hiroshima, the latter absorbing Zentsuji POW Camp. The Imperial Japanese Army also shifted many of its branch camps and dispatched camps from Tokyo and Yoko-

hama, either inland or to locations close to the Sea of Japan, in anticipation of an Allied invasion.

US Lieutenant Louis Zamperini of the US 42nd Bomb Squadron (a famous track athlete before the war, he had competed at the 1936 Berlin Olympics) was one of a group of prisoners transferred from Tokyo to

Naoetsu on March 1, 1945. Previously held at Omori, Zamperini had been mercilessly punished by Sergeant Mutsuhiro Watanabe, who was known to the American POWs as 'the Bird'. Together with 17 Americans, three Englishmen and a New Zealander, Zamperini was marched from the Naoetsu train station through deep snowdrifts only to



Left: Zamperini's ordeal and unbelievable stamina is portrayed in the movie *Unbroken*, released in November 2014. Based on the 2010 best-selling biography of the same title by Laura Hildebrand, and directed by Angelina Jolie, it features Jack O'Connell as Zamperini (left) and Takamasa Ishihara as Watanabe (centre). The movie was wholly filmed in Australia, shooting taking place out in Moreton Bay (for the ocean scenes) and in Werris Creek (standing in for his home town of Torrance, California) — both in New South Wales; and in the rainforest on Mount Tamborine (doubling for the



jungle of Kwajalein); at Fort Lytton in Brisbane (Omori camp), and the Village Roadshow Studios (with its huge outdoor water tank) — all three on the Gold Coast in Queensland. Even the scenes depicting the race in the Berlin Olympic Stadium were shot in the country, an athletics track in Blacktown outside Sydney being used and then digitally built up to look like the real thing. *Right:* The scenes representing Naoetsu camp, and the coal-shipping harbour where the POWs were put to work, were filmed in an abandoned naval shipyard on Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour.



DAVID GREEN

Left: On May 5, 1945, an American B-29 dropped three bombs near the Shin-Etsu factory, causing 33 Japanese casualties.



DAVID GREEN

This is the site of the explosion as it looks today. Right: A small monument near the spot today commemorates the victims.

discover 'the Bird' waiting for him at the camp. 'Inside I gave up all hope', Zamperini later wrote. Watanabe had already earned the sobriquet 'what-a-bastard' among the Australians. 'He was a very big man', Lance-Corporal Robert Whittington wrote. Boasting that he was 'one of the most powerful men in Japan', Watanabe's favourite weapon was a bamboo kendo sword, which he used to lunge at prisoners' throats, piercing the flesh and 'causing deep wounds to the face and head'.

Zamperini described one particular incident, after the accidental death of a goat in his care, when he was given a thorough beating and made to hold a six-foot-long, heavy wooden beam above his head. Already weak from dysentery, nonetheless with some effort he hoisted it up. After struggling under the weight for over half an hour under the scorching sun without collapsing, Watanabe 'punched me in the stomach with all his might. The beam dropped on my head and knocked me flat on my face, and out'.

'SOMEBODY ELSE TO THUMP . . .'

The camp now became excessively crowded following the influx of 400 additional prisoners: US Marines captured in North China and Wake Island and British servicemen who had laboured on the infamous Burma-Thai railway (see *After the Battle* No. 26). Unprovoked violence continued at the hands of Watanabe, Kono, Aoki and Hiroaki Kawano though the larger number of prisoners did lessen the odds of being a target. Many of the newly-arrived US



On August 25, 1945 — ten days after the Japanese capitulation and five days after this news had been announced to the POWs at Naoetsu — a Grumman TBM-3E Avenger torpedo bomber of US Navy squadron VT-94 from the aircraft carrier *Lexington*, on a mission to locate POW camps in Northern Honshu, took this vertical aerial of the camp. The inmates have painted 'PW' large on the roofs of the prisoners' quarters building, the camp kitchen and the ablutions block at the far end of the parade-ground. Many of the some 700 men then in the camp can be seen milling around the buildings.

DROPPING OF SUPPLIES TO PRISONER-OF-WAR CAMPS		
Date	Camps Supplied	Supplies Dropped
25 August	Fukushima, 37-45N 140-29E Iwaki: Coal Mines (Sendai #1) 37-02N 140-50E Miyata, 37-56N 139-05E Miyata (new camp) 37-57N 139-04E Naoetsu, 37-11N 138-15E	1330 K-ration meals Toilet articles Newspapers
27 August	Miyata, 37-56N 139-05E Miyata (new camp) 37-57N 139-04E Iwaki (Sendai #2), 37-05N 140-48E	3112 K-ration meals Toilet articles Medical supplies Cigarettes (264 cartons) Newspapers
29 August	Sendi #6, 35-35N 139-41-30E Shibaura, 35-32-30N 139-45-30E Shingawa, 35-36-30N 139-45E 274, 35-29' 139-43E 271, 35-26-20N 139-41-10E Ofuno, 35-20-40N 139-33E Ueno Park, 35-42-10N 139-46-40E	5400 K-ration meals Cigarettes (150 cartons) Condensed milk (288 cans) Candy bars (1772 bars) Sugar (64 lbs.)
30 August	267 274, 35-29N 139-43E Ueno Park, 35-42-40N 139-46-40E Akasaka, 35-41N 139-40E	1600 K-ration meals Condensed milk (288 cans) Cigarettes (150 cartons) Sugar (300 lbs.) Roast beef (288 lbs.)
2 September	Harumi (Nagoya area) 35-05N 136-57E Camp (name not known) 35-11N 137-50E	Cigarettes (337 cartons) Condensed milk (270 lbs) Roast beef (252 lbs.) Candy bars (1840 bars)
RECAPITULATION		
Total Supplies Dropped During 5 Days		
K-rations	11,450 meals	
Cigarettes	931 cartons	
Condensed milk	615 cans	
Candy bars	5,612 bars	
Roast beef	540 lbs.	
Sugar	300 lbs.	
	Toilet articles	
	Medical supplies	
	Newspapers	

USNA

Although this document has Naoetsu included in the list for August 25, according to POW diaries the first drops on the camp were not made until the following day, August 26, when torpedo bombers from the *Lexington* dropped sea bags stuffed with goods into the parade-ground. Released without parachute, they plummeted to the ground, forcing the men down below to run for their lives. These were followed by more-massive drops, a flight of six B-29s of the US Twentieth Air Force delivering pallets of supplies (including juices, soup, clothing and medical stores) suspended from parachutes on the 29th.

servicemen were habitually beaten to the point of collapse. On one occasion Kono singled out a prisoner named Ward after learning that he was from America, 'a defeated race', and beat until him until unconscious. The other guards then kicked his limp body.

Commander John A. Fitzgerald (from the US submarine USS *Grenadier*, SS-210), now the senior POW commanding officer, was also repeatedly beaten. According to a later war crimes affidavit, 'he was kicked in the groin, stomach and about the body for various reasons, usually because one of the prisoners had done something that had displeased the Japanese'. Fitzgerald was 'blamed for everything that happened. Sometimes he was beaten by Kono merely because he took a sadistic delight in giving such beatings. Many times, he was forced to stand at attention in front of the guard-house because one of the prisoners had been guilty of a minor infraction of their very harsh rules.'

One particular incident involved an escaped Dutch prisoner named Cornet who was recaptured in July 1945. Brought before a group of guards led by Watanabe, Cornet was repeatedly struck by their fists to the point where he lost consciousness, the guards then used their rifle butts to smash his face. 'The beating was prolonged over a period of five days and five nights', according to a witness. 'During the daytime he was given no food except a teacup of rice gruel. Whenever Cornet fell to the ground', Watanabe would 'then beat him until he managed to get to his feet or become unconscious. Following this beating, he was placed in solitary confinement for 30 days'.

Numerous other acts of brutality were tabled after the war in the war crimes investigations against Ishikawa, who claimed not to have witnessed them nor to have been informed of them.

Communication between the POWs and the Japanese was a perpetual problem. Since there were no interpreters at the factories, prisoners frequently misunderstood commands given in Japanese—a mistake for which they were 'unmercifully thrashed'. The Army 'inter-



In this strike photo taken by one of the B-29s from the 315th Bomb Group some of the collapsed parachutes can be seen in the centre. The drops were made to the south-east of the camp, which is just visible at upper left.

preters' had little comprehension of English, a hopeless situation that led to continual misunderstandings. For eight months in 1943, Captain Chisholm was refused permission to meet with Lieutenant Oota. When he finally met with the camp commander to protest the actions of his guards, his complaints were stymied since the interpreters were the guards responsible for the abuse.

JAPAN SURRENDERS

The appearance of large formations of US bombers over Niigata Prefecture signalled the Allies' advance on the Japanese home islands. On May 5, 1945, an American B-29 Superfortress bomber dropped three bombs near the Shin-Etsu factory, causing 33 Japanese casualties. As air raid drills in the camp and factories became more regular, the guards, including Watanabe, began disappearing for extended periods. Discipline began to relax and it became clear that the war must have ended when factory night-shift work halted.

The official announcement through an interpreter that hostilities had ceased was met with restrained relief. 'No one moved', Zamperini wrote. 'No one cheered. I'd heard these rumours before and been disappointed too many times to take the news seriously'. In total there were 698 POWs in the camp on August 15, 1945 — VJ Day — including 348 Americans and 187 civilians (the latter from Wake Island), 231 Australians, 83 British, 38 Dutch and one New Zealander.

US aircraft now began searching for the POW camps scattered across Japan. Three were identified in northern Honshu on August 25 including 4-B at Naoetsu. In accordance with an agreement made with the Japanese, the camps were clearly marked with large letters 'PW' spelt out on building roofs. Packages containing K-rations, cigarettes, toilet articles and newspapers were dropped to the 'wildly cheering prisoners' and three days later six B-29s dropped cases of food which unfortunately caused several injuries.

In the absence of the occupying forces, as Sergeant Major Robert R. Winslow (a Marine captured on Wake Island) recalled, 'we took over the camp, set up an MP force, and actually ran liberty details into town. Some of our hale and hearty survivors spent some time futilely searching the vicinity for our former guards and the camp commander, who had mysteriously disappeared. After about two weeks we commandeered a train and travelled to Tokyo where we were met by the occupation forces.'



On September 2, a single B-29 of the 430th Bomb Squadron, 502nd Bomb Group, from Guam dropped more supplies into Naoetsu. On his final pass over the camp, pilot 2nd Lieutenant Byron W. Kinney shot this photograph. The camp is straight ahead, on the far side of the bridge and to the right of the confluence of the two rivers. Between August 27 and September 20, the B-29s flew 1,066 sorties on POW missions, dropping 4,470 tons of supplies to 158 camps serving 63,500 prisoners.

Right: On September 5, the 231 Australians freed at Naoetsu were transported by train across Honshu island to Yokohama, on the island's eastern shore, south of Tokyo. They arrived in the middle of the night but the lateness of the hour did not stop them from demonstrating their joy at release. The flag was made and sown by hand from pieces of the red, white and blue coloured parachutes used to drop supplies to them while still in camp. All these men were members of the Australian 8th Division, having been captured in Singapore and Malaya three and a half years earlier. They had been in Naoetsu prison camp ever since.

WAR CRIMES TRIALS

In the wake of Imperial Japan's surrender, the US Joint Chiefs-of-Staff ordered the 'investigation, apprehension and detention of all persons suspected of war crimes'. Alleged Japanese war criminals were divided into three classes: Major (Class A) War Criminals were those charged with 'planning, preparation, initiation or waging a war', while Classes B and C were perpetrators of war crimes and those who 'abetted or permitted them'. On December 5, 1945 General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, authorised the US Eighth Army to appoint military commissions to try Class B and C crimes, primarily at Yokohama. A total of 996 Class B and C defendants were indicted and of this number, 124 were sentenced to death, 63 received life imprisonment and 142 were acquitted. The remainder served prison terms of varying periods. Altogether 475 individuals were prosecuted for the mistreatment of POWs.

Lieutenant Oota and six former military guards from Naoetsu, charged with violating the 'Laws and Customs of War', were brought to trial before the Eighth Army Military Commission on November 10, 1946. In his opening address, the Chief Prosecutor, Major Robert

Right: Back row (L-R): Lance-Corporal Bill Lester (8th Division Signals, prisoner No. 66); Private Oswald Hann (2/20th Battalion, No. 182) and Private Arthur Charlton (2/18th Battalion, No. 118). Front row: Private Jack Cook (2/20th Battalion, No. 120); Sergeant Stan Slater (2/20th Battalion, No. 34); Signalmen John Henderson (8th Division Signals, No. 198) and Rae Polkinghorne (8th Division Signals, No. 280), and Lance-Corporal Ted McCarthy (8th Division Signals, No. 68).



AWM 019178



AWM 019179



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R. B. Hickson of the Australian Army, summarised the history of the Naoetsu POW camp and the Prosecution's intent. He contended that the seven indicted Japanese had acted as a team and were therefore jointly charged with atrocities contributing to the death of 60 Australian prisoners. Furthermore, those who survived were in a pitiful state at the time of the surrender. A total of 22 specifications were listed, 13 relating to the deaths of individual POWs and nine relating to atrocities committed by Narumi Oota's men. In addition to the damning affidavits presented, the Prosecution called Private

Left: En route from Japan to Australia, liberated Australian POWs on board the hospital ship *Tjitalengka* enjoy a meal. Standing at rear (L-R): Corporal Ralph Jackson (2/20th Battalion, Naoetsu prisoner No. 51) and Signalman Charles Birse (8th Division Signals, prisoner No. 106). Seated front (L-R): Private Claude Fulloon (2/18th Battalion, prisoner No. 157); Signalman Fred Duncan (8th Division Signals, prisoner No. 148); and Privates Roland Dean and Ted Dean (both of 2/19th Battalion, Roland had been imprisoned at Itchioka and Ted at Kobe Buen).

Right and below: Six of the military guards and seven of the civilian guards of Naoetsu were tried for war crimes before an American Military Court after the war. Two of the former and six of the latter were sentenced to death by hanging, the other five defendants receiving sentences ranging from life imprisonment to 20 years — all with hard labour. These are mug shots of some of the civilian guards given the death penalty.

James W. Downie — his face scarred from a beating — to the stand to recount his suffering at the hands of Sergeant Shibano.

Captain Chisholm's written testament detailed the 'totally inadequate' food and the protracted factory shifts, 'up to 18 hours long, and for as long as 110 days without rest'. Chisholm's account documented how the smallest wrongdoing would see the POWs return from work only to be kept back on the parade-ground until midnight, starved of food, for three or four consecutive nights. The POW barracks, he wrote, were infested with lice, fleas, rats and other vermin. No attempt was made to eradicate them. If mud was found on a prisoner's boot during inspection, even on the sole, the unfortunate individual was required to 'crawl along and lick all men's boots as punishment'. 'The Japanese idea of a sick parade', Chisholm exposed, 'was to get all men who reported sick to stand to attention for an hour, and then beat them severely. One interpreter had a favourite trick of taking a run at any man to whom he took a dislike, jumping into the air and kicking him in the stomach. Many men were severely hurt in this way'.

A separate Japanese document presented by the Prosecution case called for all POWs to be murdered in the event of invasion: 'Kill them all and leave no trace. Whether they are destroyed individually or in groups, or however it is done, with mass bombing, poisonous smoke (see *After the Battle* No. 160), poisons, drowning, decapitation, or what, dispose of them as the case dictates. In any case it is the aim not to allow the escape of a single one, to annihilate them all and not leave any trace.'

The court reconvened to hear the verdicts on February 3, 1947. All the seven accused had pleaded not guilty but were deemed culpable for their actions. Lieutenant Narumi Oota was held responsible for the deaths of 60 Australian POWs as well as the beating, torture and mistreatment of Allied prisoners by his staff. Oota was also accused of misappropriating Red Cross supplies and failing to discharge his duty as commander by refusing and denying medical care and supplies, despite protestations, all of which hastened the number of prisoner deaths. Found guilty, Oota was sentenced to 'life imprisonment with hard labour'.

Sergeant (later Sergeant Major) Tadeo Shibano was charged with numerous atrocities and similarly found guilty of misappropriating Red Cross packages. The court found him guilty of the mistreatment of prisoners in a series of incidents that contributed to and hastened their deaths. Sentenced to death, Shibano was hanged on November 6, 1948 at Sugamo Prison (see *After the Battle* No. 81).

Sergeant Yusu Aoki, medical representative, was charged with mistreating, torturing and beating prisoners, compelling sick prisoners to perform heavy duties and refusing medical attention. Aoki's actions were found to have contributed to and accelerated the deaths of numerous prisoners. Found guilty, he was sentenced to death and hanged on November 11, 1949. His assistant, Private Yoshio Taguchi, was sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labour.

Private Michio Kuriyama, camp interpreter from December 1942 to April 30, 1943, was found guilty of mistreating, beating and torturing the prisoners. He was sen-



Masaji Sekihara, 'Fish Face'. One of the most callous tormentors within the camp, found guilty of the death of seven prisoners and beating up six others, he was hanged on August 20, 1949.



Akira Yanagizawa, 'Gummy'. Notorious for his brutality, and held responsible for killing seven POWs, beating up five more and other forms of abuse, he too was hanged on August 20, 1949.

tenced to life imprisonment with hard labour. Private Hiroaki Kono was also sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labour and Corporal Kengo Katayama was sentenced to 20 years hard labour.

ISHIKAWA'S TRIAL

In a separate trial in March 1948, former Lieutenant Tsuneo Ishikawa was charged with failing to discharge his duty as camp commander by preventing his guards from committing atrocities and other offences against Allied POWs. Despite his claimed ignorance of the offences, Ishikawa was technically still accountable for the crimes because of his responsibility as camp commander. He entered a guilty plea and received the relatively lenient sentence of four years with hard labour, though 25 months of the sentence was remitted in light of his 'many good deeds', which had materially improved conditions within the camp in the final months of the war.

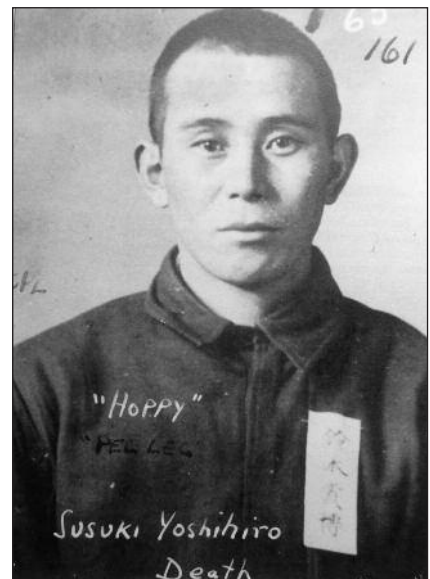
THE TRIAL OF THE CIVILIAN GUARDS

The 'Trial of Yanagizawa and others' began on November 12, 1947. Similar to the prosecution of the army guards, each of the accused faced the charge of having violated the 'Laws and Customs of War'. As with the military guards, each defendant pleaded not guilty.

The Prosecution opened by listing the number of deaths and atrocities allegedly committed by the guards. Examples of flagrant abuse were cited such as Yoshihiro Susuki forcing prisoners to lick dirt off his shoes. A total of 127 affidavits were presented plus the notice that five witnesses would be called upon to testify. Taking the stand, Captain James Chisholm identified co-accused Akira Yanagizawa and Masaji Sekihara as the most callous tormentors within the camp. Another witness, Private Watkin J. Parry, recounted how 'the guards were beating us all the time — every day. My only thought was to stay alive.'



Hiroshi Obinata, 'Boofhead'. Found guilty of murdering five prisoners, he was hanged on the same day as Sekihara and Yanagizawa.



Yoshihiro Susuki, 'Hoppy'. Responsible for the deaths of three prisoners, he was hanged at Sugamo Prison on September 3, 1949.



DAVID GREEN

In July 1993, a group of seven local residents of Joetsu City launched a plan to erect a permanent memorial on the site of the former POW camp to honour the victims and bring reconciliation. After gaining official backing from the City authorities, a Council for the Creation of a Peace and Friendship Monument was set up, presided by Saukji Sato, former Mayor of Naoetsu. Fund-raising was started, the landowner was persuaded to sell the land, and contacts were established with the

Australia-Japan Foundation and Australian ex-POWs and their families. On October 8, 1995, in a ceremony attended by Australian Ambassador Ashton Calvert and 31 ex-inmates of the camp, the Peace Memorial Park was officially dedicated. It is one of the very few memorials in Japan to acknowledge the suffering of Japan's victims and Japanese responsibility for it. The focal point of the park are the Statues of Peace and Friendship made by local sculptor Tetsuji Okamoto.

Having considered the evidence, the court reconvened on January 5, 1948. All seven accused were found accountable for their actions. Yanagizawa was found guilty of the deaths of seven prisoners and guilty on five counts of inflicting severe beatings and other forms of abuse upon the prisoners. Still pleading his innocence, he was hanged on August 20, 1949.

Sekihara was found guilty of contributing to the deaths of seven prisoners and beating six others. Sentenced to death, he too was hanged on August 20, 1949.

Hiroshi Obinata received the death penalty for contributing to the deaths of five prisoners and eight counts of inflicting severe beatings. He too was hanged on August 20, 1949.

Yonesaku Akiyama was found guilty of contributing to the deaths of three prisoners and inflicting severe beatings on two more. Sentenced to death, he was hanged on the

same day as Yanagizawa, Sekihara and Obinata, August 20, 1949.

Susuki was found guilty of the deaths of three prisoners and guilty of six counts of severely beating the prisoners and other forms of torture. Sentenced to death, he was hanged at Sugamo on September 3, 1949.

The sixth defendant, Eiichi Uishiki, was found guilty of contributing to the deaths of three prisoners and guilty of nine counts of inflicting severe beatings and other brutalities. Sentenced to death, he too was hanged on September 3, 1949.

Morimasa Oshima was found guilty of severely beating two prisoners and cruelties against six others and sentenced to 'serve 46 years imprisonment with hard labour'.

FLIGHT OF THE BIRD

Watanabe, 'The Bird', fled from Naoetsu several days before the end of the war. Listed among General MacArthur's most-wanted

war criminals, he changed his name to Owata and hid for years in a remote Nagano village (see *After the Battle* No. 161), escaping the gallows as MacArthur announced an amnesty for Class A war criminals on December 24, 1948. A reprieve for Class B and C war crimes followed the next year and in 1952 the search for remaining fugitives officially ended.

Watanabe resurfaced and in due course became a successful life insurance salesman. Decades later, in August 1995, he apologised for his actions in a newspaper article on the 50th anniversary of VJ-Day published in the London *Daily Mail*. Watanabe protested that he 'did not use weapons, only fists and hands' and he justified his 'balanced' actions as a consequence of 'obeying orders under Japanese military rule. I had to teach the prisoners military discipline'. He claimed 'I knew nothing about the Geneva Convention. I asked my commanding officer about it and he said: "This is not Geneva, this is Japan".'



DAVID GREEN

Left: Seven years earlier, in May 1988, on the occasion of a memorial service held at the site under the auspices of the Cowra-Japan Society, Frank Hole, an Australian ex-POW and survivor of Naoetsu, had brought and presented a plaque commemorating the 60 Australians who died there. For several years it was kept at the Joetsu City Hall but today it forms part of the cenotaph at the Peace Memorial Park. Right: During the planning phase of the memorial park, controversy arose over the council's plan to also incorporate a memorial plaque for the eight Japanese guards executed after the war in the pedestal

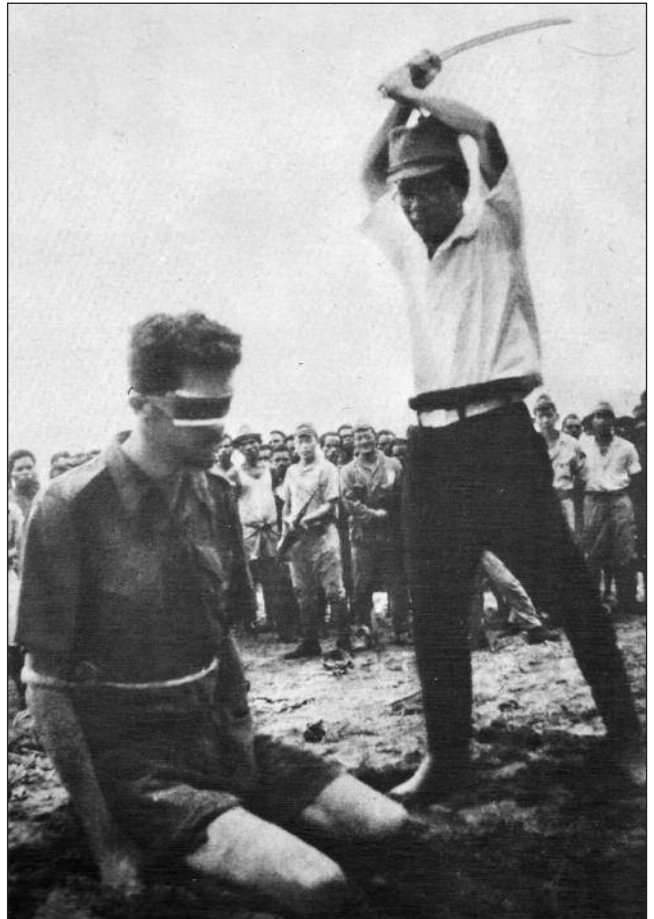


DAVID GREEN

of the monument. Not surprisingly, the Australians found the plan unacceptable so the council decided to erect a separate cenotaph for the Japanese war criminals a few yards away from the main monument. At the request of the families of the executed men, their names were not listed. Instead, the inscription reads: 'Eight Stars in the Peaceful Sky'. Here, former Australian POWs Neil MacPherson and Owen Heron, both from 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion and held in Camp Fukuoka 24-B at Emukae in Nagasaki Prefecture, place flowers at the Japanese memorial during their visit to Naoetsu in 2002.



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THE EXECUTION OF SERGEANT SIFFLEET

On October 24, 1943, while Allied troops in Europe continued their advance northward in Italy and prepared for the invasion of France, over 8,500 miles away on a remote beach in North-East New Guinea, Sergeant Leonard Siffleet, a 27-year-old commando of the Second Australian Imperial Force, bound and blindfolded, bravely knelt awaiting his fate.

The event, captured in a photograph on the instructions of his executioner, remains not only one of the most confronting images of the war in the Pacific but also is the only known photograph of an Allied prisoner of war being executed by the Japanese. In Europe, the mortality rate of the Allied prisoners in German custody was just 1.1 per cent while it was 37 per cent of those who were prisoners of the Japanese.

Leonard 'Len' Siffleet was born on January 14, 1916 in Gunnedah in New South Wales, Australia. He was the third of seven children to parents Leo Vincent (of Dutch descent) and Alma Elizabeth Siffleet. Growing up Len was a keen sportsman and was particularly fond of swimming. In the late 1930s he joined his elder sister Veronica (known by her middle name Pearl) who had moved to Sydney hoping to find work. Len tried to join the police but was rejected for poor eyesight although the defect was not serious enough to prevent him being called up for military service in August 1940. Serving for a few months in a searchlight unit at RAAF Richmond, Len was released from duty following the sudden death of his mother due to the itinerant nature of their father's work. This necessitated him taking responsibility for his younger siblings who came to live with Pearl and her husband with

Len supporting the family financially. Later he became engaged to a Miss Clarice Lane.

Despite his responsibilities to family, in November 1941 he joined the Australian Imperial Force and was posted to the 1st Division Signals Company at Ingleburn, New South Wales, and in August 1942 was sent to Melbourne to undertake a signals course.



Len Siffleet with his fiancée Clarice Lane at Circular Quay, Sydney.

AWM P02547.002

By Gail Ramsey

Once this was completed, in September he volunteered to join Special Operations Australia (SOA), a special unit tasked to gather military intelligence and carry out commando operations behind enemy lines. The SOA, which was directly responsible to General Sir Thomas Blamey, Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Military Forces, had originally been set up in March 1942 to conduct covert operations in the south-west Pacific similar to those of the Special Operations Executive in Europe. When, in June 1942, the Americans, Australians, Dutch and British set up the Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB), a joint intelligence and special operations agency based in Melbourne, the SOA was absorbed into it, becoming its A Section. To maintain the Bureau's recruits — Australian, British, Dutch, New Zealand, Timorese and Indonesian — a special holding unit was established known as 'Z' Special Unit.

Siffleet, now part of 'Z' Special Unit, was sent to Cairns, Queensland, for jungle training and in October 1942 was selected to join a Dutch operation set up by the Netherlands East Indies Forces Intelligence Service (NEFIS). The mission was to observe Japanese shipping movements in and out of Hollandia, the capital of Dutch New Guinea on the island's north coast. (At the time the western end of the island was a Dutch colony.) The Japanese had made huge gains and the concern was that the next likely target for invasion would be Australia. Code-named 'Whiting' and led by Sergeant Thijs Staverman of the Royal Netherlands Navy, the personnel comprised Corporal

D. J. Topman; two Ambonese islanders from the Dutch East Indies, H. Pattiwal and M. Reharing seconded as privates, with Len Siffleet as their radio operator. The 'Whiting' team was to travel with another intelligence-gathering mission named 'Locust'. This was an all-Australian team under Lieutenant Jack Fryer, with Lieutenant Guy Black, Lieutenant Harry Aiken, and Sergeant Les Baillie on the radio.

Now promoted to Acting Sergeant, Siffleet spent the Christmas of 1942 in Port Moresby, on New Guinea's south-eastern shore, from where he wrote his last letter home to his sister reminiscing of Christmas's past, asking after his fiancé and hoping for a brighter future . . . sadly one that he was never to see.

The 'Whiting' and 'Locust' parties were about to commence their mission when they learned that the Japanese had occupied Wewak, on New Guinea's northern shore 200 miles east of Hollandia. Two other possible landing locations on the Sepik coast had been declared too dangerous to use so on January 20, 1943, the teams were flown by Dakota from Port Moresby to Bena Bena airfield, some 300 miles to the north-west, from where they would still face a 300-mile-long trek through mountains and jungle to their destination. A large number of locals were required as porters to carry the vast amount of provisions and equipment needed for the extended stay in the north, and over 100 native carriers were recruited. However, they were often unreliable, abandoning the task and returning home, so were replaced as the mission progressed through different villages. Nevertheless maintenance of the carrier line was to remain a continuous problem.

The two teams set out on January 21. The daily routine was to break camp at about 8.30 a.m. with the aim of reaching the next village before nightfall to recruit more porters and extra food supplies. Regular radio contact with Port Moresby was maintained throughout. By early February the group had reached Wabag airstrip, where a halt was made for more supplies to be flown in, but an ongoing dispute between Staverman and Topman resulted in Topman leaving and returning to Moresby in the supply plane.

As the Japanese occupation of the area increased, the patrol often had to take detours over mountain ranges, use boats or wade through swamps, all of which delayed them further. As the porters remained a constant problem, the patrol now had to be replenished by airdrops. By June 14 they had reached the airstrip at Lumi at the foothills of the Torricelli Mountains where a base camp was established. During the past six months they had covered a distance of 514 miles by foot and 230 miles by boat. Now they were just inland from Aitape in the Mai Mai area.



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The operation which led to the death of Sergeant Siffleet and two of his men at the hands of his Japanese captors took place on New Guinea at the end of a six-month march from Bena Bena to Aitape — a distance of over 500 miles.

Meanwhile, back in Australia, the administrative structure of their organisation had changed once again. In April, Allied Intelligence Bureau's A Section had been renamed the Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD) and divided itself into 'Z' Special Unit, responsible for commando operations, and an 'M' Special Unit, responsible for intelligence. On May 5, Siffleet was administratively transferred to the latter unit and his promotion to the rank of sergeant was also confirmed.

On July 9 Siffleet's party, led by Sergeant Staverman and with over 60 porters, com-

menced the final part of their journey, heading towards the area behind Hollandia in order to begin their task of reporting on the movements of the Japanese. They moved to Wama, 15 miles south of Vanimo, where they received three food drops. However, by now airdrops had become dangerous as some of the tribes in this northern area had become almost an extension of the Japanese army — something headquarters in Australia had not foreseen as it had been presumed that the natives would be sympathetic to the Allied cause.



The members of the 'Whiting' and 'Locust' parties, together with native porters, pictured at Lumi, some 30 miles south of Aitape on the north coast. Standing on far left are (L-R)

Sergeant Thijs Staverman, team leader of 'Whiting'; Sergeant Siffleet; Rah Ah Soong of the 'Locust' team, and Private Patiwahl, also of 'Whiting'.



AWM 101097



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Left: October 24, 1943. Sergeant Siffleet with the two Ambonese islanders Privates Pattiwal and Reharing of the Netherlands East Indies Forces. Blindfolded, they await their fate on the beach at Aitape. A photographer was detailed to record the executions which were witnessed by a large crowd of Japanese. Centre: The Japanese officer was later identified as Chief Petty Officer Teruo Watanabe. Right: Kunio Yunome performed the deed on Private Reharing, later writing in his diary: 'This afternoon for me was an

occasion to be remembered for a lifetime. I myself, with my own Japanese sword, beheaded an enemy soldier prisoner. This was a new experience for me but I screwed myself to it. Anything can be done if one resolves to do it to the best of one's ability. And I am convinced that given complete confidence I can carry out any task successfully. I really believe I was magnificent. Amongst the Japanese onlookers there were many who declared their admiration for my skill in making such an excellent stroke.'

The Japanese had already set up a command post at Aitape and in mid-September it received word from local villagers that Allied spies had been seen in the mountains. An immediate hunt was launched, the Japanese offering a reward for their capture. Other locals who remained friendly to the 'Whiting' group warned them but, in spite of the risk, Staverman continued to advance towards Hollandia.

Sergeant Staverman now took Private Pattiwal ahead to investigate only to be ambushed outside the village of Nemo, south of Hollandia. Although Pattiwal managed to escape and return to the others, Staverman was killed. Siffleet then radioed that Staverman was dead; that he was destroying all codes and the radio, and was then going to head south with Privates Pattiwal and Reharing, hoping to join another party near Wamala Creek.

They had just reached Wantipi, west of Aitape, when they were surrounded by a group of 100 Wapi tribesmen, sympathetic to the Japanese. Siffleet fired on them, wounding one, and broke free only to be captured. The locals then took them to the Japanese No. 8 Naval Construction Unit at Malol, near Aitape, where they were traded for Japanese occupation money and a roll of fabric. The prisoners were now in the charge of Chief Petty Officer Teruo Watanabe of the Naval Garrison Troops Guard Company.

At Malol, Siffleet was interrogated and beaten by two Japanese, Saburo Hiroe, a civilian administrator, and Kunio Yunome, who acted as interpreter, before being moved to Aitape. A report was sent to Rear-Admiral Michiaki Kamada, commander of No. 2 Base Force of the Japanese Eighth Fleet at Wewak, who, along with a staff officer and a civilian jurist attached to his headquarters, decided that the prisoners had been operating as spies and were guilty of treason. On October 23 he issued instructions to Watanabe for the men to be executed.

The following day, on the beach at Aitape, before a crowd of jeering Japanese and locals under the supervision of Watanabe, the three prisoners were executed in accordance with Japanese tradition. The three executioners were Kunio Yunome, the interpreter, and two Japanese civil servants, Masuyo Mitsuashi and Chikao Yasuno, the latter being the one who decapitated Siffleet. Prior to the execution, an observer was tasked with photographing the event in order to record

the 'excellent swordsmanship' that was about to be demonstrated by the executioners.

Having received Siffleet's radio message, but then no further word from him, on October 21 members of the 'Locust' party organised a search along with a number of sympathetic natives. After four weeks, having failed to find any trace of the missing team, they were ordered to return to base.

In December 1943, Sergeant Leonard Siffleet was posted missing in action, believed to be a prisoner of war, and his family was notified accordingly.

In March 1944, Operation 'Reckless' — the Battle of Hollandia — commenced between American and Japanese troops. By this time the port and nearby airfields had become bases for units of the Japanese Second Area Army and the 6th Air Division of the Fourth Air Army. This force comprised of over 14,000 men under the command Major-General Toyoto Kitazono and Rear-Admiral Yoshikazu Endo. 'Reckless' was a huge success as the loss of Hollandia pushed the Japanese further west to Wakde while the Japanese Eighteenth Army, after abandoning all defensive positions near Wewak,

faced a 400-mile retreat eastward through thick jungle.

Searching through the belongings of a dead Japanese at Hollandia, the Americans discovered negatives depicting the last seconds of Siffleet's life. As a result, this photograph received vast press publicity in both Australia and America although it was often misrepresented as showing other victims of Japanese executions, most commonly the Australian Victoria Cross recipient, Flight Lieutenant William Newton of No. 22 RAAF Squadron, shot down over New Guinea and ceremoniously beheaded by the Japanese at Salamaua on March 29, 1943. However, in 1945 it was positively identified by the Australian casualty branch as showing Siffleet and this was further confirmed by Yunome, one of the executioners, when he was interrogated by the Australians in 1946.

Siffleet's family were told in 1946 that he was now officially declared dead although they now suffered an additional blow. When it became known that he had in fact died in 1943, the army issued a demand for the repayment of his sergeant's pay for the previous three years!



USNA

The campaign to liberate New Guinea lasted right up until the end of the war in August 1945. On April 22, 1944, landings were made at Aitape (Operation 'Persecution') and at Hollandia (Operation 'Reckless') by the US Sixth Army with the intention of isolating the Japanese garrison at Wewak. This armour of the 632nd Tank Destroyer Battalion was pictured on Aitape beach later (on July 31) when it was moving up under the direction of a patrol of the 32nd Infantry Division.



Left: Every day at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra a special ceremony is held to honour one particular casualty from the 102,000 Australians recorded on the Roll of Honour. On September 3, 2014 it was the turn of Sergeant Siffleet



PAULINE ROBINSON

with the address read by Flight Sergeant Lisa Swan. Right: The following year members of the All Island Project planned to erect a memorial to the victims at Aitape which was unveiled on May 5, 2015.

Siffleet's executioner, Yasuno, and Hiroe, the administrator who had interrogated him, were both believed to have been killed in the Hollandia battle, but most of the others involved in the executions on Aitape beach were called to account after the war. Rear-Admiral Kamada was convicted of other war crimes and was executed by the Dutch at Pontianak on October 18, 1947. Captain Kiyohisa Noto, his chief-of-staff, was sentenced at the Rabaul tribunal to 20 years for the execution of Siffleet and was given a further 20-year sentence for the killing of an American pilot, 2nd Lieutenant Robert E. Thorpe, on the Kairiru Islands. However, the initial sentence imposed by the Australian court was suspended and in the end Noto served only 127 months before being released. Watanabe, the commander of the guard detachment, was sentenced to seven years and served 18 months. Yunome, the interpreter/executioner, was sentenced to hang, however made numerous appeals for leniency claiming he was only carrying out orders and also stating Noto had given inaccurate evidence. His sentence was commuted to ten years. The third executioner, Mitsuashi, had also been apprehended by the Dutch while attempting to return to Japan but his fate remains unknown.

The image of Siffleet being put to death, although often incorrectly identified, came to

represent the fate suffered by many at the hands of the Japanese in the Pacific theatre. It remains the only photograph capturing the execution of an Allied soldier as a prisoner of war. In September 2014, 71 years after his death, the Australian War Memorial in Canberra commemorated Siffleet's service to his nation in a Last Post ceremony, the address being read by Flight Sergeant Lisa Swan.

As his body was never recovered Siffleet is listed on the Lae Memorial to the Missing in Papua New Guinea for officers and men of the Royal Australian Army, Australian Merchant Navy and Royal Australian Air Force who lost their lives in operations in the area and who have no known grave — although recent events may soon change that as being the end of his story.

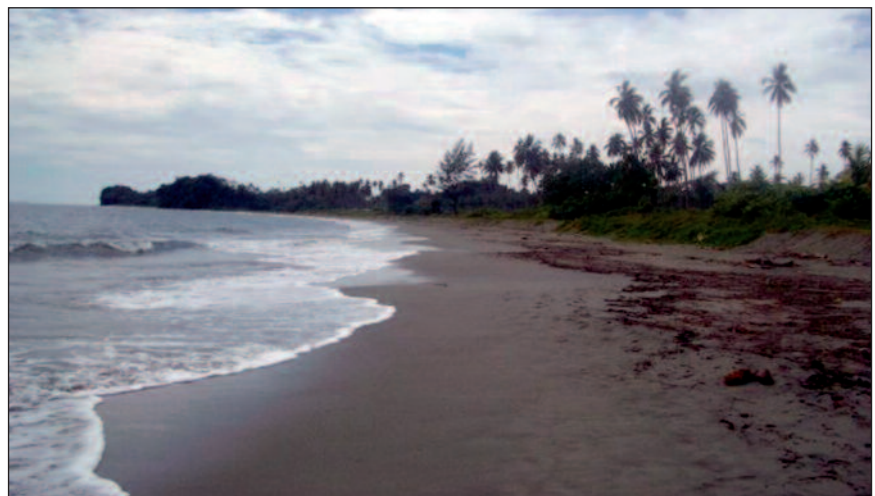
In 2005 'The Ali Island Project' — a charitable joint venture between the local Ali Island community of Papua New Guinea and Australian volunteers — was initiated to help support the health and well-being of the residents of Ali Island of the north coast town of Aitape. When the group realised that the beach that the group embarks from to go between the two communities was the site of Siffleet's execution, they approached the Australian Department of Veteran Affairs and the Australian War Memorial to support and fund a memorial plaque to be erected at Aitape to honour his memory.

Although such support was declined from official channels, the resourceful group was not deterred raising the required funds from the Australian public and negotiating with the local government in Aitape to erect a memorial to the three men. This was dedicated on May 5, 2015. The local community have gone even further and named the memorial area Siffleet Park.

Attempts to find Siffleet's grave soon after the war would have most likely been met with silence and fear from locals at the time. However, as part of the events surrounding the memorial at Aitape, information has now surfaced from a number of locals, whose parents were witnesses to the executions, that the bodies were buried near the mouth of the Raihu river at the eastern end of Aitape beach. In 1943 that area was all open beach but over the years since then it has become overgrown. The locals apparently planted a coconut tree to mark the spot and, although this has since died, the stump remains. The Australian volunteers were taken to and shown the exact location and have passed this information, including video interviews with the local contacts, to the appropriate Australian authorities. What happens next remains to be seen. The Australian Army's Unrecovered War Casualties Unit say that they plan to investigate further although at the time of going to press no precise date has been announced.



Left: Members of the group were taken to this stump of a coconut tree where it was claimed that the bodies had been buried. Consequently, a request has been made to the



Australian government to mount an operation to recover the remains for proper burial. Right: Aitape beach today — a peaceful scene that belies its horrendous past.