

George Alex (Alec) Ford (1917 - 1943)

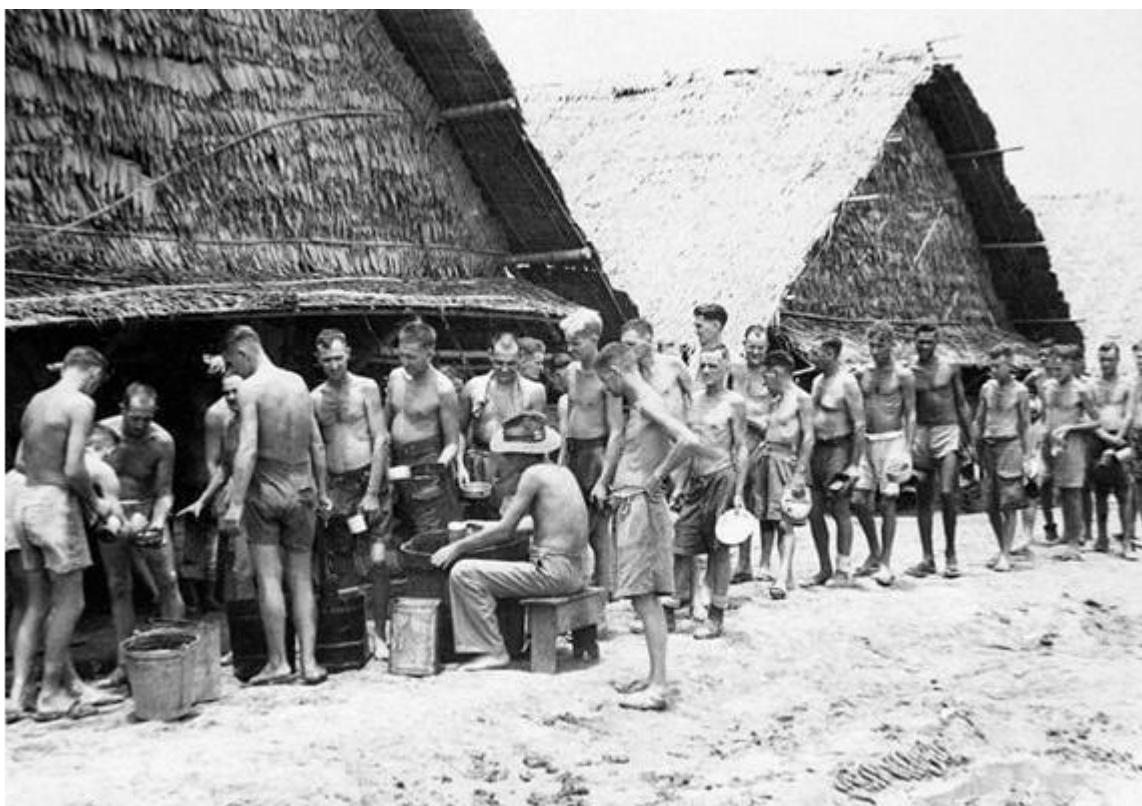


He left Changi in April 1943 as part of "F" Force, and after slaving on the railway for over seven months, was on his way back to Changi when he was admitted to F & H Forces No 1 Hospital at Kanchanaburi suffering from cardiac, beri beri and dysentery.

Photo courtesy of Kilcoy District Historical Society

Born:	Allora Qld
Parents:	George and Ada Matilda
Occupation:	Labourer
Status:	Single
Lived:	Villeneuve
Service:	Australian Army
Service Number:	QX9387
Conflict:	Second World War 1939-1945
Enlisted:	Kelvin Grove - 18 June 1940
Unit:	2/26 Battalion Infantry Battalion, 8 th Division, AIF
Rank:	Private
Embarked:	Melbourne - HMT "EE", 30 July 1941
Disembarked	Singapore, 15 August 1941
POW:	Yes - F Force
Died:	Kanburi Camp, Thailand - 16 December 1943
Cause of Death:	Cardiac, Beri Beri, Dysentery
Buried:	Kanchanaburi War Cemetery, Thailand





Prisoners at Kanburi Camp queueing for a meal , Imperial War Museum



Thai Burma Railway - Imperial War Museum



Thailand Railway Map - Department of Veterans Affairs

In 1943 Japan's high command decided to build a railway linking Thailand and Burma, to supply its campaign against the Allies in Burma.

The railway was to run 420 kilometres through rugged jungle. It was to be built by a captive labour force of about 60,000 Allied prisoners of war and 200,000 romusha, or Asian labourers. They built the track with hand tools and muscle power, working through the monsoon of 1943. All were urged on by the cry "speedo!"

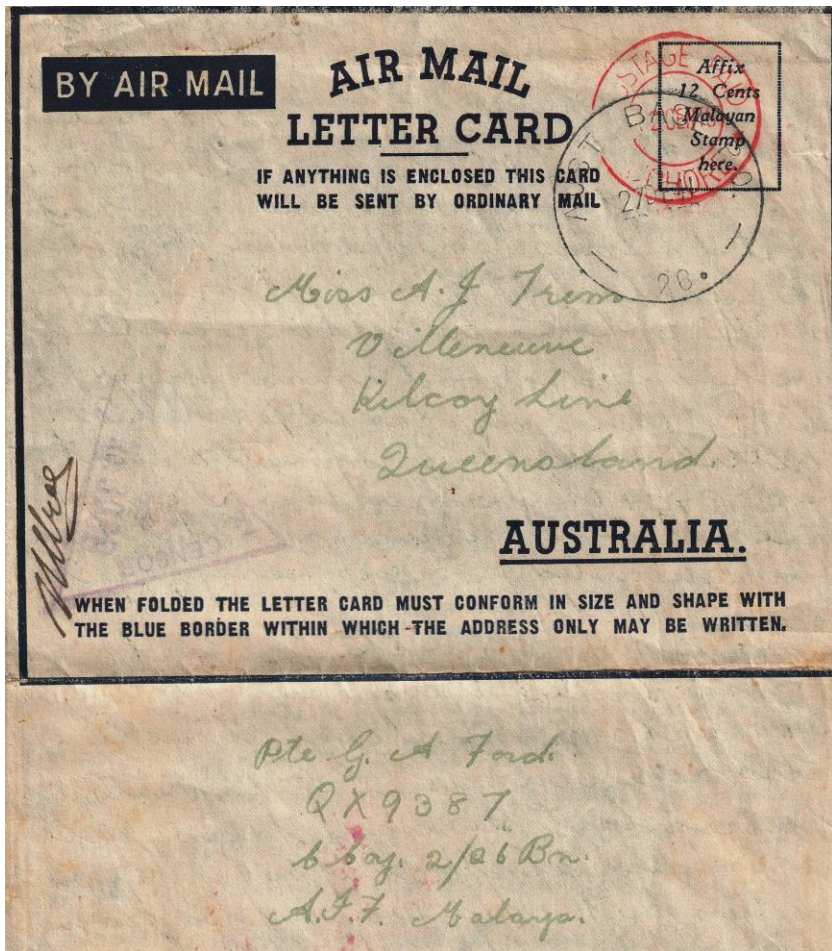
Relentless labour on inadequate rations in a deadly tropical environment caused huge losses. By the time the railway was completed in October 1943, at least 2,815 Australians, over 11,000 other Allied prisoners, and perhaps 75,000 romusha were dead.

The prisoners' sufferings on the railway have come to epitomise the ordeal of Australians in captivity. The railway camps produced many victims, but also heroes who helped others to endure, to survive, or to die with dignity

(courtesy Australian War Memorial).

Excerpts from Alec Ford's letter penned from Malaya on Christmas Day 1941

"... most of the buildings have been evacuated. We have been making road



blocks, making barbed wire entanglements, doing patrols and filling sandbags to strengthen our defences.

We also have to do guard every night so you can see we are glad of a bit of a blow.

Our section just came back from a two day patrol. Our section has done most of the patrols and this one was a particularly tough one and we went right through to the coast.

Our feet were wet from the time we left until we got back and

consequently we were footsore when we got back.

We paddled through numerous swamps and a number of creeks. We spent the night at the beach. It was a fairly open beach and reminded us somewhat of Caloundra. We had a swim but there was too many sandflies for us to sleep much ..."

"... I haven't seen Jack Boon for quite a while, his platoon isn't near ours. Last I saw of him was back at the old camp and he wasn't feeling too well. He thought he might be getting malaria. We take two quinine tablets each night to prevent malaria and they leave a nasty taste in the mouth ..."

"... Thanks very much for the Xmas card, Aud, and thanks also to your mother and yourself for the good wishes. I also echo your wishes that by next Xmas the war will be finished ..."

Lest We Forget Alec Ford