

A story of tenacity, loyalty and camaraderie from WWII

From the 1950's I can recall one Allan Marriott, and I have vague, but good memories of him at that time. I knew him mainly as a friend of my parents whose name was often mentioned in our house. At the time, we had just moved to the North Mine, and lived in a mine residence (No.18) well inside the lease.

My father had moved from the South Mine to a role as Mechanical Engineer – he often joked that there was the First Engineer, the second Engineer and he was the “Tird” Engineer. I do recall him mentioning on one occasion that he had to recover a diamond ring the General Manager's wife had lost in the septic system, so perhaps there was a little truth to this joke.

Dad was a returned soldier, RAAF, and active Legacy and RSL member, and never spoke of WWII, but I do recall him having considerable respect for Allan for an unknown wartime event. Allan was in the mining operations and Dad was involved in Engineering and I know they were both involved heavily in construction of No.3 shaft and the No.3 Ventilation fan, and would have had daily interactions.

In the late 1990s, I was attending a Broken Hill reunion at the Gold Coast, and an elderly chap introduced himself to me as Allan. I knew his name immediately. We chatted for some time about Broken Hill, parents, the mines, regular social events in the 50s and 60s and where people were, but I was grasping for the detail and especially why he, and the stories he was telling me, were all so familiar.

Immediately we left the picnic, I called my Dad to get a refresher on the events of that time. During the conversation, he mentioned to me “Allan walked from Burma to India in front of the advancing Japs”. I've got pretty good geographical knowledge, but you don't need much to know that this was a bit more than a walk to the shops. In the 1950s I know that people would set out on immense walking journeys, as a normal part of life. We all know about the Cooee March! But Burma to India... jungle... mountains.... Hostile invaders pleased to kill you... This had to be a pretty courageous person and a significant journey.

Allan passed away in 2003 and whilst I had seen him a few times since, including joining him at his sprightly 90th birthday party at the Tweed Heads Golf Course, I had not had the opportunity to ask him about the story. Dad also told me that they had stayed behind after ensuring their wives and families had departed safely to ensure that “Ghurkhas and Chinese coolies” were all paid and looked after, to secure the company records and company financial assets (£3000 cash and silver), and to destroy the mine so that it could not be used to support the Japanese invasion. At this time Allan would have been in his very early 20s.

I know that Allan retired to the Gold Coast and was a greatly respected sportsman, and community person there, as he had been in Broken Hill. I did determine that very few of his retirement friends on the Coast knew much about Broken Hill, the Burma India march, and would also not know of his front-line involvement responding to underground incidents, accidents, fire and deaths. Perhaps as you read these following excerpts you might appreciate how witnessing and experiencing such violent and tragic events might influence a person's character.

The following excerpts are all sourced from <http://trove.nla.gov.au/> digitised Newspapers, and have been sorted into chronological order based on publish date. The detail and content was not written by me and the accreditations are at the beginning of each section. I have endeavoured to extract the content of the various news articles for easy reading, but you can search for the articles directly and read the scanned images online.

A search of the articles also reveals much of Allan's contribution to Broken Hill, as a local sportsman and as founding member of local organisations.

When Sir Frank Espie, General Manager of the project, located at another location. Many other Australian mining industry identities also experienced atrocities, in Changi and the Burma Railway, so again this does not decry any of their stories. I would often hear mention of their survival from Dad, with a brief statement, "He was at Changi", followed always with some moments of contemplative silence.

You will see reference to Sir Frank Espie, who was the General Manager of the project and located at another location. Many other Australian mining industry identities also experienced atrocities, in Changi and the Burma Railway, so again this does not decry any of their stories. I would often hear mention of their survival from Dad, with a brief statement, "He was at Changi", followed always with some moments of contemplative silence.

Allan and the other members of the party were not a serving members of the AIF and perhaps this is the only reason that they survived, but they were certainly played a significant role in the conflict in ensuring that resources could not fall into enemy hands.

The roles and military experience of the members of the escaping party are identified in the following humbling excerpts.

Note!

1. The shutdown team and the members at the commencement of the trek were:
 - H.R. Stafford, from Victoria - mine superintendent;
 - Percy Edwards - his assistant from Cornwall;
 - Harry Brook - an accountant from Yorkshire;
 - Dick Edgar - a 64-year-old English member of the staff;
 - Ron Miller-Randle - mine foreman from Broken Hill;
 - Owen Miller - mine foreman from Broken Hill; and,
 - Allan Marriott - mine foreman from Broken Hill.Only Brook, Miller and Marriott survived the trek.
2. The initial leader of the group, 40-year-old Mr. H.R. Stafford had previously been a commissioned officer in the AIF.
3. There are various terminologies and references that may not be politically correct today, but that is as it was. There are also some obvious errors in some of the reports!
4. There is reference to a two-volume diary recorded by Allan Marriott and a similar diary kept by Owen Kernan Miller. I have not ascertained where these might be now.
 - 673miles is approximately 1083km
 - £3000 in 1942 is roughly A\$220,000 in 2017
 - The silver is (possibly) still buried in the jungle

Collated and annotated by Jim Bills, originally of Broken Hill, NSW 12/1/2017

GIVEN POST IN BURMA MR.A. MARRIOTT LEAVING

Leading official of the Broken Hill Cycling Club, and most popular local sportsman, Mr. Allan A. Marriott, will leave shortly to take up a position with the Burma Corporation in Burma.

Before he leaves Broken Hill, probably at the end of next week, Mr. Marriott will be married to Miss D. Rees, of Iodide Street. Her father was well known here as a North footballer.

Mr. Marriott, who is a shift boss at the North mine, will take up a similar position with the Burma Company which operates a mine about the same size as that of the North Broken Hill Ltd.

News of his appointment, came as a surprise. Hasty plans are being made for his departure and wedding.

Mr. H. Miller, of Chloride Street, a shift boss at the Central mine, will also leave for Burma shortly to take up a position with the same company.

Mr. Marriott will be missed by a wide circle of friends and sporting bodies. He has been chairman of the Broken Hill Cycling Club since its inauguration three years ago, and is vice-president of the League of Wheelmen.

He is also a popular member of the North mine baseball team, for whom he played as a catcher. His interest also extended to cricket, and he played, for the staff team in the North Mine Cricket Association.

MINING IN BURMA - Bairnsdale Graduate on Staff - AN INTERESTING VOYAGE

Writing to Mr. F. C. Yeates from Burma, Mr. Alan Marriott, son of Mr. J. W. Marriott, of Bairnsdale, and a graduate of the Bairnsdale School of Mines, tells interestingly of his journey there after leaving Melbourne in August last with his wife.

Our journey here from Melbourne entailed boat and train travel, and we passed through Ceylon, India and Burma. The journey to Colombo was, except for being a bad sailor, very interesting, as it was my first journey on a big liner, and gave us an opportunity of having a look at Perth, where we stayed all day. Here I saw an aunt of mine for the first time and also other relations whom I had not seen for many years. At Perth, we had to change our Australian cash to English money for use on board.

Colombo was very interesting and during our 10-hour stay we had a good tour round. On arrival, we anchored out in the harbor and immediately had scores of lighters and ferries alongside to carry freight and passengers ashore. All labor is native and any bother with luggage was got over by leaving it with Thos. Cook and Co. who handle luggage and arrange the transport in all corners of tile world. The biggest bugbear in these parts is the constant "tipping" required for any service rendered by the native element.

After passing the customs and changing all our English cash into Ceylon currency of rupees and cents. we proceeded to make an inspection and do some shopping.

On leaving the custom office we were instantly met with ricksha runners, pedlars, beggars and guides, who all wanted something one way or the other; and are they persistent, and real stickers? In all the streets you meet with this, and it is very annoying when one wants to look around and not be bothered.

Colombo has a nice shopping centre, and good residential areas where there are most beautiful gardens of tropical growth.

We toured ancient parts of the city, where we saw work done by the early Portuguese. We also passed through the native section, with their huddled dwellings and wayside stalls. It is simply amazing the way some of them live and the number that live together in a little humpy. Living for them is very cheap, rice being the staple diet and is very cheap and a few cents a day is sufficient for them to exist on.

We also paid a visit to a Buddhist temple and had a look round. Of course, we had to submit to the custom of removing our footwear. The workmanship is really beautiful and splendidly done, dozens of figures hand-painted representing their God – Buddha - and the disciples attached thereto. Every worshipper carries a white flower which is laid at the foot of the God before kneeling in prayer. The Buddhist priests are "funny looking chaps." (The Burman is Buddhist also). They are dressed in brilliant yellow wraps with one shoulder bare and have close cropped hair which is never covered. They do not cook any food themselves, but have to rely on the charity of their worshippers. They go out in the morning with large bowls and the residents fill these with food for them.

It is truly remarkable the number of deformed, crippled and maimed natives you see in these parts, all begging for a living. One would want to be Henry Ford, Rockfeller and two or three more millionaires combined to cope with all the beggars. Even children in arms are taught to beg; they salaam by touching their foreheads, then smack their "tummies" and hold out their little hands.

After touring the city thoroughly, we went out to Mount Levinia. Time did not permit a visit up the mount. A replica of a footprint from the mount (reputed to be one of Adam's) is in the Buddhist temple we visited, and is one of the objects of worship.

A series of natural bridges between Ceylon and South India and are known as Adam's Bridges.

Owing to the size of my head I had a little difficulty in getting a topee in Colombo and our guide finished up taking us into the native bazaar to try and get me to buy one, but with no luck, much to his annoyance for he got no "squeeze" as I eventually got one at one of the larger shops I missed in the city in my first attempt. If these guides take you to a shop and you buy anything the guide will always get his commission from the deal.

It was in Colombo that we had an opportunity of seeing the natives cutting precious stones - a most interesting process, with their primitive wheels, but the degree of polish matches any by more scientific methods.

We were unfortunate in that, owing to war affairs, we were not able to go direct from Colombo to Rangoon by boat as that service had to be taken for troop transport. We had to go by train to Talimannar in the north of Ceylon, a journey which took all night in a hot stuffy train on bunks like pieces of board. On arrival at Talimannar (Tal-i-man-nar) we had to board the ferry for transport to India, a two-hour journey. Then bother with the Indian customs and another 24-hour journey by the worst train I have ever ridden in, to Madras. We changed our cash again on the ferry into Indian currency. This section of the journey was terrible, a matter of 500 odd miles and we called at 105 stations en route, each one a mass of yelling, smelling natives changing in and out of trains selling wares or begging. The train track is more like the scenic railway at Luna Park, and the carriages have square wheels. I am sure the Australian Government would order the lot to be burned if they could, for the carriages are very rough and dirty, especially the sanitary and wash services. It is absolutely the worst train I was ever in, and believe me I never want to ride in it again.

On arrival at Madras we were that fagged and dirty that we went straight on board our boat without even bothering to look round the place.

Our boat journey across the Bay of Bengal to Rangoon was very smooth as the monsoon period had not started. This stretch of water is very rough during the monsoons and ranks with the roughest in the seven seas during these periods. It was only last week that a boat sprung its plates in the bay coming down from Calcutta and sunk, luckily with all hands saved. Here, as well as in the Indian Ocean, we were able to see thousands upon thousands of flying fish. I used to think that flying fish stories were on a par with Red Riding Hood, but I am satisfied that they do definitely fly.

The boats that ply round these ports carry a big number of deck passengers, natives crossing from different places. They pay a few chips: (rupees) for their passage which consists of space on the aft deck to park themselves and belongings and supply their own food. They are put at the stern so that the smell is wafted aft with the breeze! Of course, it is just too bad if there is a following wind.

Our first sign of approach to Burma was the thick muddy water miles out to sea from the delta of the Irrawaddy River. The passage across the delta took several hours and when we picked up our pilot we took four more hours to reach Rangoon, about forty miles in a muddy stream, which can prove very treacherous. The river banks were not very impressive, no scenery such as one witnesses up the good old Mitchell - no weeping willows, wattle, silver poplars or Eagle Point cliffs, just mud flats, with an occasional dwelling.

The first sight of Rangoon was the magnificent golden spire of the Schwa Dagon Pagoda above the horizon miles before we saw a sight of any other edifice, and as we approached the city by the winding river this spire showed out its magnificence.

It is 380 feet high and stands on the crest of a rise in the city; it is gold-sheathed and plated from top to bottom, and is a wonderful sight with the sun on it. From the first, as we wended our way up the muddy water to our landing, Rangoon far from impressed us and after 24 hours there our impressions had not

alt. Escape from Burma by Irvin Graham 1942. near the wharf and though being "extra nice" the grandest part was the tariff. I felt like telling the attendant that I did not want to buy the hotel.

We had a good time round Rangoon both on foot and by car and apart from two or three good streets of shops was nothing impressive, just a typical Eastern city, dirty, with its huddled native shops and quarters. It has a population of 500,000, of every race one can think of. During our tour we made an inspection of the Schwa Dagon Pagoda, again barefooted, and it is truly remarkable the workmanship and the ability displayed in this structure. Around the base are hundreds of shrines containing statues of Buddhas in various sires and positions, all remarkably well painted and decked with valuable stones. Each one has a precious stone of immense value placed in the centre of the forehead and their value, and gold in the spire, is worth a fabulous sum.

There are several smaller Pagodas in Rangoon, one the Sule Pagoda is just a few minutes' walk from the main street and all roads are diverted round it, as it is, really in the intersection of several main streets. The Schwa Dagon Pagoda is many hundreds of years old and the devotion of the Burman is very keen, and superstitions also. There are many thousands of pagodas throughout Burma, ranging from several feet high to hundreds and on each one is lavished equal devotion. The ground upon which they are built is forever holy and even if a pagoda falls into a heap of dirt the ground is still holy and cannot be touched.

One remarkable Buddha in Rangoon is the Na-Datche Reclining Buddah. This is a huge figure reclining on its right elbow and is 60 feet from elbow to top of the head and 180 feet from elbow to feet and is beautifully painted and jewelled.

From Rangoon to Bawdwin, we had two train journeys; the first by the Burma railway to Namyao, near Lestro 560 miles from Rangoon and thence north 44 miles by the company's rail. The Burma railway is a decided improvement on the Southern Indian line and we travelled in a certain amount of comfort; probably the fact that we had a servant boy travelling on the train with us, helped, for he attended to our wants en route. (He, by the way, is a Mandrassi Indian and a Christian. He is about 45 years of age and has turned out to be a good boy both in house and kitchen). The Burma line traverses fairly flat country throughout Lower Burma and passes through Mandalay. Whether this is the place the song is about I don't know, but being 440 miles inland with no flying fish makes me doubtful. When the line passes from Lower to Upper Burma the country and scenery both change from flat uninteresting rice country to rugged mountain and jungle country. The line here is more interesting also, for in places it is necessary to zig-zag the line backwards and forwards on the mountain face to gain elevation to pass over a "saddle." Then we pass over the famous "Go Teik" bridge, a truly remarkable piece of work. The bottom of the gorge is about 650 feet below the rails while the bridge crosses a natural arch of rock some 350 feet above the bottom of the gorge leaving the bridge about 300 feet high. It is an all-steel structure 1100 feet long and when I mention the crisis over the Burma road of late, well, you will realise how important this structure is to us and it is most carefully guarded twenty-four hours a day, for we cannot afford to allow any fanatic near it. Burma railways, by the way, are metre gauge. On reaching our destination on this line we transferred to the company's line and were transported the 44 miles to Bawdwin by motor trolley. The gauge here is 2 feet and the hilly nature of the country will not allow any more, for it would be impossible to fit the turns with a bigger gauge.

After travelling for 32 miles on this track we arrived at Nambu where the mill, smelter and refinery are situated. After interviewing the general manager of the company, we proceeded on the last twelve miles of our journey to Bawdwin. From Nambu to Bawdwin we climb about 1500 feet and in this 12 miles the longest straight stretch is only a matter of a fraction of a mile. Here, again, the zig-zag is used to gain elevation, while in one place it was found necessary to build a spiral in the end of a gully to climb over the "saddle." They built bridges across the gully and put in 1½ circles of a spiral and got over. Another interesting feature, impossible with a larger gauge. This spiral is situated at Tiger Camp, five miles by line

from ~~from the American Institute of this~~ 1942. Every curve on this 44 miles of track has a check rail for safety sake, for I can. assure you it's the "grand finale" if ever the conveyance left the track on some of these curves for there are - well, just wide, open spaces below.

Escape from Burma to India April - June 1942

Barrier Daily Truth (Broken Hill, NSW: 1908; 1941 - 1954), Saturday 4 July 1942, page 3

MR. KERN MILLER SAFE

Mrs. Kern Miller, who was evacuated from her home in Burma some months ago, has received a cable with the welcome news that her husband has arrived safely in India. This is her first news of him since she left, when he and two other Broken Hill men, Mr. Allan Marriott and Mr. Ron Miller Randall, were left to fend for themselves.

Miss Miller is staying with her parents Mr. and Mrs. J. Hawes, of Garnet Street, and expects to go to Adelaide towards the end of the month.

LONG TREK IN BURMA Britons Avoid Japanese

LONDON, Thursday. According to the Calcutta correspondent of Associated Press, the only survivors of a party of seven who spent 60 days trekking 600 miles from Burma to India are three Englishmen and two Australians.

The original leader of the party, H. R. Stafford, was murdered by Burmese dacoits. Another member, Roy Miller Randle, of Adelaide, became too ill to continue the trek, and it is believed he died before bearers could take him back to a Japanese medical post.

The two Australian survivors are Owen Miller and Allen Marriott. With the other survivors, they evaded Japanese tanks in Upper Burma, and refused invitations to join Chinese infantry. They fled along the banks of the Irrawaddy, but were finally caught by the Japanese on the Uyu River, which is a tributary of the Chindwin.

They persuaded an English-speaking Japanese general to grant them safe conduct on the ground that some of his men had attempted to steal their boots.

The general conducted them to a river, and they embarked on a crude raft. The general said farewell, but at the last moment changed his mind and called them back. The party, then downstream, refused to return and went on unmolested.

The trek began from the Burma Corporation's headquarters in the Northern Shan States, where the men were employed.

The survivors, who have been in hospital in India for several weeks, have revealed that 8,000 Japanese regular troops were sent up the Chindwin Valley in pursuit of the British and Chinese, but were recalled early in June, leaving few, if any, skeleton outposts in the malarial jungle area in north-eastern Burma.

Trek Through Burma SIXTY DAYS IN JUNGLE TWO AUSTRALIANS IN PARTY

London, July 29. — The Associated Press correspondent at Calcutta says that the survivors of a party of seven which spent 60 days in trekking 600 miles from Burma to India are three Englishmen and two Australians. The party was originally led by Mr. H. R. Stafford of Wedderburn, Victoria, whom Burmese dacoits murdered. An Adelaide man Roy Miller-Randle, became too ill to continue the trek and is believed to have died before bearers could take him back to a Japanese medical post.

The two Australian survivors are Owen Miller and Allen Marriott.

The survivors evaded Japanese tanks in Upper Burma, refused invitations to join the Chinese infantry and fled along the banks of the Irrawaddy. They were finally caught by the Japanese on the Dyu River, which is a tributary of the Chindwin. They persuaded an English-speaking Japanese general to grant them a safe conduct on the grounds that some of his men had attempted to steal their boots. The general conducted them to the river and they embarked on a crude raft. The general bade farewell, but at the last moment changed his mind and called them back. The party, now downstream, refused to return and went on unmolested.

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Dangerous Trek by Two Broken Hill Men: Third Man Believed to Be Dead

How a Broken Hill man, Mr. Allan Marriott, formerly a shift boss at the North Mine, had spent 60 days travelling 600 miles with a party from Burma to India, has been told by an Australian Associated Press correspondent from Calcutta. The other Australian in the party was Mr. Owen Kernan Miller, whose parents reside in Chloride Street. Mrs. Miller, formerly Miss Pat Hawes is also in Broken Hill.

The trek began from the Burma Corporation Headquarters in the North Shan States, where the men were employed and was made more hazardous by their continual contact with Japanese units.

They evaded Japanese tanks in Upper Burma, refused invitations to join Chinese infantry and, fled along the banks of the Irrawaddy.

On another occasion, they were caught by the Japanese at the Uyu River, a tributary of the Chindin, but persuaded an English-speaking Japan-ese commander to grant them safe conduct on the ground that some of his men had attempted to steal their boots.

The commander conducted them to the river, where they embarked on a crude raft bidding the Japanese farewell. At the last moment, however, he changed his mind and called them back, but as they were downstream they refused to return and continued on unmolested.

Of a party of seven, only three survivors - Marriott, Miller and an Englishman - reached India.

Another former Broken Hill man, Mr. R. Miller Randle became too ill to continue the trek and is believed to have died before the bearers could take him back to a Japanese medical post.

Mr. Miller Randle, who is a son of the late Mr. Roy Miller Randle, an Adelaide dentist, and Mrs. Miller Randle, married Miss Betty Kidman. He was employed at the North mine before going to Burma.

BROKEN HILL MEN REJECTED AS PRISONERS; GRAPHIC STORY OF THEIR TRYING ORDEAL IN BURMA

(From a Special Correspondent)

CALCUTTA. -Four Australians and three Englishmen, trapped in Burma, walked through Japanese lines for 60 days until at least five of them, emaciated and stumbling from weakness, slid down a hillside into a British camp on the Assam frontier.

Once on their 660-mile journey, when desperate with hunger and weariness, they had given themselves up to the Japanese, but the Japanese would not have them, so openly now they had kept on, staggering along roads between long lines of advancing Japanese troops.

Their leader, H. R. Stafford, of Wedderburn, Victoria, was murdered by dacoits.

Another, Ron Miller-Randle, of Adelaide, ill with dysentery and crippled with hernia, found he could go no farther, and begged them to leave him to die in the jungle. At last, complying with his pleas, and recognising: that only urgent medical treatment could save his life, they bribed Shan tribesmen to carry him by stretcher back to the Japanese.

"I couldn't get through alive, and if you had me it would hamper you; you wouldn't get through either," he told his mates. He scribbled a note for them to take to his wife in Australia, and the last they saw of him was his cheery wave as he was carried away.

The seven men, employees of the Burma Corporation, had stayed on in the northern Shan States after their wives, who are now in Australia, and other Europeans had left. They did not know that the Japanese had smashed through the Chinese line until an enemy column was only a few miles away.

MONEY ON MULES

Stafford, a mine superintendent, Percy Edwards, his assistant from Cornwall, Harry Brook, an accountant from Yorkshire, and Dick Edgar, a 64-year-old English member of the staff, spent all next day from dawn till midnight paying off 3000 Gurkha and Chinese coolies employed by the corporation.

Miller-Randle, Owen Miller and Allan Marriott, mine foremen from Broken Hill, stayed on too.

"Stafford was an Australian, so naturally we decided to stick with him," Miller told me.

Next day, with a few Eurasian employees, the party headed for Namhkam in the midst of a milling mass of fleeing coolies and their families. Packs, in which they had 37,000 rupees in notes, were carried on mules.

Five miles from Namhkam they came on the bodies of Japanese and Chinese soldiers killed in a battle the previous day. They hid beside the track while Japanese rumbled past in tanks.

In the darkness, they slipped around the town where Japanese officers on a bridge across a river, guarded by machine-guns, were telling coolies they would let them through in three days' time, when they had cleaned-up Upper Burma.

For a month, Stafford, riding a mule, led his little party across rivers and around towns and villages packed with Japanese, often using by night roads and tracks along which the enemy streamed by day. The Europeans, in the daytime, with rifles by their sides and their mules hidden deeper in the jungle, alternately dozed and watched them pass.

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They crossed the Shweli River, hoping to reach Katha, but turned back when they heard that the enemy was there in force.

Once they met a band of Chinese fighting their way to China. They were invited to join them, but decided to try to find their own way through the Japanese net.

Tigyaing was full of Japanese; so was every other centre in their path as they wandered on despairingly. They crossed the Irrawaddy on some of the 93 elephants left by the Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation, towing their mules behind them.

Food was scarce now - a dixie of rice daily and a couple of chickens which they managed to buy occasionally were all they had. Blistered feet and sores began to fester. Fever struck them one by one. But they kept going.

Along the track lay the bodies of hundreds of Japanese and Chinese soldiers, hundreds of skeletons of refugees, and even carcasses of elephants. They named it the Valley of Death.

When they got to the little village of Kotha, one of the few not occupied by the Japanese, they heard on the headman's wireless that the British had withdrawn from Burma. "We just didn't care now whether the Japanese got us or not," Miller told me. "They went on."

Next day Stafford was murdered. A Burman had offered to guide them, but he guided them into an ambush by dacoits. A ragged volley burst out from the jungle, and Stafford and a Eurasian fell, riddled with bullets.

TRAIL OF BLOOD

Edwards took command now and led the six Europeans west along paths so thick with leaves from Teak trees that they often lost the way. The dacoits kept on their heels, following a trail of blood left by a wounded mule until Miller shot it.

That night they abandoned their mules so as to attract less attention and be more mobile. "

We even threw away gold watches," Miller told me.

Next day, on the path, they had to step over the bodies of five Europeans who had been shot by dacoits. Farther on they passed hundreds of dead and dying Indian refugees.

AWOKE IN VIEW OF ENEMY TROOPS

Edgar now was only able to struggle alone with the greatest difficulty. Miller-Randle was being carried in a litter by four coolies.

When they reached the Uyu River they built a bamboo raft to float to Homalin. That night they bumped into a bank in the darkness and camped on the side of the river, but woke next morning to find themselves in full view of Japanese soldiers marching along a road a few yards away.

"We thought this would solve all our troubles, and were glad," Miller told me, "but the Japanese took no notice of us. After a time, I got up, grabbed one of them, and said, 'We are British.' He did not even unsling his rifle, but just looked at us, then beckoned us to follow him."

MET THE GENERAL

"Edgar and Miller-Randle were too weak to move so we left them and followed the Japanese in the midst of the marching men. They didn't even look at us. We went ahead until we came to a bungalow, about a mile down the road, where there were a lot of Japanese officers. We went in and I said to one cove: 'Are you the general?' He said: 'Yes.' So I told him we had a couple of sick men and to send a doctor to attend them."

"He gave us an injection and tablets to take. The general asked if we were soldiers. When we said 'No' he said: 'You're travellers?' and I said: 'We certainly are.'

"He said he would have to take our rifles, revolvers, and hand grenades. There were thousands of Japanese soldiers streaming past the bungalow. They were passing with mules on which they had cannon and machine-guns and down at the river they were salvaging abandoned cars and lorries.

"The Japanese general said that the soldiers were regulars of the Imperial Japanese Army. They seemed very well disciplined. He said he wished that the war was over - he and many other officers spoke good English - so that he could go home to his wife and daughters. He showed us pictures of them, and Edwards showed him a picture of his little daughter.

"Then the general shook hands with us and said good-bye. We waited a little while, then I said: 'Did you say good-bye? Do you mean we are free to go? He said: 'Yes; good-bye.'

EYES ON BOOTS

"We walked back to our camp through columns of troops. Some were knocking green mangoes from trees to flavor their rice. Others were squatting by the roadside trying to repair their boots with wire and string. None had a decent pair of boots; the soles of many were almost completely off.

When we got back to our camp we found some soldiers standing I around looking hungrily at our boots. They had already tried to persuade Miller-Randle and Edgar to give up theirs.

We thought we wouldn't get very far without being stripped of our things, so I went back to the general. "Your damned soldiers are trying to take our boots," I said so he wrote out for us a safe-conduct and came down to the river bank himself to see us off.

" My soldiers are coming up the river," he said, "so show the pass or they will go pip-pop-pop-pop. The Japanese are very good; we will look after your sick men." I said: "Well, damn it! We'd do the same for you." We again shook hands and, as we pushed off, he waved, and we shouted: "Cheerio, general; thanks for all you've done."

The party continued down-river unchallenged. Miller-Randle had been getting progressively worse, and his condition now, largely because of dysentery, was pitiful. He pleaded with them to leave him, but Shan villagers offered to take him to Homalin for medical aid - the only course possible.

Two days later the five others reached the Chindwin River, only to learn that Homalin had been laid flat by British bombings. It was reported to have been abandoned.

SEARCH FOR MATE

Immediately, weak as they were, the five, so near safety, set out for Homalin to search for their friend. In a village, however; they met a Madras Doctor Nur Singh, and his son, whose legs had been broken by the Japanese. The doctor, formerly a public health officer in Homalin, undertook to go there and inquire about Miller-Randle.

They waited until he returned two days later to tell them that Homalin was deserted.

"There was nothing we could do now except pray hard that the Japanese had got him and were looking after him," said Miller. "As they were regular troops here, I am pretty, certain they would attend him."

Staggering every yard, they walked now, the five men began the long climb into the Chin Hills, 5000ft up, and exactly 60 days after leaving Bawdwin they crossed the frontier into India. All had lost more than two stone in weight; Brook had lost more than four.

Fate Played Grimly With Burma Mine Man

FATE played grimly with the life of Mr. H. R. Stafford, who was murdered by dacoits while leading a party, including three Broken Hill men, through Burma to India. Mr. Stafford, who was underground manager of the Burma Corporation mine, was a personal friend of Mr F. T. Kerr, local Inspector of Mines. During the last war Mr. Stafford was unscathed after serving in Gallipoli, Egypt and France.

The story of Mr. Stafford's murder and the trials of the party in their 660-mile trek was told in "The Barrier Miner" yesterday. The Broken Hill men were Messrs. A. Marriott. Ron Miller-Randle, and Owen Miller.

Mr. Stafford, who was about 40 years of age, was educated at Wesley College, Melbourne, and the Melbourne University. He studied mining engineering at the Varsity in 1912-13-14. and then enlisted in the A.I.F. He rose to a commissioned rank after serving as an engineer, and later with the infantry.

On his return from active service Mr. Stafford completed his engineering course and then took up a position at Wangaratta at the Eldorado Dredge. He Visited Mr. Kerr in Broken Hill before leaving for Burma -in 1923.

Two years ago, he became underground manager of the Bawdwin mines in succession to Mr. Espie general manager.

Mr. Kerr said that he learned with regret of the death of Mr. Stafford under such tragic circumstances after escaping unscathed .in the Great. War. He praised him as a man of high personal character.

Mr. Kerr also praised the courage and tenacity of the. other members of the party on the long trek to safety.

Escape from Burma to India April - June 1942
Barrier Miller (Broken Hill, NSW : 1888 - 1954), Monday 14 September 1942, page 3

MR. KERNAN MILLER SAFE IN AUSTRALIA

Friends of Mr. Kernan Miller, son of Mr. and Mrs. O. Miller, of Chloride Street, will be pleased to hear of his safe arrival, in Australia, from India. He is expected in Broken Hill in a fortnight.

Some months ago, Mr. Miller was concerned in a particularly hazardous trek from Burma when it was invaded by Japanese.

His wife arrived in Australia some months ago, and is at present living in Broken Hill.

660-MILE TREK TO ESCAPE JAPS; S.A. MAN IN PARTY

One of the most remarkable escape stories of this war was told in Adelaide today by Mr. O. K. Miller, 33-year-old ex-Broken Hill miner. He was a member of a party of seven Europeans, including four Australians, and nine Eurasians who tried to escape 660 miles across Burma to India, through country wholly occupied by Japanese.

Their leader and former mine superintendent. Mr. H. R. Stafford, of Wedderburn, Victoria, was murdered by Burmese robbers in an ambush when Nelson, one of the Eurasian mine employees, was also killed. The fate of Mr. Ron Miller Randle, formerly of Adelaide and Broken Hill, is, still unknown. One Eurasian deserted the party in the Burmese jungle, preferring to take his chance by living as a Burmese in the midst of Japanese-occupied territory, to the ordeal of escaping to India.

Mr. Miller said today that the self-sacrificing leadership of Mr. Stafford and the heroism of Mr. Miller Randle, who wanted to be abandoned in the jungle, as he was seriously ill, instead of being a burden to the rest of the party, were never to be forgotten.

The men made their escape mostly on blistered feet, their legs covered with sores, sometimes on the backs of mules and ponies, or on rafts, dodging Japanese-occupied villages, until sickness, mainly painful and weakening dysentery, defeated them temporarily, and they had to give themselves up to the enemy.

Mr. Miller and his companions were interviewed by a Japanese general. who not only ordered his doctors to attend to Mr. Miller Randle and the other sick, but also issued them with a signed safe conduct pass through the lines of his army, which is probably unique in this war.

The party consisted of employees of the Burma Corporation silver, lead, and zinc mine, at Bawdwin, in the north-east of Burma.

In the party was a fourth Australian, Allan Marriott, of Victoria, who left Broken Hill in May, 1940, with Miller, and returned with him to Adelaide a few days ago. They had remained in Bawdwin until the last minute to pay off more than 3,000 coolies employed at the mine and to do demolition work.

On April 25, they learnt that the Japanese were approaching and expected to reach Lashio, the end of the Burma Road, about 20 miles away, by midnight.

QUININE TAKEN

Each man grabbed a firearm. They broke into the hospital and took 10 lb. of quinine, which later saved their lives on the gruelling 660-mile trek. which took them 60 days.

They were twice foiled in attempts to get to the upper reaches of the Irrawaddy River. With the greatest caution, they passed within sight of Japanese columns and crossed the river further south on elephants.

They carried the remainder of the company's money, more than £3,000 in silver and notes, and the office records. They took these safely to India, although they had to discard almost everything else. They buried four bags of silver in the jungle.

Other dangers of the trek included armed Burmese robbers, who in some parts waylaid evacuees and killed them.

Their perilous path led them through the thickest jungle, dangerous malaria country, and over steep, slippery mountains, just before they made the Indian frontier, taxing their failing strength to the utmost. They all succumbed to malaria and dysentery.

~~Mr. Miller Randle, who had a hernia, was unable to continue and had to be carried.~~
1942

The party encountered Japanese troops and sought treatment for Mr. Miller Randle, which was given.

They were taken to a general and questioned. Then Mr. Miller initiated the supreme joke of the venture, and asked the general for a safe conduct pass through the Japanese lines. To his surprise, he was given one. The general's name was M. Migikiaki.

PASS EFFECTIVE

The party was stopped several times by Japanese, but the general's pass was so effective that a non-commissioned officer addressed Miller as "Sir". At a village, further down the river, four Shan tribesmen were bribed to take Mr. Miller Randle, who was worse, down-stream to Japanese-occupied Homalin, in the hope that there he would get proper hospital treatment.

Two days later they learned that Homalin had been flattened by British bombs and deserted by the Japs. Although inquiries and searches were organised by the exhausted fugitives, no more was heard of Mr. Miller Randle.

The rest continued on into the rugged, mountainous frontier district, climbing up to 8,000 ft. over the most difficult country of the whole trek. The last stretch into India was made on a well-trodden refugee track.

ACROSS FRONTIER

On June 13, the party reached Fort Keary, on the Assam frontier, and 13 days later they staggered into Kohima. the first outpost of civilisation.

Despite the friendly treatment, the party received from the hands of Gen. Migikiaki, Mr. Miller is inclined to believe all the tales of Japanese atrocities that have come from all theatres of the war.

"From the first-hand tales, I have heard along our trek and the evidence of my own eyes, it is undisputable that the Japanese soldiers in out-of-the-way villages loot and rape at will. The regular Imperial troops were perhaps an exception," Mr. Miller said.

Barrier Miner (Broken Hill, NSW : 1888 - 1954), Saturday 26 September 1942, page 5

Remarkable Escape From Burma; Mr. Miller Back Home

MR. O. KERNAN MILLER, a former Broken Hill miner, who had a remarkable escape from Burma when it was invaded by the Japanese, returned to Broken Hill today. Relatives expressed surprise at seeing Mr. Miller so well, as they expected him to be showing signs of the trying experiences he had been through.

After leaving Calcutta for Australia the boat on which Mr. Miller was travelling sighted two submarines and put back to port. These were later identified as Japanese vessels, as there were no British submarines in the area.

Mr. Miller said today that the self-sacrificing leadership of Mr. H. R. Stafford, of Wedderburn, Victoria, who was murdered in an ambush by dacoits in the jungle, and the heroism of another member of the party would never be forgotten.

The party included seven Europeans, four of them Australians, and nine Eurasians. The trek was made from Burma to India, a distance of 660 miles.

The party consisted of employees of the Burma Corporation silver, lead and zinc mine, at Bawdwin, in the north-east of Burma.

In the party was another former Broken Hill man, Mr. Allan Marriott, who left Broken Hill in May, 1940, with Miller, and returned with him to Adelaide a few days ago. They had remained in Bawdwin until the last minute to pay off more than 3000 coolies employed at the mine and to do demolition work.

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Mr. Miller is still under contract to the Burma Corporation, the agreement expiring at Christmas. He said today his future movements were uncertain, but he would remain in Broken Hill for some time.

Mr. ~~Ermer, who was in India April 30, 1942~~ ~~Ermer, who was in India April 30, 1942~~ after the Japanese attacked Malaya and arrived back on May 13.

Escape from Burma to India April - June 1942
Barrier Daily Truth (Broken Hill, NSW: 1908; 1941 - 1954), Monday 28

September 1942, page 2

MR. ALLAN MARRIOTT RETURNING

Mr. Allan Marriott has reached Australia. and is at present at Peterborough S.A. Prior to going to Burma and having some unenviable experiences in escaping from the Japs. Mr. Marriott was employed on the North Mine staff.

During a telephone conversation with Mr. H. W. Carthew, who is a close friend, he signified his intentions of coming to Broken Hill to renew acquaintances. He will arrive by next Thursday morning's train.

In conversation Mr. Carthew stated: "Allan and I have been in communication with each other pretty regularly during the whole period that he has been away, but it was quite exciting to hear his voice for the first time in three years, and I am certainly anxious to meet both Allan and his family again."

Thrilling Escape from Japanese; Mr. Allen Marriott Home

A LOCAL man who owes his life to the fact that when, he was captured by Japanese in Burma the General was a kindly chap, who was fed up with the war and wanted to get back home to his wife and three children, is Mr. Allen Marriott. The General let the party go, after holding them for a day. After a remarkable 60-day trek through jungle in which they covered 673 miles they reached safety. Mr. Marriott arrived here yesterday morning.

A few. days ago "The Barrier Miner" gave an outline of the story of this trip according to the account Mr. O. Kernan Miller, who was one of the party.

The party was captured by Japanese after they had covered about two thirds, of their terrible journey. "We were lucky, because the General was not only retreating: and did not want to be bothered-with prisoners, but he was a kindly chap as well," said Mr. Marriott.

"He gave us good food and gave us medical attention as well. I suppose he thought we were too much of a scarecrow lot to bother about. He could have shot us, but he actually told us he was sick of the war and wanted to get back to Japan to his wife and his three daughters. Even when he let us go the captain of the band raised a rumpus at the last minute and wanted us taken along as prisoners - however, the General persisted in letting us go."

Messrs. Marriott and Miller, both local men, were in a party of seven whites and nine natives, who began the trek from Bawdwin, in the north-east of Burma. They were employees of the Burma Corporation silver, lead and zinc mine there. Before the trek was finished their leader, Mr. H. R. Stafford, of Victoria, and another man in the party were murdered when they were ambushed by dacoits, Burmese thugs. On the long route through a maze of jungle, across treacherous rivers, and up and down steep hills and mountains they suffered badly from lack of food and from tropical fever. On the track, they saw the corpses of thousands of refugees, who had died because of privation.

One man they came across who was at the point of death, was overrun with meat ants who were slowly eating him alive. His body was covered with ants. At the time they arrived he had only strength enough to brush them off his face. Another old woman who was dying shrieked out for water. When they gave it to her she just splashed it over herself. She was too far gone to know what to do with it.

Malaria and dysentery dogged them all the way. Some of the whites were poisoned by leeches and developed terrible sores on their legs.

The one thing that helped them on the trip was that they were able to trek from village to village and receive new supplies and engage new bearers as they went along. Much of the time they slept on the ground.

Mr. Marriott has written up his experiences, in a two-volume diary.

An entry told a story of how a section of British holding a bridge were outwitted by a lorry load of "Chinese." They were Japs in disguise. The British let them pass over the bridge and the Japs then turned Tommy guns on them.

For the first 200 miles or so. they had horses and mules to help them out, which was just as well from Mr. Marriott's point of view, as in the first few days when they walked, his knee had "conked out," and the journey was extremely painful. Another member developed, leg trouble also.

At the 228-mile stage, after an exhausting - time when their mules had to be taken through a bog, one of the Anglo-Indians deserted.

"Then, rounding a turn in the track we were surprised to find a big elephant: standing in the middle of the path. Not knowing, whether it was tame or wild and whether it would attack us, I unslung my rifle for action, and told O'Hara to do likewise." continued Mr. Marriott. "Imagine my surprise when he told me he had nothing in the rifle and no ammunition on him. He belonged to the Militia and was apparently of the mind that a .303 rifle was carried for an ornament. I hurriedly gave him some ammunition from my bandolier but by the time he had loaded the elephant had beat it. It was fortunately a tame worker, and was hobbled. I was very pleased to see him hobble away.

They had anxious times avoiding prowling parties of Japanese, occasionally had to duck for cover as Jap planes came over. Sometimes there was a funny side to it, as this extract shows:

"Three Jap - bombers passed over us. Everyone, of course, scattered for cover and when we looked round for Brook he had somehow, got off his pony, we don't know how, probably fell off it, and was, on his hands and knees alongside the pony. He certainly looked comical. I could only see a rear view of both pony and Brook. He probably thought he would, look like a foal alongside the pony."

The big trek started on April 25. Almost a. month later, on May 23, Stafford and Melson were murdered by dacoits. The party were curious to find that the natives in one village had army, saddle and clothes for sale. Unfortunately, they thought no more of it and engaged bearers and guides from the villagers. These 1 men mysteriously disappeared in a treacherous piece of jungle country.

They were left to find their own way. Because the path was over steep hills the party became strung out. When. Marriott and his men reached a ridge the leaders were further down the slope. Suddenly there was rapid burst of fire from the hill I lower down.

"We were dumbfounded for a short time; we didn't know what was happening. Some of the crowd came quickly back up the track. We had been ambushed by dacoits. On checking up we found, that Stafford and Melson were missing as well as the horses and pack ponies."

"Two things were clear to those left, namely, that the whole village had been in the know, and that the guides had deserted to join the dacoits: also, that if the party had not strung out. they would have all been killed."

"Then followed several thrilling pages of how they moved through the jungle and exchanged: fire with the murderers, eventually frightening them off. They found the bodies of the two men riddled with bullets.

The dacoits were after the £3000 in Burmese currency which the party had with them. The dacoits went back for reinforcements to complete the job, and whole villages evacuated in terror as they approached.

The white men escaped by making long night marches.

The nightmare journey ended on June 26, when they reached Kohima, past the western border, where they were given transport to safety.

Escape from Burma to India April - June
Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative (NSW: 1890 - 1954),
Thursday 25 March 1943, page 12

TRAIL OF DEATH - Retreat From Burma - (To the Editor)

Sir, — I am penning these excerpts from the diary of my brother-in-law, O. K. Miller, the young mining official, who so neatly wrangled a pass from the Japanese General at Mantaw, in Burma, during that terrible 667 miles from Bawdwin to Kohima, which took them 60 days to complete: —

“The dead became more numerous as we progressed, and we passed one or two humans in delirium. They had been abandoned by their friends; we could do nothing except shoot them to end their misery. It would have been kinder than leaving them to die. One blessing was they were unconscious and knew nothing. We were to see quite a lot of this during the next few days, but we had our troubles and turned our heads away. A corpse every fifty feet for many miles was too much for our fever-stricken bodies to endure.

We slept up a tributary of the river as before, having to go some distance to get away from dead bodies. Some of the postures they were in suggested vividly they had died on their feet!

It seems the things we read about these people thinking they are the chosen race to rule the world is evident in the humblest of them. They were probably flushed with their unbroken run of victories.

I lit the silawli at the fire and sat on the verandah platform. A young Jap was trying to mend his boots. One sole had come apart and was hanging down. He was making holes around the edge of the sole with a nail and lacing it with wire. He offered me the pair and motioned for me to remove mine. I demonstrated my boots were twice as large as his, and stalled him off in many ways. He gave a disgusted look and went on with his job. I went inside the door of the house and laid down on the floor. There were three ugly-looking beggars in my corner cleaning rust from their bayonets with emery cloth. After a while they made motions for me to remove my boots, making hideous faces and waving their bayonets. I used the tactics which succeeded previously and they left me alone.

Several things like this happened: One chap pointed to a tin hat lying by the fire and signed for me to fetch it. I shook my head, and he picked up a cane and threatened me with it. He then put on a turn, made a face and snapped or growled like a dog. I would like to say I laughed in his face, but perhaps it would be more accurately described as a sickly grin. He laughed and threw the cane aside. Later he (it may have been the same man) came out to put one of the big beheading, swords away, and playfully made out he was about to cut my head, off. I smiled as if I appreciated the joke. One thing was certain, once we got away from the General and among his troops we would probably have a rough and humiliating time. If I tried to go back through the village the troops would have our boots and everything we possessed, so I went in and explained it to the General. He gave me the famous pass which our Intelligence took from me at Imphal.

There are nearly 400 pages of diary, and in my opinion it was a gruesome trip. Dacoits murdered two of their number, and treachery was evident among the villagers who were in league with armed dacoits, who murdered refugees and left their naked bodies on the tracks as a warning to others. Indians died like flies, and the motors and trucks abandoned ran into thousands.”

WALTER F. HARRINGTON, Neutral Bay.

LONG TREK FROM BURMA Adelaide Man's Escape From Japanese

In his escape from the Japanese in Burma, Mr. Frank F. Espie, who returned to Adelaide yesterday after an absence of 2½ years, spent a particularly trying month, including a 150-mile walk, travelling to India.

Mr. Espie, who was general manager of the Burma Corporation limited with large mining and smelting interests in North Burma, had spent 19 years in that country. He was born in Adelaide.

For two weeks, he and his party had to walk through wild country. The 150 miles traversed, he said, would have been far more exhausting had not friendly natives helped. Japanese planes bombed them twice. In the party was Samuel David, an Indian Christian, who had been a faithful servant to the Espie family for 20 years. After the long walk, the journey to Calcutta was made by car, steamer, and rail.

Mrs. Espie, who returned from Burma a year ago, is now with her husband at Goodwood road, Redfern.