

Australians at War Film Archive

Milton Butterworth (Blue) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/906>

Tape 1

00:42 **Alright. Blue if you could just give us a summary of life pre pre-war, post-war ah pre-war, during war and post-war.**

Well I was born in a place called Dewsbury in West Yorkshire,

01:00 over in England naturally, and I went to primary school and then to a central school. Then I left school at fourteen. I didn't do too much at school. I wasn't a brain and so they I found myself doing work for the teachers in the carpentry shop, filling orders etcetera,

01:30 and I remember one time the teacher saying "Pay attention Butterworth. Listen to what I'm saying. Now what are the dimensions of a brick?" I said "You said nine by four and a half by three sir." He said, "You might be a bricklayer one day," and I thought "Oh no chance. No chance of bein' a bricklayer," but as it turned out, fourteen and I went and got an apprenticeship, which wasn't indentured, as a bricklayer and

02:00 then I took to the trowel like a duck to water and I was really enjoying work and it and I was on ten shillings a week and a gentleman I worked with said "I'm going to take over as a foreman for a builder. What about coming to work with me as an improver and you'll get ninepence ha'penny a week" and that was big money. So they had to negotiate he had to

02:30 negotiate with Mum and Dad and eventually they said, "Okay." So I went as an improver brick layer and then a gentleman came along to his mother's funeral and he was the brother-in-law of my labourer. We used to do a good job at work you know chimney pots and fire places and all the rest of it and he said, "This is the lad I was telling you about," and he said,

03:00 "I've just been told that you're a brickie and I can get you one and fourpence ha'penny an hour down where I live down in Middlesex," which London. Place called Feltham, which is half way between Windsor and Waterloo Station, and just up from Wimbledon. So I said to Mum, "I'm going down to London." She said, "Oh no you're not." Said, "Oh yes I am."

03:30 They said "We won't let you go." I said "Well I'm off." So I left home at sixteen and off I went. I arrived in Kings Cross. Saw that dirty big station there and thought "Oh my God." I got butterflies in my stomach. "What am I up to? Why did you leave home?" but when I arrived in Feltham the place was beautiful. Blue sky. Little Tiger Moths

04:00 flying up there 'cause the Hanworth aerodrome was there. Not one little no smoke but where I lived in the heavy woollen industry there used to be dirty big stacks of black smoke comin' out all the time and I was in another world. So I arrived in number 140 I think it was Percival Street in Feltham and I could hear the music coming through the door of

04:30 this place and I didn't have a clue what I was gonna see and I always remember the music, which "To a small hotel there we'll go good night sleep well" and I knocked on the door and the door opened and the blonde-headed thin blonde-headed lass said "Watch it cocker", which is a Londoner you know and from then on I was I felt good. So then I had two years workin'

05:00 around London and I saw an advert in the paper and for New South Wales, farming, on a two year contract. So I said "That's for me." So I did a bit of fiddlin' around and I eventually I found I was on this Church of England group. So we signed everything. Oh Mum and Dad of course said "No, you're not going" but I said,

05:30 "Well I'll forge your signatures," I was a bad little fella, and away I went and slept on the 1st of November 1938 slept in the Salvation Army in London, Waterloo, and then caught the train the next morning down to Southampton and we sailed on the 2nd of November on the [SS] Esperance Bay which was the Commonwealth line and

06:00 fourteen thousand tons and really enjoyed the trip. Met a lot of nice people and arrived in Sydney on the

12th of December. So it was a long trip but enjoyable. Met some lovely people and then we're slept in the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] in Pitt Street and the next morning

- 06:30 we took off to a place called Mulgrave, which is up near Windsor, got off the train and went to Scheyville, which was a college teaching you the elementary of farming, and learnt how to milk a cow and harness a horse and all the rest of it and then someone came along. I wanted wheat and sheep by the way. I wanted to work on wheat farm or sheep farm
- 07:00 and they were all taken but there was a dairy job. I said "No I don't want dairy" but anyway eventually a fella called Buchanan said "Blue, this is not the place for you" because I was having a problem with the manager "you take this dairy job", which I did and I went to a place called Karangi, which is eight miles out of Coffs Harbour, which in those
- 07:30 days was a long way away and lo and behold the people I worked for, called McLeod, and they're lovely and I slept in I was part of the household and then I left there. They got a little bit I gave notice fourteen times by the way and eventually I did take off and I went back to city back to came down to Sydney and
- 08:00 then I got a job on a poultry farm at Turrumurra, North Turrumurra, and I was there when war started. Now I'm gonna tell you the interesting part. There was two English girls, who were the only two girls who came out on the ship with us who had employment when they arrived here, and they were gonna work for a fella called Darganit, ah Darganheart, who was the trump of the stock exchange
- 08:30 and he lived in Killara. So Amy and Edwina used to, and Bill, who was my old mate, he's long dead came from England with me, and they used to do our laundry. So this particular night, which was Sunday night and it was September the 3rd, and I arrived down there and used to have to sneak up the side walk because they weren't allowed
- 09:00 male visitors. When I got there, there was no light and I knocked and opened the door slightly and the next thing the transom light of the bedroom came on and a voice, very croaky voice, said "Is that you Ginger?" 'Cause all the Poms call me Ginger, right, and I said "Can I come in?" She said "Yes, come in." In I went and she's got a red thing around her neck
- 09:30 and I said "What's wrong?" She had some fever, right, and the next thing footsteps. "Oh quick" she said "Quick, that might be Mrs Darganheart comin' to see how I'm goin' along." Amy, by the way, was still working. Doin' her job, you see? Havin' to work back. So what did I do, which was just approximately nine o'clock at night. I'm under the bed and
- 10:00 the radio was put on and Bob Menzies announced "We're... Australia is goin' to war" at nine o'clock and I was under the bed. Now this, I've got to tell you this. I've told everybody before, under that bed was the guzunder. In other words a Jerry. A pot as they used to be called and it had been used. Anyway
- 10:30 ironically and another thing, a peculiar thing was, that I was smoking. So I dashed under the bed with a cigarette. It didn't turn out to be Mrs Darganheart. It was Amy and she said "What are doin' under there? Ginge come out" and we still talk about that. Excuse me again.

Just have a drink of water Blue.

Amy, Amy is still alive.

- 11:00 **Oh really? Just for the summary of your life, if you could just sort of take us through you know just touching on the events that happened just you know one after the other and then like the really the stories like that, that's what we really want to hear but we'll come back and we'll get all those details for your stories, so...**

Yeah.

Um.

So, right. So

- 11:30 do you want. So I've come back to Sydney

No that, it's all fine. So the war's you know the war's been declared that I mean it's all moving along fine.

Yeah. Well I immediately on Monday morning went out to Victoria Barracks to enlist but when I got to Victoria Barracks, there's nothing there. There was a marquee been erected but no one there

- 12:00 to take any notice. So I just shook my head and said "Cripes, what's next?" So then I went back and I by the way I moved into a place called a street called Kent Street. I went you know Kent Street and I was livin' with a radio announcer and his wife. They had a boarding house there and Dick Butler I think his name was he from 2KO
- 12:30 Newcastle [radio] and Peggy, his wife, used to run the establishment and when I told her I was going to join up she said "No you won't. No, if any correspondence comes here for you I'll destroy it. You're too young to be joining the army." So I had a mate livin' in Cleveland Street Redfern, and there's the proof of it all there on the table, and so I said to dear old

- 13:00 anyway the landlady where he was living, Mrs Barber is a Maltese lady, "Would you mind if I used your address when I join up?" She said "No problem." So on my paper, which I've got over there to brought it in to show you, I was in 50-odd Cleveland Street when I joined up but I was living in Kent Street
- 13:30 and so the next thing I went and enlisted on the 12th of September and then on the 20th of October I was attested, by the way I joined up in Millers Point 'cause it's just around the corner from where I was in Kent Street, and I was attested and joined
- 14:00 camp on the 20th of October 1939 and went to Liverpool camp and then in November Ingleburn, which is brand spanking new, we were moved up to Ingleburn and there 2/1st Battalion had already been formed and I became part of it. 2/1st
- 14:30 Infantry Battalion and occupation, first of all I put down bricklayer. They said "Right you'll be in the pioneers" but I must go back for when I first went to join up and they said occupation I said "Bricklayer." They said, "You can't mate. You're no good. You can't join. It's manpower. You're not allowed. Think of something else." I said "Poultry farmer." They said, "You're gone
- 15:00 again." Another manpower. He said, "But hang on a minute." He said, "You really want to join don't you?" I said, "Yeah of course I do." He said, "Well now you've only got two hundred WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and while you're away your mother will be able to look after them won't she?" My Mum was in England and I'd put me age up to twenty one by the way and I said "Oh yeah." So on my paper it had occupation "Poultry
- 15:30 farmer" but when I was in Liverpool they said "Occupation?" and I said "Bricklayer." So I became the bricklayer of the 2/1st battalion but in those days all you did was listen to dear old Gladys Moncrieff, who was very good singer, and I loved her singing and Peter Dawson and I said to an old bloke, George Miller, he was a First World War bloke, I said, "George
- 16:00 what do bricklayers do and pioneers do when we get to war?" He said, "Oh dig latrines." I said, "Latrine, what's a latrine?" I didn't have a clue what a latrine was. He said, "A shithouse." I said, "What?" He said "Well if you don't like it, you apply for a
- 16:30 transfer." And I said, "Right. I'm going to." Anyway shot out and this little Scotch sergeant, acting sergeant, is standing there and I said "Sergeant, any jobs for me to do?" and he said "Well as you know Butterworth, Ingleburn's a new camp and there's no bricklaying to be done but I got a wee job for you" and lo and behold he headed straight away towards
- 17:00 the latrine and I said "Listen sport." I didn't say sport I didn't know the cavalry in those days. I said "Listen I'm not the battalion poop carter. I'm the battalion bricklayer." He said "I'll have you know you'll do as you're told." And I saw this tall gentleman standing up the top there and I shot straight up to him and I saluted him. He said, "Soldier you don't salute a
- 17:30 warrant officer." And I said, "Look you're so tall I couldn't see if you'd had anything on your shoulder or not" you see. He said, "What's your problem?" And this Scottish acting sergeant was stiffly to attention and he had my complexion in those days too and I said, "Well do you know of any jobs sir that I could do?" He said, "Ah hang on a minute." He said, "Yeah I want a batman." I didn't have a clue. I said, "I'll take it."
- 18:00 And this gentleman, this sergeant said, "Aye sir. I was after tellin' Butterworth you wanted a batman." And I said, "You so and so liar." "Ah ah soldier that's no way to speak to an NCO [non commissioned officer]." "Righto sergeant." he said, "dismissed. I'll look after Private Butterworth." Off he went and Wally Delves, WP Delves NX7597, took me into his room. He said, I said, "What do I have to do?" He said, "Oh clean
- 18:30 me Sam Brown, clean me boots, do you smoke?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well there's three, three, a tin of Three Threes ready to roll tobacco and cigarette papers. Just help yourself and by the way," he said, "I got a mate of mine too, the quartermaster RSM [regimental sergeant major]. Would you mind looking after the two of us?" I said "No problem." So that was my introduction to the army
- 19:00 and Wally and I, I must say, Wally he's ninety two years of age. He's still alive, in Melbourne and I spoke to Wal to tell Wal I was gonna mention his name, would he mind, and I was gonna bring up a couple a things about my time with Wal in the 2/1st Infantry and he said, "Go ahead mate." And I said, "Could you write something to prove?" He said, "Ah I'd rather
- 19:30 not," he said, "but tell them to ring me. If they don't believe you, tell them to ring me." I said, "Well I'll do that if they don't believe me" and so there you are.
- That's great Blue. That's the really the wonderful detail that we want to get from you but um, for the moment we've just got to get through this summarising process. So if for instance you could just say you know "I left I did my training, then I left Australia and I was**
- 20:00 **initially there for this long then there then there then there then there then the war was over. Then I moved into this and this and this." Just so we can get a really quick overview and we know you know generally what you got up to and then we'll go back and we get all that wonderful detail**

All the nitty gritty

That you've got there. So

Yeah, yeah.

I'm sorry to interrupt you, but

No, no.

If you could just we'll quickly move through you know the major developments in your life and then we'll come back and really tell the story.

Yeah, yep.

20:30 Alright now?

Yeah.

Yeah well we were in Ingleburn camp and then on the 10th of January 1940 we went down to Sydney and we boarded the [SS] Orford, troop ship, and we sailed in convoy with a few other troop ships and went over

21:00 to Western Australia and then left Western Australia and then off we went to Middle East and we arrived in this Bitter Lakes in Egypt. Anchored there for awhile and then next day we suddenly went up the Suez Canal to Kantara, El Kantara East. Then we disembarked and we went from there up to Palestine

21:30 and into a camp called Julis, which had been erected. All the tents were there. Had been done by the black watch. So we were in Julis until August of 1940 and then we went down to Egypt to a place called Helwan, which was

22:00 not far out of Cairo, and then the war was starting to come a bit closer and we moved then down to Egypt ah Egypt, ah beg yours, we were in Egypt but we went down to a place called Ikingi Mariut, which is about fourteen ks [kilometres] out of Alexandria

22:30 and we were there for awhile training etcetera and then we shot up to a place called Sollum, ready for the western desert and then on the way from Sollum we eventually went up the escarpment, Alpha Pass as they called it, and that was the battalion. Unfortunately I got crook

23:00 and I left and went back into hospital in Alexandria but I did get back on the eve of Tobruk and then we did Tobruk and then with Wally Delves, who was the RSM, but he'd been promoted he got a commission but his commission hadn't quite come through, he became intelligence officer and we

23:30 had the job of under the orders of the colonel, Colonel Ether, to go along and establish headquarters because the 2/1st were gonna garrison Tobruk. So we went and found what they called Al El Barco Tobruk, which was the hotel, Mussolini's hotel etcetera, and Wally said to me "Go 'round the back and see what you can find" and he stood at the front door

24:00 'cause we couldn't get in there and I went 'round the back and which was a side entrance. No back entrance, side entrance, and it was down underneath where all the kitchens were and all I hear were my knees knocking and a bayonet rifle and I could hear a 'tick tick tick' and I thought "Oh Wally, there's a time bomb here somewhere" and I'm lookin' around and it turned out, very humorous, you looked up

24:30 this pier and there it was, it was a kitchen clock. So I shot up top and opened the doors, let Wal in and right in front was a dirty big photograph of Mussolini in the foyer and I said, "Do you mind?" He said "Go your hardest." So with the butt of me rifle I destroyed that and so we established headquarters there and then the colonel moved in, Colonel Ether, and so we were

25:00 there for quite awhile and then we shot back to Mersa Matruh and from Mersa Matruh we went back to a place called ah Amiriya, which we'd been in previously before we'd left to go in the western desert and then we shot from Amiriya to Alex [Alexandria]

25:30 and boarded a Bombay packer steam line for Greece on the 17th of March 1941 and we arrived in Greece at Tanjong Priok [Java], ah or yeah Tanjong Priok [Piraeus] I think that oh I might be getting mixed up there. Anyway we arrived there and two of us were left

26:00 in charge of the luggage etcetera and I won't go into all that detail now and then we went to a place called Daphne, which was a camp where the 16th Brigade were established and then from there we went up to a place called oh geez

26:30 Levadia , Lamia. Good God, not the Florina. God, gracious me. Ah...

Okay Blue, just to pick up the story you were heading up to Veria.

Yep. Oh we went up to Veria. Well first of all before Veria we were some

- 27:00 distance away and awaiting the orders to get up there and that's where we went, Veria, and we established and the next thing we knew that we weren't doing much good and Wally, dear old Wal, he said "Right" he'd gone for a conference with the colonel and he come back. He said
- 27:30 "You've got to get rid of all your gear. Not too much gear to be carried. Naturally you had to have your rifle and what have you and your bayonet and your eating utensils but your big pack and all that you're supposed to get rid of it" and we rendezvoused with a few of the other people and then we started the march,
- 28:00 which was a thirty mile march over the Olympic Range, and when we got down to the Aliakmon River and it's in there where my last time with the battalion. By the way, prior to all this my socks, army regulation socks, got so wet and
- 28:30 this Greek lad we had with us with a donkey, Greek soldier with his donkey, we were bringin' in stores off the main pass the road into where we were established with the mortar platoon and he gave me a pair of his socks made out of goat's wool and they were just like been knitted with any old thing and were like barbed wire on me feet.
- 29:00 Now I never had my boots or socks off for seventy two hours and did this thirty five thirty mile march, which is all gazetted. It's all in there and we're down the Aliakmon River and we had a spell before we crossed on a punt and nice cuppa. "On your feet." I got on me feet, went to move and down I went. Twice.
- 29:30 So Wally said "Right." So they carried me and put me on the punt and into a makeshift ambulance and I went into a ADMS [assistant director medical services] advanced turn out and then into a CCS [casualty clearing station] and a doctor had to cut my boot off and the boot my sock was impregnated into the soles of my feet and
- 30:00 I was in a hell of a bad way. I was on a train for three days back to Athens but somebody had knocked off all my Australian gear and I got a British battle dress on and I finished up in the English hospital and I felt a bit guilty
- 30:30 when wounded started to come in there that I wasn't wounded through bein' and I said, "Oh I want to get out." See it was on my papers "Unfit as further infantry infanteer" so they let me out and I went back to Daphne to be what they called ex-personnel. Anyway, the next thing Major Miller,
- 31:00 one of our battalion majors who was on his way back to Palestine to take over the infantry batt... ah 2/1st Infantry Training Battalion, he said, "You can drive Butterworth" and he tossed me a bunch of keys. Now I'd never driven a car. I'd had a go in a ute and a six-wheeler Morris. I'd no licence and I was told to report this major in 1st Aust Corps, 1st
- 31:30 Australian Corps, and right and I mean Brigadier Allen, who had gone he'd left, his I'm in his staff car which was a Chevy a 1941 Chevy with the first column gear change on and some people have got it down where I said Bentley,
- 32:00 but it was Chevy not Bentley. A Chevrolet and so the next thing he said, "Everything right?" This captain came along "Everything right with the car?" I said, "Oh yeah." I knew it had to have oil and water, that's all I and petrol. "Good." So I'm in the car. Nobody came near me and I put the groundsheet outside and
- 32:30 lay on it and went off into deep sleep and a little fella called Pee Wee out of the 2/1st battalion who was over there, he said "Hey Blue quick, quick." He said, "They've all gone. There's a fortune here. They've left everything." I said, "Go away. Go away." He said, "Come on. You wouldn't believe it" he said, "they've all gone." "What the hell is all this?" And sure enough, all their tents they'd just evacuated left everything.
- 33:00 "That's queer." Anyway at first light, dawn, they all came back again. There'd been a false evacuation. You don't read that in books. Anyway the next thing this captain came and said "Butterworth, your services are no longer required but you've got to go and pick up iron rations
- 33:30 and report to a Major Dunlop." So I went, got the iron rations and "Where is this Major Dunlop?" "At the Acropole Hotel in Athens." So there I am driving away and I saw this Acropole Hotel, went in, up on the third floor, knocked. The brigadier opened the door. I did all the usual
- 34:00 things, present arms and what you I said "I'm here to pick up a Major Dunlop." "Oh Dunlop old boy" he said, he's a British brig, he said "Your driver's arrived" and a very quietly spoken voice said "Ask him where is he parked?" I said "Right opposite near the park." "Good. I'll be down there shortly." So back I went
- 34:30 and I'm sitting in the car and over there you drive on the right hand side and the kerb is quite high to the footpath. So I'm sitting right up against the kerb and the next thing I look and there's this dirty big great coat right practically down to his feet, to his boots, and up I look and I said "Shit he'll never get in here."
- 35:00 He was six foot four and a half and around he came, introduced himself and I introduced myself. He said "Good. Now I want you to take me to the do you know the King George Hotel?" I said "No" and me

knees are shaking and we're going through Omonia Square, which is a very, very busy square and it's this time of day when everyone's coming from work etcetera and a little car in front, air force car, put the brakes

35:30 on quick and my front bumper bar locked with his back bumper bar but we got over that and went to the hotel and he said "Now I don't want these people to know that I'm actually leaving" you know but he went in very quietly and picked up a few bits and pieces that he had there and then we shot in the car and off we went. Going north and he said "You must be tired Butterworth. I'll take over."

36:00 So and he's so quietly spoken and I'm trying to work out "I think this bloke must be intelligence or something" the way he you know and he said "I'll give you a rest. I'll drive." So it's dead dark. We're going up under evacuation. The evacuation's on and the people are coming back you see and I'm sayin' "A bit to the left. A bit to the right.

36:30 Over to the left. Over to the right" and the next thing, 'Woof' and we're on an angle. We've gone into a ditch. He said "Have you got the trenching tool?" I said "Yes, there is one in the boot. I had seen in the boot and there was a trenching tool and with that I went to take my he said "Give it to me." He took off his great coat and he took off his stuff and I thought, and I kid you not,

37:00 I was lookin' at Hercules. Big man and he started. Just grabbed that and then he gave me a little pencil torch with a purple globe in it. He said "Keep it like that and just show me" and that's when I woke up. I thought "This bloke must be a doctor." 'Cause that's the only time I'd ever seen one of those kind of torches, doctors, and so I had to

37:30 keep it there and believe it or not you'd have thought anyway we got out and the next day coming back you'd a thought a bulldozer had been in there where he'd been and but we shot up there to headquarters

Blue we just want to say that's once again the real rich detail that...

Oh yeah, okay.

That we wanna get.

Oh yeah, yeah. Sure.

A little later

38:00 **um but we just want to zip through in very brief points just...**

Where I was.

You did that, you did that, you did that.

Yeah.

As briefly as we can and then we can really get stuck into that nitty gritty.

Yeah. Yeah well then we picked up these two Kiwi blokes and we're on our way back to a place called Levadia and these two Kiwis said, "Who" oh he stopped and by the way we had a Stuka comin' over the top just flown over

38:30 the top and he said "Stop Butterworth" and he shot out over to the railway, right? "Who is this fellow? He's bloody mad. He's got no nerve." I said "I've only just met him." Anyway that was that. So then we got back to Athens. So we're dawdlin' around there for awhile and then Piraeus, that was the harbour we arrived in

39:00 when I said Tanjong Priok, but Piraeus was the place in Greece and then they bombed Piraeus and then Weary told me to see that we had plenty of petrol, etcetera, and I did and then somebody knocked off the petrol. We found out it was two Kiwis and then we went to

39:30 a place called Kifissia, where the 2/5th AGH [Australian General Hospital] the hospital were, and the next thing I'm talking to a fellow and "Private Butterworth. Report back to your car" and Weary was in the car and he's got the engine running. He said "No panic but I've just been told that the Germans are on the way. No panic." I immediately went to start the car but

40:00 he'd already started it so hell of a big shot across all the gardens on the way back to Athens to the Acropole and the sun was shining in my eye and he took my hat off and put his cap on me so I could pull the peak right down. We got back to the Acropole and there's a provost [military policeman] standing guard there and Weary shot in there. I see this poor devil

40:30 present arms to Weary. He shot in and come back. He said "The silly bastard." They'd burnt a hell of a lot of gear he wanted and he did chin wag to the provost there trying to persuade him to..., Anyway we're back in the car and off. Then we went to Daphne, back to Daphne and he there I saw the pay roll, thousand millions of drachmas, being burnt

41:00 because they didn't want the Germans to get onto this finance and he was in there for a quarter of an hour and I'll go into detail later but came out he came out and then off and we after catch up with the

convoy.

Tape 2

- 00:41 We left the Acropole then shot down to a place called Argos and then we got to a place called Navplion. Oh prior to this, sorry,
- 01:00 but prior to this a gentleman come along and said "Is that you Dunlop?" In the dark of course. "Yeah." He said, "Right the brigadier's waiting for to see you." So Weary said to me, "Right, just go 'round the convoy." And I went 'round the convoy and the next thing whack, we're in a crater on a forty five degree angle and it looked
- 01:30 a bit grim and then in the dark an English officer said, "You'll have to abandon your vehicle and get in the vehicle at the back of the convoy." Now this is in books, what I'm gonna say, but Weary said, very nicely spoken "I don't know who you are or what you are. Will you
- 02:00 please f off." So they did. So there we are and the next thing I could hear the Greek voices singing, because they'd capitulated early, been withdrawn told to get back home the best way they could and around the corner they came and in about ten seconds flat they had the car back on terra firma and off we went and we caught up with the brigadier and we're goin'
- 02:30 over the Corinth canal and Weary said "Do you know where you are now?" I said, "Wouldn't have a clue" naturally, but we got the brigadier and then...

How long after that Blue was it that you ended up in Crete?

In Crete. Well we were in there for about two days, in the olive grove in Navplion, and then the order was evacuation

- 03:00 and so then two days later we were on the boat, on the anti-aircraft cruiser the [SS] Calcutta. Took us over to Crete to Suda Bay.

How long did you end up spending in Crete?

In Crete all told I'd a been there about ten days or maybe a little longer. I forget now but Weary we went from the Suda Bay and went up to Canea,

- 03:30 the city of Canea, and then went back to Suda Bay and I thought I was comin' off with Weary and eventually this fellow in full of red braid and what have you said "Dunlop he can't go with you" and he said "I want him to go with me." He said "He can't go with you and that's an order." So he left me in charge of a fella called McLeod, Lieutenant McLeod, who
- 04:00 was 1st Aust Corps, and Weary took off. He told this gentleman "Look after Butterworth and when I get back to the mainland, if possible we'll make contact again." So off went Weary and I was there a few more days right on the just alongside of the water at Suda Bay. Another long story for later

Yep.

And then got on this little

- 04:30 boat and took us back. We had to keep well away from roads because the we could a been bombed and went way up right out to sea alongside of Tobruk and then from Tobruk back to Alexandria and them from Alexandria went back again to Tasa, the old camp I used to be in, and then back to Palestine. Back to a place
- 05:00 called Dayr Nizam, which I knew from previous experience, and there we were informed that Crete had fallen and that we were no longer Anzacs. Now we had become Anzacs over in Greece and Crete under the command of General Freiberg, who was a New Zealander, and so I was an Anzac.
- 05:30 Anyway that was that and then next thing I know I'm gotta go and see this Colonel Johnson and he said, "We're trying to make contact with Major Dunlop and as soon as we find out we'll let you get back to him." And then I was put on forward movement on the Syrian campaign and we went to Nazareth. So
- 06:00 I was stationed in Nazareth for a few days and I then got the movement order that they'd found where Weary was and I went from Nazareth to Haifa, got the train and I've still got the tickets in there by the way, and back to Gaza on the train and back down to El Kantara.
- 06:30 El Kantara across the canal. Down to Alex, Alexandria, and then oh ay

Still in Egypt?

Yeah, yeah. So and then I said to this in Amiriya I said, "Excuse me, where is Major Dunlop?"

07:00 He said "Don't you know?" I said, "No, where is he?" 'Cause everywhere I'd gone by the way, it's another story and...

We'll get to that wonderful story.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

We'll get all those details of the reunion but if you could

Yeah alright and he said, "He's in Tobruk." I said, "Oh shit don't tell me I'm goin' back there again." 'Cause I was in the first push and yeah well I was treated like royalty and eventually I arrived back

07:30 in Tobruk during the siege and when I reported to this casualty clearing station they said, "Where did you meet this bastard? He's mad. He's got no nerve." I said, "Listen mate, that's why I'm here." I said, "I could have bailed out when they told me he was back here," I said, "but the episodes I encountered with him," and we become you know and I said, "That's why I'm here."

08:00 I said, "Anyway where?" They said, "He's in Tobruk. He's in the hospital operating. Up in the main hospital." I said, "What time will he get back?" They said, "Ah on dusk." So I shot out waiting for him and he walks along the wharf and I went up and he said, "How the so and so did you get here?" Yeah and there it was. So there and

08:30 so in Tobruk then we left Tobruk on the [HMS] Hero, a Pommie warship, by the way we I forgot to tell you we were on the Calcutta when we left Greece and we were on this Hero. It left Tobruk and went back to Alexandria and the Alexandria up to back to Egypt to a back to Palestine to a place called

09:00 Beit Jirja and then from Beit Jirja we did a bit of a stint up in Syria again, right, and then the next thing I know we're back in Egypt and we're on a ship called the Orf..., the [SS] Orcades and on the Orcades we shot to Ceylon

09:30 and we never went in right in to Ceylon. We were in the bay for awhile and then we took off lone wolf, no escort or anything, and we went through the Sunda Straits heading towards Sumatra and naturally we all had the compasses out, all thinking you know "Are we

10:00 going back to Australia?" but we go to Sumatra and we arrived at a place called Ousthaven, which is Dutch for East Harbour, and some went ashore and the next thing "Get out, the Nips [Japanese] are already here. Go for your life." So eventually we all back on the ship and we arrived in Tanjong Priok in

10:30 Java in Bandoeng (Bandung) and from Bandoeng we went from Bandoeng up to, from Batavia rather, up to Bandoeng. That's where Weary formed the hospital, the 1st AGH [Allied General Hospital] in the Crysallie Lyceum, which was a girls' college for all the uppercrust of the

11:00 Dutch nobility etcetera, and then next thing we're on our way, oh by the way the Nips came along and just turfed us out. We went into a civilian reformatory and we were in there for awhile and then to a place called Chu Mai, Chu Mai, then we shot into another camp which was an ex-

11:30 Dutch army camp which had been established for many, many years and then we took off and we went down to back a little out of Batavia into a camp called Makasura, which was a big been a big olive grove, yeah, and so Makasura there for awhile and then right

12:00 we went to Tanjong Priok and boarded we called it the [NK] Maru, the meaning 'sick' and, and Byoki, Byoki Maru and we set sail for Singapore. We arrived in Singapore and disembarked and went out to Selarang barracks, which is Changi, and we're in Changi

12:30 for awhile and the next thing we're goin' north. We on a train, rice wagon, thirty to each wagon and off we went and there we were and we arrived in a place called, oh good God, Bampong, disembarked

13:00 and then off we go and we arrived up in a place called Tahsao [alt. spelling: Tarsau] just Tahsao, for a little while and then up to Konyu [Kenyu Rd], established a camp there. Built the camp. Had to fell the trees and build a thing and then from there we went up to Hintok, which road camp jungle camp and then from there down to the

13:30 river camp and then from the river camp we moved up to Kinsayok and that is the furthest north we went, the Dunlop Force, and the next thing we came from there back to a place called Tamarkan, which was a shocking place, and from Tamarkan we then went to Chung Kai

14:00 and Chung Kai to a place called Tarsau, ah called ooh oh crikey, anyway we went back to this down to this camp and then from there we went to the Nakom Paton, which was a Red Cross supposed to be hospital, much better than anywhere else we'd been, and

14:30 that's where we were when we were freed and fortunately for me the day I walked out of that prison with Weary was on my birthday, 25th of August, which was very good.

Blue, we're that's a good point by point overview of an amazing story, which we're gonna go into in great detail soon. So

15:00 **you then returned home?**

Yep.

And just tell us where you were when you know the war ended and how you got what you got what career you then moved into and how you got on you know becoming married and stuff like that.

Yeah. Well I we left the Nakom Paton

15:30 and we were in Bangkok and we left there on the last official ex-POW [prisoner of war] plane 'cause Weary wanted to see everything was right and all ex-POWs etcetera, but we left on the last official plane and we arrived back on the 16th of October at a place called Eggesfield [Bamaga airfield],

16:00 right on the point of Cape York, spent the night there then in a DC3 and then we flew down to Archerfield, spent the night there and then from Archerfield to Mascot and I said "Right, Sir," and he said, "Where the so and so do you think you're going?" I said, "This is where I enlisted and this is where I," I said, "I got

16:30 Wally Delves' wife and sister-in-law gonna be meet me." He said, "You're coming to Melbourne with me." I said, "No I'm not." So we parted. "You keep in touch." What have you. Anyway I had a beautiful first night in Rose Bay, have a look at the harbour. Couldn't sleep on a soft bed by the way. Very difficult. I wanted to get down on the floor all the time and sleep and then I went to Manly and

17:00 with Connie Maher, who I'd met in the army in the battalion and then I got a letter from Weary. "Helen and I," which was his dear sweetheart. He'd been engaged by proxy for many years, "are getting married on the 8th of November.

17:30 You're our guest." So

We'll save that story too.

I got the train and over I went to Melbourne, went to the wedding and what have you and I got discharged out the army on the 14th of February after six and a half years and most of the time I was abroad. About a hundred and nineteen days in Australia. The rest of the time overseas. Right, so then I

18:00 going through DDD [D & RS: Discharge & Recruiting Section] for discharge occupation. I wanted, I thought I'd get into concrete engineering or something, but that's another story, but I got the discharge and then I went to Adelaide because my girlfriend Dorothy in those days, not this Dot, who I'd met on the ship coming from England and I had her mother down as a matter of fact.

18:30 I used to make an allotment and she used to put two shillings out of my pay into a bank account. Anyway and then back I got a telegram saying pleased I was free from an old army mate of mine and he lived in Newport. He didn't actually live there but he was staying there at the time and I got the phone number. I gave him a tingaling and so I kicked off on the trowel again

19:00 and everything went well. Then I got married. I married Lesley and then went to Cobbitty to do a job for Billy Dawson, the great the brother of the great Peter Dawson, the baritone.

So what sort of work were you doing at that

Bricklayer.

Right.

Old bricklayer yeah.

Mm.

Went back to me trade which I'd learnt when I was fourteen. Oh yeah and never regretted it and then I got crook.

19:30 Naturally I had a few and a job came along in the building department of Hornsby Shire Council so I got into it and finished up in charge of a gang there. You know the bricklaying etcetera and maintenance. Then I retired at sixty. My doctor, Doctor Eric Giblin, he kept saying to me, "You've got to give work away" but fortunately I had a nice wife, good wife,

20:00 and so that was that and no regrets you know. I I've enjoyed most of my life you know. The

Fantastic, Blue. Alright well I think we're ready now to go back and talk in some detail. So let's go back to your early days in the UK. Can you tell us what sort of a character your mum and dad were?

20:30 Well mother was a great toiler. She worked in what they call a rae because that heavy woollen district. That was all wool and weaving etcetera, and they used to make old rags into materials and my mother's job was that and she was a strong very strong and a very bad temper and I was a red

21:00 top and so, and Dad...

Was she a redhead as well?

Oh no. No, but Dad was a glass bottle blower and his firm sold out to a Yankee crowd. So he wouldn't go to America. I've often said I used to say I could have been a septic tank you know. Anyway yeah, so but mother was

21:30 the she was the king pin. Dad was unemployed and he was a boozier. Loved his grog and I mean this sincerely, I can't put a face to my father. I this has been said before to different reporters, it's that I can't put a face to my Dad but mother I never went to school with a patch in my trousers. Never without boots or socks and it's one of those things. I don't know why but

22:00 I just wanted to get away from it all and my grandfather as it turned out, on mother's side, I must have had his genes or something because I did exactly I came over to Australia.

When did you start to feel that urge that you wanted to go somewhere else? How old do you think you were?

Oh well. Oh I'd be about thirteen when I got so sick of

22:30 Dewsbury because as I told you, there was stacks belchin' out black smoke, all these woollen mills and you know, and then on Sunday night the church bells, the parish church bell'd ring, and this used to annoy me. I oh cripes what an environment. Friday night I get paid. Mother used to give me, out of me ten bob she used to give me four bob

23:00 pocket money. We used to go and pie and peas, pork pie and peas, two or three of the boys, right, and then tripe. Eatin' tripe is and then ice-cream. Kadi Mataris [?], a beautiful icecream, in the billiard room and on Friday night I'd be broke and have to bite Mum

23:30 for some more money to go to the pictures or and I just it was so to me I felt really down. "I've got to get away from here. I must get away from Dewsbury," and when the opportunity came along I took it.

Did you know anything about Australia at that stage?

No. No. Not a thing. I went to Australia House by the way to first of all

24:00 saw all the beautiful sheep and oranges ah apples and everything looked so nice you know but when where I boarded and when I was leavin' Australia this lass grabbed me and shook me and squeezed me and give me a kiss and she said, "No you shouldn't be goin' over there," she said, "Mrs so and so told me that so and so went out there years ago and he ain't been seen since. The black fellas eat him." That's

24:30 honest Indian and I didn't go back to England for thirty four years. I didn't want to go back. That was it. I turned out I broke my mother's heart, I know that.

Do you think it was your destiny Blue to go to Australia? Do you think it was your destiny to come to Australia?

Oh yeah. Yeah, I, I've never

25:00 regretted it. Excuse me.

No problem.

Yeah the thirty four years before I went back. By the way see when I arrived back from Crete and they called out the roll I wasn't

25:30 on it. So I thought "Beaut." That's another story anyway. So consequently I was missin' believed killed and twice my mother got my brother they got the telegram, which was all wrong. I shouldn't a been I should have yeah. So in thirty four years I didn't wanna go back and one day I when I was livin' in Hornsby there, one night,

26:00 I'm in Hornsby now funny and knock on the door. Flywire. See the police. We were havin' dinner. "Come in." He said "Hey it's you Blue." This is the police sergeant. "You Blue." He said "I never knew your bloody name was Milton." He said "We've just from the Salvation

26:30 Army. Somebody from England wanting to find out could we make contact with you." It was Mum. So that was the first contact I had with Mum.

So when you first left for Australia, that was since that time that was the first time...

Yeah.

You had contact with her?

Ah oh no, no. I had wrote her a letter

27:00 when I was workin' on the farm in Karangi but after the war years onwards no contact, no. No, no contact.

Were you close to mum before you left?

Yay and nay. Yay and nay. She had a very bad temper and oh no it's but as I say, she she's a great worker.

27:30 Yeah.

But do you think you, sorry.

But bad tempered.

Go on.

She used to you know, for no reason at all sometimes she'd grab me and bang. She had problems. I realised afterwards that she had problems with Dad, yeah, which I learnt many years later. Yeah. Yeah.

Can you see characteristics in mum and dad that you inherited?

I don't know whether,

28:00 well not Dad. Not Dad. Mum, I inherited Mum's temper a little. My kids say, "You got a short fuse Dad," you know, which I did. I've come down a bit now.

Were you a bit of rebel in your younger years?

Oh yeah.

In your teenage years?

Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah I was a rebel. Still a bit left.

28:30 I

So what was your impression when you did arrive in Australia?

We couldn't see anything different you know. I'll give you an instance. We were in Fremantle and we arrived and when the comin' aboard pilot what have you and my cabin mate, one of the there was four of us

29:00 in the cabin, he said "God they speak bloody English here too. They're like us" and then when we went ashore we saw the trains. He said "God the trains are like ours." Yeah. That was the ignorance from him then.

Were you surprised that we spoke English in Australia?

Not really. No, no, no. I I'd been around a bit more than the other blokes. It yeah fantastic you know and I met

29:30 so many nice blokes and on the ship and that you know and yeah. I could tell you heaps about that ship.

So you got a sense on arriving in Australia that you'd made a good decision?

Yep. Yeah. I never got homesick, never. Never.

Did you have any brothers or sisters, Blue?

Yeah I got I had two brothers. There were ten years

30:00 between the youngest brother and myself and he's still alive, Derek, and my brother Norman he was five years difference. He died of quite a few years ago. He was a little rebel too. He bit the bad boy of the family. I never gave it my parents any trouble with police or anything like that. Unfortunately Norm did, and but my younger brother,

30:30 Der he's seventy three now, he's done very well. He got a nice home and all my relations back there are all reasonably well off and I mean that, inclusive of a couple of multi millionaires, cousins, on my mother's side but so

Did you stay in contact with your brothers through the war?

No, no. No. No contact whatsoever. Yeah

31:00 and

Did you tell everyone in the family that you were leaving for Australia? When you decided that you were going to move over to Australia did you

Oh yes.

Tell the whole family exactly what you...

Oh yep. I told the and they said "No you're not. You're not going." Mum and Dad said "No, you're not." I

said "Well," they said, "We won't sign the papers." I said, "Well I'll fix that." So I was a rebel, yeah, and I as I say, I

31:30 put my age up and down whenever it was needed and got there. Yeah and here I am now.

So did you move over to Sydney quite what how long was it until you did end up in Sydney?

Oh well twelve months approximately. Oh I was

So Fremantle was just a stop over?

Oh Fremantle. Oh you know we went Fremantle and then to Adelaide and then

32:00 Port Phillip in Melbourne and then we arrived in Sydney on the 12th of December. Aha and then on the 13th we went up to Scheyville and that's where the farm the agricultural teaching of the elements but and now we were a Church of England group and then we

32:30 found out that this college was actually for bad boys, for truants etcetera and really and truly and my dear old mate Billy, who's long dead, he never forgave them. He you know to think that but we met some good blokes in there. They'd have blokes who just forgot to go to school and that.

Were you a bit disappointed with the set up and the

33:00 **circumstances?**

Well I was, the manager I'll give you an instance. The manager, called Walker, it when we arrived there he's done up. He's got leggings on. He's got a big stock whip and he's got all these Poms around him. He's now I'd been around. I'd spent two years in London area and I mean and I was the spokesman and he's tellin' he's tryin' to tell us about snakes and oh

33:30 and he keeps off and tryin' to to put the wind up us immediately and I thought "You're a lot of so and so" you know and in my opinion to this day I still think he was. Two or three of the teachers there, great blokes and as I say, the I wanted wheat and sheep and this Buchanan he told me he said "Listen to

34:00 me young Blue." He said, "This is not the place for you. Get out. There's a dairy job comin' up, so take it" and I did. So I but

What about

Oh it was dreadful there. The food I'll give you an instance. The food it started to walk in front of you. Honest, the maggots and the bloke said "Hey look at this." So what did I do? I grabbed it, shot

34:30 into the kitchen. "You Pommie b... you wouldn't you dine better here than what you would in England." Now this is honest. Poof. So...

Did they, sorry Blue, go on.

Ah yeah they some of them. I mean they were dreadful. We couldn't even whistle. We couldn't even sing.

What about the religious side of things? Did they also impose...

No, no. There's no. No, no, no, no

35:00 there was none of that.

Were you a religious person at all at that stage?

Never. No. No. No. No I got to say I always said I was an atheist but no, I'm a I'm not an atheist but I'm not a believer.

And that was the case when you were that old as well?

Yep. Yeah, I just couldn't believe it. No, especially after later on when I see

35:30 where I was and what I've been through and what have you and I still

We'll talk about that.

It's one of those. Yeah. Anyway

That's an important thing to talk about.

Mm. Mm. Yeah I just one of those things. I thought "Cripes, if there is somebody why the hell are we doin' all this? Starving and bleeding to death." Yeah.

So the dairy farm, Blue,

36:00 **how did that work out for you?**

Well he dear old Bill they're good Presbyterians, as being Scottish descent, and the McLeods but so they little chapel up there. Once a month the parson used to come there. They conned me into going one

- time in the old Chevy. Anyway long story but not
- 36:30 for me. No I was never followed religion.
- So the dairy farm, Blue,**
- I
- That was did that turn out well for you?**
- Yeah, I well I enjoyed it but until they started I'd get down there and I'd be milkin' on me lonesome before they got down with me breakfast. 'Cause I was out five o'clock rounding the cows up and what have you and down to the bowls and then I was out with the
- 37:00 workin' with a brush or knockin' saplin's over and what have you, you know and all that sorta thing and I thought "Hello" and then the bloke had me diggin' holes for a new fence, fellin' the tree, cuttin' the posts, splittin' the posts, cuttin' the all this sorta thing and
- So was it feeling like the right career for you at that stage?**
- Oh no, no but if something different does 'cause I was reasonably strong. I was a strong bloke,
- 37:30 yeah. Yeah pretty strong but and he said to me "You know what Blue" he said "You're not as strong as what you look you know" and I said "Listen Bill, it's marvellous what an extra few bob might do." The old term and I gave notice fourteen times and he I loved his two kids. I used to put them on a broom and pull 'em around and play horses with 'em you know and the old 'cause
- 38:00 in those days you were miles away from anywhere and dear old...
- So that was up around Coff's Harbour was it?**
- Eight miles out, yeah. Not far from where dear old what's his name is now at Nana Glen. The film star.
- So once you left the dairy farm, what did you do next for work**
- I went...
- And where did you head off to?**
- I went down to Turrumurra, North Turrumurra. This mate a mine, Billy, was workin'
- 38:30 on a poultry farm there for the call bloke one-armed gentleman called Pippard and I worked there and I was there when the war started. Yeah but
- Did you did you have any sort of career ambitions? Did you sort of have a an ultimate dream of what you wanted to do with your life at that stage?**
- Well I well when I was a young fella I used to dream what I'd look like in the a bowler hat,
- 39:00 spats and a walking stick you know like the toffs then you know and that was my ambition. To be like that and have plenty of money, but anyway I often think of about all that but as I said, when I was goin' through for discharge, I thought I might have gone into concrete engineering but I sat there and there was a young corporal.
- 39:30 Now I after what we'd been through. I'd been away all that time and come back and I wouldn't a I wouldn't have called the king me uncle or the queen me aunty you know. They I and I he said "Right fill these papers in" about I said "But that means I'll do a correspondence course." "No, no" he said "that this means that you won't be able to get discharged today 'cause you" I said "You're joking." He
- 40:00 said "No I'm not." I said "How are ya?" over the back of him and he turned around to see who I was talkin' to, which was daylight, and I just grabbed the paper. I said "Forget it" and that was it. Next thing I had my discharge paper. Yeah.
- Just going back to you mentioned the war being declared, just prior**
- 40:30 **to that had did you sort of pick up that war was looming? Was that something you sensed at the time?**
- Well I'm funny thing, a lot of people said to me see over in England they were diggin' air raid shelters and all that sorta thing and some blokes said to me "You bugger, you took off. You were scared of the war." I never even gave it a thought. I really didn't. No. None of the air raid shelters and all been issued with gas masks
- 41:00 and everything in 1938 you know and no, I'd no thought.
- So when you were underneath that bed and you heard that announcement from Menzies, was that a surprise**
- Yeah.

To hear?

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah it was.

What impact did that have on you?

Well well I bit of a nationalist you know. I thought "Oh gotta go and join up. Another job."

- 41:30 As a gentleman said who is a politician of the time, the war started he reckoned we became and my colonel said the same too. Good God, the term's gone. It'll come back later. Conscripts. Ah ha something about conscripts. Re unemployed you know then
- 42:00 joined the army to for a job but which

Tape 3

- 00:41 **Blue could you tell us how the name "Blue" came about 'cause I know your real name is Milton Butterworth. So how did Blue come about?**

Well I was on the ship coming from England and there was an Aussie on that ship called Bruce Brown.

- 01:00 I found out later his name of course. Now Bruce he had shorts on, short shorts in those days. To what, you know, and as a matter of fact he was some old English lady dobbed him in for bein' not being nice, his shorts, and the skipper got onto the first mate to come and tell Bruce he'd have to put something different on, yeah? He's as
- 01:30 brown as a berry. Good bloke. Nice fellow and he said "Now listen young Blue." "Blue? What's this Blue?" He said "When you get to Aussie mate, they're gonna call you Blue." So it was from then on I got Blue. The first time I called Blue 'cause all the Poms call me Ginge and so Brownie's the bloke who called me Blue. Now can I just tell you something about when I saw Bob Brown again. Bruce Brown.
- 02:00 I was just about prior to me getting married, which was March 1949, I was workin' in Cobbitty for project up there for Peter Dawson's brother, Billy Dawson. Peter Dawson was a good baritone. Well known singer. Anyway so I went and bought some shoes. My wife was workin' for FW Hughes in Grosvenor Street, a book keeper, and I shot into the long
- 02:30 bar in The Australian. Now in those days beer was still very short and so I'm in the long bar and I said "Schooner of Reschs please" and the lass behind the bar, there was only two other people in the bar at the time, the lass behind the bar said "So you want a schooner of Resch's." I said "Yeah thanks." She said "I wouldn't know you
- 03:00 from a bar of soap. Never seen you before in me life and you're askin' me for a schooner of Resch's and here am I thinkin' how the hell I'm gonna be able to give all my regulars a beer." 'Cause the beer 'cause it was all rationed see, and I could hear this bit of a snigger and I swung around there's two blokes and I looked straight at this bloke and I got a good memory for
- 03:30 faces. I said "Listen mate you shouldn't be gigglin' at me." I said "You should be helpin' me. I've known you" I said "I met you on the Esperance Bay in nine" and he looked at me. He said "Young Blue. Oh." He said "Give him his schooner of Resch's" 'cause they were regulars, see. Yeah he just come out the army as an officer and
- 04:00 went into the second hand car game because he was buyin' all the stuff off the army and later on I met that very same bar maid, who became a very good friend of my wife and I, with her hubby who used to be a chef at The Australian who'd also been a POW and we were all members of the ex-POW Association on the Central Coast. Marvellous. Small world. So that's where I was first called Blue and in the army
- 04:30 no one, very very few, apart from the paymaster when he had saw me pay book me full name, no one knew I was Blue. Even to this day my army mates wouldn't know my name was Milton. Everybody Blue, Blue, Blue.

Is that what they call all Pommies? What Aussies call all Pommies at the time? Blue?

No, no. Only no, no the Pommies were Pommies no but it's only

- 05:00 the red tops they call Blue. Red headed fellas yeah. Oh no the it's all Ginge. Ginger you know the red, but oh no but old Bruce Brown he was the first one to call me, yeah.

Okay we'll go we were talking about the day you enlisted and the night that war was announced. Churchill announced that Australia was going to war. Can you tell us

- 05:30 **again just your mood how what you felt and what the mood of the people around you were at the time that war was announced in Australia?**

Well the immediate, being with two English lasses of course they were very upset, disturbed, but and

my mate, Bill, who I was working with at Turramurra he said "I'm gonna join the air force." Which he did. Later on I found out

06:00 he joined the air force and I immediately went over to Victoria Barracks to because Bill and I were one out sort of thing you know we hadn't got to know many people but I just felt that for flag and country sort of thing and that's why I went to join up and the term I was looking for a while ago is we were quoted as being economic conscripts

06:30 because most people were out of work you know and that's where the term came from and our dear old colonel at our fiftieth anniversary of the 2/1st Infantry Battalion he quoted that. How he took over this bunch of economic conscripts. He thought "Hell what have I got here? But" he said "You all turned out good blokes." Yeah.

So you thought a job in a

07:00 **in the army would probably be a better option than the work that you were doing**

Yeah well

At the time?

It was advent... it was still adventure you know. I mean I came out for adventure. I came from England. People said to me "What made you" and I omitted to tell you, when I left England I was on full money as a bricklayer. At eighteen years of age I was on full money as a bricklayer. People a lot of people won't believe, a lot of Poms won't believe that but

07:30 it's not a porky pie [lie] I'm tellin'. I was on full money. I was at seventeen I was dressin' myself, you know buying everything. I was on top of the world. I was living like a lord over there and people couldn't understand why I'd leave that to come out here. It was adventure. All adventure and that's it in a nutshell. I've enjoyed every bit of it. Yeah.

So when you went

08:00 **to Victoria Barracks on the Monday morning the night after the war was announced and found no one there, that you must have felt amazed.**

I was amazed.

Did you think that you'd heard the news wrong?

I was amazed. I went I said to my mate "There's no bugger there." He said "Ah." I said "I'm tellin' you." I said "There was a marquee as you went through the" like on up at Victoria Barracks now by the way while I'm thinking of them. You walk through the gate. There wasn't even a sentry

08:30 on there. I said "And the marquee was vacant" I said "and I looked around" I said "Oh bloody hell. I've got this wrong somewhere" and marched out and just walked down. Yeah and back to Turramurra. Mhm. Yeah yeah yeah. Told my I could not believe it. Really and truly yeah.

Can you take us through the your some of the days that you spent training to get to prepare for war

09:00 **while you were in Australia?**

Yeah well we were in Ingleburn and they used to do bivouacs etcetera, and marches but me being with the pioneers, and being with Wally Delves, I was fortunate that I missed a lot of that. Now in some of the books a couple of the books they've got me where I was in the officers' mess, which is all wrong. I was never in the officers' mess in

09:30 Australia but they did a good solid training you know. The blokes who were in the A company. See I was headquarters. I was BHQ [Battalion Headquarters], which meant that I didn't have to foot slog like a lot of them did and but the training was quite good, which proved later on because the 2/1st, 'First at War' is this book, and so

10:00 they're pretty good blokes. There are a lot of characters in it. Tough characters you know. As a matter of fact, just before we left there they caught up with a few of them and kicked them out for being undesirable. Yeah and yeah I could tell you a lot of funny stories about some of those fellas.

Why you mean before you left for the war

Yep.

There was some fellows kicked out for being undesirables?

Oh yeah yeah yep.

What kind of what do you mean by undesirables?

Oh well. Well they'd found out that two or three of them

- 10:30 were trying to get out beat their wives and their commitments, which eventually a lot did because there were a lot were under false names. Pseudo. Hell of a lot and then we had a great fella called Delaney, Bobby Delaney, who used to be a champion boxer and he wouldn't leave the plonk alone, the wine alone, and eventually they kicked
- 11:00 him out for bein' undesirable because he was gonna be no good but he they tell me he joined up about four times afterwards trying to I spoke to people later on in life. They said "Delaney" they said "He couldn't have been in your mob because he was in our mob." So he wound up going in the army three or four times you know but yeah oh we had quite a few undesirables a lot I gotta be careful
- 11:30 what I say but a lot from Paddington, Redfern, all some of the bad boys and oh yeah. Even to this day there's a lot are known to have been under false names in the army. There were heaps. Dodgin' their wives and you know girlfriends etcetera who they'd left done the wrong thing. Oh yeah but

So the

- 12:00 **army was a form of escape**

Oh yes.

For some men

Oh exactly.

At the time?

Oh without a doubt and there and that's the early days but it was all voluntary. There was no conscripts then in that. So they all volunteered like we all did and but as they say, we you could say that I would without a doubt fifty/fifty'd be out of work, if not more.

- 12:30 Maybe sixty/forty. Yeah. A la the economic conscript.

Can you tell us a bit about the pioneers at the time before you left Australia. Can you tell us a bit more about the pioneers?

The pioneers, the... my pioneer battalion?

Yeah.

Well in the pioneer battalion you were the working force. You had the bricklayer, plumbers, carpenter, boot repairer, leather

- 13:00 saddler. All this sort of thing. See and also when we joined up all our transport was horse transport. We had the jinkers and the horses and all the rest of it you know and Ingleburn bein' new there was of course no nothing for the bricklayer to be doing or a carpenter or anything. So we were just lounging around most of the time listening to Gladys Moncrieff, who was a nice singer,
- 13:30 and Peter Dawson singing and you were just loungin' around doing nought for quite a while and you know some of the officers, and some great blokes amongst them. One little fella, I'm goin' off the pioneers now sorry, but this little fella he only stood knee high to a grasshopper. Actually
- 14:00 according to regulation he should never have got in the army but he a militia man and A company, that's where you had most of the scallywags, and the name Kelly, the good Irish Kellys, see, and this Cocky Horam is walking in front of them and right from the back
- 14:30 one of these Kellys shouted out, "And a little child shall lead them," and he stopped, turned around, "Who said that?" Nobody said it of course. He said, "Right, but the little child'll be on a bloody big horse tomorrow" and the next day when he's marchin' 'em out he's on a big horse and he could hardly he could hardly stay, his legs were very short. Yeah. Old Cocky. He wound up as the top floor
- 15:00 of the taxation department. He a good bloke to know after the war and I did use him after the war you know. Yeah but so they're payin' him off. There's some rough mob 'cause they're all ex-building fraternity etcetera. Yeah but they're a good mob. I met some great blokes.

Can you tell us a little bit about a bit more about Wally and your relationship with Wally?

Wally Delves? Old Doover? Well ah

- 15:30 Wally was a great bloke. He soldier there's no smarter soldier. He was a Australian Army Instructional Corps and fit. He looked like a show pony you know done up and regimental on the on parade. Givin' the orders all the rest of it and he was a good bloke and he used to say to me "Righto, take off." He'd let me go early
- 16:00 to get down to town to meet the girls on a Friday, yeah, weekend leave. All that sorta thing. Met his wife and same with Clarrie Maher. Met his wife and family and still friends long after the war you know. Wally to me a great soldier and I went in to Tobruk alongside of Wally. I went with Wally

- 16:30 on the night on the eve of Tobruk to check the starting line. So I was and Wally omitted to say in that book, he never put my name in about that, and I had a go at him and also then when we established headquarters for the battalion when we garrisoned Tobruk and my name's not in there as Wally
- 17:00 told in the book about we established headquarters but it was Wally not me I and I said to Wally when I rang Wally "I'm gonna bring up your name mate. I hope you don't mind. Could you write me a letter to" "No no I don't. My writing's a bit scratchy Blue but tell them to phone me. If they don't believe you, tell them to phone me." So and Wally and I remained friends 'til long after the war and still friends, and he's ninety two now.
- 17:30 **You said**
- He's ninety two years of age.
- You seem to from some of the stories you've kin of, you seem to always wanted to do it your way. You weren't gonna take orders. You wanted to chart your own course and that that seemed to happen when you told us the story of**
- Well
- About your first meeting of Wally and...**
- Well Wally this sergeant, see he told me "You're in the army now. You'll have to do as you're told" and I told him I
- 18:00 said "I'm" when he was leading me toward the latrines and I said "Hey hang on. I'm not I'm the battalion bricklayer, not the battalion shit carter" and that's when I saw Wally standing there and from then on, the way I approached him, and we became friends and that was it in a nutshell you know and Clarrie Maher, good old Clarrie and I are still friends.
- 18:30 Met his family 'cause they were permanent soldiers when war started. They were permanent and they joined up had to drop their rank and immediately after awhile got their rank back you know. They went in as privates and came out Wally retired as a colonel many years later of course. So Wally was POW in Germany. Now all my mates, all my battalion mates, all those fellas we were just talkin' about
- 19:00 became POWs, majority of them, with the Germans. They all got caught in Crete. A few in Greece. Well so I'm the only ex-2/1st Battalion bloke who became a prisoner of war with the Japanese and that's in the book. Yeah so but so I was lucky. I met wherever I went I met good blokes.
- 19:30 Seniors, juniors, the lot. I to me the majority of them were good.
- How did you how did you relate to a guy like Wally? I mean you were obviously working for him. How did you how did you get on with him? Were you good at taking orders from people like him or**
- From Wal?
- Yeah.**
- Yeah, yeah. Oh yeah I'd have done anything for Wal, yeah. That's what I oh yeah. If Wally had have said, "Jump" then I'd have probably jumped. Same
- 20:00 with Weary later on I and I mean I to the extent, you've got me about this though. I'll go back to Jerusalem. A leave on a leave party and we used to have to assemble in the Russian compound to catch the bus on the way back to Julis camp and someone made a very nasty remark
- 20:30 about Wally and I said, "Hey cut it out or else" he said "Or else what?" And or else what it was. So it was on. So immediately the dear old Hen Diep, who was the lieutenant in charge of the leave party, put me under arrest for having fisticuffs, right,
- 21:00 and I had to sit on the front of the bus with him coming from Jerusalem back to Julis and he let everyone get off the bus at Julis and then he said to me "Piss off" and then he'd immediately gone and told Wally that Blue had been havin' a blue with a bloke who'd been sayin' nasty things about him, see. So that
- 21:30 was and that got around that Wally and I were and Wally then of course strengthened our friendship you know. To think that Blue and a long story and things I've got to you've got to be careful what you say because in those days Wally actually later on wanted to confront the same bloke and take his uniform off and his rank
- 22:00 and have a go at the bloke himself but he wouldn't be in it but all those things are in those days I mean officer and other rank having fisticuffs wasn't done. You had to be very careful. Aha.
- You mentioned back in the training days that you got time to take leave and on a Friday night and go out and see the girls.**
- Yeah.

Can you tell us what you'd do? What where would you go? Who would you socialise with?

Oh well

22:30 **your girlfriends?**

There was the English girls off the ship. I wish I'd put the photographs on one side only yesterday to see they've lovely girls. Taken in Port Said and I had them all. I said "No they won't be interested in them" but I used to meet them. We'd go into Reppin's Coffee House and you know and go around. Over to Luna Park. All that sort of thing and alright I'd

23:00 stay a night over at North Manly at Clarrie Maher's place and all that kinda thing but the girls, they were all workin' around Bellevue Hill and yeah. Darling Harbour a couple of them working.

What kind of jobs did they have?

Oh all domestic. Yeah. The only two they came out with no jobs

23:30 with the exception of Amy and Edwina and that's when I was sayin' they had the job with Darganheart who was the trump of the Australian Stock Exchange and they'd been over in London and made contact with these two girls when they advertised for people and so they were the only two when we arrived here on the 12th of December who had a work to go to. The

24:00 rest, I mean the blokes were right. We had the college to go to but the girls were at limbo. They didn't know where they were the rest of them but they were very well-educated ladies amongst 'em I'll tell ya. Oh yeah. One of them especially, finishing school over in France. The other one a vicar's daughter, Elizabeth. Gertie

24:30 as we used to call her. Great bunch of people

Did you have a special did you have a girlfriend? A special girl at that time?

Oh yes. Oh yeah and I believe it or not, all these people, not all of them 'cause a lot died or what have you but Amy I had a feeling for Amy but she's still alive. A widow and her two kids. I was lookin' at their photographs the other

25:00 day when I was lookin' for with but Dorothy, another Dorothy, her family had come from Glenelg, South Oz, and gone back to England and then when her parents got to England they didn't think England was as good as what it used to be or so I became a friend of the family on the ship with Dorothy, right, and

25:30 Dorothy and I became very thick. Not on board. There was nothing but now Dorothy got the word that ex-POW that I'd gone. So she married but when I came back I went and had Christmas over in Glenelg with Dorothy and parents

26:00 and her marriage hadn't turned out as good as she thought. So I more or less instigated a divorce. Now Dorothy was a air hosty, she was an air hostess, and she was with ANA [Australian National Airways] and New Guinea Airways and what have you and then she came with me and we had

26:30 a de facto relationship in Newport. TAA [Trans- Australia Airways], remember TAA? They advertised when they formed. In 1946 they formed TAA and they advertised for staff and she said "I'm gonna, Ginge I'm gonna apply for a job."

27:00 She said "I probably won't get it" because she was still married. She had her married name. "I probably won't get it" but lo and behold she got a telegram sayin' that she'd got the job. So she was the first married woman to work with TAA and then she that's when we parted. She said "Ginge I'm not comin' back. I won't be coming back" to we were livin' in Newport. Right on Pittwater and that was the

27:30 then the close relationship finished but to this very day we're still friends. Still phone one another. My late wife and I met her dear hubby, old Chidge and they're very nice homes over in Victoria they lived in, anyway Dorothy did better than what she'd have done if she'd have stayed with me

Alright.

28:00 **That's great. Let's go back to the last day you spent in Australia and you...**

The last day?

When you embarked on the ship to go to war. Can you talk about that?

Yeah, well the last day before we went to war? Well from Ingleburn when we left Ingleburn to come down to the thing quay to take off sorta thing we had a bloke there.

28:30 Well we were all we didn't know what we were up to you know, we just knew that we were gonna go overseas but we didn't know where and when and we had a fella called Norman Gordon. By the way he was a young bloke who came out to work for Sydney Snows as a counter jumper you know and he wasn't there when we were leaving. We got the orders to "Get your gear and off and march down to Ingleburn station."

- 29:00 So everybody's saying, all the Aussies are saying, "Where is the Pommie bastard? Where is he?" So one bloke had his rifle. Another bloke his bayonet. Another bloke his big pack. Another bloke his haversack and we all picked up gear and they're still nobody put him in that he wasn't there. He hadn't been missed and we got down to the station and he arrived and everybody said "Where you been you Pommie b...?"
- 29:30 and he come to me. He said, "Blue I got married." I said, "What? Who did you marry?" And he pulled out the photographs and beautiful blonde lass, see, and I said, "Where did...?" she was the daughter of an Indian army bloke, like a white man, retired army major his daughter. "Right" and then we all gave him his gear and what have you. Now he became POW Germany. After the war
- 30:00 I went to a reunion at the station in Central near the what they call it the workers' organisation. "G'day." I said "How you goin' mate?" I said, "And how's your wife and baby?" He said, "I don't know. They've gone. I haven't seen them." He was like one
- 30:30 of many where the girls cottoned onto them and got the money allotments sent to them, a lot of those did that. A lot of females did that but poor old I was on Tobruk on the perimeter still at Tobruk when he came to me with a letter and he said, his first letter from his wife, and this was eleven months later after
- 31:00 and he said "I'm a father. Baby boy" and there was a beer issue on. Two bottles of beer. So we got the two bottles of beer and we wet the baby's head and he went away and he came back about thirty minutes later. He said "Blue, is it possible for a lady to have an eleven months old baby?" and I thought "Well I know horses do."
- 31:30 I said "Yeah of course. Course. Yeah. Yeah mate. Yeah," but that was one of the so all those sort of things when I think about what hap... think of the poor bugger takin' off and getting married before we left Ingleburn and, right? So I had to come back to the baby and his wedding but he never ever saw her again and he disappeared off the scene. He went he came from Romford in Essex and I went back to England
- 32:00 in '74.
- Blue I think we'll just take you back where you're on you're about to get on the ship. Tell us what it was like for you.**
- Oh
- And yeah just...**
- Feelin' oh great feeling you know especially you didn't know where you were heading for and we got on the ship and the people in little boats on either side and toot tooting and people have got signs up 'Pagin' so and
- 32:30 so and so and so' and everybody waving and oh fantastic and fortunately Wally Delves and Clarrie they by the way, the Orford was still all exactly like it had been before war started. There hadn't been anything taken out. So the state rooms where the prime minister and all the toffs and
- 33:00 nobs had all travelled on, army officers were taking them over, see, so it's quite good and we had four in a cabin. The odd bods the privates etcetera and sergeants but it's quite good and it was a real nice trip. So we got to down to Fremantle
- 33:30 and we had leave and quite good and there was blokes goin' along pulling the things off the trams and makin' em kangaroo. The thing you pull the thing on the rope and it disconnected the tram and then they'd start it again so the trams were kangarooing. All diggers and then they lifted a baby Austin onto the
- 34:00 post office foyer, lifted it. I'm havin' a drink in a pub there and a bloke come in and said, "Hey George" or Bill, whatever his name was, the publican, "have you just sold a barrel of beer to one of the diggers?" He said, "No I bloody well haven't." He said, "Well he's rolling one down the street." Honest. Oh they really turned it on for us and then I'd gone to see a
- 34:30 bloke I'd come from England with, like nothing to do with our party but a fella a Welshman called Hughes, and he was married and I'd got his address. So I went out over the Rose Street Bridge to see where he lived and he wasn't there and his neighbour said, "No they've gone to the pictures," and I'd been intoxicated of course and I just fell on their verandah. I said, "Oh I'll have a snooze and wait for him," and he arrived
- 35:00 about eleven thirty and he's shakin' me. He's saying, "Hey, young Ginger what are you doing?" "Oh" I said, "What's the time?" I said, "Hell I've got to be back at twenty three fifty nine." That's when the one minute to midnight the leave pass expired. In the car. Top speed. Up the gangway and Wally Delves was there to check people and he said "How are you?"
- 35:30 out of the corner of his mouth. "Not bad thank you sir" because I knew maybe someone was listening and the next thing we had a one of the troops called Bonnington, Charlie Bonnington. He was an

English bloke. Cambridge-educated and he'd been over in New Guinea unearthing graves and what have and all this sorta thing. He's one a that type of bloke you know looking for bones and whatever and

36:00 he was absolutely oh he was pie-eyed and he had two bottles of Gordon's gin under his arm and Wally distinctly said "Corporal you can't bring those on board." He said "What?" So straight he did a u-turn straight down the gangplank onto the thing and got a bottle opened one bottle and swigged

36:30 and with the other one he said "I do declare thee launched" and hit the side of the Orford with the other bottle. Smashed it and came back. He said "Am I alright now sir?" and Don Jackson, who was the adjutant, was standing in the shade sorta thing behind 'cause "Put him under arrest." So Wally had to charge him and

37:00 he had a night in the brig you know but he was Lord Bonnington's son and later on he was tran... he was the first Aussie transferred out of the Australian army into the British army and with the rank of captain. So there's another thing I remember pretty well but and then of course when we're takin' off a few blokes who'd missed the ship

37:30 were all bein' escorted out on a the launch to try and catch up with us, see, and they're all in the all in there and a lot of blokes we had quite a few Kiwis by the way who were in on other ships and they'd been changin' uniforms and so they didn't know whether they were Arthur or Martha. All been playin' up but they but Perth gave us a well we were the first

38:00 mob but they told me later on they got sick and tired of some of the other crowd playin' up and causin' a lot of vandalism but we didn't you know. We just enjoyed ourselves but no

Were you apprehensive at all about what you were about to encounter?

I used to think "Cripes what the hell are what are we up to? Where are we going?" Naturally you know and I thought I "Have you done the right thing?"

38:30 but I was enjoyin' life. I they're lovely blokes. I don't like guys as guys, but they're lovely blokes the lot of them. The good company and I got on well with everyone. Majority. You always occasionally you'd have a little upset you know.

It sounds like you were a bloke that always had a lot of friends during the...

And a mate of mine

Before the war and during the war

Not long he said "You're a gregarious sort of a bastard Blue."

39:00 He reckoned I was gregarious, yeah.

I just want to take you take you back to a point that you mentioned before that's quite interesting I think. You said that a lot of the women hooked up with the men, got married to the soldiers just before they left with the intention of getting their ration or pay packet

Yes. Yeah.

From the government?

Yeah.

Can you just tell us a little bit about that?

Well

What you know about that?

Well it was straight out. You see they used to make allotments. The married men used to make allotments

39:30 to their wives. So there was x amount taken out well see by the way a private, private soldier, when we joined up was five shillings a day but when as soon as we left overseas you got five and sixpence a day. Well out of that five and sixpence a day they were going to make an allotment to their wives and some of them were only collecting a shilling a day and the rest were bein'

40:00 allotted to their wives and the kids of course.

So it was up to them how much they allotted the wives?

Yeah well they had to more or less allot it you know. It was a... they had to because they're married. They're down as bein' married and they had to but they could break it down a little bit but a hell of a lot of 'em did super out of it you know. Did very well out of it and poor devils they were just caught.

40:30 Green as grass I reckon but and then of course the other lot we had the other poor devils when we were POW Japanese and declared missin' believed killed and then there was no word of what was cookin' while we were with the Japs and they some of them when they got back it was heartbreakin' because

the wives had remarried

41:00 and their the wives, their ex-wives, were meetin' them to introduce them to my husband you know. It's funny and the and they're daughters and their sons didn't even know them because when they'd left they'd been babies you know and a hell of a lot of those stories. Oh stacks of 'em. Stacks. Where they just remarried and you couldn't blame them

41:30 of course. They thought their husbands were dead and oh yeah. That's all in books. Plenty of that.

We can pick up on that later on some of the specific stories. So where did you head to where was your where did you first disembark? After Fremantle. You left

After Fremantle we disembarked at El Kantara in the Suez Canal. El Kantara East.

Tape 4

00:51 **Alright Blue, so you blokes were 6th division.**

Mm.

01:00 **So you were the first blokes getting to the Middle East?**

Yeah. Yeah.

Now did you have a concept of where they were gonna be dropping you off, or it was all a mystery tour until you got there?

No. No idea. Didn't have any idea where we were headin' for, no.

Were you surprised to find yourself in the Middle East?

Yeah well yeah, especially when the war was over in

01:30 was on over in Germany and yep. Very surprised but lovely to see the canal again, because I'd only gone through it yeah, not long before you know, in '38, and goin' back there in 1940 and I got a hell of a shock.

When you did go through in '38 it was you were just passing through, you didn't

Yeah.

Didn't step off did you, so...

No we were we were off

02:00 yeah we were off in Port Said for a little while, yeah.

But you hadn't had an opportunity to really see the country or...

No, no.

Mix with the locals. So

Nothing, no.

This time arriving with 6th division was...

Yeah.

Was the first time you...

Yeah.

Encountered really the...

That's right.

The landscape and the people?

Exactly. El Kantara. Yep.

So where's the just take us through where they put you down in that area and where you sort of settled up base and

02:30 **started to do training?**

Well we got off the ship and we went into big marquees to have a feed, a NAAFI [Navy Army Air Force Institute] as they call it, that was the canteen with the British and everyone reckoned that it was camel meat and peas. They were pushin' it on one side the hell of a lot of 'em wouldn't have a go at it 'cause

some bloke said "That's

03:00 bloody camel meat" see, which was a lot of rot of course, and then the next thing we were on the trains and up we go and as I through the Sinai Desert and arrived Java and that's where we got off and then went to Julis, this camp called Julis, which was the start of the Middle East training.

03:30 **So that was close to Palestine?**

That was in Palestine.

In Palestine?

Oh yeah.

Right.

Yeah that was the 1/6th all the 16th Brigade were all in that area. 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Infantry Battalions, which was a division then but then later they... brigade, well they brought them back to three

04:00 battalions in a brigade. They did away with the fourth one. They went into 17th Division, ah 17th Brigade and 18th Brigade. Yeah and then of course foot sloggers started doing all their bivouacs and out to the Hebron Heights all around there, doin' it tough, goin' on desert marches and around and

And what was training for you

04:30 **at that stage?**

Oh I was very fortunate. I didn't have to be in with the pioneers and than bein' with BH

I didn't get out very much at all. I was lucky. I was fortunate. I was with the camp duties most of the time.

So what would a typical day be for you doing camp duties at that stage?

Oh just keepin' the area clean and all

05:00 around the place etcetera. You know but enjoyin' life and then at one stage I was put in charge of the sergeants' mess. The reason being that Wally had been sent to OTU, that's officers' training school, and a gentleman I don't like talking about him much but he was a 2IC [Second in command] of the battalion and he said,

05:30 "Butterworth, over to the sergeants' mess. Take over there." I said, "But sir I wouldn't know what to do. I've never pulled a beer or..." "That's an order. Get over there." So I became the trump of the sergeants' mess and got really enjoyed it. So that filled quite a lot of my time. A long, long time.

So Blue in general you sound like

06:00 **you were feeling pretty comfortable on arrival there...**

Yeah.

And you were fairly satisfied with the...

Oh yeah.

Set up and the circumstances?

We you were on the top of the world you know. You're in a foreign country and you got a beer occasionally. You gained three meals a day and enjoyin' life.

Was the weather a factor? Was the heat a factor?

Oh yeah, yeah, the you used to sweat a little bit and the flies were bloody awful and the flies were shockers

06:30 you know. Really bad.

Could you do anything about the flies?

Well they put fly traps, invented fly traps and all the rest of it with dead meat in to try and keep them away but half the time you the Australian salute was on all the time tryin' to get rid of them. Yeah. Oh yeah.

And did you have a chance at that stage to start mixing with any of the locals?

07:00 Well I we had a little lad an Arab boy called we christened him Mickey and he lived in the village behind Julis but anyway that's another story for later but the on the first goin' on leave into Tel Aviv or Jerusalem I got very friendly with some Jewish people. Nathan Gurdis, who was the

07:30 last reporter out of Poland as a crime reporter, war correspondent rather, and he was wanted by Stalin and Hitler. They had a price on his head and he lived in number 7 Key Boulevard, Tel Aviv, and his next door neighbour was Mrs Seratski. I got photographs there of

08:00 them and she was in number 5. So I became friendly when I'd go on leave I used to make a point of goin' having a good meal, a couple of beers and other things and then go 'round and visit the Gurdis' and the Seratskis.

How did you meet those people initially?

By I'm I've often thought "How the hell I did first meet..?"

08:30 I can't remember. I really can't remember what started it all but Nathan Gurdis by the way he was a paraplegic or he'd had polio you know and he's fantastic. He spoke fifteen languages. Mrs Seratski spoke thirteen languages. Being very wealthy people over in...

09:00 hoo hoo, come on Blue. Anyway.

Were they both originally from Poland or...

No, no. No she was from oh cripes. The Russians took it over. Mrs Seratski ooh cripes. She showed me photographs.

It'll come to you...

Beautiful home and property and she was on a world tour on a ship and it's on that ship

09:30 that she met Moritz, a Jewish a German Jew, but in that period the Russians took over oh come off it, took over the town took over the property. The Communists just moved in and wiped them. So she was left with only the jewellery that she had, nothing else, and they settled in Tel Aviv

10:00 and Nathan of course he'd he got away from Warsaw and he settled in Tel Aviv also and he was the editor of the Jewish paper and he was a marvellous man. I you go there in his wheelchair, he had shoulders on 'im that wide and arms and he'd be there with the phone, he'd be listenin' he used to traverse the dial of the short wave radio and I got very

10:30 cagey about it at one stage. I thought "Hello this bloke might be a spy you know and he's trying to do this and that with me bein' friendly," but he'd traverse the dial pickin' up anything he could get about Russia or Germans or you know and then he'd be typing. He was marvellous. He'd be listening the radio, typin' and all the different, marvellous man yeah and he's the photograph's there of him by the way

11:00 for later but and Mrs Seratski she was a lovely she had the little boy, Danny as we called him, who I've got a photograph there of. Yep.

So Blue, how long would those periods of leave tend to be for you?

Oh about every two weeks, third week you know weekend. Just a week or a day sometimes, only a day. A day, yep.

And when you did get out to have a couple of beers or a bit of food or something, what sort of people were you encountering

11:30 **and spending time with?**

Mostly Jewish in Tel Aviv and that because the mostly Jewish people, Jewish girls. They're all refugees who'd gone to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem of course.

And you got along well with those folk?

Beg yours?

You got along well?

I got on well with the Jews and the Arabs. I'd like at this stage to tell you, Mrs Seratski and the way that unfortunately when I think of it now. I mean

12:00 going back in those days, Tel Aviv is very small you know but we had a mate in hospital and Mrs Seratski, bloke by the name of Marchant, Neville Marchant, and I think Neville died not long ago but and I told her that Neville was in hospital and she said, "I'd like to go and see him. Could you take me?" So we went and got the little canteen the like most hospitals have now but

12:30 this is only small and we sit in the chair at the table and the gentleman offers her, good looking sort of a lad, and straight away "Shalom" greetings, the Jewish greetings, "Shalom" you know and they kick off yakkity yak in Jewish and then a bit of English'd come into it to let me in on the turn out and then he said, he had a thing, a

13:00 forage cap under his epaulets on his "Must go" and she said, "Bluey, Bluey he was an Arab. He was an

Arab." And I said, "So what? You enjoyed his company didn't you?" "Yeah" and so that was in those days and see in the early days when they went there, she told me and Gurdis,

13:30 they used to have gold cups to drink out of in the parks. You never had a lock on your door or window closed or anything and it wasn't 'til the black Jews came from Newman that things started to change. When they had to start puttin' locks on their doors yeah and beautiful there. I'd walk down the Boulevard and

14:00 not recordings, tapes or anything, the dinki di you'd hear the violins playing, the pianos being played. Beautiful. Talented. So I got on very well with those people and then the next thing, young Mickey when I came back from Crete and I wasn't on the roll and there's another story. Old Mickey was

14:30 workin' in the canteen there speakin' lovely English which Blue helped him with early in the piece and in charge of the canteen and also he's in charge of The Palestine Post sellin' the papers. "You must go see my people." So I went and had a week in the Arab village.

When was this

15:00 **Blue?**

This was after I come back from Crete.

Okay.

'Cause I wasn't on the roll you see. I when they called the roll I wasn't on it. I said "Hoo Hoo. I'm not here."

Do you mind if we go back to that story when we've sort of...

No, alright.

Come to Crete? Is that alright?

Yeah. Yeah. You bet.

Thanks. So and you enjoyed the company of Arabs?

Of Arabs, yep. Yeah.

And how did you find the Arab people?

Very good, yeah. You see they all worked a lot of them worked in the camp you know

15:30 doin' odd jobs and what have you and beautiful. Oh yeah, down I spent the week down there with Mick's people and oh yeah. Fantastic.

So this period of training, Blue it sounds like it was a wonderful time in general really.

I got on much better than other blokes. I was more fortunate...

For you, yeah.

Than some of the buggers.

For you.

Oh yeah.

16:00 I wasn't foot sloggin' like they did. As it turns out, I should never have been in the infantry because I got flat feet. Yeah and

So morale in general was...

Yeah.

What was morale like at that stage?

Fantastic. Yeah, yeah. We you got a few odd bods that didn't want didn't like discipline and couldn't take it and but majority were good, good blokes. The average

16:30 Aussie soldier mate you wouldn't get better anywhere. No and I mean that.

Blue was there a feeling amongst you blokes that you were eager to see some action...

Yeah.

At that stage?

Oh yeah.

Was were you feeling...

Oh yeah.

Impatient or were you feel just enjoying the wait?

The blokes "Let's get to the dinki di," they'd say. "Let let's get at it," you know. Oh yes, they were lookin' forward to bein' able to shoot somebody sort of you know. Mm.

Were you getting any information

17:00 **at that stage as to what the Italians were up to...**

Well the Italians weren't, it wasn't 'til June and as I say, I was workin' over at the sergeants' mess when it came over that the Italians had gone to war with the Jerries [sl. Germans] and so that was it.

Just going back to the time when you were running the mess

17:30 **how long was that period where you were the trump in the mess?**

The sergeants' mess, from oh about two months, three months, yeah. Yeah. 'Cause then before we left, and this comes back because of my birthday, we went to a place called Hadera, as a convalescent before we took off to go down to Egypt

18:00 and so I reckon two months or so before then we were in Hadera and I know I had my birthday there and then we took off down to Egypt and then from Egypt, anyway that's another story.

Alright. What I was going to ask is at that stage were you also were the Australian troops training with troops

18:30 **from other countries in that area or was it exclusively...?**

Oh they had the Brits, the black watch, the black watch were over there. The Scots. Oh yeah and then

How did you find that the Aussies were mingling with the British?

Not too good believe it or not. No, no the there was still that fraction but believe it or not, even in a battalion you got companies and you got platoons.

19:00 You got sections and they'd be at loggerheads. So stupid and battalion against battalion and wanting punch ups when they got intoxicated and then one of our blokes unfortunately, a great bloke. He came from Kalgoorlie originally and when war broke out he joined up and became a 2/1st battalion. Now he was on leave in Jerusalem and

19:30 he'd been done over by the black watch and he was just on the verge of becomin' a deserter when he was found and news came where he'd been in hospital and the stupid people in hospital hadn't even let the Australians know, they had his paybook and everything, let 'em know that he was in there. Anyway that's a so our blokes they wanted to go and do the black watch over,

20:00 soldiers, and it was it was stupid you know. You'd go and have a drink and a Scottie, in one particular instance "Hey digger," the dig, "Hey Jock, what've ya got under your kilt," and all this behaviour you know and well if and the next thing 'whack' it was on. So

20:30 stupid the bloody then this bang bang bang and the provosts wanting to know where all the it was so damn silly and they said to me "Hey Blue comin' on leave mate? We're gonna get square with..." I said, "Oh cut it out. I'm neutral" and that's actually what went on. Really and truly.

Blue is that where you positioned yourself as neutral because I guess it would have been interesting

21:00 **for you being from England**

That's right.

But part of the Australian troops. I mean were you feeling like an Aussie or

Yeah, of course I was.

A Brit at that stage?

I was. I oh feeling like an Aussie and proud to be it but then I couldn't do go up in fisticuffs against I mean we're all we're all there for a purpose of fighting the enemy and I did see in my opinion they were our ally, not our bloody enemy, and but this went on

21:30 **Were superiors trying to sort that sort of behaviour out?**

Oh yeah. They we were told you know that behave yourselves but oh...

It just continued.

Yes. It was on all the time. Really and truly. Yep. Yep, even as I say even in company, sections, platoons

they'd still 'ave a go at one another

22:00 and battalion against battalion. The in one the old 2/11th battalion you know they were the WA [Western Australia] mob and when we were in Egypt, 2/1st and 2/11th havin' a go at one another and 'ome on a train one day on me lonesome coming back from Alex to Amiriya to Ikingi Mariut, Ikingi Mariut, where the station was and I wasn't game to breathe.

22:30 I thought "Geez, too many." and that's stupid isn't it? The 2/11th Battalion and the 2/1st Battalion and they used to you know hammer and tongs at one another in Egypt, in Alexandria. Yep.

Amazing.

Stupid. Which today Victoria against New South, even in civilian life. All this stupid thing and the crowd eaters and the sand gropers and, silly.

23:00 **Just going back to those times when you were on leave Blue, were you known to chase around the local girls at all?**

No, not really. I used to go to the brothel. That's when I said before, in the confab where I used to go and have a drink and a good feed and a drink then I didn't mention brothel but now that you've asked the question, yeah.

Could you tell us about what the brothels were like over there?

23:30 Well they're regimental brothels and...

Can you explain what that means?

Well it meant that they were examined by doctors, yeah, and you had to wear a condom, which were called French letters in those days and also they had what they called the blue light, which an ointment they gave you

24:00 if you should be stupid and also the blue light outside.

Stupid in which way? Not wearing...

In the not wearing a condom.

The French letter?

Yeah.

What would the blue light ointment do for you?

Well it killed supposed if you did it immediately after intercourse it killed the VD [venereal disease]. No chance of getting the VD and also they 'ad the blue light places in the

24:30 vicinity of the brothels where you could go and you'd get looked after. You'd get, you'd have to wash, bathe and be in Condi's crystals and all that sorta thing and then the blue light treatment. The cream and yeah.

Do you know what the cream was? The blue light? Do you know what was in it?

No, I can't tell you. No, no. No that but it was called the blue light yeah.

25:00 **Did you experience one of those blue light venues yourself um or were you always one to stick to the French letter?**

No, I thought you, oh no, can I, I don't like telling this in female company but I...

I don't want you to feel uncomfortable Blue.

No, no, no.

But we'd love to hear it. I mean it's not a problem for us.

Yeah, well I'll tell you because well this is in my opinion

25:30 first of all the first time without one I was in Jaffa Road in the brothel there, in Lil's brothel, and the air raid sirens went and the poor girl, she was Arab by the way, and she's saying, "Igari, igari, bomb, bomb, bomb, igari, quick, quick, quick, igari, bomb, bomb, bomb. Quick, quick, quick, bomb, bomb, bomb," you see, and I said, "Oh," and I pointed

26:00 and she said, "(UNCLEAR)" and she went (UNCLEAR) and immediately bingo it did the job. Right. So that meant blue light, yeah. Now that same girl, by the way she took off. She was dressed quick smart and I'm right behind her. Just before she steps into the street over went the veil. They're earnin' a quid. Anyway now the other. I was in Jerusalem and we had the

26:30 first level in the Fast Hotel, Jerusalem, and right underneath the 'otel the bottom 'round the corner

there's a blue light outfit. So I done a winkie pop right next door to the synagogue, just opposite where The Palestine Post was printed and when I got back I thought I better go 'round into there and the bloke said,

- 27:00 "Righto digger, shorts over there. Underwear over there. Go there. Life Buoy soap 'round your privates your testicles," and then he said, "Where were you by the way?" I explained to him where we were
- 27:30 this mate and I, Johnny, and so then he came behind me and in those days I had a foreskin and the next thing I'm up on me toes. I "Hey," (UNCLEAR) whack.
- 28:00 Dressed. Out and but when I got up top the makin, the food, the mongaree, makin is the Japanese. The mongaree, which is food in Arabic, had gone and I said, "Hey mongaree ma fish. Ma fish mongaree." I said, "Al la Australian
- 28:30 Australian soldier, ooh zalan I'm angry you know. Ma fish." So I went to the sergeant, Watkins. I said, "Hey, what's all this? No bloody tucker." I said, "What?" He said, "Where ya been?" I said, "I was underneath havin' a wash out." He said, he had a big smile on his face, he said, "What did you think about that bloke?" I said, "He's a poofter. He's got to be." He said, "I thought that too."
- 29:00 This is humour in the it turned out, now this is honest, it turned out he got kicked out. They caught up with him. He'd been in the navy, in the permanent navy, and had been kicked out of the navy and when war started he had a smorgasbord. He joined the AIF and that's his occupation so he was on top of the world. So there you are, that's humour. That's so yeah, but I...
- 29:30 Lil I could tell you a story about the brothel. I became friendly with madam and she wanted to go to the pictures with me. I was in Jaffa Road and the picture was 'The Forty Thousand Horseman' you know with what's his name, big I used to see 'im in Newport Hotel. Anyway,
- 30:00 so I said, "Lil how did you become a madam in a brothel?" and she's tellin' me how she married an Egyptian who was, had, she was Egyptian by birth but she married an Irishman who was in the army and when his time was done he took her back to Ireland and her father, his father had a bakery, but she said, "I wasn't getting on too
- 30:30 well." I can imagine from over there to Ireland and she said, "Not very pleased." But then her hubby saw an ad in the payment paper 'Palestine police wanted. People with previous army service', right? So he and her brother, her brother-in-law, both applied and got it. So they're in Tel Aviv and she said, "My brother-in-law came to me
- 31:00 one day and said 'Lil why don't you start a brothel?'" "Oh," she said, "I was dumbfounded. Oooh I..." He said, "Now you don't have to be a..." he said, "I know a place you can get you can lease and I'll get the girls." That's it. So he said, now just as she's sayin', "And Blue that is how I started the brothel," the lights faded you know
- 31:30 to start the show and allst you can hear, you can hear it all, "And so you see Blue that is how I started the brothel" you know. So, and that by the way was Chips Rafferty in 'The Forty Thousand Horsemen.' So when just before interval again and you were allowed to smoke over there too but just before interval I said "I'll see ya, must go. I've gotta go to the toilet." I went outside and I smoked in Allenby Road until I heard the start of it and then
- 32:00 I snuck back again. So there you are. So you know her two boys her two children, her husband by the way finished up a superintendent of the Palestine police, and her two children were goin to the Golden School of English in Jerusalem. Private education. Top of the world. So there you are and then another lass who worked there, later on I'm back in Haifa now, this is
- 32:30 afterwards. Lo and behold, this is after Crete when I was waitin' orders how to pick up with Weary again, and that's another story if you want it now but if

Can you give it to us briefly?

Quick

Blue we were talking about the ah the brothel set up over there in the Middle East. Could you just let me know

- 33:00 **those blue light places where you could go to clean up, were they who were they organised by and run by?**

The army, yeah. Yeah the Australian army. Ah army services mm, yeah. They're for all nations all soldiers. Servicemen. Mm.

So the just the activity of going to a brothel when you're on leave was

- 33:30 **it pretty much par for the course? Was it encouraged? Was it discouraged?**

Well you knew that they always issued the condoms were issued to you, which meant of course that you were gonna go somewhere but oh yeah they I would say without a doubt that eight out of ten made use

of them. Yeah.

Okay Blue now I'd just like to

34:00 **get you to tell me about what happened after that period of training, that initial period of training was over, when you first started to you'd heard the Italians were on the move and you started to move towards battle.**

Well firstly when we heard that we were in Palestine still, about the Italians, and then we shot up to Hadera for a rest area

34:30 but we were doin' bivouacs around the Hebron, Hebron Heights over there, which had been in the paper not long ago. Something out of there about the Hebronites and then we took off and went down to Helwan and were in Helwan down in Egypt, just out of Cairo, two ks out of Cairo and then we, we went by I went as an offsider to a

35:00 driver with advance troops down to a place called Ikingi Mariut, which was next door to Amiriya camp, which we did the battalion did most of their time in but from there we were goin' on bivouacs etcetera all part of the training before we moved up to the Western Desert. That was kicked off at Sollum and then advanced to Bardia,

35:30 and I as I told you I didn't do Bardia. I had to go back to hospital and then...

What was the reason why you had to go to hospital?

Well I had what do you call... Balanitis.

Could you tell us about that?

Balanitis is what you get, your penis with a foreskin and you can't... you... our water bottle had to do everything. You had to wash yourself and drink and what have you

36:00 and in the sandstorms the sand used to penetrate and naturally and it got under your foreskin, and now at one stage of the game I was told there's about a quarter of the forces were out of action with Balanitis. So consequently, anybody who had a foreskin and went into operate for a normal operation had to be put out

36:30 to it and when he woke up he'd lost his foreskin but not in my case. That's another story later on but and that was the reason that I went back and then I got back on the eve of Tobruk ready for action.

Can you take us through what happened at Tobruk?

Yeah well on the eve of Tobruk, Wally Delves, who was the intelligence officer,

37:00 he had to go out there and take care of the see that everything was right, the starting line. That's where the battalion was gonna move off from and I went with him. Naturally, bein' his batman, I went out with him, and we had to go in the desert to a find a little light, kerosene light which was surrounded from the view of the

37:30 Italians and to check that everything was intact for when we took off in the early hours of the next morning and so when we started, there was Colonel Ether, Ken Ether, who later on became General Ether, and Don Jackson the adjutant, eh

38:00 Wally Delves and other officers and I was alongside of Wally when Colonel Ether said, "Right, now all the watches have been synchronised," and I think from memory it was about six twenty or six twenty-five. As soon as he said, "Right," the skies just opened up 'cause the ocean was way over on the right and the

38:30 fifteen inch gun was out there, monitor they call it, it started firing and we also had the eighteen pound, prior to this we had the eighteen pound artillery, but they kicked off with the twenty five pounders and they all opened up and then we started advancing. The crowd had been in with what they call Bangalore torpedoes, which they'd

39:00 attached to the wire near the tank trap that the Italians had done and as soon as that 'pffffssst' the wire was blown then we started to advance along with the tank crowd, which was a British crowd, and I always remember vividly the top of the

39:30 tank poppin' up and the bloke in very nice English, the officer sayin' "Oh there we are" and I always remember that vividly and then we went in rolled in behind them. Started advancing and I always remember that 'bang' some poor devil holdin' onto his crutch and the words out of Ken Ether was "Oh well lad you've got a blighty." That's you've got a...

40:00 you're battery's gone. Yeah he was good. Yeah, really good and he by the way Ken Ether walked in he went into battle with a walking stick. Yeah. He's a very brave good bloke. Very brave.

Blue was this the first time you'd been in any sort of situation of battle fire?

- Oh yeah. Oh dear, oh yeah, and I tell ya what, ooh sorry, I I'll never forget,
- 40:30 I thought of all the wrong things I'd done when I was a kid. Ooho, yeah, I really felt "Oh this is the time you're gone."
- You thought this was gonna be retribution for all the things you'd done as a young rascal did you?**
- Oh yeah, that's right. Yeah. Words to that effect. Yeah. Right, now I've got to tell you this.
- If it's a long story we're just about out of**
- No, no we're advancing and, "Down!" And this officer, I won't
- 41:00 mention his name, he's dead now, but he'd been drinkin' other people's rum, 'cause a lot of our lads wouldn't drink it, "Down!" And I went down and a batman had to in the infantry you had to be two paces to the rear of your office, and I went down and my bayonet hit Wally Delves' backside for starters but then (UNCLEAR) a machine gun from the Italians that far
- 41:30 in front in the sand and then Wally Delves said, "On your feet. Who gave that bloody order?" So that's how fortunate it was, but poor old, we, when I rang Wal the other day I was talkin' about it. I said, "Do you remember what happened Wal?" He said, "Yeah I remember when you put the bayonet in me backside." Yeah. Oh yeah. So there's humorous parts of it but I did think I... I didn't need clean underwear at that stage but
- 42:00 I thought of a lot of things. Yeah.
- Did you catch yourself saying a silent little prayer?**

Tape 5

- 00:37 **Blue, the night of the attack on Tobruk,**
- 01:00 **Blue, the night of the attack on Tobruk did you ever come face to face with the enemy?**
- No. Not face to face until the blue was over, then I saw hundreds of them face to face when the already POWs that capitulated.
- Can you tell us, can you describe the scene?**
- Ooh cripes. They just some of them
- 01:30 by the way they'd been there, the Italians had been in that area for twenty one years. They were dug in. They had their underground trenches and gun pits what have you and they were really but they never even some of them never even took the thing the covers off their muzzles. They never fired a shot. Just surrendered straight away, more or less straight away, and so the desert,
- 02:00 when they're advancing as POWs it was you couldn't believe it. It was just like a big black cloud. Hundreds, thousands of them with a couple of our blokes marching alongside of them keepin' 'em keepin' 'em in order sort of thing you know. They just give it away. One of those things. They didn't want to fight. Very few of them wanted to fight and that was the extent of the my experiences with the Italians
- 02:30 'cause I never went further than Tobruk. A few of our chaps went further up to as far as Benghazi but not my battalion, but a lot of the Australians went up to Benghazi and, good God. Anyway that's about the limit.
- But how did they transport all the Italian POWs away from once they got to your camp?**
- 03:00 **What how did they get them out of there?**
- They brought 'em by ship. Brought them out by ship. From Tobruk Harbour. That's where the majority oh yeah and they were comin' we had them in a cage. What they call the POW cage and I felt very sorry for them. Now the way they used to feed them 'round the army biscuits, Swallow and Aerial they call them, the name of the firm, and bully beef,
- 03:30 tinned bully beef. Now our blokes used to back up to the fence and just grab the cases of bully beef, toss them over the fence and the tins of biscuits over the fence. Consequently the big Italians got the bully beef and biscuits. The poor little fellas who didn't have the energy
- 04:00 or and the rest of it to be able to get there to get some, they missed out and then later on when the movement started to get rid of them and they were bein' marched in from the other side of the harbour into the township side of the harbour and I felt so sorry. The 8th Battalion blokes, 2/8th battalion fellows, were in charge, the guards,

04:30 and they still retained as the Italians still retained as much of their gear as they possibly could. You know their great coats and uniforms and what have you and blankets and, which I don't blame them for, but up this bit of the hill comin' into Tobruk township two or three of them, who as I said hadn't been getting anything to eat because they couldn't get at it, all the strong blokes were eating the most of it,

05:00 getting most of it, they started to go down and our blokes said, "Get up you Dago [sl. Italian] bastard, get up," and putting the bayonet in the backsides givin' 'em a prod and I went to say a few words about it, and I was told, "What's wrong with you, you're on their side you bastard?" But I went and grabbed a tin of biscuits and I opened the top, large tin, and I started tossing them as they're marching by me, tossing the biscuits, but

05:30 when they got lower down I had to bend over to get right down to the bottom and when I did, a few of 'em charged me to get at the and I cut me wrist a little bit, just a, so what did I do? I just grabbed the lot and said, "Get to buggery you dago bastards," and that was it. Oh yeah, but that's the way they came out and there was a few accidents by the way getting on the ship where some of 'em

06:00 unfortunately fell alongside of the wharf and the ship, yeah, down off the wharf in Tobruk harbour.

Because there was too many of them trying to get onto the plank?

Well the two or three of them there were taken up in slings and what have you and dropped and yeah, but then they were sent back to Palestine and then from Palestine

06:30 they were sent back to hell of a lot to Australia and hell of a lot to this very day they're still here. They didn't want to go back and never did.

Can I just take you back to the battle of Tobruk, I just could you talk about some of the senses that you felt? Like you said that you know you were imagining all the bad things that you'd done as a child on the night of the battle, what about the noise and the smell and

07:00 **can you describe...?**

Oh yeah well

Those things?

The cordite? The smell of the cordite and the cloud the cordite is and I've often said to blokes, "You, you b..." I said, "You've never even smelled cordite."

What does that smell like?

Well, like cordite. It gets up your nostrils and it it's an explosive and you can smell it you know and naturally there's a hell of a lot of it around because everybody's

07:30 firing away there in the big stuff the artillery and we were advancing. As we advanced the artillery were lifting their fire, keeping it in front of us supposedly. There were a few times when unfortunately something went wrong and ala the name they give to artillery of drop shorts, and the when these artillery blokes see this, if the do, they'll say, "What? That twerp."

08:00 **What do you mean 'drop shorts'?**

Well they're droppin' short. Instead of advancing and lifting the guns to fire further ahead in front of the infantry as we were advancing, some of them didn't get that far. They were dropping in amongst our blokes and that's why some of the artillery we call drop shorts and the artillery men, I don't blame them, they didn't like it.

08:30 **And did anyone die close to you? Did you hear the you know the screams of a man dying and 'cause this was your first battle. All of this must have really affected you.**

No. No and no one screaming and there weren't too many of our blokes that in our advance who got killed. The few wounded but as I say, in

09:00 you read in the book where the names are of those who did get in this book 'First at War' but I felt sorry for a lot of the Italians who were hiding still underneath in the trenches, which were covered over with boards and then sand, all camouflaged, and our blokes goin' along and callin' out "Come out. Come out you Dago so and sos" and then

09:30 some of them were throwin' in, well throwin' the bombs in there to get them out. It was very said. I didn't I felt sorry for them. Yeah.

Next after Tobruk you went to Greece.

Yep. Yeah.

Can you talk about that journey and getting to Greece? Can you take us along with you to Greece?

10:00 Well first of all we came back to Mersa Matruh and then from Mersa Matruh we went down back to Amiriya, which is just out of Alexandria, and then on the 17th, which was St Patrick's Day, then we were told we were off so there we are, all on the wharf at Alexandria waiting to for our transport

10:30 to arrive to take pick us up and take us over to and we were on the wharf for so long that a hell of a lot of our blokes got sick of it and took off.

They deserted?

Well they actually not they just take absent without leave and had to be twenty one days away before you became a deserter but they took off and then the ship came in, which was a Bombay package steam line,

11:00 and took us off and they were left behind. Then of course when they got back and found we'd gone they put themselves in of course, handed themselves in, and they were disciplined when they arrived back and for offloading their firearms and their gear you know their they were charged, but naturally we were goin' into battle supposedly so they couldn't put them into jail

11:30 and so they're just more or less got away with it.

What had you heard about the battle in Greece and that stage? What did you know of the allies' progress in the battle?

Well we as I say, we were in Daphne and we were getting news over the radio. We used to listen I used to listen religiously at nine o'clock every night to the news via South Africa in a little café, which I

12:00 used to break camp and go down into this little café and I used to anyway have six avgos, which was eggs, brown bread and a small bottle of Maro Daphne, beautiful red wine. Beaut red, nice wine and then the next thing of course we you were on your way. We're off and we moved and up through Larissa and through those places.

12:30 Levadia, Lamia and finish up in the Veria, Veria Pass, and then the they started the Germans were advancing when we got the orders that we were gonna retreat and comin' back I did the thirty mile march.

So as soon

13:00 **as you got to Greece you got orders to retreat?**

We weren't there very long. No we weren't long in up in the Levadia. No, not very long ago. The Germans had too much weight for us. They were well-organised you know. These blowin' up bridges and all the rest of it. They had the stuff to thwart that. They just fixed another bridge up quick smart like a bailey bridge what have you,

13:30 stick them across and advance. Yeah they were in our way, our way all the time but yeah there's stories which you can read about where our blokes wanted to blow up the bridge at Veria and the civilians didn't want it and it's very it was desperate. The looked like

14:00 some of our blokes would have had to shoot some of the civilians, but fortunately it didn't come to that and the and as I was saying about my feet, not having boots my boots off for seventy two solid hours and wet. So I did it tough comin' over that mountain range.

What happened to your feet? Can you describe the condition?

Trench, trench foot.

Trench foot.

Yeah.

What happens when you get trench

14:30 **foot?**

Well the sole of the feet go like tripe and naturally the socks, which were made out of goat's wool that this Greek soldier had given to me, penetrated the sole of me foot and a captain by the name of ooh, Lady anyway, I've got the letters in there to prove this, he operated. He had to cut the boot off me foot

15:00 and when it and it was about three-eighths of an inch in the sole of me foot, the sock and everything and then I was stuck on a train for three days getting back to Athens and I the uniform I was wearing wasn't the Australian uniform. Somebody had knocked my Australian uniform off and I had a dirty old battle dress,

15:30 English battle dress suit. So I was put into the British hospital in Athens and then all the troops ah wounded started comin' in and I felt a bit stupid. I thought "You're not wounded" and I talked to the doctor and I said, "No I want out. I'd give up me bed." And it was put on my papers 'Unfit

16:00 as further infanteer' and when I got discharged I went back to Daphne, where we kicked off in Daphne,

the 16th Brigade, and went back as what we call ex-personnel.

What does that mean?

Well it means that you've you could have been away to a school or you could have been in hospital, any old thing, but you're ex-personnel and so I went back there and as I told

- 16:30 Sean [interviewer], that all of a sudden Major Miller, who was on his way back to Palestine to take over the 2/1st Infantry Training Battalion, tossed me a bunch of keys and said, "You can drive Butterworth," and Butterworth had never driven a car. I'd had a go at a ute and a six-wheeler Morris. I'd no licence
- 17:00 and I was told to go and pick up a major in 1st Aust Corps headquarters and when I got there and I repeat I'm repeating what I said before that he said, "Is the car alright?" "Oh yeah, the car's alright." All I knew about a car, you put water and oil and petrol into it. He said, "Good. Stand by and we'll let you know when we need you." Anyway they,
- 17:30 no one came near me. Dark fell so I put the groundsheet alongside the car and stretched out and went off to sleep. That's when little Peewee, who was one of my battalion blokes, and he was on duty over in 1st Aust Corps "Hey Blue. Come on mate" he said "they've all gone. They've all p'd off. Come on. There's a fortune there." I said "Go away." I wanted to sleep. "Go away"
- 18:00 and "Come on." So sure enough, there it was. All their tents had been left exactly with all their gear. They'd just took off.

Where had they gone?

At first light they all came back and I say to this day it was a false evacuation.

Do you know why? What was the reason behind it?

No. No. You don't read this about this in books but they they'd gone this false evacuation

- 18:30 and they came back and then as the day went on this fella came out, this he said "By the way Private Butterworth your services are no longer required here but you've got to go and pick up iron rations from your quartermaster, RQ [regimental quartermaster], and go to the Acropole Hotel and pick up a Major Dunlop." So that's what happened. I went back and

19:00 **How was the drive? Having never driven before...**

Yeah, yeah

And on Greek roads it must have been pretty...

It...

Hairy was it?

Yeah, I tell you what, my knees were knocking and I was in a Chev, a 1941 Chev. It was the first one with a column gear change on it up on the column and you imagine I me knees were knocking and I approached this Acropole Hotel,

- 19:30 went up where Weary was, knocked on the door and a brigadier, English brigadier, Brigadier Larg, "Oh." I give him the old one, two. I sloped arms and all the rest, which you had to do when you had your rifle and bayonet there and what was me problem? What was I there for and I told him I had to come and pick up a Major Dunlop and then he called out "Dunlop
- 20:00 your car's here and your driver's here," and very softly I could hear "Ask him where he is." A very soft voice Weary and I told him right opposite. "Right, go and get the car and he'll come out and meet you over there." I said, "I'm near the park opposite," and as I just said a while ago, the kerb over there is very high in the footpath and you drive on the right
- 20:30 hand side and I'm sitting in the car and I wondered oh my knees I wondered "Bloody hell, what am I up to?" And the next thing I'm lookin' at these feet, the bottom of a great coat, his overcoat, and I started to I said, "Shit he'll never get in here." He's six foot four and a half, and 'round he came on the other side and introduced himself and that was
- 21:00 the start of our friendship.

What did you, you liked this man immediately did you?

Yeah.

Did you...

Yeah. I could

Apart from his height, what did you...

I just did. I you know there's something about him you know and when he spoke, he's so softly spoken and even when we were travelling along I was still trying to work out "Who the hell is this fellow. I think

he must be intelligence." Naturally bein' force they call it force headquarters,

21:30 which is where all the top notches were there.

This is at the hotel? The Acropole Hotel?

In the yeah, which the services had taken over naturally you know but then I had to drive to he said "Do you know the George Hotel? King George Hotel?" which I didn't and he'd been stayin' there. So had to drive there and as I said I went into Omonia Square, which all the workers comin' home from work and comin'

22:00 from the underground station and I clicked my bumper bar at the back of a air force Greek air force car and that was the start of the fun and I got organised and the mob pushed that way and pushed the other way. Got to the hotel, picked up his gear. I know he left a tip there too by the way and he didn't want people to know he we were leaving.

Why?

Well he didn't want the let them know there's any panic on that we were

22:30 we'd been in other words been beaten. Things weren't going too well and then we took off and started goin' north and it got darker and darker and he that's when he took over. He said "I'll give you a spell."

Was he was that because your driving was so bad or was he were you getting did he think you were getting tired?

No, it's just that I was tired and he said, "I'll take over." So I had the job oh and by the way all the all

23:00 the big stuff, we were coming back and all the Tommy army, British army, big vehicles and you're on these roads, pitch dark no lights and I'm saying, "Over to the left, pull over to the right, pull a little over to the left, pull to the right" and the next thing, we ditched. Got out. He said, "Have you got a trenching tool?"

23:30 I said, "Yeah. Yes sir, I have in the boot," because I'd looked in the boot when I'd picked up the car and I went to takeoff me tunic and to start digging and he said, "Give me that." Then he gave me the torch, a pencil torch with a purple globe. He said "Now hold it like that. Keep the light down."

24:00 He stripped off. He took his great coat off and he I said "Gee he's like bloody Hercules." I christened him Hercules and 'The Big Fella' but really and he started to dig and he trenches and we pulled out and the next day when we're coming back there's a spot and you'd a thought a bulldozer had been in there.

24:30 That's how much earth he moved. No really

So where did you go to?

We went up to corps headquarters up to the corps mob that were up there and he had to go up and organise, his job by the way at this stage, I didn't know, but he had to organise people, wounded getting out. Getting on to trains etcetera, and ambulances to get them to the hospitals and casualty clearing stations.

25:00 That was his job. The ADMS [assistant director medical services] he was the assistant ADMS and we went there and that was one of the early parts about it. I thought, "This bugger, he's different." Now I was looking for him and I went along and he said to me, "Get yourself undercover," sort of thing and he's sitting there with his steel mirror, which was army issue,

25:30 having a shave. Shaving just very casual like you know. Yep. So that was the start of things and then these we

And was that you were getting attacked at that stage?

No, no, no but all the Stukas had done their damage. They'd been over early and had bugged everything. They'd destroyed transport and everything and they were just reconnoitring he was like a reconnaissance plane. He was just flyin' and dartin' around.

26:00 There was a Lewis gun there, mounted, and couldn't go near it. Keep away from it 'cause it had just knocked hell out of the lot but he just flown over the top, not doin' a thing at that stage. That's when I went looking for the big fella and there he was shaving. Got the knife you know

And you said that's when you got a feeling that he was a different special man.

Oh different, yeah.

Well

26:30 **why? Was it his**

Oh just something. You know he's so cool, calm and collective you know he no panic with him at all. He's good. He had no fear. No fear and later on of course he got at that stage that I knew that if I was alongside of him I wouldn't get hurt and this is when, don't get me wrong now, but that's when I thought

"Well there must be someone up there lookin' after 'im" but he used to laugh at that and said, "Hah"

27:00 you know. Oh yeah.

Why wouldn't you get hurt if you were alongside him?

Beg yours?

Why wouldn't you have got hurt if you if you're alongside him?

Just the feelin' that he'd been protected. Somebody was lookin' after him for a reason you know and the good reason was of course came out later on when we became POWs because without Weary, and don't get me wrong, there's several good doctors,

27:30 heaps, but he was everything. He was an organiser, a good doctor, good leader and he had the works you know that in my book put it put Weary on top of all the other blokes and the men just thought Weary was it. When Weary was around everyone with our mob felt that we were safe. That and we if Weary wasn't

28:00 around for awhile and he come back, they'd say "Ooh Weary's back, we're right. Weary's back." He may have shot down the river you know in the when we were over in on the Kwai, River Kwai, or the Kwai Noi and that was it.

So I'll take you back to him shaving and the reconnaissance plane's just go gone overhead and now you're in Corinth now in Northern Greece?

In Greece.

28:30 **Yeah and where did you where did you go to with Weary after that?**

We came back to came back to Athens and then we he said to me "Go and see that we've got plenty of petrol. Fill up with petrol" and then we went out to Kifissia, which where the 2/5th AGH was, their hospital,

29:00 and in between times by the way I filled up with petrol and had the boot filled with petrol in four gallon tins and the back seat and the back floor but there was two Kiwis we were told who were on the run and they thieved the lot. So then I had to take off to Kifissia and while the car was bein' refuelled and Weary was talkin'

29:30 to a major who was the quartermaster, next thing I was paged. I was waiting by the way for a fella to bring a letter out so I could give to his wife, because they had to stay with the unit. Bein' a hospital they had to stay behind as a skeleton staff and I said "Yeah mate." He was a Scotsman. I said "Yeah alright Jock. Aussie

30:00 Scotsman and I said "Yeah mate I'll deliver the letter." So I was waiting for that when I got the message return to my car and when I got there Weary said "Now don't panic. I've just been told the Germans are on the way." So no panic, I just went to switch on the car but he already had it running and then I shot straight across, I didn't bother about the thing over the hospital, I shot straight across the

30:30 lawns and onto the main road, which was the ah five cars wide by the way at Kifissia, runnin' along the waterfront, and the sun was down and I was blinded and he knocked my slouch hat off and gave me his cap and pulled the peak down, kept the sun right off my eyes while I was drivin'. Then we got back to the Acropole 'cause he wanted to go in there and pick up some gear

31:00 and there's this provost

This is in Athens? You were back in...

Back to Athens

Yeah.

At the Acropole Hotel and he went in and came out and he was speakin' to the bloke on guard tryin' to get him to "Come on. Come with us" and he's a Pom. He said "No sir." He'd been told to stay there and guard the place and Weary come and passed a few rude remarks about everything the silly b...'d had

31:30 they'd burnt everything and some of those papers he wanted.

Which who what who had burnt everything?

Oh some of the staff of the force headquarters. What they did they took everything down below into the kitchen and set afire to the lot. All the papers. Anything that could be of any interest to the enemy but some of that he wanted because see some of his records. So

32:00 he was a bit cranky about that. Then we took off to Daphne once again. Daphne was the camp that 16th brigade were first in and when I got there, there was the payroll goin' up in smoke. All the 6th Div payroll was just been burnt and by the way I forget to tell you his about the young kids, people "Why? Why

32:30 they burn? Why not give Daphne, make rich?" but what they were doin', they were keepin' it away from the German forces. They didn't want them to get onto the currency and that's why it was goin' up in smoke.

How far were the Germans behind you?

Well

How much time did you have on your hands?

Well we reckon they were the other side of Athens and we, not very far behind, and then we took off and down the coast road

33:00 and I forgot to tell Sean there were horses where the cavalry, the Greek cavalry, had been ordered to shoot their horses and I was runnin' over some of their legs on the narrow guttered coast road goin' down 'round the mountain and then darkness had fallen by the way, by now, and pulled up behind this convoy and

33:30 a voice said, "Is that you Dunlop?" "Yeah." He said, "Oh, the brigadier's up front waiting for you." So Weary said, "Right, around you go." So I went to go around the convoy. Only went a little way and "Wssst" the car again was on a forty five degree angle and the only thing that was holdin' the wheels of the car from goin' was where the blast, the explosion, this bomb had

34:00 exploded and taken half the road and Weary, one of his favourite expressions when anything went wrong was "Oh shit." That's the way he used to say it, "Shit." He said, "You alright Butterworth?" I said, "I'm Okay sir." "Try and get out." Get and all it skid, skid, skid and he got out the car and he's standin'

34:30 there holdin' the car and down below was the rocks and the ocean and I still swear to this day that eventually when you got used to the light, the darkness, down there was two vehicles and in the finish I said, "No sir, if this slips you'll go. No." By this time of course I got me feet on terra firma and I just got one

35:00 then leg tryin' to hit the accelerator but it wouldn't. It was no good and then this voice came along, very English, and said "You'll have to abandon your vehicle and get in the truck at the rear of the convoy" and dear old Weary. Very quietly, always nice, said, "I don't know who you are or what you are

35:30 but will you please f... off" and I thought "He's my boy. He's good. No wonder he's a good bloke" and that's really and truly and they all took off and all you could hear was the ocean below hittin' the wave hittin' the rocks but then in the distance all these Greeks singing, 'cause they'd capitulated early. They'd been the Greeks had pulled out of the war and all been told to "Get paddle your own canoe

36:00 and get back as quick as you can. Get back to wherever you came from," and they came around the corner and quick smart, the car was up. They lifted us bodily onto the lifted the car. So I emptied the glove box. I had Woodbines and Players cigarettes and they got the lot and then on we went.

So what would have happened if you'd have gone with the brigadier? If you'd said, "Yes" and gone joined the brigadier's convoy?

36:30 Well we went. I went to chase it. Right? So eventually it naturally he'd gone and he didn't know about us bein' left behind, the accident, but eventually we caught up and there was much to be said. Weary told me bits and pieces and we were goin' over the Corinth canal and that we were on our way to a place called Navplion, Navplion, and that's where

37:00 eventually we evacuated from and Weary, his job to see that all the wounded got out of anywhere you know. That was his job and there's another story. Now I'm I've got to tell you this, we'd picked up a fella called Livingstone, a doctor, and when we got to Navplion pulled in this yard which was covered I covered over

37:30 with a bit of whatcha call it, net for camouflage

Mm.

And they had ducks and geese and you name it, pigs, and when this bombers came over to bomb the troop ship, this Livingstone went flat on his face and there was two 7th division provosts, Australians, laughin' their heads off and

38:00 I thought "Oh ya weak-kneed bugger." Until I found out later he'd been in the big bombin' when they'd raided Pireus. No wonder the poor devil thought he was gone again. Anyway I looked in the back of the car and there's Weary's tin hat in the back. "Oh, Weary's the old bugger's." So I grabbed it and went out lookin' for him and there he was sitting on the sea wall, sitting on the

38:30 sea wall doin' notes and they were still goin' over the top of 'im. The troop ship, which was on fire. Absolutely blazing and I said "Here you are sir you'll need this." "Go to buggery" he said. "Get out of here before you get hurt" you know.

So who was going over the top? The German planes?

The Germans. Yeah, the Germans. They were

And he's sitting on the wall the sea wall?

He's sitting on the wall goin' the notes after they'd had their conference

39:00 and there he is doin' the bloody notes. I couldn't believe it, really, but he sat there. Marvellous, yeah. No fright and then the next thing it was on. We were, prior to this by the way we were in an olive grove and I had the car and I still had two bottles of beer in the car and I said to Weary

39:30 "Will we torch the car?" Well I didn't use the term "Can I set alight to the car?" He said "No. No you don't know, we might need it. No you better leave the car as it is." So we left the car in the olive grove and that's evacuated and we went onto a what I call a kark, a little boat, timber boat, which was loaded, absolutely loaded

With Aussies? Australians?

With Aussies, all Aussies

40:00 comin' off and we went right alongside of the burnt out bombed out ship who by the way, the skipper of that the pilot who piloted that boat and the harbour master we told was shot themselves for sabotage, right? But we came right alongside of it. You could feel the heat off it

40:30 and the next thing we go into the darkness and there she was, the anti-aircraft cruiser called the Calcutta, which was an English...

That must have been an amazing moment.

Now they're all the nets are down beside, the scumble nets, and up and they said, "Officers, NCOs to the right. Other ranks to the left," and away you went through the black out curtains and down below.

What do you mean,

41:00 **what are the black out curtains can you describe?**

Well they're the so no light could come out of anywhere they're big heavy draped black out curtains. 'Cause naturally if you're at sea or anywhere and somebody showed a bitta light, bombers or anything comin' over they're spotted see? So use black out and so the next thing oh immediately you got coffee. Not I mean cocoa,

41:30 yeah. Dirty big cup of cocoa, beautiful, and then there was bangers and mash. Sausages and potato.

Were you separated from Weary at this point?

Yeah, Weary had gone.

'Cause he'd gone to the other side

and then away 'bang bang bang' they started trying to get us you know. Oh yeah we've been bombed. Now we're down below feedin', helpin' feed up the ammunition

42:00 up to the gun points see

Tape 6

00:41 **Okay Blue if you could just pick up the story**

01:00 **you had just gotten on the British vessel and had your cocoa.**

Mm.

And if you could just continue on with the story.

Yeah. Well then we were just settling down and 'Bang' the we'd been raided by the stingers and what have you and the bombers. They're comin' over and so we all went to assist pushin' up the ammunition up to the guns

01:30 and what have you and then eventually everything quietened down. We were still there and down came the sailors up in the side of the ship and they're saying, "They'll never get this bloody tub. They'll never get this bloody tub" and yeah but they did, by the way, they did. Later on they got it off Crete later on, but we won then and then Weary came on the scene

02:00 and he reckoned, this is Weary's words, that he said he in his opinion it was wide open on the back. There was a and he that's the way he went with his hands but so a bit a space in there and he said she could go but their firepower of course fortunately they were keeping them at bay but eventually it did

go so how it went I don't know. Whether it was torpedoed

02:30 or whatever, but that's about it and

So what sort of nationalities did you have on the vessel heading out of Greece?

All Poms or British. A mixture of Scotch, Welsh, English. Yeah.

No Aussies apart from...

Not to my knowledge.

Yourself?

Not...

Mm.

No Aussies on the crew no, they're all I would say they're all British.

03:00 Every one of them. Quite a few north of England blokes by their accents, which I knew, and I used to talk like it for awhile too, yeah.

So heading out of Greece, where did you anticipate you were gonna end up?

Didn't know. At that stage did not have a clue. Until we pulled into Suda Bay and there we saw the [HMS] York,

03:30 the British cruiser that had been sunk, with just the superstructure sticking out the water and then we were offloaded and disembarked and then marched up to a place called Canea.

And this of course is Crete we're in now?

Yeah we're in Crete, yeah. Yeah we disembarked and in Suda Bay. Mm. Yeah and then up we go to Canea and

04:00 eventually get organised and Weary met up with a few people, you know upper echelon people and also met up with a few reprobates, blokes who were bad bunch of blokes who seein' as we're on the run more or less, being chased by the Germans,

04:30 they didn't want to take any notice of they didn't want discipline. They didn't want to be disciplined by they thought "No" and

Who were these blokes?

Our some of our blokes.

Australian troops?

Yeah, yeah.

So how many Australian troops so these are Australian troops that you'd met up with after you got off the vessel that had already been evacuated?

Yeah oh there were quite a few of them. Yeah. Quite a few. It

05:00 **So they were getting a bit rebellious?**

Oh yeah. A few of them were. They reckoned seein' as the Jerries were chasin' and that was enough. They didn't want to be bugged around by our blokes. A certain few but Weary had reason to pull 'em into gear a bit and which wasn't bad for a medico and

So those chaps responded to Weary?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Oh most of them did,

05:30 yeah. Oh yeah. Oh there was a few bad buggers amongst 'em. They didn't want didn't like discipline at all in comparison to other nationalities, which went on all the time. Yeah.

So what was the plan from there? What was Weary's plan of attack?

Well all of a sudden he was

06:00 told that "You're gonna be shipped out." We were gonna be shipped out I thought at that stage. So away we went back to Suda, Suda Bay and I'm alongside of him and I thought in that time there was a plane, a Sunderland flying boat, in the water and it wasn't 'til much hell of a time

06:30 later that I found out that Weary didn't come out on the flying boat. I told people he did but right, I'm alongside of him and this officer, plenty of red braid, he said, "Dunlop he can't go with you." And Weary said, "I want him to go with me." He said, "Dunlop he can't go with you and that's an that's an order." So

07:00 the next thing Weary slipped me a thousand drachma note, which is a lotta dough, and he said, "Right" and to this lieutenant, Lieutenant McLeod, who by the way was a Geelong Grammar School boy ex-Grammar School boy and he said, "I want you to look after Butterworth until such time as when we get back to the island

07:30 back to the mainland. I'll catch up with him again" and he took off. That was it.

How did that make you feel?

Oh bloody awful, you know but so there we are and we're in the sleepin' in the olive grove alongside of the Suda Bay and fortunately there was a bit of entertainment because the two-storeyed cottage

08:00 in like in a barn and there's some British ah some Greek navy, not navy shipping people, staying there and this Greek was named George. He'd had seventeen children, two wives they had. His first wife had died and he had young George and then he had these beautiful

08:30 daughters and I became friendly. So instead of being with the mob under the olive grove I was near the farm house with him and one of the fellas off the boat, off the ship, which later I came out on the same ship that they were in charge of had been in Yorkshire and knew all about the Yorkshire and Yorkshire people

09:00 and he was quite interesting and I'm drinkin' the cressi, that's the Greek wine, which is bloody awful. It's like vinegar and then George the old man, he was seventy seven by the way, off to he was a Turkish Greek. He wore what we call the poop catchers like and he sent young George up to the mountain village to buy some more cressi.

09:30 So and (UNCLEAR), eggs, so comes back and then they've got this goat in a big boiler boilin' the goat and the girls are makin' cheese, goat's cheese, which is a goat's turn out and they got a sling on it and they keep bashin' to churnin' to make it a

10:00 cheese. So there I am. I got this cressi like vinegar, or worse even, goat's meat and goat's cheese and the next thing a bloke come along, a runner as we call 'em "Butterworth you're wanted immediately." I said, "Why?" He said, "Movement. We're on the move."

10:30 And you wouldn't read about it, when we did move the crew who was stayin' at this place, they were the crew off the boat. I got to tell this story. The first mate was only a young fella and he didn't like me because I was talkin' to the young Greek girl that he liked, yeah? So right, away we go. We board the

11:00 ship. He's one of later on I you realise he's one of Onassis you know the Greek magnate around all the ships? The small ones. A coal burner. So there I am I got goat's cheese, goat's meat, and cressi and my mouth felt like the bottom of a bird cage and out to bunk on top of the coal. Anyway

11:30 I got down, and look up on the bridge, a little bridge, and there's this young fella, the first mate lookin' down and I looked up, smiled at him and he, "Come up." I had the water. He let me wash, which was good, and rinse me mouth out. Now then of course we took off and we had to keep out from Rhodes because we could have been bombed and we went way up,

12:00 way up the coast, way up the other side of Tobruk off the coast and then came back into Alex and then from Alex out to Amiriya. Amiriya camp again and then from Amiriya back to Palestine to a place called Dayr Nizam and that's when

12:30 we were told that we were no longer Anzacs. That Greece and Crete had gone and that was it and as I say listened to that and the roll call and I wasn't on it but so that's when I had the week off down at young Mickey's place

13:00 living like King Farouk. I had a cow sleepin' alongside of me in a bit of a barn there. Real so I got on pretty well with the Arabs.

Where was young Mickey's place?

Down behind Julis camp and I can't tell you the proper name of the village but he's just behind the back of Julis camp. Now when we got back

13:30 from Crete there's a fella called Bill Lockyer. Much older than me. Bill's gone now. He came from Tenterfield and he was bein' sent back to take over the post office, 'cause he was good on the Morse code and what have you and he was in the post office when he joined up and they were formin' the Postal Corps. So he'd been sent back and...

Heading back home?

Sent back, no sent back to Palestine.

14:00 So we arrive there and walk in the canteen and there's young Mickey. "Mr Blue." He always called me 'Mr Blue'. "Mr Blue" and he jumped over the and he grabbed me and he's hugging me "Mr Blue. How's Mr George?" and I'm tellin' "No more no more no more." Tellin' him about the people who'd gone up the desert and what have you and he and I'm tryin' to

14:30 explain that not all had gone but there were I wasn't with them anymore you know and all this and then he screams out "Assan, Assan" and Assan's photograph's in there too and Assan came in, he'd been serving milkshakes, and he came in dashin' in with a tray and the because he thought young Mickey was in strife and he saw me and he dropped the tray. "Mr Blue." You can imagine what all the Aussies were saying, all the diggers

15:00 around me? "Hey, what's all this?" There you are. So I was friendly with...

How young would those two boys have been?

Oh Mickey'd been 'round about fourteen and Assan I'd say'd be well in his thirties and only reading today about where they put pig food in the sheep things for sabotaging these sheep being sent away because the Muslims won't eat anything to do with pig

15:30 and I asked Mickey, we were out in the sergeants' mess, to wash a dish out that had been had bacon in it. "Oh" in horror "Oh Mr Blue la la la la ooh no." I said, "Do the bloody clean up. You're getting paid to do it." "Oh la la la" and one of the blokes screamed out "He won't do that. You should know by now they don't like bacon or" so that was that

16:00 but I got on very well with them all, yeah.

And the first time you had met Mickey was when you had taught him a bit of English?

First time yeah yeah. Yeah. Yeah he he'd taught me a bit of Arabic you know out at.....

So you exchanged a bit of language?

Yeah at (UNCLEAR - SPEAKING IN ARABIC) you know. All the easy stuff. The counting and that and (UNCLEAR) all that and "la"

16:30 was no and "awah" was yes and all those sorta things but...

So what was the next development for you then?

From Julis? Ah from Beit Jirja? Dayr Nizam? Then I was sent with advance corps headquarters on the Syrian campaign.

So.

By the way...

You,

17:00 **heading to Syria out of where were you in Palestine?**

In Dayr Nizam. Dayr Nizam. Now every day or first of all, if you don't mind me telling you this, but I when I come back after a week away. AWL [absent without leave] actually, but my name and this Lieutenant McLeod said, "Oh there you are Butterworth. Private Butterworth. Been looking all over the place for you."

17:30 I said, "Have you sir? Mm." He said, "Colonel Johnson wants to see you." He was the ADMS that and all in the book. So in I go to meet him and he said, "Butterworth we're trying to make contact with Major Dunlop and as soon as we do we'll let you know and send you on to him. Now in between times," he said, "what you've been through, you must have leave."

18:00 I said, "No sir, I don't want leave." I didn't have any money in me pay book or anything. I said, "No I don't want leave." "You must have leave," he said. I said, I'm appealing to him, "No I don't want leave sir." He said, "After what you've been through you've got to have leave. Now go down and see the RSM, Sergeant Major Lee, and tell him to give you a leave pass for a week." "Good sir." So away I go down to Sergeant Major Lee, the RSM,

18:30 into his and he was an in-betweenner. He'd missed the First World War sort of thing and so he he's a little I suppose he'd be about forty then, which is an old man, and he said, "Who are you?" I said, "NX2592 Private Butterworth sir" and he's got the roll in front of him, nominal roll. He said, "You're not there." I said, "Well I should be." I knew I wasn't

19:00 because he said, "What's all this about?" I said, "Well I'm waiting to make contact again with the Major Dunlop," I said, "and Colonel Johnson said to come and see you to give me a week's..." He said, "Dunlop. Weary Dunlop." Now that's the first time I knew that that was his nickname. First time I ever heard it you know. Weary Dunlop. I couldn't believe it. He said, "Can't that big bastard fight and can't he play

19:30 football?" And this and in the finish he said, "A week's not long enough." And I said, "Yeah that's a week'll be long enough." Very nice I was goin' back and see the Gurdis' and the Seratskis and what have you. "No," I said. "No," he said, "look don't worry. If you're in any strife anyway make contact," but 'bang'. So he bung on a few more days on me and the days of the blotting paper

20:00 and he did it too quick and it smeared his signature. So it, now they had an interpreter who was French

and spoke Arabic etcetera and he's goin' on leave for the weekend and he had a Citroen car. So he's driving me in this Citroen into Tel Aviv and we get to a place called Qastina and there's the provosts

20:30 there with a barrier. So the Frenchman pulls out his papers. Blue Butterworth pulls out right, and he's reading the smeared he said, "This is no bloody good is it mate? Hey?" I said, "Well it's dinkum." So into the tent and you could hear what they call the field service telephone

21:00 and he's checking and he come back and he give me me leave pass back. He said, "Righto on your way smart arse." I was thrilled to bits. So there I went into Tel Aviv and I stayed in a Café Olair, which was in Jaffa Road, and I stayed there in accommodation and the lady who owned it also owned the Balalaika Hotel

21:30 on the waterfront in Tel Aviv and she was the a Jewess and she had the most beautiful skin and skin like alibaster, alabaster I should say, and she told me, "I used to live in Essendon." "Oh yeah?" She said, "Yes. I run a brothel in Essendon." Straight out you know and I became friendly with them you know and the lass up in

22:00 the Empire Café, the other one which she owned, and I was on top a the world. Loved everything about it. There I was got away from here, got away from there and really enjoyin' myself. Back meeting people I liked.

So that leave ended up being how long for you? That after

22:30 **you.**

Ten days. I had ten days.

Oh, it was ten days.

Yeah, ten days.

And you lived it up? You lived it up when...?

Oh yeah, well it's all tippie, tippie, tippie and yeah, and went 'round visiting the Gurdis' and the Seratskis and but they didn't have much to eat. You know they were rationed but I used to have some beautiful beetroot soup that Mrs Gurdis used to make.

So at that point you were now familiar

23:00 **with Weary's nickname but...**

Yeah.

But...

First time

Did you know why?

Yeah.

It was? Had the chap explained it to you? Did you ask him?

No, he yeah, he what, no he didn't, but Weary it all came out. At university the boys in the, you know the Dunlop, tyres, so Weary. That's how his nickname came about. Dunlop tyres

23:30 and Weary. Weary, tyres, Weary. Dunlop, Weary, and that's how he got his nickname at uni. That's how it all came about and it stayed with him 'til the day he died.

When did you actually have that explained to you?

Oh not long afterwards. Not long I went to people afterwards and yeah.

So Blue, there you were. You'd finished that ten days living it up. You were feeling pretty good about

24:00 **things.**

Yeah.

What happened from there?

Right. Then we were informed that we were goin' up advance party on the Syrian campaign, which we got to Nazareth, which is still in Palestine, and we were livin' in the olive groves next door to a kibbutz. Now the

24:30 officer in charge there was an old First World War digger who'd been in the Camel Corps and naturally he'd been in Palestine, that area, and he spoke fluent Arabic. So and he was livin' in a tent, a bell tent, and I used to go up to him every day and say "Any word from Major Dunlop Sir?"

- 25:00 "No. I've told you. We'll let you know when we hear from Major Dunlop." "Good." Then I got this he never if he'd a woke up he'd a cut my throat with his cut throat razor. I used to wait like this. The bell tent, you know a bell tent? With a pole in the middle? And a little wall that but he used to have a nail on the tent pole and the army issue
- 25:30 steel mirror and I used to wait until he'd lathered up and just about when he was gonna with a cut throat I used to put me foot over the thing and salute him and say "Any word from Major Dunlop sir?" "I've told you Butterworth. I'll let you know" and then we moved out of the olive grove and we went into Nazareth proper.

What had what was the group that you were moving around with?

- 26:00 **How many...**

1st.

How many men?

1st Aust Corps. Oh it'd be about twenty. All corps headquarters crowd and the people who won the war. They'd told you that they without Aust Corps it didn't matter what you were but the men behind the wheel you know the Australian, the Aust Corps men oh yeah and I didn't like them. 'Cause I'd been with the men prior you know the infantry.

- 26:30 Anyway I got into this place and every day I'd still go in there and the next thing a runner came along and said, "Private Butterworth. You're wanted in the orderly room immediately." I said, "What's it all about?" "Oh," he said, "Something about a bloody movement or something. "You beauty." So in I went and I said, "What's all this sir?" "Righto Butterworth," he said, "We've got word
- 27:00 for you about Major Dunlop and here's a movement order." I said, "Ah what about rations sir?" "Oh well," he said, "the quarter, see the quarter master. He'll fix you up with those." I said, "Oh by the way. Pay." He said, "Well there's the pay sergeant." I said, "I've got one pound in my pay book." So I got the quid
- 27:30 and I said, "What about transport sir?" He said, "There's private public transport." I said, "Sir I am not allowed to travel on public transport with side arms, even not even a rifle." I said, "I'm sorry but," 'cause I knew King's Rules and Regulations. When Wally was RSM I used to read his manual
- 28:00 you see. Anyway, "Right." So he said, "Sergeant go and see the transport sergeant and get him fixed up with fifteen hundred weight Morris to take Butterworth into Haifa to the RTO [railway transport officer]" that's the rail train officer where you had to get your tickets and what have you. So when I arrived there he just shunned me off. I got off and I thought "Cripes I'm gonna have a drink." So I went in and we weren't supposed to drink whiskey on the ranks. You weren't supposed
- 28:30 to. In I went and I got a whiskey. I had another whiskey. I hadn't been to see the RTO and I said, "Christ. Where you gonna sleep tonight?" So I said, "Hey mate where's the provosts around here?" He said, "The Poms? The red caps? They're up at Mount Carmel." "Oh." So out I go, two whiskeys and happy as Larry and full pack, rifle
- 29:00 and I'm walkin' up and down. This truck comin' towards me and I stop the sergeant. Broad Yorkshireman too. He jumped out. "Hey what the f'in hell's all this about?" I said, "Well I'm not a spy." I had me movement orders. "On the way to see Major, pick up Major Dunlop. Officer in charge of me, Private M Butterworth" see, on the movement order. He said, "What?" I said, "Can you give me a bed for the night?"
- 29:30 "Alright lad." He said, "Hey Ginger," he's the red-headed driver, "drop us off. Take him back. Take him back" he said, "see the cook and tell the cook to see he's up at five thirty. See that he gets bed, boards and palliasse to sleep on and then bring him back." So I went back and joined them and we went into a restaurant
- 30:00 which was a Greek Jew. Now this provosts had been over in Greece and Crete and we're havin' this I said, "Hey sergeant, I've got no money to pay for this." He said, "Bloody money?" He said, "You don't want money lad. We're not paying for it either." So, that's honest. So then eventually...

Blue can you just remind us what provosts are?

Police. Yeah.

Sorry, continue.

Yeah, the police. Yeah, the army

- 30:30 police but the British provosts, the red caps they call 'em, they're more severe than the Australian blokes. I mean the Aussie blokes were they were there were some so yeah there were, but the dinki di ooh red cap the Pommie provosts they were really a bad lot. Anyway we done that and then he said "Righto. Now" he said "I've got to go and clean out the brothels."
- 31:00 So in we go and you wouldn't read about it, there's Lily the Polish girl. "Blue." Honest. He said "Bloody

hell." I said "Lily what are you doin' here?" She said "My business. It's mine." She owned it. She was the madam. So she'd gone up the scale in eighteen months.

31:30 So then, right, back I go. There's all eighteen foot ceilings. All ceramic tiled and you only had to whisper and your voice came back at you, you know? So there's me bed boards in the corner. Palliasse. Blanket

Sorry what? Your bed and...?

Palliasse. That's a mattress. Made out of straw. There's

32:00 straw in it you know. So, undress no 'jamas and I lay down. The next thing I can feel things on me and here's a big cord for the light switch. I hit it and I kid you not, there was cockroaches as big as that. Bloody hell. Ooh, yeah? They shot they go like

32:30 hell you know. Pull the light off and they're on again. So I just slept with the light on and then sure enough "Come on. Rise and shine." Went and had bacon and egg and all the rest of it then taken down to the Misir station and I got the tickets there to go down to El Kantara East

33:00 and then El Kantara West and then down to Alexandria. The train went to Gaza. Had to go through Gaza and we pulled in at Gaza station and these two blokes, one's called Van Maradeth who unfortunately had lost his right wing in Bardia and a fella called Catterns, Basil Catterns and their names are in that book, in this book,

33:30 and I went like that. Knocked on the window. They just peered then they boarded the train and we took off and the next thing Maradeth come up and said, "Hey come on. You'd better come with us, sit with us" and it was just like civilian time. They had beer on the train and everything. So I got ooh didn't cost me anything. They were shouting. Been well laced, well paid

34:00 and they were goin' to Cairo. They were goin' to a school and I was goin' to Alexandria. So we got to a place called Zig Zag and that's where the train went to Alex and I had to change and wait and get a train. That's the way to Cairo and I had to go down there to Alex. So right, I flog my bed gear. I sell my gear to this station master to get a quid,

34:30 which was a very bad thing to do. Anyway I'm on the train. I sat on the train in the dark for starters and eventually the train started and then people started to get on the train who'd evacuated from their places because you were told that the suburbs of Alex and everything was gonna be bombed and believe you they had everything. They had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s you name it, bringin' it on the train

35:00 and I'm sitting there on a long seat and I had a bint on this side, that's a girl, and I had a bint on that side and I'm full marching order. I've got all me gear, me rifle and everything and they start in their own lingo havin' a shot about me and one girl all of a sudden didn't like what this girl had said, and she swung a left, right in front of me, and as she did

35:30 my KD, which is your slouch hat, KDs the army term, shot off. So there I am, a soldier without head gear. So I arrive in at Alex and I went to this soldiers' club and booked in and then I thought "I'd better go and see the pay

36:00 master. See if I can get a few bob" and he said, "Soldier where are you from?" I said, "I'm in transit. I'm not a bloody spy mate" and I showed him all he said, "But do you realise you shouldn't be here? All movement's been cancelled and you should be in camp." "Oh" I said, "I didn't know that, did I?" He said, "Anyway we can't give you any pay. It wouldn't matter how much you had in there" he said, "You can't

36:30 get paid. You've got to return." So I'm there and I'm window gazing. No head gear. Soldier and a fella come and tapped me on the shoulder and I turned around and it's a tall English gentleman, soldier. He's a major and he had on his arm DPM, district provosts marshal. He's a British red cap

37:00 charge of and this 7th Divvie [Division] provosts had just arrived more or less had been long over there. They were over in Greece with us for awhile but, "Lance Corporal come over here. Take this soldier up to your headquarters. Have him investigated." See? So up we go. There's this lieutenant on a havin' a

37:30 siesta and the corporal told him who I was, the lance corporal, where I'd been. He said "What are you doin' here?" And I pitched him a good old yarn about I thought this twerp had only been out five minutes. I was an old veteran you see. He said, "Where's your gear?" I said, "Well I've lost my hat. It's on a railway line." He said, "And were are you stayin'?" I said, "'Round the soldiers' club." He said, "Corporal, take him 'round the soldiers'

38:00 club. Don't let your eyes off him. Take him up to the station to the RTO and see that he gets the train to take him to Amiriya." So that's when I got to Amiriya and I said "Excuse me sir. Where is Major Dunlop?" He said, "Don't you know?" I said, "No, where is he?" He says, "He's in Tobruk." I said, "Oh shit. Don't tell me I got to go back there again," you know and that was it. So that was the start

38:30 of the movement and I was treated like everything, once again I've put into a tent on me lonesome. Bed boards, palliasse and no kit. So I got everything I'd lost in transit. So I was decked out with everything again.

So then you were off to Tobruk?

After awhile, yeah.

After how long?

39:00 About two weeks. Ah not no, eight or nine days, yeah.

The delay was due to? Why was it

Getting up there. Transport. Yeah. Yeah.

So once the transport was organised for you

Ship, yeah.

Can you

Yeah.

Take us through arriving in Tobruk?

Well I always thought that I went on the [HMAS] Vendetta but I'm not certain, not certain, but I do know when I arrived there I had to go into a

39:30 camp and lo and behold, a holding camp as they called it, and when I got there there's this major out of my mob 'cause we'd left him behind in Tobruk. This is the Second World War veteran, the First World War veteran, Major Bill Adams who didn't like Pommies. I won't go into all that but he said, "What are you doing here?"

40:00 You should be over in Crete." I said, "I got away from Crete." "How did you get away?" Treated me like a I said "Well I met a Major Dunlop and now I'm his batman and we got separated. I'm just coming back to join him. He's with the CCS." So that's that. So I shot off and...

When exactly

40:30 **was it that you did get back to Tobruk? What was the date at that stage?**

Oh, a diff

'Round about. 'Round about.

A different Tobruk to what I'd left.

Now the when what was the date?

Oh the date?

What time of year was it?

Oh June. Yeah, early June. It was June. In June, yeah.

So and what was the state of affairs generally at Tobruk at that stage?

Oh well, grim 'cause it's in siege. They were surrounded

41:00 by and then

So it was pretty much the height of the siege?

Oh yes and also of course the CCS was right under forty feet of rock and that's where they used to bring the badly wounded and put them in there.

The CCS?

Casualty clearing station and then we used to ship them out, take them out on a barge

41:30 at dark and load 'em onto the Vendetta or the [HMAS] Waterhen. What they call the spud run. The Australian destroyers used to take the wounded out. We'd whip 'em out of battle and take 'em away to the end of the jetty, away out, and say goodbye to them and hope for the best you know and of course they had to

42:00 get out before well before dawn.

Tape 7

00:39 **Okay Blue, can you just tell us the story of your reunion with Weary?**

My...?

Tell us the story of your about the reunion with Weary.

What, after the war or no...

Just where we were. You were heading towards Tobruk.

Oh yes.

And you

01:00 **and your reunion with Weary.**

Oh yes, yeah. Oh right, yes. Anyway I arrived at this, right, I arrived at the CCS and I reported and, "Where did you meet that he's mad the bastard. He's got no nerve." I said, "Listen mate. I could have pulled out in Amiriya if I wanted but the reason I'm here he's such a good bloke." I said, "I went through a few

01:30 experiences with him," I said, "and that's why I came." I said, "I could have pulled out. I could have left and bailed out and said oh bugger it, I'm not goin' up there again" and I said, "Anyway where is, where is he at the moment?" They said, "He's up the hospital operating." I said, "What time will he get back?" They said, "Oh about dusk." "Oh." So I'm at dusk I'm out on the wharf and I see him walkin' along.

02:00 I up to him, saluted him, said, "How are you?" He said, "How the bloody hell how did you get here?" After all that you know I'd been given and I explained to him and that was it. So and you tell that story by the way I was told many times how he went to uni and he lectured and he always talked about Blue Butterworth and how he'd left me

02:30 there. He said goodbye to me more or less and in Crete and I caught him up in Tobruk. Caught up with him in Tobruk.

That must have been an amazing.

It was.

Amazing moment for both of you.

Yes, yeah. Yeah.

Can you just describe how you were feeling and

Well he couldn't believe it. He said, "Bloody," it took him he had to negotiate to this and to that to get up there you know and tell a few porky pies and but what took part, he actually

03:00 he got sick of administration and he wanted to get back on the tools again. He wanted to become a surgeon again and start operating and that's why he decided to take the CCS job on and get back on the tools and that was it. So anyway it was quite good and it well it, it cemented the friendship. Yeah. Yeah,

03:30 and I can remember we were what they call Bardia Bill, the original big gun the Italians had used to come out and fire and then they got a second one, Bardia Bill, and I'm walking with him alongside of him and they let drive and the shell, just prior to dusk, and you hear and I'm ready to go

04:00 down and he just kept walking and I had to keep walking too. So then I realised, "No, if I'm alongside of you mate, I'm right," and that's the way it was. He had he I think he quoted that in the book somewhere where people who said he had no nerve, he had nerve but it didn't get him like most people you know. You nothing seemed

04:30 to affect him and even reading about his football days and all that you know and which I did. Anyway he

So you were back in Tobruk and you became Weary's batman immediately as soon as you were re you reunited?

Back in Tobruk, yeah. Yeah. It the there's no cleaning of boots or anything dear you know. Oh no.

So what did you do for Weary as the batman there?

Oh well I

05:00 oh Weary, I used to have to clean his boots and polish his and wash, do his washing and that, but believe you me Blue Butterworth had a batman whenever even with Wally Delves I had another batman looking after me. Oh yeah. I wasn't worth a squid as a batman really but see what in Tobruk I was helpin'

05:30 with the wounded and that and as I just quoted how we used to take out the wounded, so I wasn't doing any batman's work there, and also up on the railway. I was workin' out on the hammer and tap and then when cholera came in I was lookin' after cholera.

You mean when people got cholera?

Oh yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah. That

Can you tell us a little, this is in Tobruk?

- 06:00 Not not in Tobruk dear, sorry. They got the cholera over in the railway, over in Thailand. Sorry about that. Yeah. Oh yeah but so I wasn't a they had elderly people blokes 'round the forty mark a couple of them in camp lookin' after any but Weary used to look after himself most of the time. He didn't have you know there's he wasn't worried about being
- 06:30 polished or anything.
- So how long were you and Weary in Tobruk before you left to come back? What, you thought you were gonna come back home then didn't you?**
- Oh yeah. No not in no we left Tobruk and went back to Palestine. Egypt and Palestine oh no but I was only in Tobruk approximately four weeks, if that, but I still became a Rat of Tobruk. So Weary and I very few can say that they've been
- 07:00 POW Japanese and Rats of Tobruk and '39ers too. Got the '39 medal.
- So why did you and Weary become Rats of Tobruk? Because you were there?**
- Why did...?
- Why did you you're saying that you became a Rat of Tobruk.**
- Yeah well.
- Why was that?**
- Well they call them the Rats, the Tobruk veterans became called the Rats of Tobruk and so,
- 07:30 right, because of Weary and I bein' there we also became Rats of Tobruk because we were there during the siege of Tobruk and there you are and as I say there are very few who were Rats of Tobruk and POWs with the Japanese.
- So you after Tobruk you left with Weary and you headed back to Palestine?**
- Yes. Left we left we shipped out on the Hero,
- 08:00 a British destroyer, which did forty two knots. He was just like a speed boat comin' out and lo and behold there's a bloke on the on board the ship that Weary had played rugby with and yeah. So Weary was standin' astern there and just floating down and then we got back to Alex and then from Alexandria we went up back to Palestine.
- 08:30 Yeah. So that was the start all over again of my Palestine days. Yeah.
- And so what happened in Palestine? Were you preparing to leave in Palestine? Where did you think you were going next once you'd arrived in Palestine?**
- Well no, went to when we got out of Tobruk, Weary and I, then we went back to Palestine and then
- 09:00 Weary wanted to form what he called a first operating unit and the idea was to assemble these two tents quick smart and get close to the fighting and to be able to attend the wounded instead of the wounded havin' to be transferred away from the front line because
- 09:30 in movement, in ambulance movement and what have you a lot of them died before they could get looked after properly and his that was his baby and really he was looking forward to that then all of a sudden he was told that we were bein' shipped out. We were bein' moved and he was very disappointed.
- How far had he got with his plans to establish...**
- Oh he well... we were working we
- 10:00 were all we had it right down to a fine art you know that we could get in there in x amount of minutes, have a bloke on the table operated on.
- Whereabouts were you planning to do to try this first?**
- Well wherever the fighting was going to be, that's where the mobile operating units were going to be, but that was Weary's baby. He got we went down to Cairo and saw ooh General Morshead, who was a friend
- 10:30 of Weary's, and he got it all organised and permission and got the gear and yep and then all of a sudden we movement. Movement order.
- And where was the movement order to?**
- We wound up in Java but first of all we went to Ousthaven in Sumatra up the Sunda Straits. Now that was on the 15th of February,
- 11:00 which was a Sunday, and the day that it came over where Singapore fell. So it wasn't a very nice feeling for all of us to think that we were heading somewhere and Singapore had fallen.

What boat were you what ship had you travelled on from the Middle East?

I was on the Orcades. I went abroad on the Orford and I came back to Java on the Orcades.

And Weary was on the ship with you then?

Oh yeah. Yeah, oh yeah.

How many

11:30 **troops were on the ship? How many Aussie Australian troops were on that ship the ship coming back?**

Over a thousand. Over a thousand. Yeah. They called it the Dunlop Thousand, yeah.

And where did you think you were going back to?

Well believe it or not the blokes were the compass they had it out and where was it pointing and whatever and said "Oh we we're heading back to Australia." Oh yeah but then when we were in Java, first of all let me tell you that when we did

12:00 arrive in we went to Sumatra and then back to Sumatra to Tanjung Priok, the harbour of Bandoeng, of Batavia. "Right. On with your gear. Disembark." Disembarked. Next thing "Back with your gear. Get your gear on again. Embark" and three times we got on and off that ship. We should

12:30 have never have got off because we were just a present for Queen Wilhelmina, then the Dutch queen. We were supposed to be goin' there to form a second line of defence you know with the when Singapore had fallen but hog wash. So consequently we were just wasted. We had the blokes get out and guard the aerodrome and

13:00 then a bit of fighting went on and then the Japanese took over and that was it.

Did you lose anyone in your the thousand Weary troops that had come back from the Middle East? When...

Oh yeah.

When you were fighting in Java, did you lose any of your men?

Not fighting in Java. No, no. No we didn't lose anybody there but we lost a few of our boys and their names are in there with the cholera up on the railway.

That was later on.

Later on, yeah but no

13:30 one no one in Java. We did lose a few of the 2/2nd Pioneers and 2/3rd Machine Gunners and a few other odd bods but none of the unit.

Can you tell me it must have it must have felt...

Blue, what kind of news on the ship back to the Pacific, what kind of news had you heard about the way the war had turned?

14:00 Well we didn't know much about it at that stage but when we did arrive in Java there was Wavell was on the wharf, General Wavell. General Burston. General ooh there was four generals, a couple of brigadiers on the wharf, they're in conference, and naturally Ginger Burston, who

14:30 was a friend of Weary's, eventually said to him that, "Weary I'm leaving and I'm afraid I don't know what happens to you people but would you like me to send a letter take a letter back to Helen," who he'd been engaged to by proxy for many years and Weary did. He sent a letter back with him and then Weary

15:00 told me that the Japs were gonna take over and on March the 8th is the day that the Dutch admiral, who was in charge, surrendered and that was the end of the section. From then on we became POWs.

So I okay I'll just if you could take give us

15:30 **I'll just try and exactly locate where we are and when these events happened.**

Yeah we're in...

So you were in Java and you fought and this was before you'd surrendered and then you moved up to Singapore.

Well I wasn't fighting there no. We were in Bandoeng. Bandoeng, which was a ladies' college for top notch all the Dutch top officials etcetera, their daughters, beautiful anyway

16:00 it became the first allied general hospital. It was called the college was called the Crystalec Lyceum and we took over. We only had a basketful of kit to start with.

This is in Java?

In Java. In Bandoeng, western Java. A lovely spot. Very nice when the Dutch people were there and then when we, the Nips said, "Right,

16:30 you're out. You've been pushed out," and they gave Weary no time at all. We were supposed to clear out. Get out. Leave the hospital and Weary negotiated for a little while longer because we had blokes without eyes and limbs and what have you and then eventually they said, "Right this is it. Out we go," and

17:00 we carried as much gear as we possibly could and we went into a civilian prison.

In...

Which was for bad boys and it's all in there. You've got the name, the photograph of it and there was five hundred POWs in an area where not enough to cut a swing a cat around sorta thing.

Okay I'll just for the record, so you were you went to a civilian prisoner of war camp

17:30 **in and what was...**

No, no just a civilian prison. It was just a civilian then civilian prison and we were pushed in there and along with these Dutch people also, POWs, and it was absolute chaos you know and then we moved from there to a place called Chu Mai and then from Chu Mai

18:00 we went back to Bandoeng again into a big camp where the Dutch troops had been there for years with all the Javanese over there, actually Dutch instructors with all the Javanese personnel you know using soldiers and that's where we were when we then we were told we were leaving there and we went down to a place called Makasura, which was just out of Batavia,

18:30 in a olive grove but the a coconut grove rather, sorry, with the coconuts trees growing through the ceilings the roof of the attap. Roofs all made out of leaves what have you and we were there and then the next thing we've been moved again and taken to Tanjong Priok

19:00 and board this Byoki Maru, which was "sick ship" we called it and travelled over to Singapore.

What did you call it? A sick ship?

A sick ship, yeah. It... And "Takusan" is "very" so you used to tell the Jap when you, "Speedo bunjo," which was quick to the toilet "Takusan byoki", "be very

19:30 sick" and the ship was called the Byoki. Christened it the Byoki Maru. It was a very sick ship I tell you. When we were down there we just bolted down in the ship. Shocking. Shocking conditions and then arrived in Singapore.

So the Japanese had... who had put you in the boat?

Oh yeah.

The Japanese had

Oh yeah the Japs had. Yeah they put us there and before we

20:00 before we boarded by the way, they used to be there with a mask on and a spray, spraying us. Oh yeah. Oh a dreadful feeling.

Can you talk about the actual surrender. The events surrounding it and what actually happened when you surrendered with Weary?

Well very all we knew we were getting this these wounded into the hospital and then started

20:30 to realise that things weren't going too hot for us. That we were being beaten again and the little air force that we did have over there unfortunately they'd go up there to try and fight against the Zeros, which was the latest planes that the Nips had, and they were just and knockin' hell out of our blokes and so we knew the it wouldn't be long before the

21:00 war'd be over and we'd be losing but in our back in Bandoeng in the hospital of course we didn't go through what the blokes were out there fighting and trying to they were retreating most of the time. They weren't advancing 'cause there were too many of them. Too many Nips. There were just thousands of them you know and they arrived. Now I don't know whether you've heard, we had the Perth, the HMAS

21:30 Perth and then we had the big Yankee cruiser, the [USS] Houston, and they both went down fighting and so we had all those survivors POW and we were beaten everywhere. We were just we had no chance. That was it. So it was a very bad feeling you know. We all felt down but we were told,

22:00 Weary told us all, "If you want to go, go" but we had to keep a skeleton staff lookin' after the wounded but, "If you want to go, those who want to leave just go but your chances are very remote of gettin'

away."

Did anyone leave?

No. Not to a man. Everybody no, they all wanted to stay with Weary. Yeah. No nobody left.

22:30 No one and that was it. So next thing we were we told "You're POWs as from the 8th of March."

So who told you that you were POWs?

The well Weary informed us that we were "Now you are now considered POWs," but the Dutch admiral who was in charge he called upon all the Australian troops and the British,

23:00 what was his name, not Percival. I forget now but that this was it. "The number's up and you've got to surrender," and that's what took part and then off we go and we had some beautiful what they call helpers, like VADs, Voluntary Aid Detachment we call 'em in Australia, but they were helpers over there and they were the wives of and daughters of some of the Dutch

23:30 top notch government officials. Wonderful people who came in to look after the wounded and but

And so you left the wounded there or did...?

Oh yes. Yeah, yeah. Yeah they were left and that was it and we've got a bloke arrived there with his eyes both his arms were missing. He's a very known personality. He's still alive in England. Fella by the name of Bill Griffiths

24:00 and poor old Bill, he arrived and he looked like his leg was gonna go and I in the unit and with Weary I got away with murder. I could go anywhere and I used to be in the operating theatre. First of all he said, "Right you'll be first time," he said, "you want to stay you won't like it." I got a little bit but after that

24:30 I got that way nothing hurt me at all. I could watch anything and this fella arrived in there with both his arms blown, his leg, looked like he was gonna lose it. Major Moon, he was in civvie life was a gynaecologist from North Sydney and Major Ewen Collette, a physician and a top bloke.

25:00 A nickname by the name of The Gangster call him and they've got Bill on the table, Bill Griffiths, and the little boy's anaesthetic machine is just little bladder just moving and Major Collett said to me, "You know what? It's so silly. This poor fellow. If he should survive this, no future."

25:30 In between times I should have told you, but Major Moon said, "Ewen", Ewen Collette. He said, "Ewen, looks like we'll have to take them out. Both his eyes." And as soon as he said that I took off looking for Weary and as it turned out Weary was in the foyer of the school. The Crystalec Lyceum and I said, "Chief, they're gonna take Bill's eyes out."

26:00 And he galloped in there and he said, "Arthur," Arthur Moon, "you certain?" He said, "Look for yourself they're all," shrapnel right through all his eyes you know. So they took out Bill's eyes. So Weary titivated up his arms and the leg. By the way I said, "Major," to Ewen Collette, I said, "Why can't you?" He said, "All we've got to do is go like that and chop the

26:30 oxygen off." Now this is honest Indian what I'm tellin' you. He said, I said, "Well why don't you?" He said, "No, not allowed." I said, "Well if you look that way sir," I said, "I can," 'cause he'd said, "This boy's got no future if he gets back. He'll go to a place called St Dunstan's," which is the blind institute in England. Well known. Right. Bill's still alive today dear.

And how's he doing?

Oh he got the

27:00 OBE [Order of the British Empire]. He did this. He topped in disabled sports. Oh Queen, he's been everywhere. Top bloke. I spoke I was speakin' to him about six months ago on the phone.

And his eyesight? He's still he's still blind is he?

Oh yeah. He arms and when he puts artificial arms on when he's out and he's always doo dahed, Alice, his second wife, doo dahed up. He looks the part.

What did he get the OBE for? What did he get the OBE for?

27:30 Oh well for being he goes around lecturing and all the rest of it. He's oh yeah.

I just want to ask you a question. When you were come about your journey back and the emotions that were going through your through you at that time. I mean you'd been in the Middle East fighting the war over there but the Japanese had been advancing towards Australia...

Mm.

And you'd been defending your country

28:00 **you'd been defending Australia over in Europe. How did you and the blokes feel about that?**

The fact that you'd kind of missed the large part of the war over this side of the globe?

Yeah well it's the a lot of 'em didn't. See we'd been told that Curtin, the prime minister, had been havin' an argument a blue with Churchill that he wanted us

28:30 back in Australia. He wanted Australian troops back in Australia to defend New Guinea against New Guinea and all the rest of it and the spoke was put into the wheel, "No, no they're going to Java." So a lot of them when we found out of course were very upset you know but that was it. I mean we were in the army and we had to do as we were told and what else can you do?

29:00 You got 'specially the lower ranks. You just did what you were told. Under the higher blokes of course but oh yeah but seeing what funny that and that's why I say when we arrived in Changi we were veterans. I mean I'd been abroad I'd been over there for eighteen months you know and when we arrived in Changi "Oh."

29:30 They were all done up. Sam Browns. Brylcreamed hair.

This is the British soldiers?

No fear. The Aussie boys too. Oh yeah. Yeah and we were christened the Java Rabble because our hair was that if it got longer than that the Nip, "Oh bugaroo" they'd say and pull it. Try and, "Bugaroo".

Who would say that? Who would say...?

The Nips. The Japanese soldier. The guards.

Telling you to cut your hair?

30:00 Oh yes. We had so much notice to cut our hair so you had every bloke doin' it you know. Runnin' the clippers the old fashioned clippers and anyway then also on top of all that we had second hand Dutch uniforms on, which were all green, and some of us had sneakers on and we looked a dreadful lookin' bunch I admit it

30:30 when you compared us with the Brylcream and the Sam Browns and pork pie hats, which were South African Red Cross and good boots and that's when we came across this officer called Blackjack Callaghan and that's another story but so he christens the Java Rabble because we one crowd failed to

31:00 salute him you know and he didn't like that. I gotta be careful because when this comes over some blokes are gonna say "The b..., knockin' us" but we were veterans and yet with all due respects to the 8th Divvie, they did a good job but we'd already done a good job. We'd been against the Jerries and the French, the Vichy French, and all that you know and the Italians.

31:30 We were veterans and they were all new chumps. See some of those poor buggers, excuse the lingo, some of those poor fellows only just arrived over there in Selarang in Changi, in Singapore I should say, and the war they're straight into it and over, five minutes. No training. Practically no training at all. Poor devils.

Did you feel the 8th Division in Changi...

32:00 Yeah.

Gave you as veterans of Tobruk and of the Middle of the war in the Middle Eastern Europe do you think they gave you the respect that you...

No.

That you felt you deserved?

No, no. They didn't. No, no fear. No. Oh no, and the there's still too much goes on even today. I'm gonna say it. That the 8th Divvie still think that they're JCs [Jesus Christs] of the you know they've got the idea that oh they won the war.

32:30 Which is all wrong you know and we as I said, when we arrived in Changi hair cut, shave, old second hand uniforms, Dutch uniforms. No shoes. The South Africans' Red South African Red Cross had been over there and left boots and pork pie hats you know.

33:00 They wouldn't give us any. Rice polishings, which is the husk off rice, which is even better than the rice itself for Vitamin B, and he said "Oh no. You've got enough money to buy your own rice polishings" and there. So that was Blackjack.

33:30 Blackjack Callaghan and I don't think they'll put this through but that actually happened. Weary, when we come back if Weary, there was two persons. Weary could have put the straight underneath them by just saying what they did to us trying to treat it as you know not doing the right thing as senior officers and

34:00 he could have had those drummed out of the army.

What else did they do?

Oh didn't want to forfeit the money that they had in favour to help you know so that we could get buy rations and buy this and that and they wanted to hold onto x amounts of guilders when we were in Java.

So there were all officers from which div, from the 8th?

No, no.

Or they were the...

One officer was with 7th Divvie

34:30 and the other bloke was 8 Divvie and see all the senior officers, the top notches, were all shipped over to Japan. When we arrived in Changi and then the debate was on with Weary and Blackjack. Blackjack reckoned that Major Dunlop,

35:00 who actually was made a temporary colonel by Blackburn, the brigadier, before he left Changi, he said that, "You are a non-combatant officer and therefore you should not be in charge of combatant people. Who's your next in charge?" and the next in charge combatant, the senior, was a Major Werne, Bill Werne. Poor old Bill's gone now too and so they fronted

35:30 like an ordinary time as if the war was still that we were still on top. They had to go to the orderly room and front him you know as if everything was normal and Bill Werne told him. He said, "No, no. I'm satisfied bein' under the command of Major Dunlop."

'Cause that's what all the blokes all you men wanted?

Yeah of course exactly, and then

36:00 what's his name was there, Air Vice Maltby... Vice yeah... Air Vice Marshal Maltby, he was a Pom, Brigadier Blackburn they came to see Weary before then they were bein' shipped the next day over to Japan and Weary told

36:30 the brigadier all about this Blackjack and he said well that as long as the thousand Dunlop force were together that he should remain he, Dunlop, remain in charge.

What was Changi like?

Well I've got to say as far as we're concerned Changi was a convalescent depot. Changi

37:00 was easy. There might have been some rough patches there but to us, Changi was easy compared with the railway and poor devils who later on of course Sandakan, Changi was North. It was like a convalescent depot, yeah.

Is that what you felt at the time or is that upon reflection?

Well when we got there we see all these polished soldiers just as if it was normal days, normal war time, you know.

37:30 We couldn't believe it and let me tell you this, that when we left Singapore there was crates of good boots that they wouldn't give us left on the Singapore railway station.

Who wouldn't give those boots to you?

Blackjack and his mob. Mm.

These were the other Australian...

Yeah.

Yeah.

Mhm. Oh yeah. A bit of sour grapes I tell you. Yeah. Yeah the...

38:00 **Can you tell your can you or just begin to tell us how you left Changi like...**

When we left Changi?

When was it decided that you were leaving?

Oh

And how you were leaving?

Little after only about fourteen days all told we were there. We were pushed out, sent up, we went, we boarded these rice trucks and thirty in one. We were three days goin' up to

38:30 Bampong.

Was there any windows in the trucks?

No windows. Oh they had the doors, that's all. You used to take turns to get near the door to relieve yourself. Shocking and so many of our blokes went put their feet out and the bridges are only that far off the stanchions on the other side. Bang, bang, bang. Hell of a lot of

39:00 casualties with our feet and legs bein' knocked. Oh yeah.

What kind of physical condition were you in at that stage?

Oh well we were just sweating and the rice that we had was goin' sour. Eventually these steam trains naturally had to get water on board. So when they stopped for water that's when we'd all get out and try and get water and splash it and

39:30 try and relax. Oh yeah. They were bad old days.

Were you did you have much contact with the Japanese then or were the allied troops still in control of you?

Very, very little. The eventually our guards were Koreans and they were worse than the average Nip.

Why?

Because they were the lowest of the

40:00 Japanese army. They considered we, being POWs, we were lower than those than they but what took part, if a soldier in the Japanese army even if you'd been in a day longer than the other bloke you were senior and I've seen them, they used to knock hell out of one another and then the poor old Koreans he used to really cop it and as soon as he copped it, then we copped it

40:30 'cause we were lower than they were and oh yes there's hell to pay there. We despised the Koreans and there's a thing in there a bloke called 'The Lizard' who came out and met caught up with Weary in Canberra and apologised because he was an absolute bastard, The Lizard and...

Why was he called 'The Lizard'?

41:00 Just his features. We had a name for all these their features. You got we'd give them all a name you know. Bill the bastard and The Lizard, and oh Steven Fetchit. These are old actors that you wouldn't know and Edna May Oliver and these are all the type of people you'd you put a name to them you know. Their features and what have you. Oh yeah.

Tape 8

00:41 **Alright Blue. When you were first when you first realised that you were in the hands of the Japanese**

Mm.

How did that make you feel? Did you feel yeah what were your emotions?

01:00 Shocking. You just felt that fancy being collared by these slant-eyed beasts. That's exactly the feeling. That's the way I felt. Most of us did. We couldn't believe it that these little apes were taking over. That we'd been knocked off by them you know we couldn't imagine it at the time.

What was your impression of the Japanese soldiers before just prior

01:30 **to you being under their control?**

Well they're so well-disciplined. Their discipline was fantastic and they were in good nick. Very good nick. They were doing their PT [Physical Training] and you know regularly and that was a ritual with them and...

Had you heard anything about their brutality? That side of their character?

No, no.

Not prior to

Oh well I'd read

02:00 I knew how they'd carried on with the Chinese when the war all that sort of thing but that just 'nother book you know and so...

When was it that you realised you started to appreciate just how cruel they could be and what how did that start to impact on morale?

Well the first ever was when we were leaving the hospital and Weary and I had a long bamboo pole with

02:30 all this gear on with bags and what have you because we wanted to carry as much as we could, medical and books etcetera, and these helpers, these Dutch girls that had been workin' in the hospital as voluntary labour and had to look after the sick and wounded and two of them went to take a photograph of Weary and I and saying goodbye and the Nip just went and 'bang

03:00 bang bang.' You just kicked them where you wouldn't think of anybody who died, and knocked them and belted you know and that's all I know, "You bastards." That's when I first thought, "Well you're a horrible, horrible people," you know. That's the start of it.

As you got more and more insight into that side of the Japanese,

03:30 **how fearful did you start to get?**

Not so much fearful I must tell you, eventually the Japanese weren't too bad. The engineers, the Jap engineers, they were some of the worst but the Koreans, our guards, they were the worst of the lot. They were bastards. They were villainous. They treated us like dirt you know.

04:00 They were really bad and we were so pleased when they got knocked off you know. They when Korea and Japan split they just got all the Koreans and just put 'em in the trucks and out of this camp we were in at Nakom Paton and just threw 'em out in the street. Paddle your own canoe and we were pleased about that but oh there were some bad ones amongst them. You know going along

04:30 Bill who was blind and no arms etcetera, they wanted to knock him off because he wasn't worth anything. He wasn't working you know and so that's when Weary came into this scene and said, "Right before you get to him you put your bayonet through me," and that and Bill anytime you read anything about Bill

05:00 Griffiths he'll always talk about that or any and that was Weary and the Nips. They were a bad lot of bastards but anyway, I came back.

Was there a what was in your mind at that stage before you just before you were start to start on the just about just before you were about to commence work on the railway,

05:30 **what sense did you have what feeling did you have about how long you were gonna be a POW?**

Oh we didn't. We didn't. All I could tell you this, we were starting to be starved. We the food hardly any food and we were all smokers. We used to smoke and no cigarettes. Tempers got frayed. You'd be waiting

06:00 for the breeze to get the leaves off the trees and roll to smoke leaves and you were smoking banana leaf, any old thing, and some bloke in the queue waiting to get the maccan, get your food and some bloke'd stand outta line and one of his good mates, "Hey you bastard, get back in line" and 'bang' they're starting to knock one another.

06:30 Frayed nerves and Weary stood on parade and there he's standing out six foot four and a half. He said, "Right. We try our best to get things improved to get cigarettes and tobacco but if anybody wants to hit anyone come and see me and have a go at me," and that brought 'em back. That was Weary. I forgot to talk about him. That was Weary.

Blue, let's move to

07:00 **the beginning of the railway experience. So the last time we picked up the story you were on a truck. Now if you could just quickly take us through what happened up to the point where you got to the railway and then could you start to flesh out the beginning of the railway experience.**

Yeah. Well we went to Konyu [Kenyu Rd]. Tamarkan, Konyu and then to Hintok and that's when they started putting us

07:30 on parade to take us out onto the railway and we were split up into certain divisions. To what they call a hammer and tap, that was the drill gangs. There was a number one and number two gangs and then there was the bridge gangs and then you had the labourers who were moving the soil and moving the rocks and they're all different work parties. So when you got out on the track and we used to have to walk five kilometres

08:00 to get to the track first up before eventually we put a ladder over a rock in the mountain and it chopped off a couple of kilometres and I was on the hammer and tap and then cholera broke out and me being with the medical crowd I was co-opted to go in and look after cholera

08:30 and that was it. That was the end of me workin' actually on the railway line.

Can you tell us a little bit about how hard it was being in the hammer and tap gang when you were a part of that?

It was bloody hard. It was the hardest job on the railway, hammer and tap. You were swingin' away and you kicked we kicked off having to do depth and for neat finished, "Speedo, speedo campo, back to camp." So then you got a big

- 09:00 burley bugger, 'bang bang bang bang' and the drill was goin' down quicker. Consequently the Nips said, "Right," and they kept stickin' the centimetres on 'til it finished up in some cases two metres of drilling hole before they could put their shots in, you see, the gelignite and that was the hardest job of the lot in my opinion.
- 09:30 **Can you explain what the process was of doing the hammer and tap work?**
- Yes, well one sat on the drill holding the drill. The bloke on the seven pound hammer belting away and each belt he twisted the drill and you put a bit of water down after you done it to scoop out the rock that had gone to powder and we had a piece of
- 10:00 fencing wire with a little thing flat on the end of it and you scoop that out. 'Bang bang' and then you if your mate wasn't up to it feeling too good well you'd stay on the hammer, which I often did I say myself but I wasn't bad. I was in reasonably good nick compared with some of my mates and that was the hammer and tap
- 10:30 and...
- So sometimes you'd change roles?**
- Oh yes. Yeah, yeah.
- And share the role and other days if need be you'd do a full day doing one of those roles?**
- That's right. Well it kicked off in the end by these fellows wanting to get back to camp they buggered it for everyone. Well let me put it this way, we actually aided the Nips to build that railway quick by thinking of ourselves getting back into camp.
- 11:00 Silly. It was stupid and oh believe you me there was some shocking things went on there. Blokes...
- Can you explain to us why it was silly?**
- Well we didn't realise but we were helping them by being stupid and wanting to get back to camp and get off the work to go back and we were assistin' them all the time and your drill if your drill's, I'll give you an instance
- 11:30 I was going to work with a my partner at that time was a fella called Baddam, Ernie Baddam, and I said, "Ern, mate, speedo bungo," which meant quick to the toilet, and I had g-string on and I just shot off onto the bridle path relieve myself and just as I did Nip, Nip sergeant, gloves on and a bamboo
- 12:00 "(UNCLEAR - SPEAKING JAPANESE)" and he hit me on the shoulder and sat me back in my own excreta.
- And what was he saying? What were those words?**
- "Buggera buggera whoooo," and then he's trying to tell me cover it over and he'd gone, and you imagine wet leaves that was our bunf, wet leaves to wipe your backside with and I'm just doing everything and along come another bloke, "Whoooo buggera,"
- 12:30 and I'm tryin' to explain, "Yeah mate I've been told what to do," you know and off he went.
- Translating that word?**
- No, I didn't hear.
- No the but for us could you... "buggera" means?**
- Buggera, you bugger you, you know, "Whoooo." Cranky. No good. No good. So right I get down on the track. What does Ernie Baddam say to me?
- 13:00 "Where the f'in hell have you been? Look at the bloody time we're losin'." See what I mean. We were helpin' 'em. We were helpin' the Nips build the railway quicker. Now when I first lobbed down that railway the mob had been there clearing all the bamboo etcetera and when you looked along you think, "Oh they'll never build this. They'll never do this," but they did.
- 13:30 **So how many days were you doing hammer and tap before you moved onto the cholera?**
- Oh I suppose it'd been two weeks. Little over two oh a bit more than two weeks.
- So can you talk to me about your involvement in the cholera treatment?**
- Yeah, cholera. Yeah, used to be lookin' after the cholera. The poor buggers your mates, by the way, off the, come off the hammer and tap, come in and see bed boards missing.
- 14:00 "Hello not another one." Next day, two days later they'd be dead. The cholera, the eyes went back, their voices became like grandmas, they lost weight so quickly, their excreta was like milk and that was it. One minute it didn't look too bad and the next minute, cholera and gone next day or the day after.

14:30 Now then we brought out the saline in the drip which was a bottle with the bottom knocked off it, an old rubber and what have you which was sabotaged off the vehicles which were standing there because he couldn't move with the monsoonal weather and all this was fixed up by some of our good and brainy blokes and the saline was done.

15:00 Made.

Were these constructions co-ordinated by Weary or just by medical folk in general?

Weary and his and the good doctors we had with us, yeah, and the dentist old Joel Clark you know and all his good blokes, blokes with a bit of nous and oh yeah and the cholera be some names there in that little book I got there that went with cholera out of our unit.

Did the Japanese when

15:30 **they saw these hospitals and these healing tools and systems that you were setting up, did they make any attempt to help or to interfere with that activity?**

Well they were dead scared of cholera. Dead scared of cholera. So naturally they were pleased when, they knew they could get it, so they were pleased when they saw what we were doing.

But they weren't willing to

16:00 **help with some of their own medical supplies?**

No, no. All they did, they gave us Lysol to scrub up with because if you by the way, the only way you can get cholera is orally. Through the mouth. That's the only way. So we'd get Lysol to scrub with. Well I in the finish I had to give it away because all this skin was burning and

16:30 then I started looking after the scabie later. Treatment for the scabie which is with sulphur and what have you. These are all Weary's ideas you know and my skin couldn't cop it in the finish.

So your role would be to just keep an eye on these blokes as they were lying around?

Oh well you'd hear them, those who knew me "Blue" and we had the bottom of a

17:00 petrol tin for a bed pan and you'd scoot real quick and try and get in under them. Now in that cholera where we were, we were in the bottom of the camp. Consequently all the drainage and monsoonal season that's when cholera really starts, so and we were up to there in slush and mud. That there bed boards were like that

17:30 and you'd try and shoot this thing underneath them and sometimes you wouldn't get there quick enough and sometimes "Pssssst" you'd get it over your face and everything.

Were you fearful that you would get cholera?

Oh no, I wasn't. You know funny thing. Ewen Collette, the major, he said, "Listen no smokin' rollin' cigarettes or any old thing

18:00 because that's the only way you get cholera, through the mouth. So scrub up. Make certain you scrub up," and in the end I got sick and tired of bloody scrubbing up with Lysol and I said, "Stuff it. If I'm gonna die I'm gonna die." That was in a nutshell and I mean that.

So...

And I, and I always said afterwards in debate with Weary I used to say, "I reckon that tobacco,"

18:30 oh some of that tobacco was ooooh it was black as your boot and strong. We used to try everything to try and get the nicotine out of them. I said, "I reckon that saved people from getting cholera." And Weary just said, "Oh." Shook his head of course. He wouldn't agree with me. I don't blame him.

So Blue you moved from the cholera treatment to the scabies treatment?

Yeah that's in another camp. When we went down to Tamarkan.

How long were you involved with cholera and how long were you involved

19:00 **with scabies?**

Scabies ah probably about three, four weeks in Tamarkan and the cholera oh maybe a month, five weeks all told you know.

So through this time you were occasionally running into Weary or you were always quite close to him or...

I used to pop in to say g'day to him. Go 'round to see how he was or what have you

19:30 and on this particular occasion, I hadn't seen him for awhile, and I shot 'round to where he and an old mozzie net and he and Ewen Collette were in the same thing. I said, "How you goin' Major?" "Not bad." I said, "How's the big fella?" He said, "Oh alright." I said, "How's the..." and I pulled the mozzie net and

there it was,

20:00 all these little batteries all bloody, I said, "Oh," he said, "For God's sake please don't tell anyone." I said, "I won't tell anyone," because we had the secret radio in Java, which I used to connect up. There's another story. In Java, back in Java, oh yeah. So there it was.

What impact did

20:30 **Weary's presence around the railway at that stage what did that do for morale do you think?**

Well Weary we used to go and buy drugs off a fella called Bung, ah oh anyway he got decorated after awhile this Bung Poon and duck eggs and they used to dig the

21:00 latrines and their main in Hintok, jungle camp, they rigged up dammed the water and then with six inch pipes with holes in made showers, a permanent shower. So when you came off the railway you just got under there and in heaven you know beautiful but prior to the cholera breakin' out, which comes out of water too, coming back

21:30 off the railway coming back to camp there's a lovely creek there like a little water miniature waterfall and we used to fall down there and they said "Right no more water until it's boiled." So all that finished. So it it was hell when cholera broke out for quite a long time.

Let's talk about the important things that you want to talk about

22:00 **relating to the overall railway experience. What are the things that you really want to get across today about that experience?**

Well as I said before, the first thing we assisted them definitely but those who stayed in camp did a good job and I was pleased that I was able to go out

22:30 and then I was pleased that I was able to help in the cholera and then later on when it was voluntary for the scabies I was pleased with all that and I felt beaut. I felt good but the bloke the shinin' light who kept me the bloke I kept lookin' at all the time was Weary and I think in my own personal thoughts, I mean this, I reckon maybe if Weary hadn't a been there

23:00 then I wouldn't have come back. I mean that but I worked bloody hard because sometimes I'd come off the railway and there'd be a bloke bedridden with bed sores on his back and sit up just rollin' them over and all that sort of thing. So I'd be working twelve, fourteen hours and maybe longer than that and some of the poor buggers then

23:30 of course on what they called Hellfire Pass, which was a Konyu Cutting, they were getting back into camp at half past ten at night from dawn in the morning and at midnight sometimes just like that. Down to six, six and a half stone you know. Been working like hell down there. Oh yeah.

Why do you think you may not have made it if Weary wasn't there?

Just one of those 'cause he was a shining light. When I looked

24:00 at him I thought...

Were there many others who felt that way?

Oh hell yeah. Oh you'll any blokes who was with Weary in our mob, he was the shining he was the beam. Oh yeah.

Was he fairly renowned amongst most of the...

Yeah. Oh yeah.

Blokes working?

Yeah.

Around the area?

Oh yep, yep, yep, yep. Most of the blokes, even blokes who hadn't met Weary before, like once they got in

24:30 the area where Weary was and the other good doc we had some beaut doctors, but Weary was a leader also and a shining light. That was the difference. Like Weary when they gave his they give us stuff for cholera, needles, because I told you the Japs were dead scared of cholera but Weary'd stand up there, six foot four and a half, and he'd give the needle.

25:00 He'd like spear it like a dart and you'd see blokes around you goin' fainting but he just let them see "There's nothing to it. Come on" you know. Yeah.

Blue, what was the hardest time for you as a POW?

Oh well first of all I had an ingrown toe two ingrown toenails and they were rotten and comin' goin'

down

25:30 to the railway you, in what was called the Yankee grobbin [?] where they chopped down the bamboo and then the rains came so it exposed the bamboos, but no shoes, I had no footwear, slippin' and slidin' and hittin' me toes and I used to struggle into camp, I'd be two hours behind some of the blokes heading back to camp and a bloke said, "I'm gonna put you into Weary. I'm gonna dob you," 'cause I wouldn't, I didn't want to think that

26:00 you know I couldn't work with the other and as soon as he saw me he said, "You silly bastard. You won't be going to work in the morning." So he organised so I'm on the table, bamboo table, and a fella called Wiseman, Sergeant Wiseman, who was a chemist and they're lookin' at the Novocaine and I heard the confab was, you know, "Do you think this is gonna be alright?" And, "Oh yeah," and I'm layin' back. I thought "Oh geez."

26:30 Anyway he did the operation. Didn't feel a thing. Foot down there. Both off. First operation with Weary. Bing. Hundred per cent ever since and then that was good but when I couldn't go to work for two days and I was bed down, then whack. I got the malaria and then straight away

27:00 I got clinical diarrhoea. Not dysentery. No blood. So consequently it took me nearly three weeks to get back on deck and they were the bad times. That's when I felt a bit low.

Did you feel like you weren't gonna make it

I did.

At this stage?

I thought, I thought "Oh this might be the end of this section." Yep. I really did, yeah.

Did you talk to Weary about that feeling?

Oh I no, no because I heard him abuse

27:30 two or three people for feelin' that way. Oh yes. He used to, "Come on, get up."

What sort of things did you learn about human beings being a POW?

Well overall good. You had to have mates and believe you me mate the Australian mates they were good. Tops. Oh yeah. Yeah. Really good.

28:00 Yeah. The in at one stage there you know, "Come on mate, get up. Come on wake up to yourself," you know and all this confab and telling jokes. Keepin' things on the move. Yeah, but dear old Weary. I'd like, did I, am I allowed to tell you this story about when we were gonna spilt up?

28:30 **Please.**

It was in the Nakom Paton and he came he said, "Blue, looks like you and I'll be parting." I said, "Why?" He said, "Oh well, no chance," and I always said for him to cook the books. He didn't like that. He said, "Well I'm afraid they're sending people out to Ubon and different places", which was up on

29:00 Indonesian ah not Indonesian anyway the French border there. Vietnam it is today and I said, "Oh what a pity." I said, "What about an operation on before day of movement?" He said, "What have you got?" I said, "Well I got my tonsils. Do without those." Said, "I got my appendix.

29:30 Do without that." I said, "I got me foreskin. Do without it," and everything was made out of bamboo in those days and his reflex hammer was bamboo and he went like that on the top of me skull. He said, "Right, the foreskin." Now I used to go down to the amoebic dysentery ward and take forty leaves for a bloke, Squizzy Taylor, to wipe his bottom

30:00 with. He used to do forty motions in the small half of his dixie, amoebic dysentery, and a motion was about that big, blood and mucous, and he was down to little 'round the area of five stone, and I used to sit on the end of his bed boards and tell him a yarn and, "See you tomorrow Squiz," thinkin' "You won't be there tomorrow." But when I got back, this Scotch RSM we had he said, "Butterworth where you been?

30:30 The big fella as you call 'im wants you to go to him straight away." I said, "Why?" He said, "Something about an operation." I said, "But the bloody movement I'm told's been cancelled." He said, "I don't care. Up and see him." So up I go to the big bloke. I said, "You want to see me sir?" He said, "Yeah. Get up to the compound. The operation." I said, "It's been cancelled" and he went 'plop' hit me on top of the scone. He said, "Just in case," because the Nips used to change their mind a lot.

31:00 So two mates of mine said, "Could can we come up with ya?" I said, "I suppose so." So there I am and it was Sunday. Yasmai day they call that, rest day, and the bloke in the theatre was a Welshman. Taffy Jones more. "What is this? Indeed to goodness man what are you doing?" I said, "An operation Taff. You got to prepare me for an operation for circumcision," and he's going berserko. "Yasmai day." I said, "I

- 31:30 don't give a stuff mate. Go crook on the big fella when he walks in." So I'm on the table. So he has to shave me and he's got a little brush with about two bristles on it and he's got a bit of stuff which is supposed to soap and the razor is a table knife honed down. The big bronzed Anzac. I'm layin' back there. Oh and that knife
- 32:00 when he started to shave, holy hell. So in walks the big bloke, bamboo and starts scrubbin' up in the water. Over he come. He said, "Now I've only got this much", this is Novocaine, "I can only give you a little bit because if you've got too much of this it'd go black." Anyway so I'm just going, right. I'm laid back.
- 32:30 Bamboo. So he's got this needle and then with a scalpel he's goin' like that. He said, "Can you feel that?" I said, "No sir." Then this Spencer Welsh forceps and they've got ratchet which you use in operations for chopping off veins and cutting them and as soon as he did that, "Holy
- 33:00 Hell," I jack knifed and I hit him on the shoulders and he went back and immediately came back at me and hit me on the shoulders, wonder I wasn't unconscious, and I went down. He said, "You silly bastard." That's the way he used to talk, very quiet. "You silly bastard," he said, "You told me you couldn't feel that." I said, "I didn't but I..." Two of me mates that came to see me, one had fainted by the way behind me. So there you were and the next thing
- 33:30 "Righto," he said, "do you want to take it home with you?" Now that's the story of Weary and I and that's been on television. 'This is your Life.' It's been everywhere.

Blue, did you ever get to the point as a POW where you gave up hope and you thought you were just never gonna get out of that situation?

Only when I was down with the diarrhoea and the malaria,

- 34:00 but no, not really. No, I as I said, the big fella, he was the shining light and when I see him around and he did that to hundreds of other people too, yeah, but I'd like to mention before I go off about Weary the fact I went to his wedding and I was treated like King Billy. 605 Toorak Road, Toorak, and wherever we went overseas it wouldn't matter what company he was with or being with
- 34:30 ambassadors and consulates and what have you, "Meet my man Friday," and so it opened up a lot of avenues for me: a Yorkshire lad who come out without a zac. Well I beg your pardon, I paid four pound to come out and I got two pound money when I arrived here and that's another story. So I did very well wherever it and wherever I've been, through Weary I've met people I would never ever have
- 35:00 met if I hadn't have been in the army with Weary.

And that friendship with Weary continued...

Oh right to the... For the rest of... Right to the day he died and they wanted me to carry his medals. I'm right behind the casket on the TV, photographs and everything, and I remained a friend of the family and am still a friend of his two sons. Oh yeah.

Blue, what how did the

- 35:30 **war change you as a person?**

Well I didn't give a stuff for anybody when I, after that. I thought, "Well I've been through that. I got through it. Nothing's gonna knock me back now," and I as I've said before, I wouldn't have called the queen me aunty or the king me uncle. I felt that I could ride the waves. I come back with a good quid in me bank book.

- 36:00 All the time we're away and you know accumulated pay and what have you and happy as Larry in a beautiful little place called Newport and bricklayer. The only bricklayer in those days living north of Narrabeen. Everyone knew Blue and...

Did you have any difficulty adjusting back into civilian life?

I did for awhile yeah, yeah but yeah,

- 36:30 but don't get me wrong, even though I, the beer was my medicine. Grog was my, that was my, definitely my medicine and I used to tell people, "Well there's no bloody medicine bottles in the garbage. No pill boxes. I enjoy that," and that a lot of our blokes did the same and fortunately I've got to eighty three, so I must have done some good for me you know. I reckon it
- 37:00 did anyway, and also I must say I, my dear wife, I don't think if things had been like they are now I think my dear wife mighta bailed out but she stuck by me and that was it. My kids, my son, he said, "Dad you're a tough old bugger." I disciplined them you know. Different to what goes on today. I
- 37:30 was pretty strict as a parent. Too strict really, I realise now, but they still love me.

Blue, when you look back at that war experience, what's the most important message from it that you want to pass onto other people?

- Let's hope there's no more bloody wars but we've got to protect ourselves so we can't be stood over but it'd be a pity if we have to come blastin' again at one another and bloody pity. Should never be a war in my book.
- Blue are you do you still have dreams about the POW experience? Do you think that still haunts you?**
- Not now. Ooh it did for a long time. Oooh, oh yeah. I used to kick hell out of my dear wife when we had the double bed and she said, "Blue,
- 38:30 no good." I'd be punchin' and kickin' and screaming.
- How long after the war was that?**
- Oh two or three years it went on and then we when we moved up to Mount Colo she said, "Blue, we gotta get single beds. I can't stand this anymore." So we did but and I did I knocked hell outta me for awhile.
- But eventually you got through that?**
- Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah.
- 39:00 I still
- How long do you think it took you to get to a point where you felt like you were no longer haunted by all that?**
- Well I don't...
- Blue, how do you feel about the Japanese these days?**
- I forgive 'em but I won't forget. I'll never forget, but they were disciplined
- 39:30 and their discipline was stricter than our discipline and if they didn't obey the order their lolly got chopped off. So there you are but I'll never forget. I mean I wouldn't be talking now if I'd forgotten. So I'll never forget. No.
- Did that take you awhile to get to that point?**
- Oh yeah.
- Where you could forgive?**
- Yeah, yeah.
- How long do you reckon it took?**
- Oh about four
- 40:00 or five years actually before I started to wake up to myself, "Well poor buggers they shocking you know their discipline," but some of the engineers they were tough birds you know. They'd been told that railway had to go through speedo, speedo and they wanted it through. So consequently you copped it.
- 40:30 **Have you been back there?**
- Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- How does that feel?**
- Oh sad you know. See the Konyu Cutting, which is called Hellfire Pass, Weary's got some of his ashes laid there now. I, that's the last time I was there, when they put the ashes there, and also put some of them on the little boats and put 'em in the Kwai Noi, River Kwai as it's called
- 41:00 or the Kwai Noi as we called it in those days and you think and memories and you know and you see the drill holes here there and everywhere. The marks where the drills had gone down but as I say, I was never on the Hellfire Pass. I was lookin' after cholera.
- Blue we've got a few moments if you'd like to pass on your message about the club to...**
- Yeah, well Sean
- 41:30 and Kylie [interviewer], I'm pleased that I had the opportunity through Bob, our chief executive officer of Hornsby RSL [Returned and Services League], to allow me and allow you to have this interview and much appreciate it, and if possibly if you get the chance, if you felt like it, you could drop him a line just to say thank you or the 'cause I...

INTERVIEW ENDS

