

Extract from a report produced by S.N.King MCS, N.S.Alexander MS,PhD, W.L.Blyth MCS at Sime Road Internment Camp 3rd September 1945 and kindly provided by Mrs D Hallward, daughter of Cyril Paddon, an internee who died 12 weeks after release.

After 17 days (*ed: early March 1942*) we were ordered to March a further 7 miles out to Changi Gaol. Most of us were carrying a certain amount of baggage and blankets and we were all pretty well done up on arrival. The gaol was built for 600 convicts, and we had to find space for 3000. The women marched out about 3 days later and entered the gates singing "There will always be an England." The 400 women and children occupied the European block and the men the remaining 75%. The Governor who was 63 marched with us and lived in a cell with two others. Every available space was occupied, verandahs, dining rooms, mortuary, certain corridors lift wells etc. There were 3 to a cell, and in other rooms about 28sq feet per man. You ate, slept and read in this space. The exercise yards became vast latrines. One had to queue for baths, library, haircuts, food, medical attention etc.

The whole work felling timber for fuel, sawing, stacking, cooking, cleaning, was done by the internees. We had plenty of labour for the essential work however at that time most of us only worked two days a week, but cooks, gardeners, hospital orderlies etc. had full time duties. The Japs supplied rice, salt, sugar, tea, oil and the early days about of 6 oz. of meat. We had to pay for everything else such as electric light bulbs, brooms, utensils etc. We subscribed our money to a certain fund for this purpose and later they allowed us to buy some bulk supplies such as sardines, eggs and coconuts to supplement the diet. We all rapidly lost weight and beri-beri soon started until we persuaded them to let us buy rice polishings. Dysentery remained a scourge for the whole of the internment. During the first 20 months we did not fare too badly for food and contrived to achieve a degree of comfort. We organised bridge tournaments, concerts, lectures, arts and crafts exhibitions etc.

By this time we had acquired a Jap staff who derived pleasure in frequent beatings up, face slapping, and solitary confinement, often without food for 7 days. One of them rushed round when drunk and laid out 23 with his stick in the space of a few minutes. Some of our men were flogged, others tied by ropes and kicked and beaten and left without for a week. One died as a result of this. My only experience was to kneel perfectly in the sun for ½ hour and receive a crack on the head or kick in the ankles for any movements.

On October 10th 1943 an event came to change the comparatively even tenor of our lives. This was known as the "Double Tenth Investigation". We were ordered to parade early in the morning without breakfast for a roll call. When assembled the Gestapo (*ed: Kempetai*) arrived and threw a cordon around the gaol. We were warned by an evil looking thug that any disobedience would receive the severest penalties. We were ordered back to our own yards and remained there without food until 9.30 p.m. Meanwhile the whole gaol was carefully combed by a large force of Japs. The contents of ones kit were thrown out on the floor, bottles and tins emptied, back broken off hair brushes, large quantities of valuables and money looted and all written material impounded and placed in a large envelope bearing ones name. As a result 57 arrests were made on the double 10th and during the succeeding months. They suspected us of an espionage organisation receiving cash from the Chinese, using it for obtaining information and transmitting military secrets by wireless. We were in fact smuggling in cash to finance supplementary supplies for our inadequate rations and we operating three receiving sets to get the B.B.C. news. The parts had been smuggled in assembled in the camp. We had in fact a well organised news distribution system and many of our fellows paid their lives for their work in keeping up the morale.

Medical facilities afforded whether visits of medicine personnel or the supply of medicines or drugs were for all practical purposes non-existent. In many cases our own doctors sharing the cell with the sick made urgent requests for prompt medical attention on their behalf particularly in cases where the victim was on the point of death, but these requests were invariably ignored. In one case a Japanese doctor, who was called to see an internee suffering from a fractured pelvis and possibly ruptured kidney remarked that the man not sick enough.

The buildings occupied by the Japanese M.P. resounded all day and night with blows, the bellowing of the inquisitors, and the shrieks of the tortured. From time to time victims from the torture chambers would stagger back or if unconscious would be dragged back their cells

with marks of their treatment on their bodies. In one such case an unconscious victim so returned died during the night without receiving any medical attention and \ body was not removed until afternoon. In these conditions and this atmosphere of terror men and women awaited, sometimes for months, their summons to interrogation, which might come at any hour of the day or night.

Usually interrogation started quietly and would so continue as long as the inquisitors got the expected answers. If, for any reason such answers were not forthcoming physical violence was immediately employed.

Torture was carried out to the limit of human endurance. One internee attempted to commit suicide by jumping over the verandah. In his fall he fractured his pelvis but, despite his condition, his interrogation under torture was continued until just before he died. In another case, the internee asked his inquisitors for the means to commit suicide. A pistol was produced and snatched away only when the man was about to carry out his declared intention.

Of the 57 internees detained as a result of the investigation on 10/10/1943, 12 died of sickness directly attributable to the appalling conditions under which they were detained one as in the preceding paragraph as a result of his fall and one was executed. The survivors who returned after lengthy custody by the M.P. required prolonged treatment in the camp Hospital for extreme emaciation (except where oedema was present) chronic dysentery, neuritis, sores, ulcers, scabies, beri-beri, weak hearts or injuries to joints or limbs.

The Commission also recorded the evidence of the three surviving members, out of six of the Body Disposal Squad who were arrested by the J.M.P. in the Municipal Building, Singapore in March 1942, and were sentenced after a so-called trial, to two years solitary confinement each for "anti-Japanese talk". While in prison three of the six died, without receiving any medical whatever. Requests for medicine on their behalf evoked the reply "You are prisoners and are not allowed any medicine."-----

----- The rest of the camp was placed under penal conditions. Rations were drastically reduced, outside supplies-were stopped, concerts, church services and schools were terminated. We were not even allowed the timber to make coffins. A further slimming process set in, and as the deaths of prisoners were announced morale sagged. For some months we were without news, but then we set about organising a new service. We would pay the Sikh Centre \$1.00 per newspaper and got them in all languages, Jap, Eng, Malay, Cantonese, Hindustan etc. This continued to the end. In May 1944 we were transferred by lorry to Sime Road alongside the Golf Course. We cook over from P.O.W.'s and learned of the terrible losses they had suffered on the Moulmein Railway. 1300 had died there and the lists showed we had all lost dozens of our friends. 5000 more perished on transports sunk at sea. This was a big proportion out of 60,000 taken at Singapore. The surroundings at Sime Road were much more pleasant but the work was extremely hard, moreover we found in a few days that it had become a hot bed of Malaria, and went down by the score until we got the trouble under control. This was followed by 25 cases of tropical typhus, of which 6 were fatal. Rations were at first increased and every man had to put in 6 hours of coolie labour daily. This consisted of felling, sawing and hauling timber, opening up acres of ground for tapioca leaf vegetable etc., building huts, tunnelling and other tasks. The rations gradually declined and were finally halved in March 1945. We were now doing heavy labour and being half starved, our clothes had practically gone and we lived in loin clothes. On my fatigue we sometimes hauled wood for 12 miles in a day without footwear over and through jungles up to our knees, in mud. We teamed up, 40 to a lorry chassis, like bullocks in rope traces. The general weight was from 8 to 9 stone and we looked a pretty collection of skeletons. Food lately was an obsession and we were exploring every possible means of supplementing it -breeding snails using rubber seeds, dessicated tapioca leaf, drain fish etc. A few tried snakes. Eggs were \$25 each, 1lb. of dried milk \$100, sugar \$8 per oz and so on -----