

PRESS RELEASE – issued on behalf of Helen Langridge Associates (film-makers)



Former 'enemies' to meet 70 years after the end of war with Japan

Two courageous men (now both in their mid-nineties) from opposing sides during the building of the notorious 'death railway' have chosen to meet each other for the first time

This summer sees the commemoration of the 70th Anniversaries of:
the atomic bombs being dropped on Hiroshima & Nagasaki (6th & 9th August 1945) and
the end of the war with Japan (Events to mark VJ Day are taking place on 15th & 16th August 2015).

You are cordially invited to a historic reception on Monday 22nd June 2015
(6-8pm at The Army & Navy Club in London)

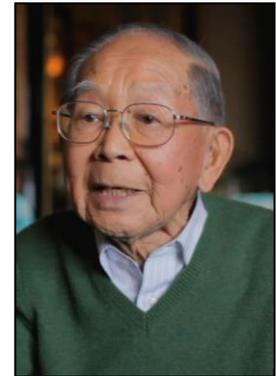
to mark the reconciliation of two men who worked on opposite sides during building the notorious Burma-Siam (Myanmar-Thailand) "death railway" during World War Two.



In the early 1940s these two men were 'enemies' – their countries were at war with each other. Now, they are about to meet for the very first time.

Sir Harold Atcherley was a PoW who was forced by the Japanese to work on the notorious Burma-Thailand "death railway" which cost the lives of an estimated 120,000 people.

Meantime, Mr Mikio Kinoshita was a Japanese army engineer on that horrific railway. Both men featured in an HLA documentary film (shown on **BBC FOUR TV** many times since 2014) but the two men had never met – until now



This extraordinary meeting has come about because, when Mr Kinoshita was being interviewed for the HLA documentary *Moving Half the Mountain: Building the Death Railway*, he expressed his wish to meet some of the surviving, British former PoWs who had been forced to work on the railway. Mr Kinoshita (who was conscripted into the Japanese Army at the age of 21 and who also lost many comrades in the fighting) bowed to the camera and saluted. He said, *"We were all serving our country. However, when I think about all of those that suffered and lost their lives because of the railway I do feel very sorry now for all those that suffered."*

Sir Harold Atcherley felt moved to invite Mr Kinoshita to visit London for a meeting of reconciliation and friendship. Sir Harold (who, as a 24-year-old Army Captain, had become a prisoner of the Japanese when Singapore fell in 1942) says, *"With the 70th Anniversary of the end of the War in the Far East approaching, my wife and I have invited Mr Kinoshita and his daughter to spend a week in London. Some people may wonder why we are doing this. The thought behind the invitation is, for me, really quite simple: It is to extend the hand of friendship and human understanding after so many years of misunderstanding and hatred, before it is too late."*



The harrowing and very moving documentary (featuring Sir Harold and Mr Kinoshita) has been broadcast six times on **BBC FOUR TV** since April 2014 under the title *Building Burma's Death Railway: Moving Half the Mountain*. It featured interviews with surviving former prisoners of war and former Japanese Army personnel. Some of the men who were interviewed in the film had never spoken about their experiences before – not even to their wives or families.

You can see the trailer for the documentary (including footage of Sir Harold and Mr Kinoshita) here: <http://hla.net/news/moving-half-the-mountain-trailer/>

Now, Sir Harold Atcherley and Mr Mikio Kinoshita (both in their mid-nineties) are about to meet for the very first time in a spirit of reconciliation and as an act of remembrance for all those who died, suffered or lost loved-ones on the Burma-Siam Death Railway.

To attend the reception on 22nd June or to arrange interviews please contact Elly Donovan:

elly@ellydonovan.co.uk tel: 01273 205146/0790 508 7779

The event will be attended by other Far East PoWs including Dr Bill Frankland, aged 103.

Please see over for more information and media opportunities >>>>



For further information, to attend the reception on 22nd June or to request interviews please contact:

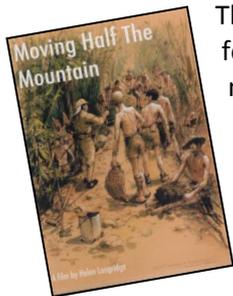
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Press Release continued: Former 'enemies' to meet 70 years after the end of WW2 You are invited to a historic reception on 22nd June 2015 in London

Sir Harold Atcherley and Mr Mikio Kinoshita know only too well the horrific suffering of those who worked on "The Death Railway" – they saw it for themselves. But, now they are keen to meet and get to know each other, in a quest for truth, reconciliation and friendship ...

Although they worked on different parts of the railway, both Sir Harold and Mr Kinoshita witnessed, first-hand, the terrible suffering of the thousands of people who built the railway – the suffering depicted in films such as *Bridge on the River Kwai* [1957] starring Alec Guinness, William Holden & Jack Hawkins (Dir: David Lean) or, more recently, *The Railway Man* [2013] starring Colin Firth & Nicole Kidman (Dir: Jonathan Teplitzky).



The men rarely spoke about their experiences on the 'death railway.' Many families of former Far East Prisoners of War (FEPOWs) had little or no idea about the sufferings the men had endured until they saw films or documentaries about the Burma-Siam Railway.

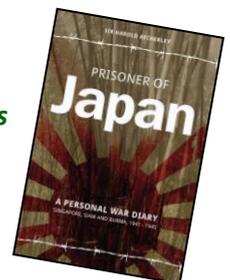
Most of the British former FEPOWs who were interviewed in 2013 for the HLA film, *Moving Half the Mountain* had never spoken about their experiences before then. As Sir Harold says in the film, "I had never spoken about it ... You don't want to talk about it." The preview screening of the documentary was a very emotional occasion for these elderly men who were speaking of their dreadful experiences at last. It was also a harrowing revelation for many of their families.

Sir Harold and Mr Kinoshita believe it is important to remember the terrible sufferings of those who worked and died under horrific conditions to build the Burma-Siam Death Railway – and to acknowledge the longer-term emotional and physical costs to individuals and their families. Both men sincerely hope that their meeting in June will encourage understanding between people from both sides who were (or continue to be) affected by the painful events of World War Two.

Sir Harold's personal diaries from his time as a FEPOW were published in 2013 in the book, "Prisoner of Japan" (Paperback, £12.99, Memoirs Publishing). In the book he says:

"I do not believe our treatment stemmed from any innate cruelty in the Japanese population as a whole. It was essentially due to brain-washing by the military commanders ... There were, of course, civilised Japanese who did whatever they could to help us".

"Primo Levi, the well-known writer, a survivor of Auschwitz, wrote in his autobiography Is This a Man? 'I cannot tolerate the fact that a man should be judged not for what he is but because of the group to which he happens to belong.' How I agree with every word. I would only like to add that, in the end, hatred only damages those who hate."



Media opportunities: • Meet Sir Harold Atcherley (and other FEPOWs) and Mr Kinoshita at a reception at The Army & Navy Club in London (photo opportunities) • Mr Kinoshita and Sir Harold will be available together for interviews 22nd – 25th June in London (Please do get in touch to request an interview) • Request a review copy of Sir Harold's book (extracts/serialisation available) • Helen Langridge, director of the film *Moving Half the Mountain*, is available for interview • Photos available • Illustrations from the time by fellow FEPOW, Ronald Searle OBE

The 70th Anniversary of the end of World War 2 (VJ Day) will be commemorated in the UK with services of remembrance, including those at:

- The Church of St Martins-in-the-Field, Trafalgar Square, London on Saturday 15th August
- The National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire on Sunday 16th August

Information about events to mark VJ Day this summer can be found at the following websites:

• **British Legion:** www.britishlegion.org.uk • **The National Memorial Arboretum:** www.thenma.org.uk

NB: Burma (Myanmar) & Siam (Thailand): Burma became known as Myanmar in 1989 (although many people in Britain still refer to it as Burma); Siam became known as Thailand in 1939.

Please see the attached sheets for further information and available images.



For further information, to attend the reception on 22nd June or to request interviews please contact
Elly Donovan PR elly@ellydonovan.co.uk tel: 0790 508 7779 / 01273 205 246 www.ellydonovan.co.uk
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Two former 'enemies' to meet 70 years after the end of WW2: Further information About The Burma-Thailand Railway ('The Death Railway')

Why was the railway built?

When Japan joined WW2 in 1941, it resolved to capture India ('the jewel in the crown' of The British Empire) but if Japan was ever to sustain a war in India, they would need to constantly move supplies north from Singapore and Malaysia, through the treacherous landscapes of Thailand and Burma to reach their forces in India.

Their solution was to build a railway through the mountainous jungle terrain. It was a scheme that the British themselves had considered in the past and which they estimated might take five years to complete. The British had abandoned the scheme as too difficult.

"It was an unrealistic project from the start. I think the military knew this. It was a bad decision made by those in command. As a result, a great number of people died."
Mr Mikio Kinoshita (Japanese Army Railway Engineer)

The POW railway builders

On 15th February 1942 British Singapore, fell to the Japanese (an event which Churchill later described as "the worst moment of the war") and approximately 130,000 allied service men became prisoners of Japan that day. The Japanese decided to use their new POWs as labour to build the railway and they were set a target of just 18-months in which to complete this momentous task.

Horrendous conditions

Having experienced terrible suffering in Changi camp, north of Singapore where malaria, dysentery and cholera claimed many victims in appalling, unsanitary conditions; the surviving POWs were crammed into railway carriages to endure a five-day journey with no sanitation to Bampong (in Thailand). From there the POWs were forced to march 150km (known as 'the death march' because so many POWs died *en route*) to the River Kwai.

The POWs were then dispersed to prison camps at intervals along the planned route of the railway. Some were sent to Burma in the North (where Mr Kinoshita was stationed) and others, including Captain Harold Atcherley, remained in Thailand

The POWs, already weak and ill were going to be forced to build the railway for the Japanese through the dense jungle and solid rock in the 1000ft mountains of the Burma-Thailand border.

Conditions for the prisoners were unimaginably harsh. Many died from terrible diseases (particularly cholera) and others underwent amputations (without anaesthesia) on account of leg ulcers. Food was short for the POWs and for their Japanese guards. Many resorted to eating snakes and lizards to survive.

Japan was not a signatory to the Geneva Convention on the treatment of POWs. There are eyewitness accounts of POWs being tortured by Japanese and Korean guards as punishment for stealing food or for escape attempts – nonetheless, many people also believe that the treatment of the POWs varied from camp-to-camp and that brutality was not necessarily systemic within in The Japanese Army. There are former POWs who remember acts of kindness from some Japanese guards who wanted to do what they could for the prisoners.

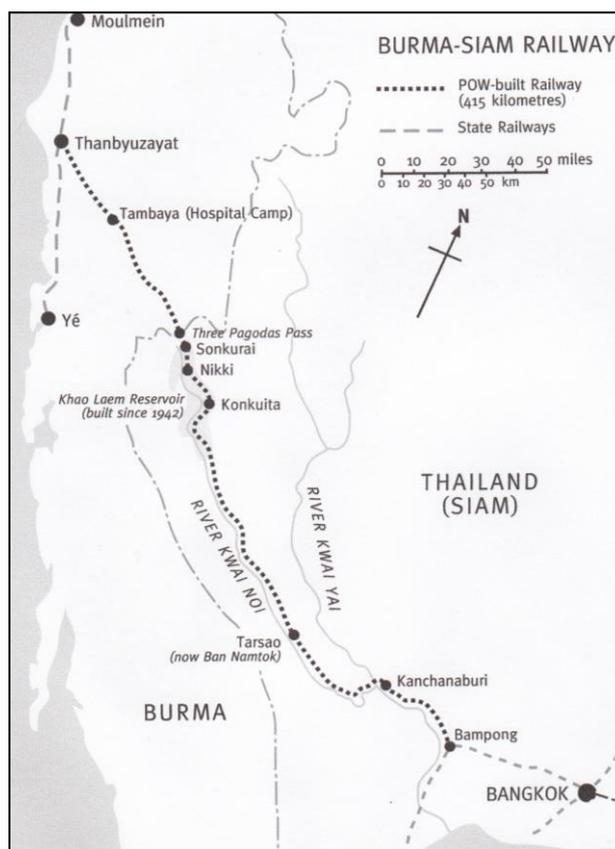
The Burma-Thailand railway was finally completed in October 1943 – on schedule but at the cost of an estimated 120,000 lives



For further information or to request interviews please contact:

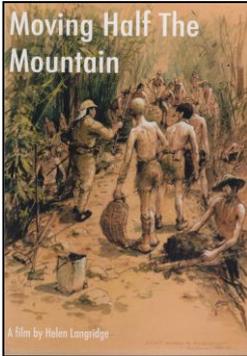
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One man died for every railway sleeper laid on the 415km 'death railway'

**Two former 'enemies' to meet 70 years after the end of WW2: further information
About the film, *Moving Half the Mountain: Building of the Death Railway*
featuring Sir Harold Atcherley and Mr Mikio Kinoshita**



The film *Moving Half the Mountain: Building the Death Railway* has been broadcast six times on BBC FOUR TV since April 2014 under the title *Building Burma's Death Railway: Moving Half the Mountain*.



The film was directed by Helen Langridge and produced by Helen Langridge Associates (HLA)

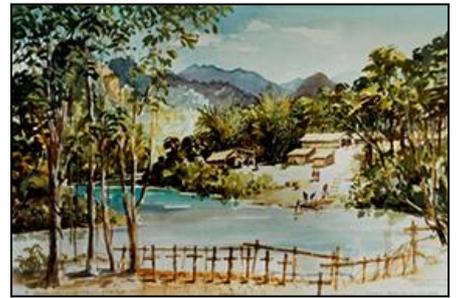
You can see a trailer for the film here:

<http://hla.net/news/moving-half-the-mountain-trailer/>

This very moving documentary film featured interviews with surviving former prisoners of war and former Japanese Army personnel. Some of the men who were interviewed in the film had never spoken about their experiences before – not even to their wives or families.

Sadly, since the film was made, two of the British men who appeared in the film have died:

Jack Chalker: 1918-2014 (Royal Artillery). The paintings and drawings Jack made during his time as a POW working on the 'death railway' are now considered to be a vital historical record of life as a POW. His paintings are used in the film, *Moving Half the Mountain* by kind permission. (His painting of the graves of POWs is shown here >>>)



And

Bill Moylon: 1915-2014 (Royal Arm Ordnance Corps). Bill was originally from Wales and spent the latter part of his life as a Chelsea Pensioner. His family visited him every week. In 2006 he travelled to Japan. In September 2013 he attended the preview screening of the documentary *Moving Half the Mountain* and met some of the other former POWs who had been interviewed for the film.

"I have no ill feeling against the Japanese at all. I meet Japanese here now. No trouble."
Bill Moylon speaking in London in 2013

As well as **Sir Harold Atcherley** and **Mr Mikio Kinoshita**, HLA would like to thank all the other gentlemen who featured in the film and have contributed so much to our knowledge of the past:

- **Dr Bill Frankland** (Royal Army Medical Corps) – who continues to work in London as an allergy specialist and, at the age of 103, is still using London Transport to get around. Dr Frankland (who recently took part in the BBC Radio 4 programme, *The Reunion* about the Far Eastern POWs) will be attending the reception on 22nd June.
- **Yoshiro Kurimata** (Japanese Railway Regiment) – who is a retired businessman living outside Tokyo
- **Tetsuya Shimomura** (Japanese Railway Regiment) – who lives in Kitaibagaki City and is a keen gardener
- **Kazou Tamayama** (author of the book, "Railway Men in the War") – who lives in central Tokyo with his wife
- **Takeo Yoshino** (Japanese Railway Regiment) – who lives near Tokyo with his wife and has a shrine in his home to the memory of his fallen comrades
- **Alister Urquhart** (Gordon Highlanders) – who lives in Dundee and wrote the bestseller, "The Forgotten Highlander." He still ballroom dances once a week.

***Moving Half the Mountain* is dedicated to the memory of all those who lost their lives on the Thai-Burma Railway. Helen Langridge, the director of the film, is available for interviews.**



For further information or to request interviews please contact:

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Two former 'enemies' to meet 70 years after the end of WW2: Further information About Sir Harold Atcherley and Mr Mikio Kinoshita



Sir Harold Atcherley was born in August 1918 and served in the Army throughout WWII. He had the misfortune to land in Singapore with the 18th British Infantry Division in January 1942 and became a prisoner of the Japanese shortly afterwards with the British surrender of Singapore. The diary which he kept during his three and a half years in captivity recorded his experiences in Changi Prisoner of War Camp and hard labour on the construction of the Burma-Siam Railway. He returned home at the end of the war in 1945 and resumed his career with the Royal Dutch Shell Group the following year. He was posted to the Middle East and then South America and did not return to England until 1960. He retired from the oil industry in 1970 but carried on working. For the next thirty years he served in a voluntary capacity as chairman of a number of government advisory groups, in recognition of which he was honoured with a knighthood in 1977. He was also chairman of several charitable organisations including Toynbee Hall and the Aldeburgh Foundation. He lived in Suffolk for

almost 25 years before finally retiring at the age of 80. In 2013 he published his diary of life as a POW as the book, *Prisoner of Japan*. He lives in London with his wife. In recent years Sir Harold has begun to speak publically about his experiences as a POW and has given a number of media interviews to national newspapers and broadcasters. Sir Harold will be 97 in August.

Sir Harold Atcherley in his own words:

- ***"My original group was 1,700 strong. By the time the railway was finished there were only 400 left ... Looking back now I can hardly believe I experienced all this."***
- ***"We watched the Japanese troops and they were unbelievable with what they put up with. There were times when the treatment and the food they got were not much better than ours."***
- ***"As Japanese troops were marched out of Singapore as prisoners shortly after its reoccupation by the Allies, they were watched by our men, by then free. One of them said to his mates "Poor buggers, now it's their turn". This did not reveal any hatred of the Japanese, and I found this to be true of the majority"***

Mr Mikio Kinoshita was born in July 1920. He was conscripted into The Japanese Army in 1941. In 1943, he was sent to join The Railway Regiment. He worked as an engineer on the Burmese side of the railway. When the railway was completed, he was posted to an army station in Burma which was attacked by Allied bombers. Many of his comrades were killed. After the war, Mr Kinoshita returned to Osaka and, in November 1947, he joined the Hanku railway. He married a month later. In 1961 Mr Kinoshita (who is a Buddhist) established the Kodomo-Kai children's organisation and then, in 1967 he set up the Tomoshi-Kai organisation for adolescents. Mikio Kinoshita worked as an advisor for children and young people until 1981. In 1982 he began working as a juvenile crime-prevention officer a role that he continued until 2001. Since 1989 Mr Kinoshita has been the vice-president of the Suita region crime prevention association. In 1990, his commitment to the welfare of young people led him to establish an organisation that provides holidays for disadvantaged families. He is the president of his local group of worshippers at Guzei-ji Buddhist temple and has also served as the also president of Kotobuki-kai – a society for elderly people. Mr Kinoshita has received many awards and honours (including honours from His Majesty, The Emperor) for his voluntary work with charities and his crime prevention work. Mr Kinoshita has returned to Myanmar (formerly Burma) every year for the past 25 years to light candles in remembrance of his fallen comrades and to attend the annual memorial service for the war dead. Mr Kinoshita lives in Osaka with his children, grandchildren and great-great grandchildren (who call him 'Mickey'). Mr Kinoshita will be 95 in July.



Mr Mikio Kinoshita in his own words:

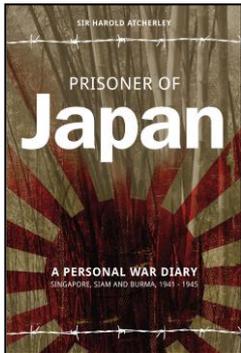
- ***"Killing human beings is the last thing that you should do. That is what I learned."***
- On being conscripted into the Japanese Army: ***"I really didn't want to go. It was my duty as a Japanese boy. I didn't like it at all. I didn't ever get used to it. The training was so unbearable. A friend suggested suicide."***
- On the accusations of systemic torture of POWs: ***"It was just a few soldiers, a small part of the army. Most soldiers didn't act like that, especially where I worked on the Burma side [of the railway] - but the Japanese military didn't follow the international regulations for the fair treatment of POWs."***



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Two former 'enemies' to meet 70 years after the end of WW2: further Information About Sir Harold Atcherley's book



PRISONER OF JAPAN

A PERSONAL WAR DIARY

Singapore, Siam and Burma 1941-1945

By Sir Harold Atcherley

with illustrations from the time by Ronald Searle OBE

ISBN: 978 1 909 304 53 6 Paperback 363 pages RRP: £14.50 Memoirs Publishing
Available through all good book shops and internet booksellers.

Originally published in 2013 to mark the 70th anniversary of the completion of the notorious Burma-Thailand Railway by POWs of the Japanese, Sir Harold's book is based on his, as-it-happened diary. Sir Harold was of one of the few POWs who survived working on the railway.

The book contains a unique collection of drawings made at the time by fellow POW, railway-worker (and good friend of the author), the artist, cartoonist and satirist Ronald Searle OBE (1920 – 2011).

The remarkable Sir Harold Atcherley (now aged 97) is available for interviews.

Sir Harold's original diaries and Ronald Searle's original drawings are now held at The Imperial War Museum.

During the course of the Second World War, more than a quarter of a million European, Australian and American soldiers were taken prisoner by the Japanese in Malaysia, the Dutch East Indies and the Pacific. These POWs went on to suffer years of deprivation, brutality and enforced hard-labour. Most of them perished in the unimaginably horrific conditions.

A young Army Captain, Harold Atcherley was one of the few fortunate enough to survive. Throughout his time as a prisoner, from the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942 until 14 September 1945, he kept a diary. He wrote it in pencil on scraps of paper and in school exercise books scrounged from wherever he could. He bound the diary together in brown paper covers with needle and thread. Remarkably, he was able to bring the diary home with him. This book is based on that diary (and other diaries and official documents from the time).

Around 1,600 POWs started work on the bridge at Sonkurai. Only 182 survived.

"Those who died did so as the consequence of overwork, starvation, diseases – particularly dysentery, malaria, and cholera – and, in many cases, brutal beatings by the Japanese engineers and camp guards. Of these diseases, cholera took a major toll. I do not recall a single case of cholera which did not prove fatal, and men usually died within 24 to 48 hours in the most appalling agony and physically unrecognisable ..." Sir Harold Atcherley

IMAGE: Sick and dying: Cholera. Siam-Burma Railway, 1943 (by Ronald Searle, OBE) >



Sir Harold's hopes for the future (excerpt from his book, *Prisoner of Japan*):

"We must all wonder from time to time whether our world will ever see an end to wars. Although this is highly unlikely, one can at least hope that they will not be on anything like the same scale as WW2 and that governments will learn from the appalling errors of Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. The world clearly faces huge problems, which are global in nature – population increase, water, food and energy shortages, not to mention climate change, any one of which may well lead to war. ... What then can be done to get governments to change course? I believe the younger generation everywhere has the capacity to start the process. They are far less nationalistic and more globally minded than my generation has been and are far better equipped than any previous generation has been to influence the political classes."

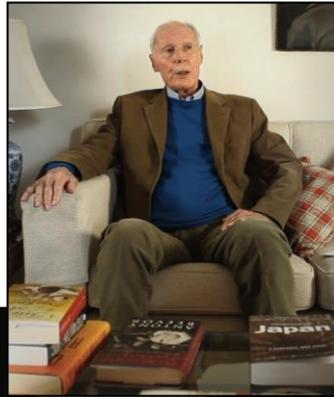


To request a review copy or to be put in touch with Sir Harold Atcherley, please contact

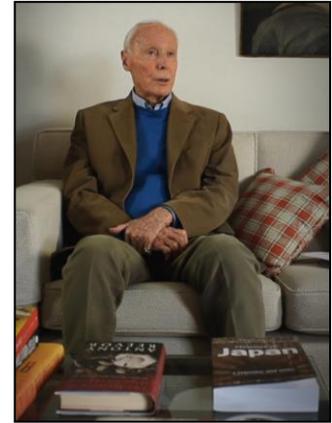
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**Two former 'enemies' to meet 70 years after the end of WW2: Further information
High-res images available on request**



Mr Mikio Kinoshita and Sir Harold Atcherley in the HLA film, *Moving Half the Mountain: The Building of the Death Railway*

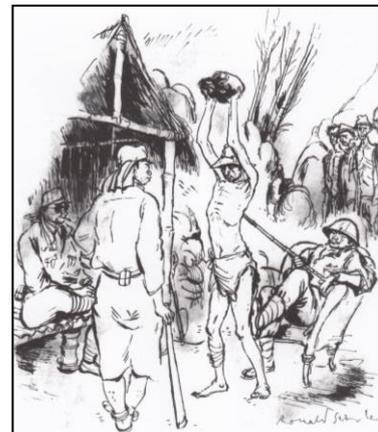


Examples of illustrations (from the time) by Ronald Searle OBE (1920 - 2011)

Ronald Searle (best-known for his St Trinian's and Nigel Molesworth creations) was a fellow Japanese prisoner of war with Sir Harold Atcherley. Throughout their time as POWs, Ronald Searle made countless sketches and drawings. Ronald Searle kindly gave Sir Harold permission to use his illustrations in the book *Prisoner of Japan*. Ronald Searle's original drawings and Sir Harold's original diary are held at The Imperial War Museum.



< L to R: Arrival of Japanese troops in Singapore City, February 1942; Hut interior, India Lines, Changi 1942; Train to Thailand (Siam) May 1943



< L to R: Prisoners on a jungle track during the monsoon, on their way to work on the Death Railway, 1943; Prisoners cutting into the mountain near Konyu, June 1943; Guards punishing a prisoner, 1943



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