



Stories from Australia's History

Weary Dunlop and the Burma–Thailand Railway



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GRAPHIC
PAGES!

When a word is printed in **bold**, click on it
to find its meaning.

ON THE GRAPHIC PAGES, TEXT WITH
THIS COLOURED BACKGROUND COMES
FROM A HISTORICAL SOURCE.

Railways are one of the
legendary stories in
Australia's history

Stories from Australia's history

The story of modern Australia starts on 26 January 1788. On that day, Captain Arthur Phillip arrived in Sydney Cove from England with the **convict** ships of the First Fleet. The new **settlement** brought disaster to Australia's **Indigenous peoples** because the newcomers took their land. This event marks the beginning of Australia as we know it today.

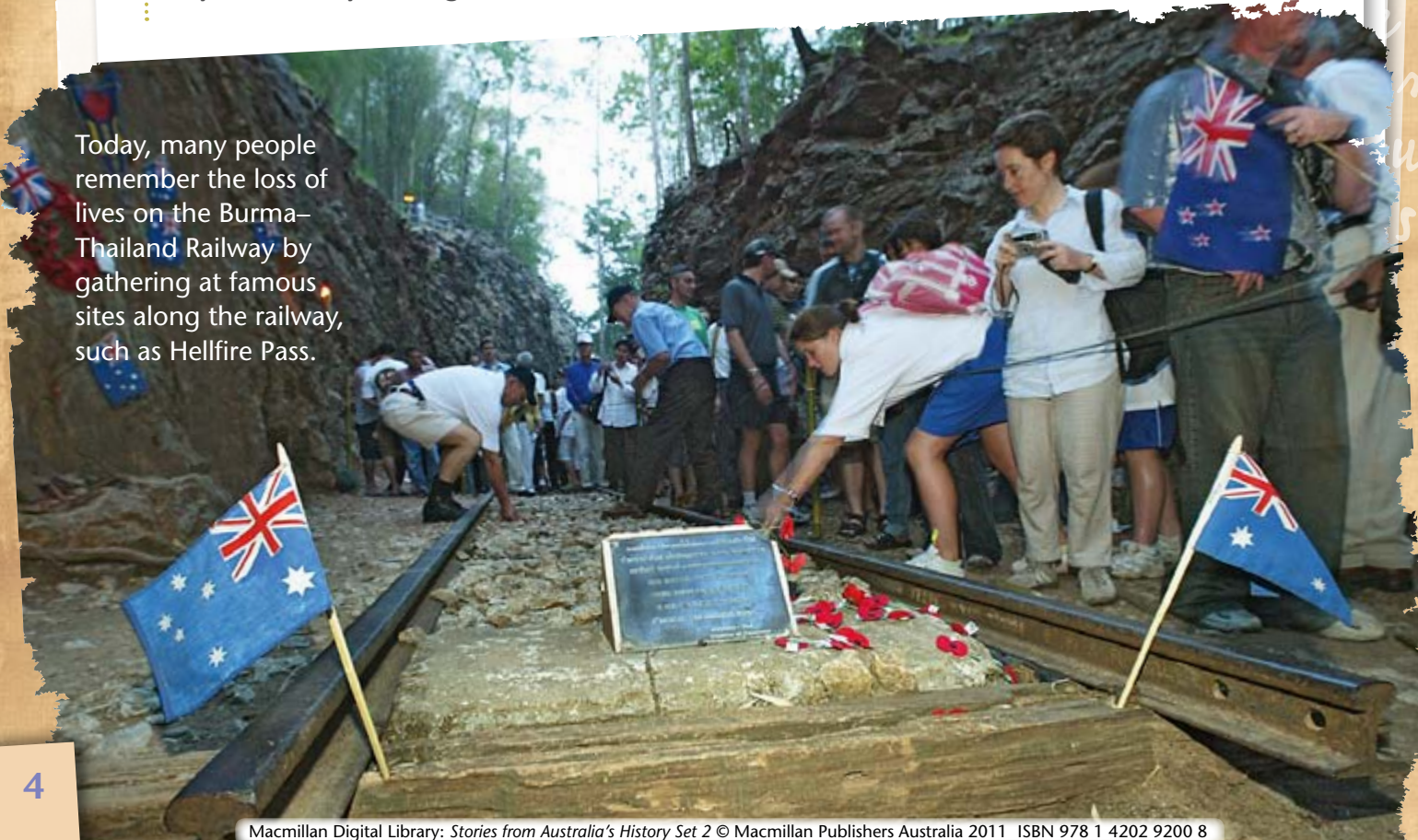
For 150 years after European settlement, Australian soldiers were sent overseas to fight, but war did not come to Australia. Then, in 1941, Australia itself was threatened when the Japanese joined World War II and overran countries in South-East Asia. Australian soldiers were sent to stop them, but thousands were captured and forced to build a railway between Burma and Thailand, called the Burma–Thailand Railway. Among these **prisoners-of-war** was Colonel Ernest Edward Dunlop, known as 'Weary'. The story of Weary Dunlop and the Burma–Thailand Railway is one of the legendary stories in Australia's history.

What does it mean?

prisoners-of-war:

Prisoners-of-war are soldiers captured by the enemy during wartime.

Today, many people remember the loss of lives on the Burma–Thailand Railway by gathering at famous sites along the railway, such as Hellfire Pass.



Weary Dunlop and the Burma–Thailand Railway

On a dark morning in Thailand in July 1943, around 300 sick, starving Australian prisoners-of-war were sent to work. They struggled along the jungle path from Hintok Mountain Camp to the site where they faced hours of back-breaking work building a railway line. As a doctor, their **commander** Weary Dunlop knew they were too sick to work, but he had to let them go. It was their 62nd day of work on the railway without a day off.

Life on the Burma–Thailand Railway was so terrible that it broke many men, but Weary Dunlop never gave in to despair. Every day, he fought for the lives of his men, standing up to **brutal** Japanese guards who oversaw the work on the railway. Through his medical work he saved the lives of many men and inspired hope and **courage** among them.

This is the story of Weary Dunlop and the prisoners-of-war who built the Burma–Thailand Railway under dreadful conditions, and how they changed Australia through their spirit of mateship and cooperation.

What does it mean?

commander:

A commander is an officer in charge of a military force.

This painting shows Weary Dunlop operating on a prisoner-of-war in the Thai jungle, using bamboo and tin cans as medical instruments.



The big picture

When World War II began in September 1939, thousands of Australians rushed to Europe to fight against the Germans. They thought their homeland was safe. However, when Japan bombed American ships at Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the war came much closer to Australia.

Australian soldiers were sent to fight the Japanese in Java, Malaya (now West Malaysia) and Singapore, but the Japanese were too strong. In early 1942, about 100 000 troops, including around 22 000 Australians, were captured by the Japanese and sent to prisoner-of-war camps.

Soldiers of the Japanese Imperial Army believed that being captured during wartime was shameful, so they treated prisoners-of-war with great cruelty. Living conditions in the prisoner-of-war camps were terrible, with filthy huts, no clean water and not enough food. Diseases such as cholera and malaria broke out and there were no medical supplies to treat the sick. Nevertheless, the prisoners were forced to work.

The Burma–Thailand Railway

The Japanese planned to build a railway to carry troops and supplies. The railway would run from Burma to Malaya, through the mountain jungles of Thailand. The Japanese aimed to complete the work in just two years, using thousands of prisoners-of-war.



Prisoners-of-war, many of them sick, were forced to build the Burma–Thailand Railway by hand, without proper tools or machinery.



This map shows the part of the Burma–Thailand Railway that was built by Australian and other prisoners-of-war between June 1942 and October 1943.

Eyewitness words

“When despair and death reached for us, he (Weary) stood fast, his only thought our wellbeing ... he was a lighthouse of sanity in a universe of madness and suffering.”

Donald Stuart, prisoner-of-war with Weary Dunlop

The ‘Quiet Lion’

Weary Dunlop never expected to be an army commander. He was a farmer’s son from Victoria who worked his way through medical school on **scholarships**. He was working as a **surgeon** in London when World War II broke out, and was sent to the Middle East as an army doctor. In February 1942 he was shipped with Australian troops to Java to run a hospital there. When the Japanese **invaded**, he could have escaped, but he chose to stay with his patients and be captured.

Although Weary was not a soldier, higher-ranking officers chose him to be their commander in the prison camps. They saw in him the calm strength of a natural leader, which led Malay prisoners-of-war to nickname him the ‘Quiet Lion’. Weary’s lion-hearted **courage** would be vital in the terrible years that followed, especially when he cared for the men who worked on the Burma–Thailand Railway.

Key people

These two people played key roles in helping the prisoners-of-war during the building of the Burma–Thailand Railway.

Ernest Edward 'Weary' Dunlop

Born: 12 July 1907 at Wangaratta, Victoria

Role: Lieutenant-Colonel in charge of Australian prisoners-of-war on the Burma–Thailand Railway and army **surgeon**

Age when captured (March 1942): 34

Died: 1993

Appearance: Very tall and strongly built, bright eyes, dark wavy hair, moustache

Character: Intelligent, hard-working, full of energy, firm and determined but softly spoken, with a quiet, modest manner. Very good with people and a natural leader, Weary was fearless in the face of terrible cruelty.

Comments: Weary Dunlop was a man of many gifts, and a brilliant student, sportsman and doctor, with a great zest for life. A problem-solver and a good judge of character, he was generally easy-going, but thrived on danger and had a temper when pushed too hard. These qualities meant he was admired and respected by his men in the prison camps. He constantly put his own life at risk and would do anything to help his men.



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Boon Pong Sirivejjabhandu

Born: Around 1910 in Thailand

Role: Thai river trader and member of the Thai **resistance**

Age in 1943 (when he helped the prisoners-of-war): Early 30s

Appearance: Short, slight, round-faced, dark straight hair, neatly dressed, regular features, wore spectacles

Character: Clever, quick-thinking, honest, cool-headed under pressure, acted with **courage**

Comments: Boon Pong was a successful shopkeeper and river trader who sold vegetables and other goods to prison camps along the Burma–Thailand Railway, but he also had a secret life.

Boon Pong was a member of the top-secret 'V' organisation, which was part of the Thai resistance against the Japanese **invaders**. At great risk of torture and death, he brought much-needed food and medical supplies up the river to the prison camps. He cleverly hid tiny packages of these supplies among the vegetables so the Japanese guards would not find them.

After the war, the British Government gave him an award called the George Cross for his heroism. Weary Dunlop said of Boon Pong, quoting Shakespeare: 'In thy face I see the map of honour, truth and loyalty.'

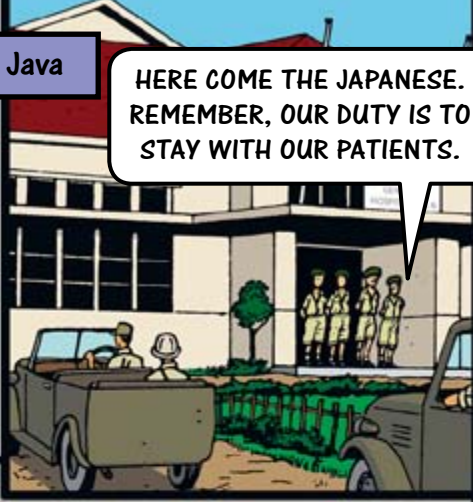


Prisoners- of-war

During World War II, Weary Dunlop and his medical team were working at the Allied General Hospital in the hill town of Bandoeng in Java, Indonesia. They treated wounded troops flooding in from the battlefield. Then, in March 1942, the fight for Java was lost.

9 March
1942

Allied General Hospital, Java



HERE COME THE JAPANESE. REMEMBER, OUR DUTY IS TO STAY WITH OUR PATIENTS.



GET RID OF THAT FLAG!

YES, CAPTAIN NAKAZAWA.



BUT AS YOU CAN SEE, THESE MEN ARE TOO SICK TO MOVE.

ALL PATIENTS AND STAFF MUST GO TO PRISON.



IF YOU DO, I'LL MAKE SURE YOU ARE HANGED!



KILL HIM!



NOW YOU WILL LEAD THE MARCH TO JAIL!

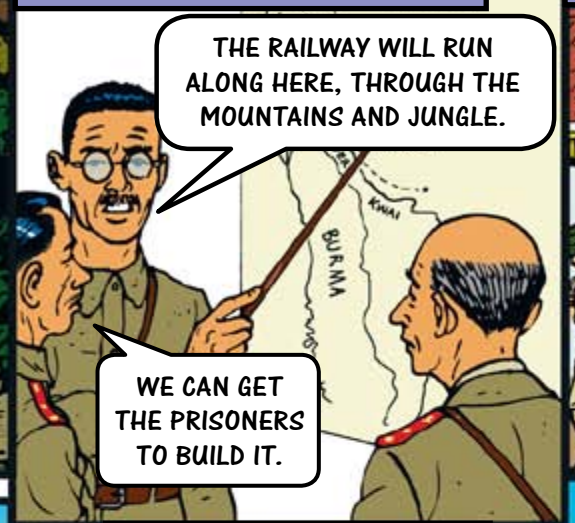
18 April
1942

Back in Java, Weary led the march of 476 prisoners-of-war to Bandoeng gaol.

Meanwhile, Japan's forces were advancing through Burma and Thailand.



Japanese war leaders decided to build a railway to transport supplies for their armies.



THE RAILWAY WILL RUN ALONG HERE, THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS AND JUNGLE.

WE CAN GET THE PRISONERS TO BUILD IT.



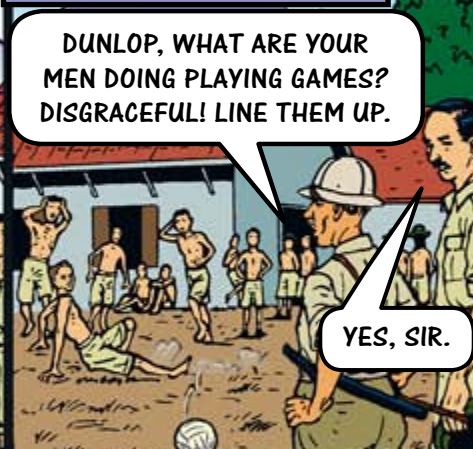
C'MON LAD, YOU'VE MADE IT.

Weary set out a routine straight away.



PARADE DAILY AT 9.30 A.M. SHARP, EVERY MAN WASHED AND CLEAN. AND SHOW RESPECT FOR THE GUARDS.

Japanese officer Lieutenant Sumiya came to inspect the prisoners.



DUNLOP, WHAT ARE YOUR MEN DOING PLAYING GAMES? DISGRACEFUL! LINE THEM UP.

YES, SIR.



YOU HAVE NO DISCIPLINE!

Weary went to salute Lieutenant Sumiya, but ...



SMACK!

The men threatened to riot, but Weary called them off.



NO!

Weary stood to attention while Lieutenant Sumiya threatened him with his sword.



SWISH!

Lieutenant Sumiya finally gave up and left.





At Bandoeng jail, food rations were limited to two bowls of rice per day.

THIS ISN'T ENOUGH, WEARY. WE'LL STARVE!



Weary's plan worked. Everyone shared the food and no one starved.



... a camp newspaper ...



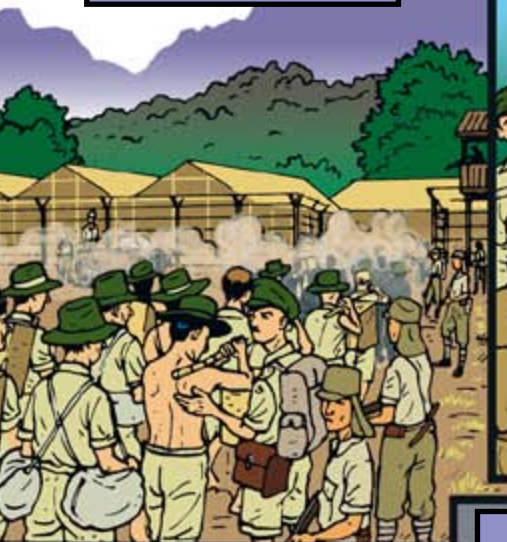
Weary came up with a plan.

LISTEN, MEN. IF WE SHARE ALL OF OUR MONEY WE CAN BUY EXTRA FOOD FROM THE LOCAL TRADERS.



BUT I WAS SAVING TO BUY A CAR WHEN I GET HOME.

June 1942 The men were marched to another camp in Bandoeng.



... exercises to keep fit ...



ONE AND TWO AND ONE AND TWO ...



HOW ABOUT SAVING SOME LIVES INSTEAD?

To keep the men's spirits up, Weary arranged learning programs ...



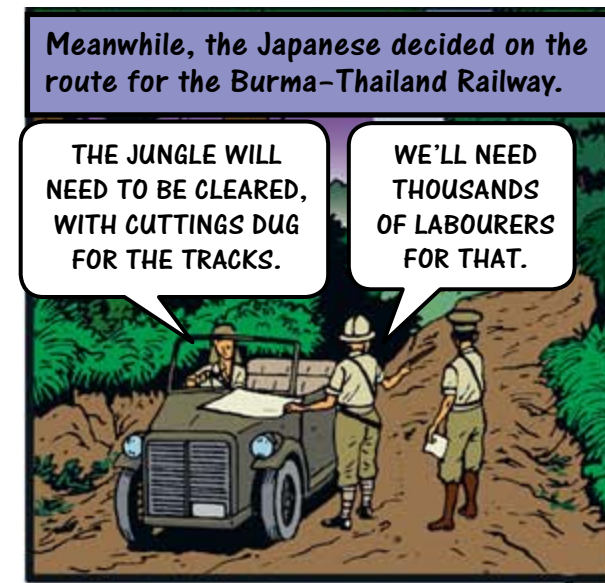
... and entertainment. Even the Japanese came to the shows that the prisoners put on.



HURRY!



GET IN!



Meanwhile, the Japanese decided on the route for the Burma-Thailand Railway.

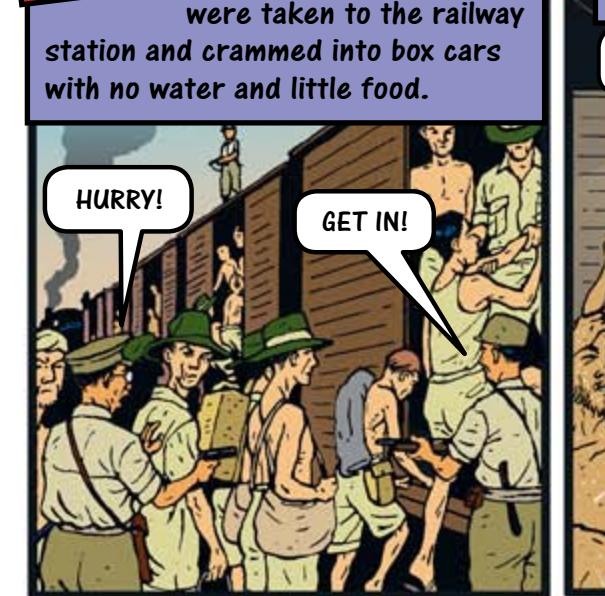
THE JUNGLE WILL NEED TO BE CLEARED, WITH CUTTINGS DUG FOR THE TRACKS.



A thousand men marched out of Bandoeng camp, many of them sick from the lack of vitamins in their food.



20 January 1943 In Singapore, Weary and his men were taken to the railway station and crammed into box cars with no water and little food.



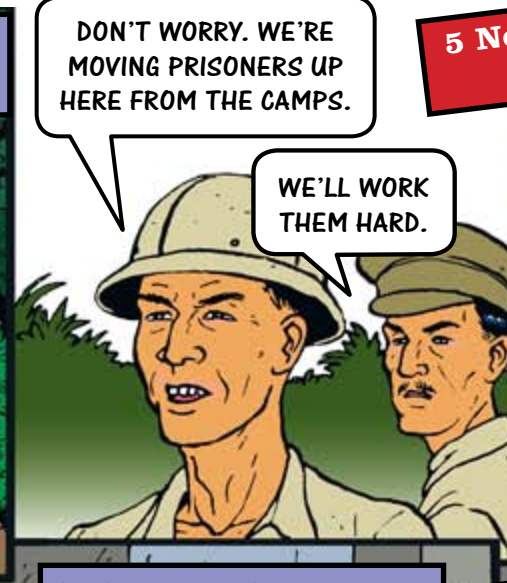
WE'LL BE THERE SOON, MEN.



WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT US HERE?



YOU'RE HERE TO WORK - TO BUILD A RAILWAY.

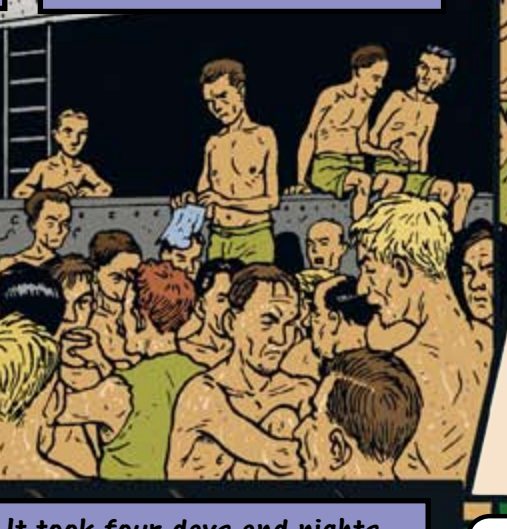


DON'T WORRY. WE'RE MOVING PRISONERS UP HERE FROM THE CAMPS.

WE'LL WORK THEM HARD.



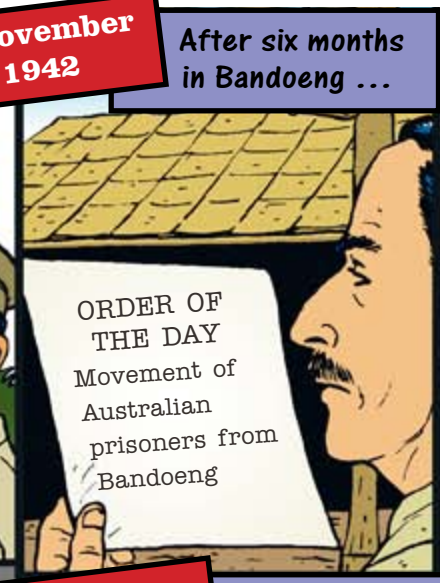
In the weeks that followed, Weary and his men were taken to Batavia, then by ship to Singapore.



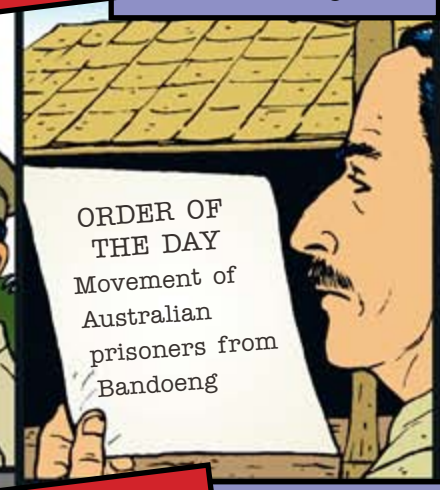
It took four days and nights to travel through Malaya, into the jungles of Thailand.



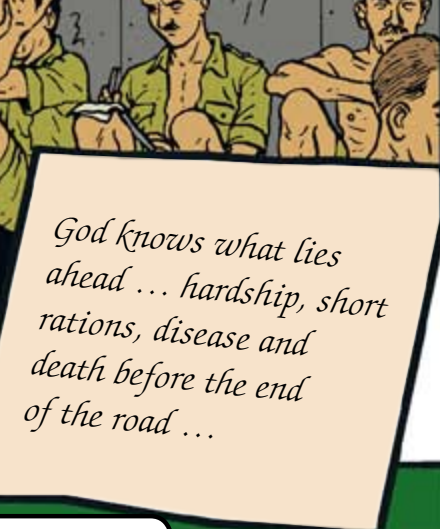
GOOD GRIEF - THIS'LL KILL US.



5 November 1942 After six months in Bandoeng ...



28 December 1942 All the while, Weary kept a secret diary.



It took four days and nights to travel through Malaya, into the jungles of Thailand.



GOOD GRIEF - THIS'LL KILL US.

25 January 1943

The men marched from the station to Konyu, deep in the Thai jungle.

THERE'S NOTHING HERE.

YOU MUST BUILD YOUR OWN CAMP.

Weary got to work immediately. He planned their daily routine ...

Rise: 8.00 a.m.

Roll call: 8.15 a.m.

Breakfast: 8.30 a.m.

Work starts: 9.30 a.m.

Work ends: 6.00 p.m.

Dinner: 7.00 p.m.

Lights out: 10.00 p.m.

... and all the buildings they would need for their camp.

With no tools or nails, the men built Konyu camp.

Barracks x 9
Officers' hut
Cookhouse
Store
Hospital
Latrines (toilets)
Materials
Bamboo poles
Thatched roofs

GOOD WORK, LADS.

THANK YOU, SIR.

They bought extra food from Thai river traders, such as Boon Pong.

WE NEED EGGS, FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES.

With the few medical supplies he had carried with him, Weary performed his first operation in the jungle.

By 18 February, the camp hospital was finished.

ARGH! MY STOMACH!

HMM ... I MIGHT HAVE TO OPERATE.

Many Japanese came to watch. Private Jones recovered.

24 February

Weary's men began to get sicker.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

I FEEL HOT AND SICK, AND I'VE GOT A POUNDING HEADACHE.

WE'VE GOT ANOTHER MALARIA CASE.

AND THESE MEN HAVE DYSENTERY.

WE MUST DRAIN ALL OF THOSE POOLS TO GET RID OF THE MOSQUITOES THAT CARRY MALARIA ...

... AND ALL MEN MUST SLEEP UNDER NETS TO KEEP THE MOSQUITOES OUT.

1 March

The day came that Weary had been dreading ...

WE NEED 500 OF YOUR MEN EVERY DAY TO WORK ON THE RAILWAY.

IMPOSSIBLE!

This will be very difficult because of the number of men sick ...

Weary did everything he could to keep his men healthy. All food was cooked thoroughly and sick men were given three eggs per day.

Latrines were dug deep into the ground and all men had to wash their hands with disinfectant.

11 March 1943

YOU MUST MOVE CAMP - TO THE RAILWAY.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE SICK?

ALL MEN MUST WORK - SICK MEN TOO!

Dark days lay ahead for Weary and his men.

Viewpoints

Prisoners-of-war were forced to work on the Burma–Thailand Railway. The Japanese guards insisted that fixed numbers of prisoners had to be sent to work on the railway every day, even if they were sick. Weary Dunlop fought hard to stop the Japanese sending sick men to work. These two different attitudes to the men's suffering are presented here.

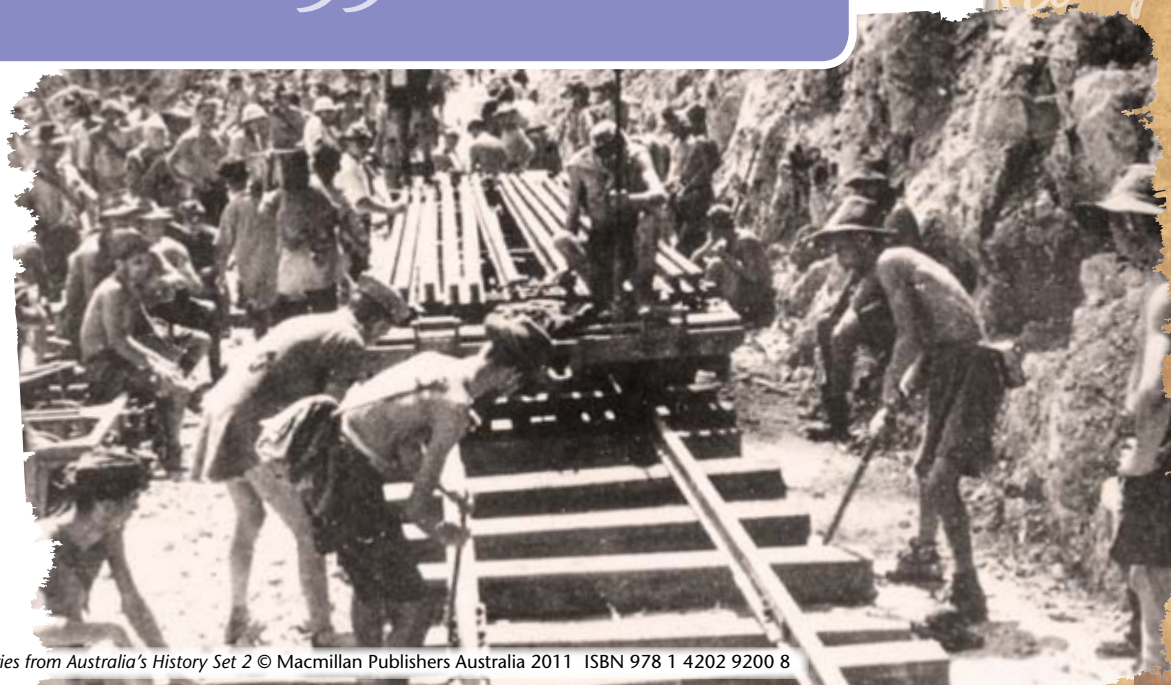
Colonel Sijuo Nakamura, senior Japanese commander

Colonel Sijuo Nakamura was the senior Japanese commander of the camps along the Burma–Thailand Railway. He believed that sickness was a sign of weakness and lack of willpower, and expressed this view in the following letter he wrote to the prisoners-of-war:

“ I am pleased to find in general you are keeping discipline and working diligently (hard) ... [but] regret to find seriousness in health matter Those who fail to reach objective (goal) ... by lack of health or spirit is considered in Japanese army as most shameful ... your welfare is guaranteed only by obedience to the order of the Imperial Japanese Army. ”

Colonel Sijuo
Nakamura,
26 June 1943

Even though many Australian prisoners-of-war were sick and exhausted, the Japanese thought they should be able to overcome their weak condition to work long hours on the Burma–Thailand Railway.

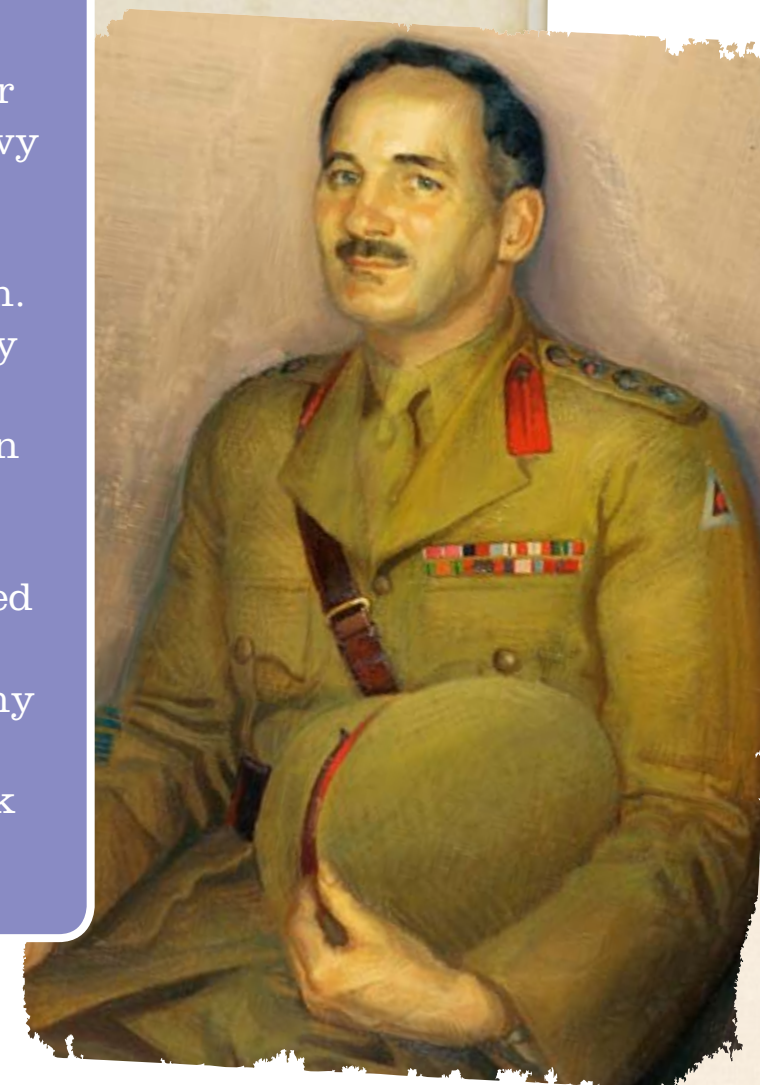


Weary Dunlop, Lieutenant-Colonel and surgeon

Weary fought daily to stop the Japanese ordering desperately sick men out of the camp hospital to work on the railway. This is an entry from Weary's war diary from the time:

“ Today I had words with Okada (the Japanese camp commander) after refusing to supply more than 20 heavy sick for working ... [He] said, ‘Why more sick every day?’ I said, ‘Am I almighty God to answer this question. Did I make this fever – this unhealthy jungle?’ Am I responsible that the Nipponese (Japanese) made these men prisoners and then worked them so hard and gave them too little food? Look at them with their skin stretched over their bones! The Nipponese are responsible. Why do you not ask, ‘Why do men die?’ Look at that cemetery – does it surprise you that men get sick before going there? ”

Lieutenant-Colonel Ernest Edward
‘Weary’ Dunlop, 14 October 1943



Weary did everything that he could to help his men survive the terrible ordeal of working on the Burma–Thailand Railway. His diary describes what the prisoners-of-war had to go through.

Dark days on the Burma-Thailand Railway

The Japanese wanted the Burma-Thailand Railway finished quickly, so ordered thousands of prisoners-of-war to do the work. Weary and his men were among them.

12 March 1943
Weary and 800 men left Konyu camp ...

... and were driven seven kilometres through thick jungle...

The abandoned camp was at the bottom of a cliff.

... to Hintok Mountain Camp.

GET OUT - THIS IS THE CAMP.

GOOD LORD!

Weary and his men had to climb down a huge tree with steps cut into its trunk.

The huts were falling down and there was little fresh water. Worst of all ...

HMM ... WE'RE FAR FROM THE RIVER. HOW WILL WE BUY FOOD FROM BOON PONG?

Meanwhile, in the Japanese camp, Engineer Hiroda directed the work.

THIS MOUNTAINSIDE AT HINTOK NEEDS CUTTINGS FOR THE RAILWAY TO RUN THROUGH.

THE CUTTINGS MUST BE DUG SPEEDO! ALL PRISONERS MUST WORK!

YES, SIR!

The next day, work began at the railway worksite.

23 March

Furious at how his men were being treated, Weary confronted the Japanese.

GO ON - SHOOT ME ... YOU WILL HAVE TO SHOOT [US] ALL. THEN YOU WILL HAVE NO WORKMEN ... YOU ARE ... BLACK-HEARTED!

YOU WILL NOT SEND THESE SICK MEN TO WORK!

19 March

Back at Hintok mountain camp ...

WE NEED 600 MEN TO WORK TOMORROW.

BUT ONLY 400 OF THE MEN ARE FIT!

This is the next thing to murder ... just breaking men on this job ... a cold-blooded, merciless crime against mankind ...

After Weary's outburst, Engineer Hiroda ordered the men to work without food or water.

April 1943

At Hellfire Pass, conditions were terrible.

Carrying heavy loads

Holes dug for explosives

If the work slowed down or the men stopped to rest, the Japanese guards would beat them

Rocks broken with hammers

After 14-hour days the men had to trek 7 kilometres back to camp. Some of them were so weak, they had to crawl.

During April, May and June, things got worse. Every morning, Weary argued with the guards.

I'VE TOLD YOU, THESE MEN ARE TOO SICK TO WORK!

NO! ALL WORK!

Sick men had to be carried to the worksite. If they collapsed, the Japanese guards beat them.

Weary's men were starving, so he sent squads to carry supplies from the Thai river traders.

Boon Pong risked his life to smuggle food and medical supplies to Weary's men.

Despite Boon Pong's help, Weary's men were still in a terrible state.

... broken ... pitiful wrecks
... covered with disgusting sores ... hateful [Japanese] ...
[we will] not ... surrender to these beasts ...

It was just enough to keep them alive.

19 June

Weary did all that he could to keep his men alive, but then ...

Three-quarters of the men were sick, including Weary.

May

The wet season came and the Japanese still forced the men to work.

URGH!
DAMN TROPICAL
ULCERS.

LEG CRAMPS, VOMITING,
DIARRHOEA ...
CHOLERA!

The deadly disease cholera could kill a man in hours.

The cholera tent was a terrible sight. Many men died.

One of Weary's men, Major Jock Clarke, helped keep the cholera patients' fluids up by inventing a drip made from old bottles and pipes. It saved many lives.

THIS CHOLERA FIGHT IS THE GRIMMEST FIGHT I HAVE EVER BEEN IN.

ASHES TO
ASHES, DUST
TO DUST.

ORDER OF THE DAY

- Boil all drinking water
- Wash hands thoroughly
- Keep all cholera patients separate
- Burn the dead and all their clothing.

By order
Colonel Dunlop

15 July 1943

The first train went through Hellfire Pass and the work eased off a little.

8 August

Weary's men had been working on the Konyu-Hintok section of the railway for 231 days straight.

18 August

With the railway cuttings finished, Hintok mountain camp was closed. Weary and his men were marched to a camp on the river.

In the wake of the railway is left a wreckage of humanity ...

There, they were able to get supplies from Boon Pong.

25 October

Then, Weary was sent to run a hospital at Tarsau.

At Tarsau, Weary kept a radio.

... THE ALLIES HAVE INVADED BOUGAINVILLE, NEW GUINEA, DRIVING OUT THE JAPANESE ...

5 November

DUNLOP - YOU'RE IN TROUBLE.

WHAT FOR?

WE'VE BEEN TOLD YOU HAVE A RADIO.

Radios were forbidden, but Weary refused to admit he had one. The guards beat him and tied him to a tree.

NOW YOU DIE!

STOP! HE WILL SUFFER MORE ...

... IF WE LOCK HIM IN A CAGE.

Weary was kept there for 24 hours.

IF WE RELEASE YOU, NO HARD FEELINGS?

NO HARD FEELINGS.

They let Weary go.

17 January 1944

Weary caused the Japanese so much trouble that he was moved again, this time to Chungkai camp hospital.

6 May

SIR, I NEED STRETCHERS FOR THE SICK MEN.

THE MORE SICK WHO DIE THE BETTER!

19 July

One night, Weary and his men were caught playing cards after lights-out.

CARDS ARE FORBIDDEN! WE'LL DEAL WITH YOU TOMORROW.

June

Weary was sent to Nakom Paton hospital to help treat sick prisoners evacuated from the railway.

NO!

A kindly guard stopped the officer from killing Weary.

Weary had to stand to attention for hours while the Japanese guards hit him. Eventually, he lost his temper.

BANDY-LEGGED BABOONS!

The guards beat and tortured him.

When Weary was finally freed he went straight back to work.

IF YOU WILL EXCUSE ME I SHALL AMPUTATE THE DUTCHMAN'S ARM WHO HAS BEEN WAITING ALL DAY.

16 August 1945

THE WAR'S OVER. WE MADE IT, LADS.

At last, after three years and four months, Weary and his men were free.

HOORAY!

YAAAH!

What happened next?

World War II ended in August 1945, when America dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Japan surrendered. It took many weeks to rescue the thousands of prisoners-of-war from the camps. Most needed months of medical care and many died later from the effects of their **imprisonment**.

Of around 13 000 Australian prisoners who worked on the Burma–Thailand Railway, about 2700 died. These men were later re-buried in war cemeteries at Kanchanaburi and elsewhere in Thailand.

Boon Pong

Boon Pong, the trader who smuggled food and medicines for the prisoners-of-war, was shot after the war by Thai people who mistakenly believed he had cooperated with the Japanese. However, he recovered with Weary Dunlop's help and later ran a bus company in Bangkok. The Weary Dunlop – Boon Pong Exchange Fellowship, which provides further training in Australia for young Thai **surgeons**, honours his memory.

Many prisoners-of-war who survived their ordeal on the Burma–Thailand Railway suffered long-lasting mental and physical problems.



Trials

Secret records kept by imprisoned commanders, including Weary Dunlop's diary of his experiences, were later used in trials against **brutal** guards who oversaw work on the Burma–Thailand Railway. Many of these guards were hanged or imprisoned. In 1991, a guard called Hiramura (nicknamed 'The Lizard' by the men) met Weary and apologised to him.

The railway

The Burma–Thailand Railway was built by around 62 000 British, Dutch, American and Australian prisoners and 250 000 Asian workers. It took 16 months to build and was 421 kilometres long. Some parts of the line are still in use today. The cutting at Hintok Mountain, which was dug with so much suffering by Weary's men, came to be known after the war as 'Hellfire Pass'. Today, a simple **memorial** marks the cutting where Weary Dunlop's ashes lie. Every year, hundreds of Australians visit it to remember Weary and his men.

Today, Hellfire Pass is a reminder of those who died during the construction of the Burma–Thailand Railway.

Eyewitness words

“ We have learned much of the inadequacy (uselessness) of material things, much of tolerance (acceptance), much of **endurance**, even if it be only to endure failure There is plenty of **courage** all about us even in the most ... damaged human beings. ”

Weary Dunlop, Nakom Patom, Thailand, 10 November 1944



The effects of Weary Dunlop's work

Weary Dunlop's work during the construction of the Burma–Thailand Railway has had long-lasting effects in Australia and overseas.

In Australia

Weary saved the lives of thousands of Australian prisoners-of-war. These men made it home and helped to build the Australia we know today. Weary's **courage** under terrible pressure also had a wider influence. He has come to stand for the Australian spirit of mateship and cooperation.

Overseas

After the war, Weary went out of his way to build friendships in Japan and other Asian countries. He led medical teams to Thailand, India, Japan and Vietnam to teach local doctors surgical techniques and to improve medical conditions. Weary also introduced an Asian student exchange program called the Colombo Plan, which has helped to reduce **racism** between Asia and Australia.

What ever happened to ...

Weary Dunlop?

Weary returned to Melbourne in October 1945 and married his sweetheart, Helen Ferguson, three weeks later. They had two sons. Weary became a famous **surgeon** and was **knighted** in 1969. He fought for government benefits, particularly pensions and free healthcare, for ex-prisoners-of-war. When he died in July 1993, 10 000 people attended his state funeral.

This statue of Weary Dunlop by Peter Corlett, which stands in parkland near Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance, includes metal from the Burma–Thailand Railway.



Timeline

This timeline shows the main events of Weary Dunlop's life and the construction of the Burma–Thailand Railway.

12 July 1907
Ernest Edward Dunlop is born.

1938
Weary travels to London to further his medical studies.

20 January 1943
Weary is taken to the Burma–Thailand Railway worksite in Thailand.

March–July 1943
The 'speedo' period at Hintok Mountain Camp causes many prisoners' deaths.



1905

1930

1935

1940

1945

1960

1990

1930
Dunlop goes to the University of Melbourne to study medicine and is given the nickname 'Weary' by fellow students.

1935
Weary joins the Royal Melbourne Hospital as a junior surgeon.

November 1939
Weary joins the Army Medical Corps when World War II breaks out and is sent to the Middle East.

February 1942
Weary is transferred to Java.

March 1942
Weary is captured by the Japanese and commands the 'Dunlop Force' of prisoners-of-war.

16 August 1945
Weary and his men are freed.

October 1945
Weary returns to Australia.

1 January 1969
Weary is knighted.

2 July 1993
Weary Dunlop dies.



What do you think?

The experiences of Australian prisoners-of-war held by the Japanese during World War II raise important questions about how people behave during wartime. Try the following activities to test your own ideas about this important subject.

Who was right?

After the war, most people were shocked to learn how prisoners-of-war had been treated. However, many guards did not believe they had done anything wrong. Read the following opinions and have a discussion about who you think was right.

Japanese soldiers

The guards of the Japanese Imperial Army were following orders when they beat and tortured prisoners. If they had refused to do this, they would have been punished by their commanding officers.



Prisoners-of-war

It is not good enough for the guards to claim that they had no choice in carrying out such inhumane actions. Everyone must take responsibility for their own actions and make a stand against wrongdoing.



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What would you do?

The following events actually occurred on the Burma–Thailand Railway. Read each scene, then choose what you would do.

Scene 1

You are a prisoner-of-war working on the railway at Hellfire Pass when a mate collapses. A Japanese guard, fearing the sick man has the deadly disease cholera, orders you and your mates to bury him alive. Would you ...

- A** bury him alive to avoid a beating
- B** kill the sick man yourself so he does not suffer
- C** refuse and take a beating from the guard?

Scene 2

You are the Japanese camp commander, Okada. Two of your guards complain that Weary Dunlop fought back when they beat him up. To save face, they plan to kill Weary. Would you ...

- A** punish the guards
- B** rescue Weary by taking him to another camp
- C** punish Weary yourself?

Scene 3

You are Weary Dunlop. After the war, during a line-up of captured enemy soldiers you are asked to identify any **brutal** guards. You recognise one soldier who had beaten and tortured you. Would you ...

- A** point him out so he will be punished
- B** say that all of the Japanese guards are equally guilty
- C** pretend you do not recognise him?

Once you have chosen what you would do in each scene, find out what actually happened on page 31.

Find out more

Websites

<http://www.anzacday.org.au/education/activities/weary/images/weary.pdf>

This educational website offers many eyewitness reports and photographs of life in the prisoner-of-war camps. It includes discussion topics, answer sheets and other curriculum materials that students and teachers may find helpful.

<http://www.pows-of-japan.net>

This large collection of articles covers every aspect of the Burma–Thailand Railway. It includes interviews, eyewitness accounts and biographies. Students will need some guidance.

<http://earth.google.com/>

Google Earth is a freely downloadable program that allows you to view satellite images from around the world, including images of the Burma–Thailand Railway.

Books

The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop, E. E. Dunlop, 1986

This is Weary Dunlop's own eyewitness account of his life in the prisoner-of-war camps, written secretly at the time. It includes descriptions of camp conditions, Japanese guards, prisoners' suffering and many acts of **courage**.

Burma Railway – Images of War, Jack Chalker, 2008

Jack Chalker was an artist **imprisoned** alongside Weary Dunlop in Thailand. This book is a collection of his sketches and paintings of the camps and the Burma–Thailand Railway, created on Weary's orders as evidence of what happened there.

DVDs

The Quiet Lions: The Story of Weary Dunlop, directed by Robin Newell, 2008

This one-hour documentary tells the story of Weary Dunlop, Boon Pong and their wartime experiences. It includes rare interviews with Weary, original war footage and images of Hellfire Pass today.

Spirit of the Railway, directed by Robin Newell, 1998

This documentary includes many eyewitness accounts from ex-prisoners-of-war and original newsreel footage from the time.

Glossary

amputate cut off

brutal very cruel

convict someone serving a sentence in jail for committing a crime

courage showing no fear in the face of danger

discipline order and obedience

dysentery a disease of the bowel

endurance not giving up in spite of difficulties

imprisonment being held captive

Indigenous peoples the original peoples of Australia

invaded to have entered another country in large numbers

knighted given a special award with the title 'Sir'

memorial a structure that has been set up to remember an event or person

racism unfair treatment based on race

rations food given out in small quantities

resistance a secret force that fights behind enemy lines

sanity calm good sense

scholarships financial assistance to help pay for study

settlement a place where people live

speedo a fast-paced period of forced work

surgeon a doctor who performs operations

What actually happened in the 'What would you do?' scenes described on page 29:

Scene 1: C. The prisoners refused to bury their mate alive and were beaten by the Japanese guards. Later, they rescued the sick man and took him back to camp.

Scene 2: B. Japanese commander Okada took Weary to another camp to stop the guards from killing him. He also saved Weary from being searched at the gate, knowing that Weary was probably carrying banned goods.

Scene 3: C. Weary pretended he did not recognise 'Stone Face', the guard who asked Weary if he had any hard feelings after being tortured. Weary had said 'No', and after the war he kept his word.

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