

# Despair, hope, secrets & escape

TOPIC

7

*'We never had any other thought but  
to get out tonight'* – Geoff Cornish



ART34781.015

A H Comber  
*Rolling down to the working face: the tunnel Stalag Luft III*  
Shropshire and London 1945  
Pen and ink, brush and ink wash pencil on paper  
19 x 30.48 cm  
Australian War Memorial (ART34781.015)

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# Teachers' Information

TOPIC 7

BACKGROUND

## Background

*Well you knew bloody well you weren't going to be home by Christmas, yet you'd say, 'I'll be home by next Christmas.' When you realised, when you knew in your own heart there was no way in the world that that was going to happen. But you'd still live in the hope and the belief that maybe you would be. So it's just a self-conning act. – Rowley Richards*

Hope is vital element in the survival of people in extreme situations. In this DVD chapter there are stories of hope and of POWs giving up hope.

As background preparation students should start a mind map with the word 'hope'. As they view the DVD they can progressively add to the mind map.

When it is complete, the mind map can be used as the starting point for a piece of creative writing. The topic should be 'Hope when all seems lost'. Students can be encouraged to use whichever format they choose, but they should use as many of the words from the mind map as they can.

A H Comber

*The tunnel was to come up on the woods beyond the guard box, Stalag Luft III*  
Shropshire and London 1945

Pen and ink, brush and ink wash, pencil on paper

28.6 x 39.2 cm

Australian War Memorial (ART34781.021)



## DVD Chapter 7 – Despair, hope, secrets and escape

### Summary

Death could occur from a number of causes in prison camps, including from despair. In the DVD you will hear POW survivors speak of the power of hope; of faith in one's future. They reveal the things that gave them hope – from hidden, makeshift radios to escape plans. We learn a little of the Great Escape from Stalag III and discover how impossible it was to escape from the Japanese POW camps in Southeast Asia.



Duration: 11 minutes 49 seconds

**The script of this chapter can be found in printable text form on the CD-ROM**

# Take up the stories

## Stories 1 & 2



### Rowley Richards' story

*I had always believed that there was a will to live and if that will to live disappeared, well, you died.*

#### Interpretation and analysis

- Explain what you think Captain Rowley Richards means by 'the will to live'?
- Does he have particular experience or qualifications to back his assertion?

### James Ling's story

*I wouldn't have the guts to do it.*



#### Discussion for senior students

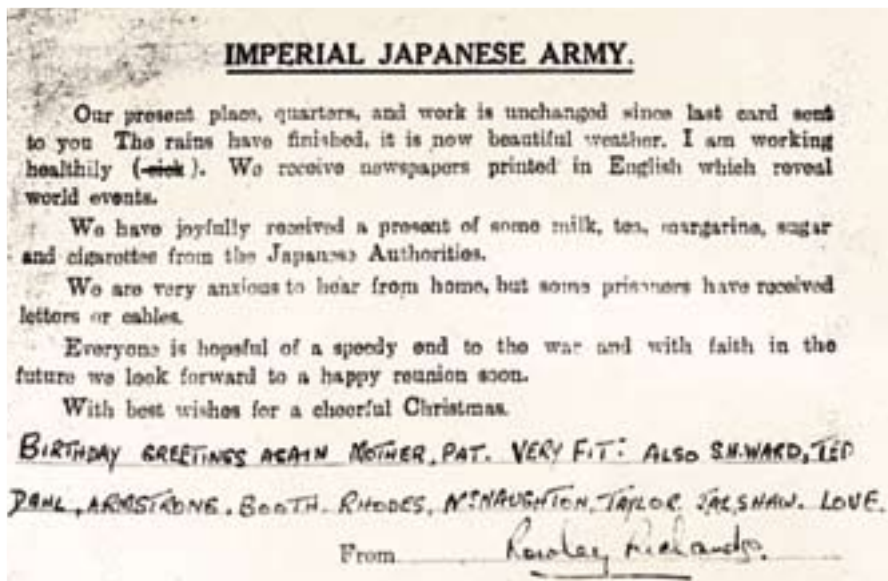
- Listen to James Ling's story about his mate who refused to eat his rice.
- Why does James Ling originally say that prisoners threatening to give up were called cowards and later say that doing so 'took guts'?
- As a class, debate the nature of courage. In those circumstances, was it braver to decide to die or to continue facing the horrors of imprisonment? Justify your arguments.

#### Discussion and analysis

These two interviews deal with the topic of prisoners just giving up and dying.

James Ling uses the term 'point the bone at yourself'.

- Do you think it's possible that people can just decide to die?
- What evidence do these men give?
- What circumstances would make people act like this?



- Discuss the issue in small groups. Can you come to an agreement?
- This is a very sensitive subject. As a topic it is difficult for both interviewers and interviewees. Is it important for historians to deal with these sensitive topics or should they be left unrecorded?
- Would our historical understanding be different if these topics weren't covered?
- What ethical issues do these reports raise?

Postcard sent home by Rowley Richards while he was a POW of the Japanese. Private collection.

# Take up the stories

## Stories 3 & 4



### Robert Parker's story

*If there was any dead... they didn't give you so much food.*

- Why do you suppose Private Robert Parker tells his gruesome story with humour?
- What does this story tell us about conditions in the POW camps in Korea?
- Compare the way Robert Parker conveys the horror of his situation with some of the other interviewees. Does his jocular manner trivialise the point or make it more powerful? Is his manner possibly a reflection of his personal way of coping?



AWMP00305.001

### Ron Wall's story

*A lot of people that were prisoners of war were happy to be prisoners of war. They weren't going to jeopardise their lives... When you're with people for a long time you can practically tell whether a person is going to sit or whether a person is going to try to escape. It's the way they go about things. And also, there's only certain people that you could guarantee may have a chance of getting back. A lot of people can't stand hardship when it really gets hard.*



Compare Ron Wall's story with the others in this topic. Discuss the following questions.

- What evidence is there that Australian prisoners fell into two broad groups, those that accepted their capture and those who did not?
- As you listen to the POW accounts in this chapter of the DVD, try and find evidence to support the above generalisation.
- Do you think your findings will be affected by the fact that you are only hearing the viewpoint of survivors?
- Present your conclusions to the class.
- Devise a questionnaire that would help predict who might be an 'escaper' or a 'stayer'?
- Ask your family or friends to complete the questionnaire. What do your results tell you?

Pyoktong, North Korea, 1952-53. Propaganda photograph of POWs eating apples in the other ranks POW camp, Pyoktong, in the winter of 1952-53, when the temperature dropped as low as -43 degrees F.

# Take up the stories

## Stories 5, 6 & 7

### Geoff Cornish's story

*We never had any other thought but to get out tonight... and that was the overriding consideration and motivating force all of the time.*



- Compare Geoff Cornish's motivating force as he describes it here with Rowley Richards's conviction that he would be home by Christmas.
- What difference, if any, did it make that Geoff Cornish was a prisoner of the Germans while Rowley Richards was a prisoner of the Japanese?
- Do you think rank or education contributed to the optimistic attitude of these two men, or do you think that their personalities played a more important part? Make a judgement after you have watched their interviews on the DVD.

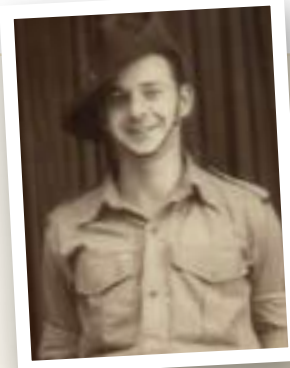
### Bill Fordyce's story

Listen to Flight Lieutenant Horace 'Bill' Fordyce's account of escaping from Stalag Luft III. This escape has been immortalised in the film *The Great Escape*.

#### Discussion

Debate the idea that escapes like this were really a waste of time, strength and resources.

Was the 'great escape' a success or failure?



### Bert Beecham's story

*Well what was the point? You were in the jungle, you had nowhere to go, you had no food to take with you; you had nothin' to ward off malaria, you can get dysentery and die, get diarrhoea and die.*

#### Partner or small group task

- What are the varying perspectives on Beecham's assertion that it was safer to stay where you were than to escape from Japanese POW camps?
- How different was the experience of escaping in Asia compared to Europe?



A H Comber  
At the foot of the shaft of tunnel 'Dick' the carpenters shop  
Shropshire and London 1945  
Pen and ink, brush and ink wash, pencil on paper  
20.3 cm x 26.6 cm  
Australian War Memorial (ART34781.018)

# Worksheet 1

TOPIC 7

WORKSHEET 1

*'To escape or not to escape, that is the question...'*

Create a grid table, listing all the reasons for and against making an escape attempt from a POW camp. Use examples from the DVD to justify your answers.

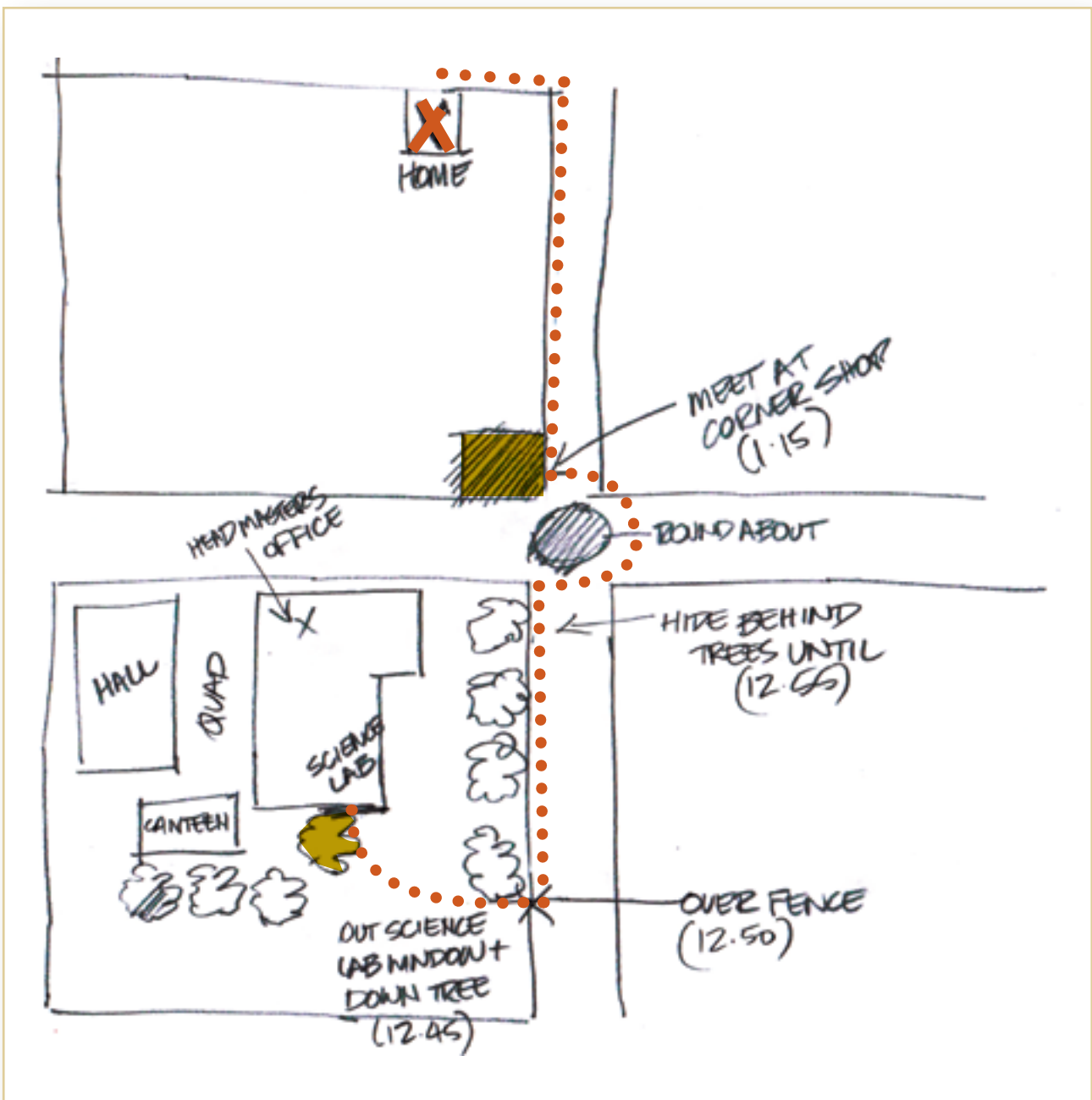
	Escape attempt	No escape attempt
Reasons for		
Reasons against		

When you have completed your grid, recommend either an escape attempt or not and write a conclusion using your findings.

# Worksheet 2

## The making of an escape map

- Go to the Australian War Memorial website: [blog.awm.gov.au/awm/2008/07/09/how-to-make-a-pow-escape-map/](http://blog.awm.gov.au/awm/2008/07/09/how-to-make-a-pow-escape-map/).
- This site shows how the POWs in Germany were able to print copies of the same escape map using very simple materials.
- Using the instructions provided on the site, create your own escape map, tracing your escape route from school to your home.
- Design your route to be both fast and safe ensuring that you identify any points of potential danger such as main roads, the areas where teachers patrol etc.
- Compare your maps. Whose map was the most detailed? Whose map was the easiest to follow?



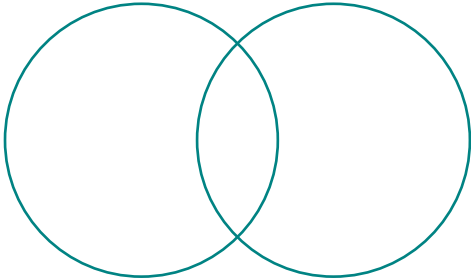
# Worksheet 3

TOPIC 7

WORKSHEET 3

## Europe or South-East Asia?

Using either a table format or a Venn diagram format, compare and contrast conditions in Europe and South-East Asia for prisoners of war trying to escape.



Choose one of the POW camps in Europe or South-East Asia. List all the steps that you would need to take to get from your camp to safety. Identify landscapes and areas that are hostile or potentially dangerous.

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What would you need to take with you?

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## Extension task: Radios

- Develop a list of reasons why radios were so important and so carefully protected by POWs.
- Draw up a list of available items that could be found in POW camps to help build radios. Get together as many of these items, or similar, that you can find, and try and create some sort of primitive radio.
- What skills do you need to build it?
- Does the class have all these skills?
- How can you get around any skills you lack?
- Analyse the problem solving you had to undertake to create the radio.
- How does this help you understand the ingenuity of the POWs?



# Worksheet 4

## Red Cross Parcels Letters from Home

One of the things that gave POWs in the Second World War hope was when they were permitted to send an occasional message home to their families, through the Red Cross. The messages were contained on a form, like the one below, leaving only a few lines for a personal note.

Moulmein in Burma.

My health is (good, usual, poor)  
I have not had any illness.  
I (am) (have been) in hospital.  
I am (not) working (for pay at 15 CENTS per day).  
My salary is \_\_\_\_\_ per month.  
I am with friends \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
From \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY.**

I am still in a P. O. W. Camp near Moulmein, Burma, There are 20,000 Prisoners, being Australian, Dutch, English, and American. There are several camps of 2/3000 prisoners who work at settled labour daily.

We are quartered in very plain huts. The climate is good. Our life is now easier with regard to food, medicine and clothes. The Japanese Commander sincerely endeavours to treat prisoners kindly.

Officers' salary is based on salary of Japanese Officers of the same rank and every prisoner who performs labour or duty is given daily wages from 25 cents ( minimum ) to 45 cents, according to rank and work.

Canteens are established where we can buy some extra foods and smokes. By courtesy of the Japanese Commander we conduct concerts in the camps, and a limited number go to a picture show about once per month.

My LOVE TO ALL AT HOME. AM FIT AND WELL. MY DEAR W. THOUGHTS ARE EVER OF HOME AND YOU ALL.

Courtesy AWM

# Worksheet 4

TOPIC 7

WORKSHEET 4

## Messages to and from Home

Family members who replied to POW correspondence also had to be careful in their letters that they did not write about anything that could cause the POWs trouble with their captors or write anything that may upset the POWs.

- What kinds of things could you tell a POW family member?
- Is there a way in which either side could secretly pass information or news to each other?

- What would be the most important things a POW could say in these messages to their family, or the family to their POW?
- Devise your own form for POWs to send messages home.
- Divide the class into two equal groups. The members of one group are prisoners. Each one writes their message to their family on the form and gives it to the other group.
- The other group are family members. Each one replies to a POW.
- Share the notes with the class.



AWM115882

Melbourne, Vic. 1945. The first batch of prisoners of war released from Japanese prison camps were brought to 115th Military Hospital (Heidelberg) for medical examination before proceeding on leave. Shown, general scene in the hospital ward as the 8th Division ex-prisoners of war and their families meet again.

# Worksheet 5

## Red Cross Parcels

One thing that gave the prisoners hope and a sense of contact with loved ones at home was the Red Cross parcels that were shipped to Europe and Asia and then dropped near the POW camps. Many lives were saved thanks to the timely arrival of the parcels, though in Southeast Asia, the Japanese captors were known to keep the parcels for their own officers or not distribute them to the POWs.

Some of the items included in Red Cross parcels were:

- Food such as chocolate, oatmeal, biscuits, sardines and dried fruit;
- Drugs and medical supplies;
- Clothing, including overcoats for those in German POW camps;

- Army boots;
- Boot repair kits;
- Toiletries;
- Cigarettes;
- Books and recreational supplies; and
- Religious books and materials.

Why were these parcels so important to the prisoners?

If you were a prisoner of war, what items would you most need to keep your spirits up and help you to survive in captivity?

Make a list of items that you would place in a Red Cross parcel in the 21st Century.



AWMREL18421

# Review

TOPIC 7

REVIEW

- Write a short story using the incidents described in Chapter 7 of the DVD. Select one of the characters referred to in this topic and assume the identity of that person.
- Write your story in the first person, making sure that you stick to the facts as referred to in this chapter of the DVD.
- Make sure that you appropriately articulate the considered feelings, emotions and thoughts of your chosen character.
- Write about 800 words.

## Reflection

*That mateship is what got us home*

– Francis 'Banjo' Binstead

- Critically evaluate the historical accuracy of this statement after reading the accounts presented in this topic.



AWM115977

Sydney, NSW. 1945. Members of 8th Division, ex-POWs of the Japanese, arrived at Rose Bay from Singapore by Catalina flying boats. Shown, Driver R. P. Coleman and Private A. Fleckone having their first hot bath in four years.

# TOPIC

# 8

## The end of the war, coming home & reflection

*'It was one of the great feelings of life'* – Bill Young



AWM122060

Sydney, NSW 1945. Sergeant Joe Elliott, 6 Division Cavalry Regiment, greets his brother Sergeant Frank Elliott, 8th Division Army Service Corps on the gangway of the Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS Striker. The latter had just arrived with other Allied ex-prisoners of war from Japanese prisoner of war camps.

# Teachers' Information

TOPIC 8

BACKGROUND



*During celebrations in the city for VJ (Victory over Japan) Day, an enthusiastic digger is at the front of the crowd lining Swanston Street, waving flags amid streamers. Although discharged in 1944 the man, ex- V301056 Private Melbourne Bourke Saunders, 22nd Employment Company, had donned his uniform and travelled into the city to take part in the celebrations.*

AWM181808

## Background

### Partner task

- The end of the Second World War is a hugely significant event in the 20th century. Discuss with your partner any significant events that occurred in the 20th century.
- Make a list, then discuss your findings as a class.

### Research and discussion

- Research the events that led to the end of the Second World War in Europe and the end of the Second World War in the Pacific.
- Make a chart showing the chronology of events.
- Find out what you can about any significant changes that occurred in Australia while servicemen and women were away.

### Comprehension and analysis

- As you listen to the accounts in this chapter of the DVD, develop a list of reasons and experiences that help you understand how war and imprisonment can lead to diverse views among returning POWs.

## **DVD Chapter 8 – The end of the war, coming home and reflection**

### *Summary*

This chapter explores the various ways in which the war ended for POWs – from the terrible forced march through a German winter to the crossing of the Freedom Bridge from North Korea to South Korea. It investigates the feeling freedom produced in these men and women as they faced a bewildering and changed world. Coming home would never be easy and the interviewees speak frankly of the difficulties they faced in returning to 'normal' life. Finally, a select few of our interviewees reflect on their entire POW experience, perhaps surprisingly, finding much to be grateful for.



Duration 14 minutes 46 seconds

**The script of this chapter can be found in printable text form on the CD-ROM.**

# Take up the stories

## Stories 1, 2 & 3

### Alex Kerr's story

*There were many instances of kindnesses by Germans to prisoners ... but then there were also many instances of absolute cruelty and murderous intent.*



#### Class discussion

Warrant Officer Alexander Kerr describes his experience of being marched out of his POW camp in Germany after surviving four years of imprisonment.

- Discuss how the German officers could differ so greatly in their treatment of the POWs.

### Ray Corbett's story

*And then suddenly, like taking a wet swimming suit off, everything just goes.*



- What does Raphael Corbett mean when describing the end of the war?
- What does the metaphor 'wet swimsuit' stand for?
- Do you think it is a good image?
- What sensory feelings does the image invoke?
- Can you think of another metaphor to use in this situation?
- As you hear other accounts of the impact of the war ending on prisoners, consider how valid Corbett's comment is.

#### Reporting

You are a radio reporter covering the end of the Second World War for ABC radio.

- As Alex Kerr and Ray Corbett emerge from their imprisonment, you have the opportunity to briefly interview them.
- Prepare two or three questions for them and write down the responses you think they would give.
- Record the interview with some classmates.

### Pat Darling's story

*He said, 'Where are the Australian nurses?' and we laughed and said 'We're here! Cause we were dressed as best as we could be.'*



- Locate Palembang on a map. What does this tell you about the climate the Australian nurses were held in?
- Research the conditions endured by the Australian nurses. You can get started by looking at the following website:  
[www.ww2australia.gov.au/behindwire/found.html](http://www.ww2australia.gov.au/behindwire/found.html).

Read this extract from Pat Darling's interview about returning to Singapore after being freed.

*Of the 65 who were on the ship, on the Vyner Brooke, 24 of us came home, and of course, when we arrived at Singapore and we were greeted by the Red Cross people with cups of tea and by a lot of the war correspondents and... we were taken to St Patrick's...*

*We arrived there and you know, it was all so unbelievable. I shall never forget having a wonderful hot shower. I think it's the best shower I've ever had in my life and toothbrushes and toothpaste, much better than a bit of coconut husk and a bit of charcoal, and the nurses who hadn't known us beforehand found us a little bit surprising I think, because we were in such high spirits because they had been given lectures on the way over, which was fair enough, and they were told that there was a possibility that we would be resentful and uncooperative and sullen and all the rest of it, but instead of which we were flying high, higher than kites could fly, and in terribly high spirits.*

- How does Captain Janet 'Pat' Darling's account of her return compare with that of the men when they returned? How would you explain the differences?
- Dr Harry Windsor, who first saw the surviving nurses, commented that the captors of the women 'should be forthwith slowly and painfully butchered'. Why do you think he said something like that? Do you agree with this statement?
- What impact do you think gender played in the treatment of Pat Darling and the other Australian women? Were cultural stereotypes of the role of women in society important in this?

# Worksheet 1

## Analysing the Photographs

Look at the two photographs below and read the captions.



AWMP01344.001

September, 1941. Group portrait of the nursing staff of 2/13th Australian General Hospital.



AWM044480

September 1945, Singapore. Nurses from 2/10th and 2/13th Australian General Hospital. They wear their original uniforms, incomplete and oil-stained.



# Worksheet 1

## Analysing the Photographs

What can we learn from these photographs about the experiences of these women? Look at them again and then answer the following questions.

1. What differences can you identify between the photographs?

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2. What do you think happened before each photograph was taken?

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3. What do you think happened after each photograph was taken?

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4. What might be happening outside each photograph?

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5. What can you learn by looking at the faces of the nurses in both photographs, the condition of their clothing and their surroundings?

Photo 1.....  
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Photo 2.....  
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6. Examine each photograph carefully. What small details can you see that were not obvious at first glance?

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7. Photo 1 was taken before their imprisonment and Photo 2 after, yet in both photographs, many of the nurses are smiling. Why do you think this might be?

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# Take up the stories

## Story 4

TOPIC 8

STORY 4



### Maric 'Eddie' Gilbert's story

*Terrible nightmares where I was back in the camp again and I experienced all sorts of things and you know, I'd wake up screaming or amongst sweat or something, but they were difficult. But as I might have indicated earlier I was strongly resolved to get back into civilian life and to find a wife and to start a family. ... I marched [on Anzac Day] the first year I came home, 1946, it was the natural thing to do and have the cheering thousands, you know, first Anzac Day after the war then. But at the end of it I thought, 'This is not for me. I don't really enjoy this*

*adulation, I don't really like it.' I never marched again, never marched again. I've tended to look on Anzac Day; it may be wrongly, as a glorification of war.*

#### Classroom discussion

- In Maric Gilbert's view, Anzac Day is just a 'glorification of war'. Explain why you think he feels this way.

#### Research project

- Go to the two websites listed below and research the history of Anzac Day:

[www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/anzac/](http://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/anzac/)

[www.dva.gov.au/commemorations/commemorative\\_events/anzac\\_day/](http://www.dva.gov.au/commemorations/commemorative_events/anzac_day/)

- Do you think the websites accurately portray Anzac Day in light of the stories of Australian POWs you have heard on this chapter of the DVD?
- How do you think attitudes to Anzac Day have changed over time?

#### Debate

'Anzac Day is a glorification of war.' As a class, have an informal debate, putting forward arguments for and against this statement.



AWM19300

*Members of the party of Australian prisoners of war (POWs) on Ambon, were on the wharf to welcome the Allied relief ships. Some 540 POWs died during their three and a half years in captivity through the systematic starvation and brutality of the Japanese jailers. Nearly all of the 123 releasees were suffering from beri-beri, dysentery and ulcers. Many were too weak to stand up.*

# Take up the stories

## Stories 4, 5 & 6

### Ray Parkin's story

*That's the one thing we wouldn't believe.*



- List the three technological advances Petty Officer Ray Parkin heard about after the war ended. Which one did he have the most trouble believing?
- Try to speak to your grandparents (or great-grandparents) about life before the biro was invented.
- Ask them about having to constantly refill the fountain pen.
- What do these senior citizens now make of the ipod, computer technology, or the iphone?
- Ask them and report back.

### Bill Young's story

*That was the most perfect night.*



#### Individual assignment

- Review William Young's recollection of his 'perfect night'.
- What does 'peace' mean? When war ends does peace begin? How is peacetime for ex POWs?
- Describe your idea of a perfect, peaceful moment.
- Bill Young, after more than three years as a prisoner of war, has been asked to write the story of his incarceration.
- Write the introduction to his book *My War Years*.
- Write about 600 words.



### James Ling's story

*We didn't know how we were going to be greeted.*

*We were naturally wildly excited, but a little apprehensive, and that was very definite because we didn't know how we were going to be greeted. Our first thoughts were, we surrendered, and nobody would want to talk to us. These other people had been in a war for three and a half years, all the people that we knew, and we really were apprehensive. It wasn't talked about publicly, but amongst ourselves we were all feeling much the same way. We just wondered whether we would be welcomed back to the country that was our home.*

#### Focus questions

- Why was James Ling apprehensive about coming home?
- List his fears and explain what these fears reflect about a society's views on how men at war should behave.
- Why do you think that many prisoners of war were unsure of their welcome home?
- Give examples of attitudes expressed by some of the POWs interviewed and justify your answers.
- You are a reporter for a newspaper and you are asked to interview James Ling after his homecoming. Write an article.

# Take up the stories

## Stories 7 & 8

TOPIC 8

STORIES 7 & 8



### Ron Wall's story

*When we came out of the prisoner camp into England we were mental. There was no way in the world that we could sit down and talk to a civilian. We didn't know – they started talking about what they went through – we just got bored and we'd turn and walk away.*

#### Writing exercise

- Think of a time when you might have had trouble relating to someone.
- Take this memory and Ron Wall's words and create a short play where characters speak to each other but cannot hear the other's words.

#### Class activity

- Two students role play a situation between a returned POW and a civilian.
- The class listens and then discusses communication and how difficult it might be to relate to someone whose experiences are unimaginable to you.

### Tom Pledger's story

*Counselling...? We never had a counsellor. Straight off the boat, discharged and that was it. Nobody worried about it. Go to a doctor, they have got no idea what was wrong. They had no idea what we went through.*



#### Discussion topics

We now understand a lot more about post traumatic stress and how to deal with it.

When Athol 'Tom' Pledger returned home the expectation was that soldiers would just put the war behind them and get on with their lives.

- What does this story reveal about the difficulties some POWs must have faced when they returned home?
- What would be an appropriate way to support soldiers like Pledger when they returned home?
- Think about Tom Pledger's complaint about not getting any counselling as a returned POW. Do you agree with his view that a doctor could not empathise because they could not imagine what the prisoners went through?
- Explain why Pledger was angry with doctors. Do you think he was justified in his anger?
- Do you think 'not talking about it' was the best advice for returned POWs?
- Some well-meaning people welcomed the POWs back in unsuitable ways. Explain, for example, why getting former POWs off a boat in Darwin and putting on a dance for them might not have been the best approach for integrating them back into civilian life.
- Research the way POWs would be assimilated back into society today. What processes have changed?

# Worksheet 2

## Lessons learned:

### *I wouldn't have missed a minute of it*

*If I had known what I was going into I wouldn't have had the guts to face up to it but having done it, I wouldn't have missed a minute of it. What I learnt and, you know, the friendships and all those things are absolutely invaluable. – Rowley Richards*

*... Some fellas have got it, some fellows haven't, and I think that is the only reason why I am telling you stories today because you were determined that they weren't going to beat you. And you have got some funny determination thing, now that I am an older man and I think back a little bit, I probably had that determination all the way through. But as long as you rule your determination with gentleness you can fit in society, and that is what I have tried to do. – Bill Coventry*

*I think it was a learning period of my life, you learned a lot about life, you learned a lot about the human side of it, you learned a lot that people can put up with a hell of a lot and still stay alive, people can put up with a hell of a lot and still be human to one another. – Fred Skeels*

What are the main messages that Rowley Richards, Bill Coventry and Fred Skeels are trying to convey?

*Sydney, NSW 1945. Ex Australian prisoners of war wave from the windows of the bus which took them to the Royal Agricultural Showgrounds after arriving at Central Station from Brisbane.*



AWM121234



AWM112906

*Sydney, NSW 1945. Ex prisoners of war, Private A Malcolm; Private A Bruce and Private T Male, waving to the crowd on the wharf at Circular Quay from a lifeboat aboard the troopship, SS Mauretania, as the vessel moves slowly in to tie up.*

# Review

## TOPIC 8

## REVIEW

- List the personal attributes that the prisoners of war showed during their time in captivity and in their lives following their release.
- How does this chapter of the DVD help you understand the difficulty many POWs had settling back into civilian life after the end of the war?
- Design the front page of a national newspaper for the day the Second World War ended in the Pacific, 15 August 1945. Locate some appropriate photos for the front page. Make sure you write an original news story reporting the end of the war and include a separate interview with the Prime Minister of the day. Use A3 paper and display the stories in the classroom.
- Find out as much as you can about the role of nurses during the Second World War. Write a report about their experiences as POWs and illustrate their stories with images you find in your research.
- This is Bill Coventry talking about his release from Changi:



1945 Sister Jess Doyle, of 2/10th Australian General Hospital sitting up in a hospital bed after her release from Belalau, a Japanese prisoner of war camp outside Loebok Linggau, Sumatra. She had been aboard the Vyner Brooke when it was sunk by the Japanese on 14-02-1942 two days out of Singapore.

*And the first music that was played over the loud speakers was Don't Fence Me In. Bing Crosby singing Don't Fence Me In. I have always thought that bloke that did that had the most wonderful sense of humour.*

Think about the songs you know that might be appropriate. What would be the first song you'd play to newly released POWs? Justify your choice.

# Worksheet 3

## The families at home

What qualities do you think the wives of returning POWs needed?

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Explain the role wives might play in helping former POWs to settle back into civilian life.

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How might the wives and families of POWs cope with the changes in behaviour displayed by their men?

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Create a diary entry for what a wife might write after receiving her first phone call from her husband after his release as a POW and return to Australia.

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Imagine that your father has just returned from a prisoner of war camp. After listening to the stories of the men in this chapter of the DVD compose a talk you could give your class about your father's return.

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What did you choose to talk about and what elements did you keep private?

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# Reflection

TOPIC 8

REFLECTION

- Discuss the suggestion that all POWs share a common bond that remains after their release.
- Consider the impact freedom and repatriation (coming home) had on POWs. Use the experiences of the men and women interviewed on the DVD and write a list of recommendations on how to deal with repatriating former POWs.
- Did soldiers returning from later wars, such as Vietnam, receive better counselling services than those from the Second World War? Research this question and present your findings.
- If you were to design a repatriation program for former POWs for a future conflict, what issues would you need to consider?



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*Yokohama, Japan. 1945. Some Australian ex-prisoners of war (POWs) having their first shower in years as they go through "processing" at the Yokohama shipping docks. Most of these men of the 8th Division were made prisoners after the surrender of Singapore.*