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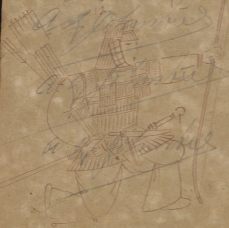
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Blossing Sunday 10. 10

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THE YEARS
BETWEEN

1941 0100 hours 29 July



1945

要再檢

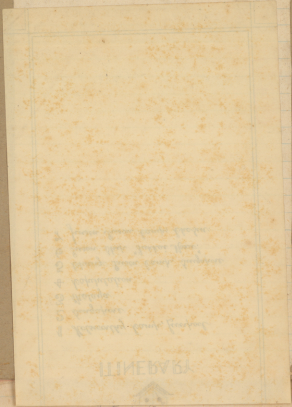
Corporal A.R.C. Johnstone, NX 20372
Jinsen P.O.W. Camp, Chosen.



ITINERARY

- 1 Kelsworthy Camp, Liverpool
- 2 Singapore
- 3 Malaya
- 4 Capitulation
- 5 Changi Prison Camp, Singapore
- 6 Prison Ship "Jukkai Maru"
- 7 Jinan Prison Camp, Khabarovsk

要再檢



Introduction

I have kept a diary from the capitulation (15.2.43) up to now, but nothing from the time I said good bye to you mine own at 0100 hrs Tuesday morning 29th July 1941 so intend writing a complete record from that hour up to our reunion. The years that we have spent apart are the best for me means everything as you would know mine own. Actually in "The Years Between" that is the years we have been apart, a lot has happened and just in case my memory fails I will record what I can of all my doings, but once freedom is gained, I desire to forget the period, as it has cost me dear, but brought home to me, what my love for you has been, a love which has not abated excepting that it is an intense yearning at all times to have you with me, with me, mean to be parted again that is my one wish, and every day with the "hope that" Soon all earth's wars may cease and the voice of Christ will again say peace

Alex

Jensen Prison Camp
Blossom Sunday 10.11.41



① 2:00 hours 29.7.41 Holworthy Camp Liverpool ①
At this hour I said goodbye to my beloved wife, the
last I was to see of her for many a long dreary age.
Bill Fillingham and his wife Joy drove her
back to "Koorawatha" in their car and to me
left behind I felt as if I had lost my all (and
to me Peg was that). Naturally sleep was out of
the question and at 0430 we packed
up for our departure. I managed to get Peg
on the phone at "Koorawatha" at 0700 and had
a last few words with her. 0930 saw us moving
off by Motor Ferry convey to Liverpool Station, where
after an hour's waiting we entrained for Darling
Harbour. Arriving there at 1400 after another wait
we boarded the "T.S.M.V." "Katoomba" which luckily
was not a troopship in the true sense of the
word and our quarters were moderately
comfortable after tent life. I was billeted in the
2nd class Smoking room with the 1st Lt. informant.
We sailed at 1600 hrs amidst hooting and
waving and cleared Sydney Heads at 1630.
We were accompanied by one troopship the
"Johann Olden Barmbecht".

without escort we proceeded south and off the Victorian coast we were joined by another troopship "Harrage" and an escort vessel "H.M.A.S. Perth" travelling well south of the Australian coast we experienced very little rough weather. During the Trip, the national game of "two up" both pennies and dice was played at every available opportunity and a considerable amount of money changed hands. In the third class mess room at night, one would have thought they were present at a Monte Carlo roulette. Sporting activities consisted of deck sports, physical training, deck tennis etc and this together with life-boat drill and rushing to stations kept us occupied when not attending lectures. Beer was taboo as the price asked by the Steamship Co. was too high, so until we reached Fremantle we were all temperate in our habits. Hot and cold baths and being treated as passengers as regards meals a la carte was excellent, as in our next stage we were to discover what bad food was.

On the 6th August we arrived at Fremantle⁽³⁾ and were granted 12 hours leave, but only after disembarking from the "Katoomba" and embarking on the "Siboga". Our leave at Fremantle consisted of a train trip to Perth, visiting a few hotels, eating and I accompanied George Spicer (later escaped from Singapore to Java) to see a friend of his mother's. I guess my thoughts were too full of my beloved wife for me to have enjoyed my leave. 8th August saw us once more set for sail and by this time we knew that Malaya was our destination. The convoy consisted of three Dutch troopships "Siboga", "Johanni" and the "Marnya" and our escort vessel was the HMAS "Bankura". We were permitted to write our first ship's letters and I also sent postcards. Due to the terrifically crowded holds (or bunks of the ship) where we slept in hammocks, swung over food tables, we were allowed to sleep on deck and this proved to be both more comfortable and not so hot and stuffy.

The days consisted of lectures and even Orderly Rooms, time spent in eating from the canteen, chocolates, biscuits, sardines etc, the latter proving a godsend as one could not stomach the Dutch cooking at any price. (eggs must have had injections in them.) As to gambling one could play any game for any stakes. The sanitary arrangements were vile and disgusting and left one with the impression that we were living in the land of slums. Tropical Kit was issued together with lectures on Venereal Disease and a handbook on Malaya left us in no doubt as to our destination. The trip from Fremantle to Singapore with the existing facilities was shocking, but later on I was to learn that even though it was bad, a worse one was to come. We arrived at Singapore on 15th August 1900 hrs amidst a torrential downpour and after disembarking were lined up and taken by motor transport to a newly prepared camp, under canvas, at the Esplanade, so now to deal with Singapore.

②

Singapore

③

On arrival at Ulu Boon, a village on Singapore Island amidst torrential rain we erected or tried to erect canvas huts this was on 15.8.41 1400 hours. We were quartered near some English Artillery (A/A) troops quartered in huge well built modern brick barracks, it was in these barracks that we made our first purchase of Malayan goods, I should say English, including cigarettes, pipe tobacco, chocolate, etc with Malayan currency (1 dollar (\$1) = 2/11 Austr.). At the first opportunity we visited Ulu Boon's village and there we purchased shorts and shorts made to order for ridiculous prices. Our camp eventually got a canteen (marquee) selling beer, cigarettes, sweets etc. During my stay at Ulu Boon, we were only there about 4/5 weeks, I had two leaves to Singapore of which I enjoyed neither, excepting that it gave me an opportunity of buying a few presents for you, the first time I got some handkerchiefs and two bags for you at Robinson's (later demolished by bombs). Visited the Augas Club (Australian troops

only) and the Union Jack Club and had my ⑥
first Guillemot ride. Singapore to me was the
filthiest spot I have ever visited and I was
never very keen to make any many trips
to it. I experienced my first "snake charmer"
outside the Angkor Club one Saturday afternoon
and little did I dream then that not six months
later I would again be outside the Angkor Club
a prisoner of war, whilst at the same time I
had my first glimpse of Malayan orchids,
Malayan mountains, and last but not least
the scorpions which worried us so much
at night under our mosquito nets. I had
one trip across the causeway to A.P. & S.S.
Johore Bharu, this being the first time for
me to set foot on Malayan soil, on this
occasion we took our time going across as
we had no one pushing us, later we crossed
it for the last time as fast as we could. About
30/4/41 we shifted camp to Tampin, a town in
the State of Negri Sembilan and also partly in
Malacca, so I now commence the story of
Malaya, though I was only there for 4 (four)
months, it was full of incidents.

⑤

Malaya

I went in the advance party with Lt. R. Thompson and a driver, the trip was approximately 170 miles, good roads (all things being considered), pineapple plantations, paddy fields and large berry (rubber) plantations. On our way, we stopped and amused ourselves watching monkeys scattering lettuce stalks across the roadway, the trip lasted about 3 hours and we eventually reached our new camp at Tampin, in delightful surroundings, built on a golf course, new huts and the administrative building was an old school (Chinese). The camp was about 1/2 mile from the town. Incidentally, George, one of our Tamil batmen arrived at Tampin the next day (photo in Australia). While at Tampin several things of note happened even though I was only there about six weeks. Hike to an adjoining mountain peak, trials by compass, cricket matches at Gambang, a tiger shot about 10 miles from camp, large snakes were killed and we experienced our first taste of marching under tropical conditions.

I witnessed my first versions of a Chinese
Harvest Festival, a Chinese picture and a
dance cabaret whilst at this camp. And the
swallows at Tampin on the overhead
wires I will never forget, they turned in
millions. My first leave to Bemeringet
from Tampin came in October and I went
to stay with the Downey's, George Spencer
and myself for 48 hours. We took a bus
from Tampin at 10 o'clock and arrived
at Bemeringet at 11:30 hours met by the Downey's
in their car. They were wonderfully kind
to me then and later when I was stationed
at Kuala Lumpur. My first trip to K-L with
the Downey's was an eye opener, dinner at
the Station Hotel (\$7.50 a time) included 9 courses
Kuews how many courses and later at the
Majestic Hotel for dancing. O.R.'s in this place
were Tabac, but George and I danced with
Mrs Downey in turn, at about 0200 they took
us to the Great Eastern Cabaret and we
had our first glimpse of Far Eastern night
life and the usual discussed Taxi Dancing,
drunk flawed pretty even though prices

were in the wood. On or about 30th October,
applications were called from accountants
in various A.S. & units to transfer to a newly
formed Audit Staff, and after weighing matters
up I took the opportunity. Our colonel, Col
O'Neill (later, 4 days killed in a car accident)
advised me to take it as it offered great prospects
so I decided to transfer. Before leaving Tamper
I had a good look at Malacca, its shops, resi-
dences and our A.G.H. there. I left Tamper
by train for K.L. at the end of October, saying
goodbye to the 3715th after being with them 12
mos. The train have a buffet service on them,
electric fans and at night travelling is made
as comfortable as possible, unfortunately we
were always compelled to travel 2nd and
under no circumstances could we travel
1st (that was for Officers only). On reaching
K.L., I discovered that our building was
none more a Chinese School, and were the
my stay at K.L. was all too short (3 weeks),
the Demings made it very pleasant; we
shopped together, went to the picture shows,
and spent a couple of nice week ends

100
at Seremban. I met Guan Yew at K.L., he
was a Chinese and manager of the Pavilion
Theatre, it was he who got me your jade pines,
and gave me a lot of good advice. One
Saturday night, he invited Geoff de Green and
I to dinner and unfortunately my liking of
Chinese meals was not a success, but I
amused myself trying to eat with chopsticks.
Hockey matches and football matches were
played on the Selarang Club's padang and
we enjoyed watching them, this club was also
taken on O.R.'s. Snake charmers were here
there and everywhere in K.L. with their
weird animals and contraptions. We went
around K.L. with a Pin photographer
and he took numerous snaps of us with
various natives, buying etc, you mentioned
that you had seen some. Well after a stay
at K.L. that was all too short, we were
removed to Johore Baru, leaving by train,
it would appear that this was our beginning
of the glorious retreat. I was really disappointed
at leaving K.L. apart from the fact that
ever thought I had been in Malaya then.

three months, I had been in three camps - and the new one at Johore Baru was to be my 4th since arriving in Malaya, on the 19th November 1941. I saw K. L. for the last time although I had visions of going back there on leave again if circumstances would have permitted. I will never forget that train journey down, we entrained at K. L. station at 2:00 and sleeping on seats, floors etc, we arrived at Johore Baru station at 4:00 and proceeded by lorry to Johore General Base Depot Camp. Here we were under canvas and during our stay (20th Nov 1941 - 27th Jan 1942) we shifted tents on the hillside from one spot to another. Training in arms, gas drill, guards, slit trenches and dug outs occupied our time (photos to Australia). Midnight and newspaper day was a comical little chap. At this camp I unearthed Alex's canteen for the first time. Work was at a standstill, air raids were all nearly every day, after 8.15.41 (except a wave of Jap bombers, but all came over our camp) and we did not have much peace later. I was to witness our Jap bombers being brought down by Aet/Act. I will never forget the fire & smoke of Malacca and the dark night in the dust of antonated flying boats.

we had several likes to the jungle amusing
ourselves, taking maps etc, one or two leaves
to Johore Barn, the last occasion was the one
in which I bought the two cases for you
and the book on "Johore." The caution was
doing a rearing trade and the game of two
up, still to the fore, even "Midnight" participating,
Brian Badgery eventually joined us in this
camp and was with us for some time. I
spent my working time doing cipher work and
carried out one audit 17th Jan 1942, of the
Field Cash Office at Young Peng, I was on this
trip. Lt W.O.L. Sadler and myself slept in
the rubber on the floor of the utility about 20
miles inside the front line and on our
way back to Johore Barn, ducked and
dived on several occasions into ditches
to get away from Jap bombers, once I went
straight into a paddy field up to my waist,
night and all. The writing was on the
wall and our expected retreat to the "Island
Fortress" took place on the 25. Jan 1942. (20 days
before capitulation) So much happened in
that short time 25/1/42 - 15/2/42. We moved

into a camp in Holland Road, sleeping under
canvas and working in a modern two storied
building (evacuated). A well was used for
"long purposes" and each tent had its own
reserve of "tinned rations". As time raced on,
so also did the Jap bombers become more
in number. Behind our tents there was an
Act/Act Battery and obviously sleep was
obtained when and where possible. It was
while I was at this building that I received
my biggest mail since arriving in Malaya,
15 letters (9 letters from you, a birthday card, and the balance
from mother and Myrnuma). Frangipani and
carnations were everywhere. On Tuesday 3/2/42
I was taken by ambulance to 2/12 C.C.S. with
an undiagnosed fever (Dengue/Malaria), at
this spot a blood slide yielded no result, my temp.
was 104°. The next day I was taken by
Ambulance to 10 A. G. H., ^{Mount Zion} Bukit Timah where
I was admitted, on the way there we stopped
on three occasions and had to drive into
ditches due to bombing and machine
gunning, eventually reaching our destination
which was on a hill and was to cope a

terrible shelling from mortar fire and bombing was not far distant. Conditions at the hospital were appalling (due only to circumstances). The staff, nurses and doctors worked like slaves night and day, operations were taking place all the time and the place was crowded. Mortar fire was all around the place, and at Mana House (part of the 10 A G H) a shell landed in the hospital, killing 1 and wounding 2. Air raids were prevalent and the patients who could walk struggled into improvised shelters, others got under beds, and those who could not move (there were many) stayed where they were and must have prayed for the best. Bed space was short and a lot of patients were moved out on 10th Feb. 1942. (my last letter to you, on air mail card, was written on this day, but I doubt if it would ever reach you) to the Bow Depot just over the hill about 1/2 mile away. On this site I met "E" Troop 2/15th and Geo Spencer, they were planning a get away on Thursday 10th Feb and he asked me to join in, much as I would have liked.

to, circumstances were against it, one I felt like a
wet rag, ash, pain, which only denique gives
one and the order that anyone leaving their units
would be classed as deserters. Bombers were
here there and everywhere and my first taste
of bombing at close quarters came at 1000 hrs
11/2/42, Wednesday, I was talking to four days and
at this time air raid warnings were useless,
I was a permanent alert. One bomber came
over, and there being no dug-outs available,
we split and made for "terra firma". I got
in between 2 roots of an enormous tree, settled
out flat face down, the sticks came down,
the earth went up and down and what
seemed an eternity elapsed before I realised
that all was quiet again, the objective was a
busy road junction, about 300/400 yds away.
Mortar shells persisted at close quarters, the
damned things seemed to come without warning,
their screaming is the worst part and at
1200 hours we were told to "make for
Kathay Cemetery" under our own steam, a distance

of 10 1/2 miles, we were all in the dark, unable to walk at all, reasonably well, but circumstances make energy, the end was in sight, so we struggled and rested and eventually arrived at Katang ("St. Patrick's School" situated nearly on the beach). We passed the aerodrome planes destroyed everywhere. At each evacuation I lost kit, so that when I arrived at Katang at 1800 hrs 11/2/42, I had a fever, a pack, and what I stood up in. We were quartered in a block of Tamil Shops, bedded down on the floor, one blanket and bedding for ourselves. At 0100 12/2/42, we were removed by ambulance convey to the emergency hospital and convalescent depot, Cathay Theatre, Singapore, arriving there in the dark; we slept for a couple of hours until dawn in the steel seats. This Friday proved to be the blackest of Fridays the 13th. At 1100 a 6" shell pierced the dome of the theatre and hit the dress circle balcony, exploding and killing 27 wounding 121, plaster everywhere, limbs mangled amongst stall and dress circle chairs.

(17)
one could not see for dust; first aid parties led
by three Australian padres and medical staff entered
the theatre with handkerchiefs around their mouths,
a distressing sight. Olive Hussey's friend Rurik
Gruen's brother was in the stalls, but suffered
only minor injuries, it was a gruesome sight.
I was very lucky, I had just left a seat in the
stalls to get a breath of fresh air. The burial
party at 1800 under mortar fire and bombers
above took place on the padang, near the
Aztec Club, the bodies being placed in one
communal grave. During the afternoon civilian
casualties must have reached their zenith, bodies
lying everywhere, some covered with sacks.
I met Winke Wade in the bathay, and I had
not seen him since "Cavan" days. Promised
support failed to materialise. Deserted flats in
the bathay building were a sight; meals left un-
touched, disorder everywhere. Meals in the building
were sporadic for us and I think we lived
on cigarettes mainly. Capitulation came at
2000 hours 15th February 1942 and blessed

(13)
sleep was awaited of by all, after the strains and
stren of those last three days, 13th, 14th, 15th of July
1942, one wondered why war should cause
such havoc, pain, and misery, it was an
untold relief, what capitulation meant, we
were to discover later to our cost.

⊕

Capitulation

(19)

The term in practice was new to me, but after all that had happened in those lost 1500 days 6/5/42 February 1942, it was the only thing that happened as it should have, our backs were to the wall, all the time. I will never forget what the look of relief on the faces of men, looked like. I wonder to this day what other than being a P.O.W. due to capitulation would have been. Singapore was a scene of desolation, arms lying everywhere (rifles etc), abandoned cars, bombed buildings, homeless civilians, the stench of dead bodies, some buildings still held in their ruins, bodies of civilians and soldiers. A procession of the Japanese forces commenced early on Monday morning 16th Feb and gradually they assumed control of everything. On the 22nd Feb, I went out by transport (hospital patients) to my first prison camp, Changi, Selarang barracks (previously occupied by the Gordon Highlanders). In this camp were installed all the Australian Imperial Force P.O.W., set far away from the English P.O.W.

⑤ Changi Prison Camps, Singapore ②①

Books in plenty have been written about
Prisoner of war Camps, but the situation in
Singapore was without precedent. The Japanese
were bewildered by the magnitude of their task
and could hardly realise what they were
going to do with all the prisoners. Clambers
of prisoners were approximately as under:-

Prisoners in Changi 51,000

British 36,000

Australians 15,000

Prisoners elsewhere

Indians at the Scotts 30,000 81,000

Killed and missing to 16 Aug. 1942 25,000.

Japanese killed and missing

estimated at 97,000

Indian troops (Sikh troops) were given rifles and
bayonets and were set to guard us. This was
the position when we arrived at Changi. The
gaol had approx 2000 civilians men, women
and children in it. Changi lies on the north
east corner of Singapore Island, and it was the
main military base on the island.

(2)

Roberts Barracks were used as a hospital without modern services and many lives were lost as a result of it being impossible to perform operations. An epidemic of Dysentery broke out and this coupled with malarial relapses and berri-berri caused an alarmingly high mortality rate :-

1st 100 Days Changi Hospital - Roberts Barracks

<u>Causes</u>	<u>British</u>	<u>Australian</u>	<u>Total</u>
Total admissions	11693	4380	16073
% Strength	32%	27%	31%
Dysentery Admissions	6512	2019	8531
% Strength	18%	13%	16%
Berri-Berri	497	104	601
% Strength	1.5%	.5%	1.2%

10 deaths.

Pure Dysentery	84	10	96
Associated with "	10	3	13
" " Berri Berri	48	3	51
Battle Casualties	42	10	52
<u>Total</u>	<u>185</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>213</u>
<u>Strength at Changi</u>	<u>3654</u>	<u>1511</u>	<u>5165</u>

(25)

The AIF units were kept in their own respective units. I was with Admin. Headquarters in a very much bombed and shelled row of dwellings. On arrival we were allotted bed space on the various floors, our bed clothes consisting of what we were able to carry ourselves, but being a warm climate, clothing was the least of our worries. Sanitary arrangements were bad, (none at all until we dug our own), water was rationed from water carts, each man having the right to collect one water bottleful, that for one day was cruel, but worse was to come in regard to food later on. For the first few days our own rations (handed us by the men) plus rice (more later) was our diet and after that we commenced our rice diet with a vengeance. Parades were held, men were detailed for various working parties and went to the extent of a nighty picket. (Can you imagine that for men sleeping on the floors of buildings that had in some cases no roofs or walls even).

After three weeks in those quarters we were moved to House 44 west door to Div. HQ and we were quartered with Pay, Enkelow, Postal and Admin HQ. It was about 28th Feb, that I first met Tony Blive and with Bert Mudge we had a few games of bridge on the lawn. Bert Mudge was over on the Square, Tony Taylor and Stan Weatherby at the back of House 44, Harry Longley and Winkie Wade were over on the Square, Brian Badgery with the Educational Centre, Vince Leonard with his unit, Alex McBean and Doug Shannon in hospital and it was at Stan Weatherby's unit that we used to meet on Friday nights and have a chin wag. I was at Blaugie Prison Camp from 22nd February 1942 until 16th August 1942 and during that time such a lot happened, some of which I shall have forgotten, but I will pen what I can

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Good night

Good Day
Good Morning

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Wine/Beer
Kiri-gato
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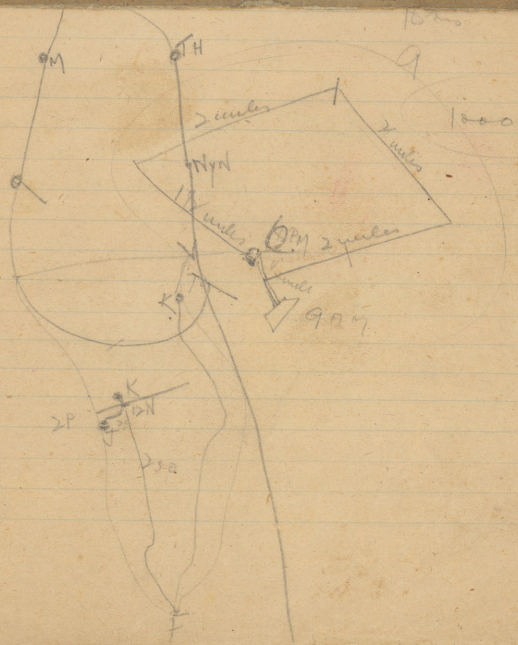
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