

Discipline at Changi:
Crime, punishment and keeping order inside the prison camp
by Lucy Robertson

Abstract

Changi was one of the largest prison camps of the Second World War and, curiously, it was also the most autonomous camp that the Japanese established. For in February 1942 the Japanese told the prisoners of war that their military structures were to remain intact, and that the Australian and British officers would themselves be responsible for enforcing discipline among their own men in the camp. This paper will explore the challenges faced by the Australian and British officers to maintain discipline in the camp, and the motives behind the crimes that were committed. This paper will reveal that the enforcement of discipline had a significant and damaging impact on relations between officers and other ranks. Furthermore, this paper will discuss how the enforcement of military discipline aggravated the friction between the 8th Division, and the men of the *HMAS Perth* and 7th Division, as the latter group transited through Changi from Java.

Introduction

One of history's great lessons is that a single order can have significant and long-lasting consequences. The Japanese forces in Singapore made one such order in February 1942.

The Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) made the extraordinary decision that the newly captured prisoners of war would be responsible for enforcing discipline among themselves. From the Japanese perspective, it made perfect sense. The conquest of Singapore had been meticulously planned, but the Japanese commanders had not anticipated the subsequent capture of over

50,000 Australian and British prisoners of war.¹ The soldiers who defeated the “impregnable fortress” of Singapore were some of the IJA’s most elite and well-trained troops. To redeploy these soldiers as prison guards was seen as a poor use of personnel and resources. Yet the Japanese were faced with having to canton, disarm and guard nearly 15,000 Australian and over 35,000 British prisoners of war.²

The Japanese came up with the rather novel solution that the prisoners of war would be responsible for enforcing discipline inside Changi. It was a watershed moment in the lives of the prisoners of war, and this paper will explore the significant consequences of that single Japanese order.

As will be seen, several changes in Changi’s command structure occurred and the consequences of these actions will be explored. From the records it is clear that many crimes were committed in Changi, so the manner and motivation of the crimes will be investigated. Military justice demands that when crimes are committed a punishment must be ordered, so the methods of punishment used in Changi will be examined. The consequences of crime, punishment and discipline on the camp’s social relations will also be explored.

On the shoulders of giants

The experiences of prisoners of war have long been fodder for historical study, and the prisoners of war in Changi have enjoyed particular attention from historians.

One of the first historians to examine the experiences of Australian prisoners of war was Lionel Wigmore in his volume, *The Japanese thrust*, of the Australian official history of the Second World War.³ Wigmore’s text vividly describes the events that took place in Changi, such as the Selarang Barracks Incident, but only briefly mentions the incidence of crime and punishment in

¹ R.P.W. Havers, *Reassessing the Japanese prisoner of war experience: the Changi POW camp, Singapore, 1942–5*, London, 2003, p. 27.

² Lionel Wigmore, *The Japanese thrust*, Australia in the War of 1939–1945, Series 1 (Army), vol. 4, Canberra, 1957, p. 511.

³ Wigmore, *The Japanese thrust*.

the camp. While Wigmore's text provides an excellent overview of life for the prisoners of war in Changi, the broad focus of his text does not allow for a detailed analysis of why crime or discipline took place.

Hank Nelson addresses this omission in his seminal text on prisoner of war experiences, *Prisoners of war: Australians under Nippon*.⁴ The 1980s saw a boom in the popularity of oral histories, and Nelson deftly uses the memories of former prisoners of war to explore the impact of theft and trading in Changi. While Nelson examines crime in Changi at a deeper level than Wigmore achieved, Nelson is also more enchanted by the many audacious tales of "scrounging" by the prisoners of war. This bias in his argument may have occurred as a result of the tendency of prisoners of war to romanticise or idealise their experiences in oral history interviews, in which the negative impact of crime is forgotten while the happier memories of fooling camp guards are retained.⁵

While Gavan Daws examines the prevalence of crime in Changi in his text, *Prisoners of the Japanese: POWs of World War II in the Pacific*, the breadth of his subject matter prevents any deep analysis.⁶ Daws explores the experiences of American prisoners of war in camps throughout Asia and the Pacific, so his text allows for only a limited analysis of crime in Changi. While Daws's text is interesting for his focus on American prisoners of war, who are often ignored by Australian and British historians, he also relies heavily upon oral history interviews. As such, his portrayal of crime and poor discipline in Changi appears romanticised in comparison with contemporary records.

This paper will draw upon the research conducted by previous historians in their analysis of Changi and the events that occurred there. Wigmore, Nelson and Daws's texts provide valuable context for this project, which will be the first to investigate not only the crimes that took place in Changi but the motives behind the crimes and the punishments. Rather than

⁴ Hank Nelson, *Prisoners of war: Australians under Nippon*, Sydney, 1985.

⁵ Rosalind Hearder, "Memory, methodology, and myth: some of the challenges of writing Australian prisoner of war history", *Journal of the Australian War Memorial* 40 (2007) p. 1.

⁶ Gavan Daws, *Prisoners of the Japanese: POWs of World War II in the Pacific*, Carlton, 1994.

rely upon oral history interviews, this paper will take advantage of the Australian War Memorial's significant collection of contemporary private papers and official records. Through an analysis of contemporary primary sources, the consequences of discipline in Changi will be revealed.

The Changi command structure

The AIF prisoner-of-war instructions informed the men that the "system of discipline to be enforced by the AIF is our own system as laid down by the DA, AMR, and AA".⁷ As the Australian and British officers were thus responsible for enforcing discipline in Changi, the military units of the prisoners of war remained intact. Likewise, as groups of Dutch and American prisoners of war transited through Changi, their own command structures were responsible for enforcing discipline for their troops.⁸ Lieutenant Colonel E.B. Holmes of the Manchester Regiment was appointed commander of all British and Australian prisoners of war in the camp, while Lieutenant Colonel Frederick "Black Jack" Gallegan of the 2/30th Battalion was in command of the Australian prisoners of war.

Gallegan was a contentious choice. During the Malayan Campaign, Gallegan's 2/30th Battalion had fought the Japanese directly, and mounted a successful ambush at Gemas. As commander of the Australian 8th Division in Changi, he was admired and respected by his own men. In his glowing biography of Gallegan, Lance Sergeant Stan Arneil even remembers the working parties based at Singapore's wharves sending Gallegan parcels of food and boot polish, as "we didn't want any Japanese soldier to see Black Jack wearing unpolished boots".⁹ Other men remember Gallegan differently,

⁷ Recapitulation and revision of Australian Imperial Force prisoner of war administration instructions 1942, 15 March 1942, AWM54, 554/11/21.

⁸ Daws, p. 175.

⁹ Stan Arneil, *Black Jack: the life and times of Brigadier Sir Frederick Gallegan*, Melbourne, 1983, p. 112.

and many prisoners of war saw him as a tyrant because of his determined enforcement of discipline in the camp.¹⁰

The fall of Singapore had a crushing impact on the morale of the Australian troops, and the opportunity to remain as a united military unit was heartily taken up by the officers and most of the other ranks. Their desire to regain as much normality as possible was reflected in the instructions issued by Malaya Command in March 1942. Australian prisoners of war were notified that the Australian Imperial Force was responsible for enforcing their good discipline according to “normal methods”, and that “Company Commanders and CO’s will exercise their ordinary powers in the normal way”.¹¹ The sense of routine normality provided by Command helped many officers to endure the initial trauma of defeat and to retain their sense of identity.¹²

Yet normality was not the only reason why discipline was seen as important. Without any structure, the prisoners of war could easily have become an unruly mob. Colonel James Thyer gave a rousing speech to the Australian non-commissioned officers proclaiming that, “We cannot afford to say, ‘It is all over; let’s rest and forget it.’ There is as much now as ever the necessity for discipline and for the leadership on our part which produces that discipline.”¹³ Galleghan also subscribed to this point of view, and argued that strong discipline had kept the men alive during the Malayan Campaign and it could save their lives in Changi.¹⁴

Orders during this time had a strong focus on discipline. Many were concerned with appearances, as the prisoners of war were ordered to wear correct military dress. So determined were Holmes and Galleghan to retain military appearances that they appointed an officer to ensure that dress and

¹⁰ Ray Parkin, *Into the smother*, London, 1963, p. 17; Edward ‘Weary’ Dunlop, *The war diaries of Weary Dunlop*, London, 1990, p.166; Russell Braddon, *The naked island*, London, 1952, p. 154.

¹¹ Recapitulation and revision of Australian Imperial Force prisoner of war administration instructions 1942, 15 March 1942, AWM54, 554/11/21.

¹² C. David Griffin, “The Changi Backdrop”, (AWM) 3DRL/0369, Part 2.

¹³ Colonel J.H. Thyer, “Report of lecture to Warrant Officers and Sergeants at POW camp, Changi, 18 June 1942”, (AWM) 3DRL/4035.

¹⁴ Arneil, *One man’s war*, p. 26.

discipline were maintained in Changi.¹⁵ In addition, the prisoners of war were required to have their hair kept to a military standard, even the men undergoing Correction Cell sentences.¹⁶ For if a man was found to have committed a crime in Changi, an officer could sentence him to a term in the Correction Cells, overseen by Lieutenant Hector Chalmers of the 8th Division Provost Company. If a prisoner of war disagreed with his sentence, he could appeal to a District Court Martial, where his case would be heard according to military law. Although the Correction Cells were organised by an officer of the provost company, an Australian provost patrol was not established within Changi. The British prisoners of war did have a provost patrol to enforce discipline and order in the camp, but the Australians chose not to have one, as it was thought it could demoralise the prisoners of war.¹⁷

Many of the other ranks saw the strict enforcement of discipline as excessive in the confines of the prison camp, and Gunner Russell Braddon's scathing opinion of the "tactless and unnecessary orders" is well known.¹⁸ However, historians have largely ignored Braddon's thoughtful reflections on the discipline enforced in Changi. Immediately following Braddon's oft-quoted complaints about the orders, and officer-other rank distinction, lies an important observation:

Those orders were inspired by a sincere conviction at top level that it was absolutely necessary – in the case of an imminent invasion, which, in fact, never came – to preserve the class distinction by privileges not based upon responsibility. It is no cause for complaint.¹⁹

Whether or not the other ranks agreed with the practice, Holmes and Galleghan were determined to enforce discipline and protect their men from the Japanese camp guards. What they had not counted on was the arrival of a new camp commandant, Lieutenant Takahashi, who swiftly replaced Holmes

¹⁵ War diary, 8th Division, 20 January 1944, AWM52 1/5/19.

¹⁶ War diary, 8th Division, 1 April 1944 and 13 July 1945, AWM52 1/5/19.

¹⁷ Glenn Wahlert, *The other enemy?*, Oxford, 1999, p. 149.

¹⁸ Braddon, p. 167.

¹⁹ Braddon, p. 167.

and Galleghan with Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Newey of the Singapore Settlements Volunteer Force. Takahashi had previously been in command at the Sime Road Camp, where Newey had acted as Representative Officer for the prisoners of war.²⁰

Newey was an extremely unpopular choice among the officers. Although Galleghan was seen as rather tyrannical by the other ranks, the officers held both Galleghan and Holmes in high esteem.²¹ Furthermore, Newey was not a member of the British Army but rather a volunteer with the Singapore Settlements Volunteer Force, and he appointed staff officers from his own unit. Even more controversial was Newey's status before the war as a British expatriate in Malaya, where he had held a senior position at the Malay Department of Posts and Telegraphs. For Holmes and Galleghan, both experienced and professional soldiers, to be replaced by an expatriate volunteer was too much to bear for some officers. One such, Captain G.H. Shorland, ranted about Newey in his diary, calling his regime "anti-officer and very tactless" and complaining that "the tragedy is that a Malay postman is in no position to judge and too pigheaded to seek advice".²²

Newey eventually appointed Major Alexander Thompson as liaison officer between himself and the Australian officers. However, Newey and Thompson had numerous disagreements over how the camp should be run, and Thompson quit in April 1945 after serving only seven months as liaison officer.

Newey had harsher methods for punishing crimes than Holmes and Galleghan had adopted previously, and he had many quarrels with the Australian officers. Galleghan in particular disagreed with Newey's methods as Representative Officer, and recorded in a later report that "the RO permits no outside intervention in his illegal administration of discipline, and

²⁰ Lieutenant Colonel E.B. Holmes, "Interim Report on British and Australian POW Camps, Singapore Island, 17 August 1942 to 31 August 1945", AWM54, 554/11/4 Part 10, p. 9.

²¹ Nelson, p. 33.

²² Colonel G.H. Shorland, diary entry for 11 August 1944 (IWM), in Havers, p. 144.

continued to inflict punishments on AIF soldiers & NCOs among others.”²³ The punishments which the Australian officers disagreed with so vehemently were the longer incarceration sentences of up to 30, 60 or even 90 days per crime. It was not uncommon for prisoners of war to serve up to 120 or 150-day sentences for multiple crimes in the Correction Cells. During their sentences in the Correction Cells, the prisoners of war were kept in solitary confinement and had to stand for long periods without food or water. Newey also believed in naming and shaming offenders in the published Camp Orders which, while useful to the historian, had the effect of demoralising the camp considerably.²⁴

By July 1945 even the Japanese Camp Commandant recognised that Newey’s punishment methods were too harsh, and he was removed from command. The comparison between Newey and his replacement, Lieutenant Colonel F.J. Dillon of the British Army, is an interesting one. Both men had endured the terrors of the Burma–Thailand railway, Newey as commanding officer of H Force and Dillon as commanding officer of F Force, yet the experience impacted the men differently. Newey had returned from the experience with a strong belief in severe punishment for crimes committed, and though Dillon recognised the necessity of discipline and strong leadership, he also valued strong camp morale.²⁵ It is therefore unsurprising that when Dillon was promoted to Representative Officer he stopped the demoralising practices of solitary confinement in the Correction Cells and the naming and shaming of offenders in Camp Orders.²⁶ As a consequence, the camp returned to its original methods of discipline enforcement, which remained in use until liberation in September 1945.

²³ Lieutenant Colonel Gallegan, “Interim Report on P.W. Camps, Singapore”, AWM54, 554/11/4 Part 1, p. 23.

²⁴ Gallegan, p. 23.

²⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Newey, “‘H’ Force Interim Report, ex Changi Camp, Thailand, Period 5 May 1943 to 23 December 1943”, AWM54, 554/8/11; Lieutenant Colonel Dillon, “‘F’ Force (Thailand): Report by Lieutenant Colonel F.J. Dillon, Royal Indian Army Service Corps to Japanese authorities on conditions of POW in Thailand, May-Dec 1943”, AWM54, 554/7/8.

²⁶ Havers, p. 160.

Law and order

Responsible for discipline within Changi, the officers were also required to make decisions to ensure the survival of the prisoners of war. Considering the limited supplies of paper and ink available to the prisoners of war, the amount of paperwork produced by the officers is quite remarkable. The official records reveal in detail the key concerns of the officers, which ranged from hygiene and sanitation to food, medical and forestry supplies.

Hygiene and sanitation were significant concerns for the prisoners of war from the moment they were marched into Changi. Early routine orders prohibited the removal of concrete slabs from anti-malarial drains, while the men were ordered to drink water only after it had been chlorinated or boiled to prevent cholera and dysentery.²⁷ Tropical diseases remained a constant threat to the camp, and prisoners of war with dysentery or diarrhoea were forbidden from working in the cookhouse.²⁸ This was a difficult order to enforce, as the symptoms of dysentery were only present after one to three days, and the infection was easily transmitted through infected food and water. Therefore, the officers were not always able to enforce correct hygiene and sanitation in Changi. Both malaria and cholera increased in the camp during 1945, owing to heavy rains and high tides that allowed malarial mosquitoes to breed, and an increase in cholera-carrying flies caused by local villagers' practice of using human waste as manure on their gardens near the camp boundaries.²⁹

To contain the tropical diseases that were prevalent within the camp, the officers issued a number of orders regarding their meagre supplies of medication. In January 1944, the officers ordered that all supplies of quinine and atebirin were to be handed in to the medical authorities.³⁰ The authorities went one step further in May 1944, with an order issued forbidding any one

²⁷ AIF Routine Orders, 11 October 1942 and 30 October 1942, PR86/187.

²⁸ War diary, 8th Division, 16 December 1944, AWM52 1/5/19.

²⁹ War diary, 8th Division, 6 March 1945 and 9 April 1945, AWM52 1/5/19.

³⁰ War diary, 8th Division, 3 January 1944, AWM52 1/5/19.

from holding private supplies of medication.³¹ This order was evidently ignored, for the official records are filled with the sentences of prisoners of war caught possessing or trading quinine and atebirin tablets. One prisoner of war, Private T.J. Aspinall of the 2/30th Battalion, was found to have acted as an intermediary in a sale of quinine tablets and for this relatively minor crime he was sentenced to 14 days' solitary confinement in the Correction Cells.³² The officers were not only concerned about prisoners of war hoarding medication for personal use or trade, for there was also the problem of men not reporting to the Medical Area when they fell ill. A camp order was issued in June 1945 calling on all prisoners of war to recognise that early medical treatment benefited not only themselves, but also their friends, and the hospital's capacity to care for the seriously ill.³³

A constant concern for the camp Command was the severe lack of food, and the malnutrition it caused amongst the prisoners of war. The camp's rice stocks decreased dramatically in November 1943, when F and H Force began to return to Changi from the Burma-Thailand railway. At this time the Japanese camp guards also experienced a drop in their rice stocks, and all prisoners of war were forbidden from discussing the levels of rice supplies with members of the IJA for fear of losing their limited rations.³⁴

As the rice rations were small and often left the prisoners of war still hungry, it became a common practice in Changi for small groups of men to look after each other. Whether through theft or trading, the small groups of friends would "scrounge" some food and share it between themselves. In his diary, Arneil recorded how he and five friends pooled together their possessions - \$350, a pair of shorts, socks, singlet, towel and two packets of cigarettes - and then traded the lot for 100 fish.³⁵ The camp commanders disapproved of this practice, as it caused an increase in theft and inflation in the camp. To prevent the sharing and trading of food, the officers ordered

³¹ War diary, 8th Division, 10 May 1944, AWM52 1/5/19.

³² War diary, 8th Division, 7 August 1944, AWM52 1/5/19.

³³ War diary, 8th Division, 1 June 1945, AWM52 1/5/19.

³⁴ War diary, 8th Division, 4 December 1943, AWM52 1/5/19.

³⁵ Arneil, *One man's war*, p. 256.

that all private cooking be banned from 21 April 1944, and all private fires were forbidden on 18 October 1944.³⁶ However, as the men became hungrier and more desperate, the theft and trading of food continued, despite orders to the contrary.

Yet food, medical supplies and hygiene were not the only factors with which the commanders were concerned. As Changi was such a densely populated camp, timber supplies were always in high demand. Specific trees were banned from being cut down, as they provided much needed shade and greenery in the otherwise stark barrack grounds.³⁷ Likewise, the timber provided necessary fuel for the kitchen fires, and from 21 February 1944 restrictions were placed on cutting down palm and coconut trees in the camp vicinity.³⁸ Fatigue took its toll on the prisoners of war, and many resorted to pre-cut timber and wooden poles as fuel for their private fires.³⁹ This caused a significant wastage of resources, and was disapproved of by the officers.

Although the officer's orders regarding correct military dress caused much consternation amongst the other ranks, and have been well-remembered in their diaries and memoirs, the officers also had more significant concerns. By ensuring strict discipline regarding hygiene, sanitation, and medical, food and forestry supplies, the officers tried to ensure that as many prisoners of war survived as possible.

Crime and punishment

Crime was a serious problem in Changi from the very first days of captivity, and the officers fought a losing battle to contain it. The most infamous theft in Changi occurred in April 1942, when the Japanese allowed officers' trunks and a few kit bags to be released from storage. A party was sent into Singapore to collect the trunks and, once back inside the camp, some men distracted the officer in charge, while others rifled through the bags and

³⁶ War diary, 8th Division, 21 April 1944 and 18 October 1944, AWM52, 1/5/19.

³⁷ AIF Routine Orders, 23 November 1943, PR86/187.

³⁸ 8th Australian division diary, entry for 21 February 1944, AWM52, 1/5/19.

³⁹ 8th Australian division diary, entry for 28 August 1944, AWM52, 1/5/19.

stole everything of value. The officers were forced to buy back their belongings at the black market that night, with one officer having to haggle for his own wallet, complete with photographs of his wife and children still in it.⁴⁰

The majority of crimes in Changi were far less malicious than this example, and many prisoners of war stole to feed themselves and their friends.



Image 1: *Australian prisoners of war carry a ration of rice that had to feed 250 men, September 1945. (AWM 019192)*

The rations provided by the Japanese decreased considerably throughout the war and the poor diet, combined with the hard labour the prisoners of war were expected to undertake, left the men permanently hungry and constantly at risk of nutritional deficiency diseases. Food theft, in this situation, became an attractive option. The camp gardens were often the subject of midnight raids: 550 kilos of tapioca seedlings were stolen during August 1944, which would have produced over 1,600 kilos of tapioca for the

⁴⁰ Author unknown, "The Black Market", (AWM) 3DRL/0369, Part 9.

camp if left to grow.⁴¹ Likewise, the rice supplies proved attractive to the starving men. One Australian prisoner of war, Private A.A. Young, stole more than 20 kilograms of rice from the camp supply depot. For this crime, Private Young was sentenced to 60 days in the Correction Cells, with one day a week on the penal diet of plain rice and water week.⁴²

With the constant presence of tropical diseases, medication became a popular item amongst the camp's thieves. A British prisoner of war, Leading Aircraftman C. Bryer, committed the most notorious theft in Changi when he stole 466 quinine tablets.⁴³ Considering that severe malaria can be a fatal disease, Bryer's actions were reprehensible, and for his crime Bryer was sentenced to 28 days in the Correction Cells. Medical equipment was also not immune from the prying hands of prisoners of war, with a surgical drill stolen from the camp hospital in August 1944.

As the men became more and more hungry, every article in the camp gained a market value, and when a man had sold all of his own possessions he often turned his attention to the property of his neighbour. Prisoners of war who were sick and needed to stay in the camp hospital for medical treatment had to rely upon their friends to guard any kit they had left behind in their huts against thieves. However, it was not unheard of for hospital patients to have their belongings stolen from their hospital room while asleep or unconscious. The British prisoners of war even had a nickname for orderlies in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) in Changi, who quickly became known as Rob All My Comrades.⁴⁴

A large and highly organised black market was established in the camp during the early period of captivity, in part as a result of theft. Anything, from clothes to watches to gold teeth fillings, could be traded on the black market for food. The prices for food on the black market were exorbitantly high, but the black market operators argued that the risks they took to smuggle in the

⁴¹ War diary, 8th Division, 28 August 1944 and 2 September 1944, AWM52 1/5/19.

⁴² War diary, 8th Division, 6 November 1944, AWM52 1/5/19.

⁴³ War diary, 8th Division, 17 August 1944, AWM52 1/5/19.

⁴⁴ Daws, p. 262.

food warranted such high profits. In any case, the smugglers had the food and could charge whatever they liked for it, and there was always a buyer.⁴⁵

The black market allowed the prisoners of war to trade among themselves, but it also allowed them to trade with the various Japanese, Korean and Indian camp guards. The camp guards had large sums of local currency and were willing to trade for luxury goods. Once this became common knowledge in the camp, fountain pens were suddenly engraved with the “Parker” brand on their sides and sold to the guards for inflated prices. Likewise, broken Rolex Oyster wrist-watches had the parts removed and replaced with inferior parts, and sold at high profits to the guards.⁴⁶

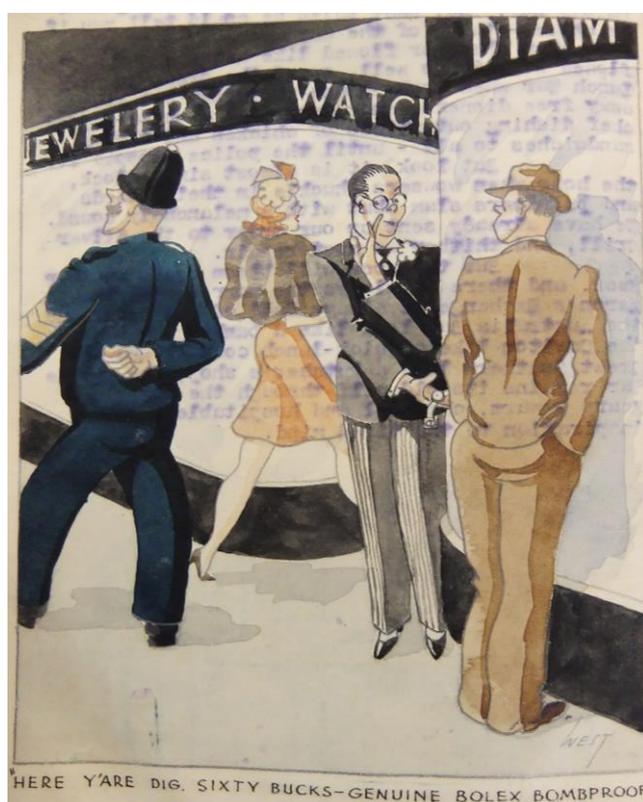


Image 2: A cartoon from the January 1945 edition of *Smoke-Oh* magazine, which depicts the black market activities as if they were happening on the home front. The sales approach appears unnatural in the home front context, but records indicate that hawking and the manufacture of fake products were common practices in Changi. (AWM 3DRL/5040.001)

Fake products were not a significant problem in Changi, but IOUs certainly were. As early as March 1942, the AIF Headquarters issued orders

⁴⁵ Author unknown, “Live to eat”, (AWM) 3DRL/0369, Part 9.

⁴⁶ Author unknown, “Trading”, (AWM) 3DRL/0369, Part 11.

forbidding the giving and receiving of IOUs for gambling debts.⁴⁷ Orders reminding prisoners of war that IOUs and organised gambling were forbidden were made regularly from 1943 until liberation in 1945, indicating that they remained severe hindrances to the maintenance of law and order in the camp.

In addition to IOUs, there was also the problem of currency and securities exchanges in the black market. Cheques, bonds, and other negotiable financial instruments were openly traded, and the rates for gold and silver were quoted weekly.⁴⁸ The exchange rate between the British pound and the Japanese dollar escalated quickly and by July 1945 it had become usurious and untenable. The new Representative Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Dillon, declared that \$8 Japanese currency to £1 British sterling was the maximum exchange rate. This had the result of giving the black market a semi-official status after three years of illegality, but the officers saw it as a necessary step to defend the starving prisoners of war from extortion.⁴⁹

The financial system within Changi was complicated, for compounding the problems caused by IOUs, cheques, bonds and currency exchanges was the impact of inflation. In the early days of imprisonment, men on working parties outside the camp could purchase tins of bully beef for 35 cents and tins of pineapple for 30 cents, and then sell them on the black market at Changi for \$4.00 each.⁵⁰ By 1945 the inflation had become even worse. Palm sugar, which had cost \$1.80 per pound in April 1944, was now selling at \$16.17 per pound. Likewise *blachang*, a type of shrimp paste that was effective at combating beri beri, increased in price from \$3.20 per pound in April 1944 to \$14.40 per pound a year later.⁵¹ These inflationary pressures had the effect of making it very difficult for the senior officers to purchase food supplies to supplement the camp's meagre rations.

⁴⁷ Recapitulation and revision of Australian Imperial Force prisoner of war administration instructions 1942, 15 March 1942, AWM54, 554/11/21.

⁴⁸ Author unknown, "The black market", (AWM) 3DRL/0369, Part 6.

⁴⁹ War diary, 8th Division, 25 July 1945, AWM52 1/5/19.

⁵⁰ Havers, p. 60.

⁵¹ War diary, 8th Division, 3 June 1945, AWM52 1/5/19.

While no officers openly declared their involvement with the black market, contemporary records indicate that the upper ranks were as involved in trading as the lower ranks. "Every rank in the camp from Colonels to Privates were represented indirectly in the trading," wrote Arneil in 1944. "And many a thin well-dressed officer grew into a healthier, though not so well dressed person in a very short time."⁵² It is this hypocrisy within the camp, whereby a man could order discipline while trading on the market himself, that ensured the black market could never be contained or abolished.

Officer–other rank relations

The enforcement of discipline in Changi had several repercussions in the camp, particularly on the camp's ability to keep the starving and diseased prisoners of war alive. However, an interesting, additional result of the enforcement of discipline in Changi was on officer–other rank relations. Many other-rank prisoners of war had fought in Malaya and seen their commanding officers perform poorly in battle. After surrendering to the enemy, an opinion existed among the other ranks that they were now prisoners of war and that the officers had no right to command them. "The officers tried to insist on discipline because they knew it was for our own benefit," recalls Warrant Officer Eric Bailey. "But a lot of the soldiers couldn't see it that way, and it actually led to fisticuffs between officers and men, besides men and men."⁵³

The war diary reports reveal that as the endless months of captivity continued during 1944 and 1945, the incidence of insolence from the other ranks to the officers and even to the NCOs increased significantly. It is uncertain whether the insolence was driven by impatience and frayed nerves from their endless imprisonment, or if it was caused by the harsh punishments that Newey ordered the officers to enforce. The larger rations

⁵² Stan Arneil, "Aerodrome", (AWM) 3DRL/0369, Part 1.

⁵³ Tape of interview with Eric Bailey, conducted by Margaret Evans, 16 February 1983, AWM recording S03000.

that the officers received, plus their lighter workloads, also caused friction between the officers and other ranks.⁵⁴

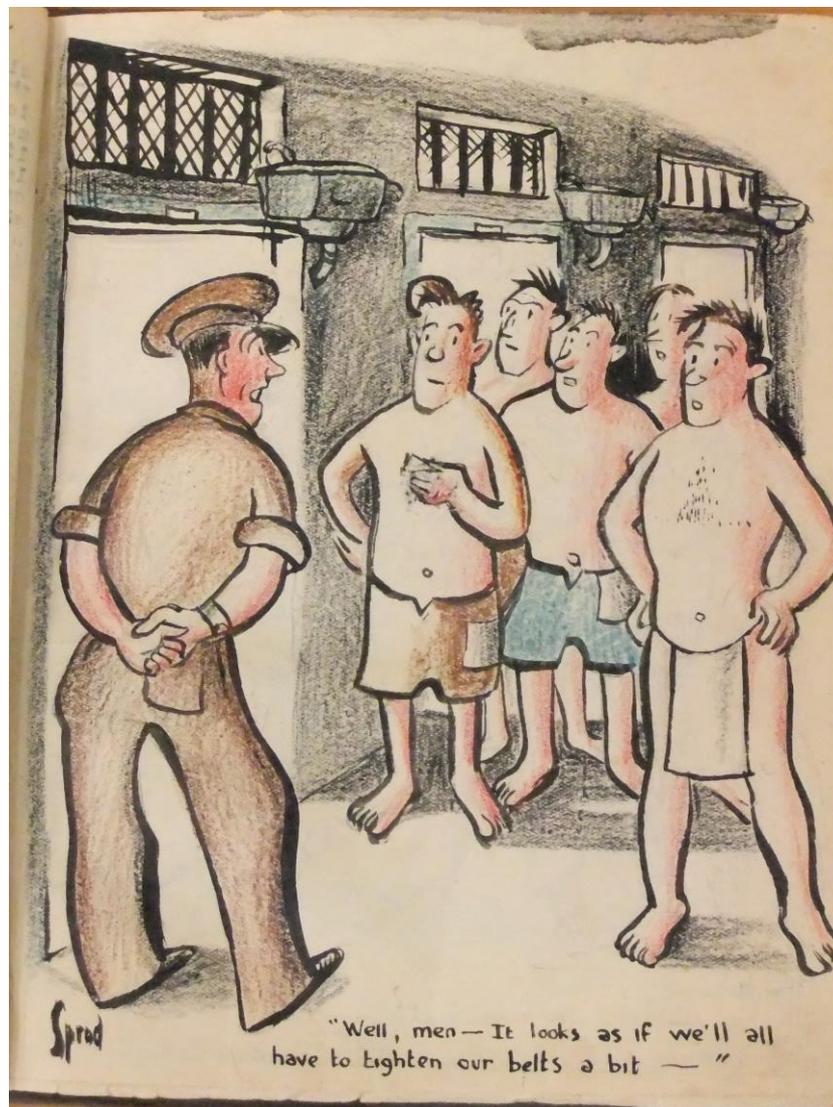


Image 3: This cartoon by George reveals the opinion of an other-rank prisoners of war regarding the officers, as the officer is shown in full military dress and giving orders, while the other ranks suffer poor rations and the need to sell clothing for food. (AWM 3DRL/5040.001)

Although relations between the officers and other ranks suffered as a result of captivity, the discipline enforced by the officers kept the Japanese at

⁵⁴ Bailey, AWM recording S03000.

bay. If the Japanese saw that the prisoners of war were being unruly, then they would threaten to intervene and punish the prisoners of war themselves. The Japanese took misbehaving prisoners of war to Outram Road Gaol, where they were tortured and starved. Few prisoners of war survived Outram Road Gaol, and the ones who came out alive did not have long life expectancies. The officers were keen to protect the men from the Japanese, and by enforcing discipline in the camp themselves the officers formed a buffer between the two.

Relations between the officers and other ranks became especially problematic when prisoners of war were punished for ambiguous crimes. In May 1945 an Australian prisoner of war, Sapper Patrick Matthews, was found in possession of electrical equipment against camp orders, and he made a false statement to the officer who discovered the equipment. For possessing the electrical equipment he was sentenced to 28 days solitary confinement in the Correction Cells, and for lying to an officer he was sentenced to an additional 14 days confinement.⁵⁵ However, Matthews had the electrical equipment because he and his friends had built two wireless sets, which allowed them to learn news of the war.

This news spread like wildfire throughout Changi and helped to keep the prisoners of war's morale high. To obtain the electrical equipment Matthews had escaped from the camp at night, broken into a nearby Japanese store, and stolen the parts needed. In separate escapes from the camp Matthews had also stolen food and medical supplies from the Japanese, which he gave to hospital patients as anonymous gifts.⁵⁶ For a man who risked his own life to bring food, medicine and news into the camp to be punished with solitary confinement caused great consternation in the camp. Although the officers had admirable intentions when they punished prisoners of war for committing crimes in the camp, their actions damaged relations with the hungrier and more exhausted other ranks.

⁵⁵ War diary, 8th Division, 4 May 1945, AWM52 1/5/19.

⁵⁶ Braddon, p. 271.

The Java parties

The enforcement of discipline in Changi not only caused friction between the officers and other ranks, it created problems with other groups and nationalities within the camp. Many of the American prisoners of war disagreed with the way discipline was enforced in Changi, and there were disagreements between the British and Australian commanders and the Dutch officers. However, the most notable result of the enforcement of discipline in Changi was the feud between Gallegan and the parties of AIF personnel transiting from Java.

The Java parties arrived suddenly in Changi, with 1,228 Australian troops entering the camp in September 1942 and another 3,400 men the next month.⁵⁷ The Australian forces in the Dutch East Indies had suffered greatly at the hands of the victorious Japanese, and when they arrived in Singapore their health was extremely poor. Major Thompson noted in his diary that dysentery was rife amongst the Java parties, and the long march from Singapore's docks to Changi camp was slow and humiliating for the men.⁵⁸

The men of the Java parties were diseased and malnourished, yet the records indicate that their lack of clothing received more attention in Changi than their health. Ray Parkin wrote in his diary how "our Java party is dressed in rags, for our clothes have been cut to a minimum by wear-and-tear and the Japanese. Changi-ites are well turned out. There is a high standard here which is taken by their officers to be synonymous with morale."⁵⁹ The aesthetic difference between the Java party troops and the "Changi-ites" was certainly stark, and yet more importantly there seems to have been a distinct lack of understanding or respect between the two groups.

In the AIF Routine Orders, Gallegan is particularly unsympathetic to the Java parties, ordering the men to adhere to correct military dress and

⁵⁷ Major Alexander Thompson, diary entry, 18 September, 23 September, 12 October, 16 October, 28 October 1942 (AWM) PR00016.

⁵⁸ Thompson, diary entry, 26 September 1942 (AWM) PR00016.

⁵⁹ Parkin, p. 17.

discipline.⁶⁰ To support this endeavour, the 4,228 troops who arrived from Java in September and October 1942 were issued with 7,500 pairs of socks, 300 shorts, 200 underpants and 300 singlets.⁶¹ Yet the second wave of Java parties in January and February 1943 received considerably less kit. During those two months 13,962 men transited through Changi from Java, while only 1,000 shirts and 1,000 socks were issued from the camp supply depot.⁶² Many of the men arrived in Changi wearing little more than rags, and Galleghan's measly issue of clothing to so many thousands of men caused friction within the camp.

As Commanding Officer of a Java party, Edward "Weary" Dunlop recorded in his diary his own tense dealings with Galleghan. With a steadfast determination to see Changi's men as soldiers, not defeated prisoners of war, Galleghan "talked to me about the movement of my lads - straggling on the march, irregular movements etc. In truth I think they look pretty dreadful, but it is hard to put up a good show in rags."⁶³ Yet what was worse than the lack of concern from Changi's command regarding the health and clothing of the Java parties was their lack of respect for their fellow soldiers. Dunlop wrote in his diary that "we seasoned veterans of three services suffer the term 'Java rabble'." Parkin claims that this taunt was created by Galleghan himself, who "has proclaimed us to the whole camp as 'The Java Rabble'".⁶⁴

The men of the HMAS *Perth* had served with distinction in the Mediterranean, as had the units of the 7th Division in the Middle East before their redeployment to Java. In their eyes, the "soft, pampered and over-publicised" 8th Division had performed badly in the Malayan Campaign.⁶⁵ This resulted in an intense rivalry in Changi, with the disappointment and humiliation of defeat causing the prisoners of war to turn on each other.

⁶⁰ AIF Routine Order, 14 November 1942, PR86/187.

⁶¹ Thompson, diary entry, 17 October 1942 (AWM) PR00016.

⁶² Thompson, diary entry, 6 January 1943 (AWM) PR00016.

⁶³ Dunlop, p. 167.

⁶⁴ Parkin, p. 17.

⁶⁵ Parkin, p. 12.

Mocked by their fellow soldiers for their lack of clothing and sneered at for their lack of military discipline, the Java parties left Changi for labour camps that promised even less assistance. As Dunlop's forces prepared to leave Changi for the horrors of the Burma-Thailand railway, Dunlop presented Galleghan with a final message of defiance:

Two weeks ago my men arrived in a pitiful condition in this camp from Java. You have done nothing to alleviate their needs – tomorrow at 8.30 they leave in the same pitiable condition: bootless and in rags. You have done nothing.

The experiences of the Java parties in Changi reveal that while the steadfast enforcement of discipline may have contained crime in the camp, Galleghan's lack of understanding for his fellow soldiers caused unnecessary hardship for many men.

The necessity of theft in Changi

In his book *Australia under Nippon*, Hank Nelson put forward the argument that "looting, or scrounging as the prisoners called it, was essential to survival, and the stories of triumphant looting sustained morale".⁶⁶ The second aspect of Nelson's argument, that looting sustained morale, is supported by contemporary evidence. Prisoner-of-war diaries are filled with stories about men smuggling pineapples into the camp in their G-strings, or cans of condensed milk in their slouch hats.⁶⁷ One prisoner of war even swore that he had seen a man smuggle a typewriter out of Changi, and sell it in the city for \$8000.⁶⁸ These stories of fooling the officers and camp guards helped morale in Changi greatly. Even Hector Chalmers, the original warden of the Correction Cells, wrote gleefully of his friends dressing as officers to "arrest" a group of smugglers and steal their sacks of tinned food.⁶⁹

While the contemporary sources support Nelson's claim that looting sustained morale, the other aspect of his argument, that looting was essential

⁶⁶ Nelson, p. 30.

⁶⁷ Nelson, p. 29.

⁶⁸ Author unknown, "Trading", AWM 3DRL/0369, Part 11.

⁶⁹ Lieutenant Hector Chalmers, *This now*, Changi, 1945, p. 196, (AWM) PR84/252.

to survival, is slightly different. At the start of this research project, Nelson's argument appeared easily debatable. For although the prisoners of war would surely have been hungry, there appeared to be no real need for the men to stoop to that level of moral depravity. Yet over the course of this research project it has become clear that Nelson had a greater understanding of Changi, the prisoners of war and their experiences than was initially apparent. The diaries, memoirs and official records speak of incredible hardships, under which the men's basic human rights to food and medical care were ignored. In a world where 250 men had to share a single bucket of rice for dinner, it is little wonder that starvation and malnutrition were rampant in Changi. Although theft and trading caused problems within the camp, it was a real necessity if the prisoners of war were to survive.

The men who survived Changi did so through their own determination, ingenuity and expertise at theft. In the end, it is their survival that is important, not how they achieved it.

Conclusion

The liberation of Singapore in September 1945 caused many prisoners of war to reflect on their experiences. In his farewell speech to the Australian prisoners of war, Galleghan commended the men on their strength of spirit over the previous three and a half years. "You finish your prisoner period as disciplined soldiers whom the Jap could not break," he proclaimed. "That is an achievement I have always hoped for, and it has been realised only by the united effort of you all." Despite the difficulties faced by Galleghan and the Australian officers in enforcing discipline, it appears that they were successful in their endeavours. The prisoners of war never, as Colonel Thyer had initially feared, descended to the level of a mob.⁷⁰

Yet while Galleghan could reflect on his term in captivity with pride in his men, Newey was less positive in his opinions. In a letter to his son Newey wrote how difficult it was to command in Changi, and how "now that we are

⁷⁰ Thyer, "Report of a lecture", (AWM) 3DRL/4035.

free I hope that sanity will return and we will forget all about it".⁷¹ But Changi and the experiences of the prisoners of war are far too interesting to be forgotten. Discipline in Changi is a fascinating subject, and the crimes, punishments and triumphs that occurred there deserve to be remembered.

⁷¹ Lieutenant Colonel T.H. Newey to Captain and Adjutant J.H.R. Newey, letter dated 20 September 1945, IWM, 85/50/1, in Havers, p. 160.