

This second edition of  
**ALL OF 28 AND MORE,**  
**THE DIARY OF EDGAR WILKIE**  
was written by:

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ALL OF 28 AND MORE,  
THE DIARY OF EDGAR WILKIE

*"Sun. 27 May (1945): Here it is again, 4th (birthday anniversary) as a prisoner of war, and I certainly feel all of 28 and more".*



These were the last words Private Lesley Edgar George Wilkie Qx2984 wrote in his personal diary. Forty-five days later, he died in a coal mine prison camp at Usui, Kyushu, Japan. Edgar was a soldier in the Australian Army, in the A.I.F. 2/10 Ord. Workshops, taken prisoner when the allied forces surrendered to the Imperial Japanese Army in the fall of Singapore in February 1942.

He was the son of Lesley Alexander and Ruth

Maughan Wilkie from Argoon, near Biloela Queensland.. He died on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1945, just before the end of the Second World War.

Edgar's remains were cremated by his fellow prisoners and his ashes are now buried in a cemetery for the Allied war dead in Yokohama Japan, in the Australian Section, Plot B, Row D, Grave 4.

*All of 28 and More - The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*



Japan formally surrendered on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1945 in a ceremony on board the American battleship *USS Missouri* anchored in Tokyo Bay.

Edgar was the older brother of my father, Colin Wilkie. As a child I knew of Edgar's existence, because my brother had been named after him.

I knew little more. I think my father never spoke to me about Edgar when I was younger because of the hurt he himself experienced from reopening old

## *All of 28 and More - The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

wounds. My grandmother Ruth's prolonged grief was the focus of discussion instead of Edgar himself. His loss compounded her grieving for her husband Lesley Wilkie who had died unexpectedly after an operation for stomach ulcer in a hospital in the Queensland mining town of Mt Morgan, only four years before.



After the war ended, Norman Chant, the soldier in the next bed sent the diary home through the Red Cross to Edgar's mother Ruth. I obtained this photo of Norman Chant from Ryan Dudley who wrote to me seeking information on any correspondence between Norman and Edgar's family. However, Norman Chant's connection with Edgar's diary extended only to making sure that Edgar's notes were received by the

Red Cross and were not destroyed by the prison guards.

*My name is Ryan Dudley and I am writing to you in regards to your uncle Edgar Wilkie. While looking for information online about Kobe House, where my paternal-grandfather's cousin was held during the war, I found a reference to my relation in your online extract of All of 28, and more. My grandfather's cousin was Norman Chant who, it appears, sent Edgar's diary back to his parents after the war. I would love to try and obtain a copy of your book as well as copies of any correspondents that may have survived between Norman and your family.*

*A little on Norman for you. Norman Phelp Chant was born in Islington, Newcastle, NSW on 14 January 1907 the third child of*

## *All of 28 and More - The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Albert Ernest Chant and Alice nee Peters. The family lived in Stockton, Newcastle where Norman spent most of his childhood with his mother's relations. When war broke out in 1939 Norman was working as a colliery fireman and living with his Aunt Mary Dudley (nee Peters) in Lawson Street, Hamilton. Norman enlisted with the 2/20th Battalion and went to Singapore (the rest you know). Like many POWs he returned a changed man. He never married and died in July 1949 at the Military Hospital, Concord.*

Letters written to Edgar's mother Ruth provided some explanation for Edgar's failure to return from captivity in Japan after the war ended.

FROM DR. CHARLES HUXTABLE

"Dear Mrs. Wilkie, I was sorry indeed to see reported in today's Courier-Mail that your son L.E.G. Wilkie had died whilst a prisoner. Although we have not met, I would like to express my sincere sympathy with you and others of his family. The last time I saw him was 12th May, 1943, at Changi prisoner camp. That was the date when he was sent overseas with a party which I think eventually reached Japan. I myself was one of the lucky ones who were left all the time on Singapore Island.

I am a Medical Officer (Captain) and in the early part of 1943 I was in charge of about 100 of our Australian sick men in a big barrack-building at Changi, which was called "The Convalescent Depot". After a man had been sick in the big hospital a mile away, he was sent for a few weeks or months to this Convalescent Depot, before returning to work under the Japanese. Your boy was with us for 2 or 3 months having been

*All of 28 and More - The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

in hospital with swollen legs from Beri-Beri. He recovered well, and was in good health when he went away.

He was always quick and useful in helping and working amongst the sick, or at the kitchens or chopping wood or whatever he was asked to do, and I would like you to know that he was very highly thought of and very popular, because of his cheerfulness and his usefulness and good manners. He was one of the nicest lads I met over there amongst our prisoners, and I had often thought of him and hoped he was alright.

Just before he went away, he acted for a time as batman to Capt. Carrick (of Sydney) and myself. We did not have much to eat in those days, but we did get hold of some coffee which he used to make up for us occasionally for a treat, and the three of us used often to have a good yarn over a cup of coffee.

I remember once how he told us that he and a party of others, 4 or 5, escaped from the Japanese just after our surrender (exactly four years ago), and they were at large for some weeks and travelled quite a long distance up country and eventually, I think, reached Kuala Lumpur before being recaptured.

My address is 43 Marsh St, Armidale N.S.W., and I shall be going there in about a week. I wish I could tell you more of your son's later history but as I say the last time I saw him was nearly three years ago. Perhaps some of the men who have come back from Japan will have given you later news. Once again expressing my deep regret at the loss of such a fine man and soldier, I am yours sincerely,

## *All of 28 and More - The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Charles Huxtable (Capt.C.R.Huxtable)

Here is the Wikipedia Reference to Dr Huxtable:

“Charles Reginald Ralston Huxtable MC&Bar (30 September 1891–29 July 1980) was an Australian doctor who served in both World Wars and wrote about his experiences in the book *From the Somme to Singapore: a Medical Officer in Two World Wars*. Kangaroo Press, 1987 ISBN 0-86417-745-3 Huxtable was commissioned a Temporary Lieutenant in the Royal Army Medical Corps in April 1915. He won the Military Cross in June 1917 and a bar in November 1917 whilst serving as a medical officer with the Lancashire Fusiliers during World War 1. He resigned his commission as a Captain in April 1918. During World War 2 he was captured in Singapore by the Japanese and imprisoned in Changi Prison.”

### FROM MOLLY McINTOSH

"Yes, Mrs.Wilkie, my husband did know your son very well, in fact they were both in the same camp at Kobe in the Osaka area together since 1943, and worked together until May this year. Fifty of the boys from Kobe were sent to another camp including your son and my husband. It was a camp on Kyushu Island Camp 26, they worked in a coal mine. It was a new camp and nice and clean. They had small wood huts to live in.

One day early in July this year your son took a bad turn and collapsed and died soon after. He had only been sick the once before he died, however he was in hospital in a bed near my husband who was very ill at the time, and that is where Edgar died.

After the war was over, the other boys cremated his body and buried his ashes on a hill. My husband said it was a most



*All of 28 and More - The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

beautiful sight to look on the hill from the camp; they made the Japs dig the grave.

Please accept our most deep and heartfelt sympathy on the sad loss of your son. My husband will come and visit you when he gets his discharge and will tell you perhaps some more things about their life over there, of course if you would like. If not, we will not be offended if you don't come to see him. I hope you are well and that this is not too much of a shock for you."

Yours faithfully,  
Molly McIntosh.

FROM JOHN BYRNES

"Dear Mrs. Wilkie, It is with the deepest regret that I have to sit and write this letter to you. If Edgar's letters reached you, you will know from them that I was his cobber in Changi and Kobe, and at his request I am sending you a resume of his doings up to the time of our separation. Mrs. Wilkie, if this letter is crudely expressed I am sorry but he always felt that if anything happened to him you would like to know all the facts.

As you know, Edgar sailed on the Aquitania from Sydney January 10th, 1942, and reached Singapore January 24th, 1942. He did not leave the Island for the mainland but was posted to a position at the naval base. At this place he waited till the Japs eventually forced us back to Singapore Island. Then his unit came into action with the first launching and like the rest, remained in action until February 15th when fighting ceased.

## *All of 28 and More - The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

After capitulation he came to Changi where he stayed for a few days.

On or about the 26th February, Edgar and three other lads made an attempt to make an escape. He was at large for about three weeks- reaching the outskirts of the city of Kuala Lumpur on the mainland. Here the party were captured by a lot of Malay natives and handed over to the Japs. Strangely the lads did not receive the usual treatment for this action but were placed in the "K.L." prison and set to work for the "Nips".

In October of '42 this party of prisoners was brought to Singapore and all were admitted to the A.G.H. for observation. Edgar became a patient of mine, having developed the complaint known as polyneuritic Beri-Beri. He was in hospital until December 1942, leaving us for No.2 Convalescent Depot. He remained there until May 15th, 1943. He sailed with me to Japan on the "Wales Maru". The trip was without major incident and we landed at Kobe on June 8th, 1943.

At Kobe we found an established camp of English from Hong Kong. And as those lads had been there from October of 1942, the camp was in full swing- this made conditions fair all round. Life in the camp was the usual type of life in a barracks with its ups and downs. However, in comparing notes with others since our release, I know that we lads had a much easier time than most boys in the Jap P.O.W. camps. Edgar was working at the "Toyo" steel works at Nishinomiya.

His chief racket was washing, having established for himself a miniature steam laundry, doing the washing for some of our

## *All of 28 and More - The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

lads and charging them peanuts, beans, rice, cigarettes etc. and with these commodities supplementing his diet. However in August 1944, he contracted a light case of "pneumonia" and was in camp hospital with us for about 10 days at the end of which he was discharged quite O.K. at the commencement of October 1944.

He received a further chill and Dr. Boyce brought him in for a rest. After a week or two, both Drs. Boyce and Wilson found a pleuritic condition on the right lung, lower lobe. (I am giving these details as Edgar informed me that you were a Sister last war). This condition would not respond to treatment with us, so Dr. Boyce managed to get him transferred to Commander Paige's Hospital, Kobe, where there was a properly established Prison Hospital- this hospital was really very good: British, Dutch, American and Australian doctors of all branches of medicine and many more drugs and much more suitable foodstuffs.

Edgar stayed at the Kobe Hospital until January 1945. He was subjected to extensive tests for all types of lung complaints but showed negative reports. However, his condition had not cleared up when he was sent back by the Japs. Dr. Boyce was able to keep him on our outpatients list which meant no work.

His general condition was good and everything taken into consideration, we expected to have him 100% by the summer. However, in April 1945, the Japs took all our sick men and sent them to a new camp with a party from Kawasaki (Australians). As far as we know, this was to have been a job of

## *All of 28 and More - The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

agricultural nature in the hills about Lake Biwa, central province, Honshu Island.

On contacting his party in Manila, I learnt that they had been sent to Kyushu Island to the coal mines. There the Japs put them to work below ground without exception, and it was not until the change of commanders took place that the doctor there was able to change this situation. By this time, Edgar's resistance had been lowered to danger point and his orderly there said that when he contracted his last attack of "pneumonia", he just sank into a coma from which he failed to respond.

I have been assured from several sources that his passing was easy. I know that at times he was his usual bright self- You have every reason to be proud of him as a soldier and a man, and when many around him were relaxing their grip on the finer qualities, your boy held fast to his and tried hard to help others to carry on as he was."

"I don't believe Edgar was ever under the impression he would not see home again; if so, I am firmly convinced that he would never have recovered from his illness in Changi Camp. He was, to my knowledge, possessed of an outstanding grit and will to hang on.

I believe in my last letter I mentioned his plans for "Argoon" to be carried out on his return. These plans were extensive in design and covered all branches of station life. He spent hours, night after night, drawing, calculating, estimating and assessing. His whole being was wrapped up in the project.

## *All of 28 and More - The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

In fact, when he went to Commander Paige's hospital in Kobe, he left me with all these papers which I placed in one of our hospital's old mattresses until his return. These unfortunately he burnt before he left for Kyushu. I think you will agree that no lad doing those things felt he would not make the grade.

Further, he did not make his request to me to contact you until we were under constant air-raid alarms and the request was a mutual one such as soldiers make in time of war. Mrs. Wilkie, I will say no more other than I know and appreciate your loss- he was my friend.

Faithfully yours,  
John H. Byrnes."

When I was about forty years old, increasing curiosity about Edgar led me to ask to see his diary. I found it in my Aunt Margaret's possession. Carefully unwrapping the deteriorating faded yellowed pages with their meticulously pencilled notes, I began to search for the uncle I had never met. I was pleasantly surprised to find that photocopying made the pencil marks easier to read. And when I read his last diary entry, I wept.

Soon after the book was published the family held a special Holy Communion service in remembrance of Edgar in the little Anglican church at Jambin, near Biloela Queensland. A feeling of profound peace settled over that quiet sunny Saturday afternoon, and later that evening, as we gathered

*All of 28 and More - The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

with some of Edgar's old friends in Edgar's family homestead, it seemed that some healing had taken place.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

INTRODUCTION

Edgar's Grave  
Norman Chant  
Dr Charles Huxtable's Letter  
Molly McIntosh's Letter  
John Byrnes' Letter

	Page
The Family of Wilkie of Rathobyres	1
The Scottish Reformation	3
James Wilkie Primarius of St Leonards	7
Robert Wilkie Moderator of Kirk of Scotland	8
The Excommunication Farce	9
James Wilkie Hanged in 1685	11
The Covenanters	12
Prof William Wilkie Poet and Eccentric	14
Sir David Wilkie Famous Scottish Painter	17
Reverend Daniel Wilkie Minister Greyfriars	19
Dr David Elliott Wilkie MD	20
Burke and Wills Expedition	23
Daniel Wilkie Barrister-Cricketer	26
Daniel's Family Breakdown	31
Lesley Alexander Wilkie	32
Lesley's Note on the Duties of an Officer	34
Some Notes on the Robson Family	37
Arthur Robson Librarian & Manufactures' Agent	38
Robsons Come to Queensland	40
Willie Robson Marries Lizzie Cameron	40
Ruth Robson Army Nurse	42
Birth of Edgar Wilkie	42
Living at Jerodgerie	43
Move to Queensland	45
Life at Argoon	47

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Letter to Colin from Lesley	55
Edgar Joins the A.I.F.	56
Lesley Dies After Surgery in Mt Morgan	57
Edgar's Personality	58
Arlie Spackman	63
Background to Edgar's War Diary	64
Charles Huxtable's Comments	67
Edgar's Letter to His Mother	70
Edgar Sails on the Aquitania	71
Arrival at Singapore	73
Fighting the Japanese	74
Surrender to Japanese	76
Jock McLaren	77
Escape from Changi	80
With the Chinese Communists	84
Captured	87
Treated Well by the Japanese Soldiers	89
Pudu Prison	91
The Padre and Pudu Fellowship	96
Passages Underlined in Matthew's Gospel	104
Symptoms of BeriBeri Vitamin B deficiency	124
Taken Back to Changi	124
Sailed for Japan	136
Arrival at Kobe	138
Life at Kobe House	142
Serious Chest Condition	184
Back to Work	194
Kobe Air Raid 1945	195
Epileptic Seizure	197
Transferred to Coal Mine at Usui	201
The End of World War 2	205
Sources of Information	211
Some Names in This Book	



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

### CHAPTER ONE WILKIE OF RATHOBYRES

In 1893, Edgar's grandfather Daniel Wilkie, lawyer and cricketer hired Edinburgh researcher H.B. McCall, to produce the Wilkie family history. It was entitled "*A Pedigree of the Family of WILKIE OF RATHOBYRES, in the County of Edinburgh*".

There are many Wilkies in Scotland. However Edgar Wilkie's ancestors are relatively easy to trace, because the eldest son in each generation inherited a portion of land at Ratho near Edinburgh.

In 1593, King James VI of Scotland had granted a parcel of land which had once been the property of the Catholic Church, to Gilbert Wilkie "in life rent, and to Robert Wilkie, his son and apparent heir in fee." Since this time, one of the sons of each generation, originally the first-born son, inherited an interest in this land and the title "of Rathobyres" to go with it. This title continued down until Daniel Wilkie, Edgar's grandfather, sold his share in the family inheritance in 1895. Had Daniel not sold this inheritance, it would have passed to Edgar's uncle David, but as David did not have a son, the title would have come to Edgar's father Lesley, and thence to Edgar as Lesley's eldest son.

The entire family tree history is readily available, and I will not reproduce it here. However, there are some of Edgar's ancestors whose stories are worth telling for their contribution to events that shaped the Scottish consciousness and were transmitted down the family tree.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

**Wilkie of Rathobyres**

Gilbert Wilkie m. Janet Cairns

He died in 1594

Robert Wilkie Thomas James Wilkie  
of Rathobyres, d. 1586 Primarius of St. Leonards  
College, St. Andrews

m. Barbara Bathgait

died May 10th, 1574

James David George Robert Wilkie  
of Rathobyres. Primarius of St. Leonards  
He died in 1615 Moderator of General  
Assembly of Kirk of  
Scotland

m. Margaret Mitchell

James Wilkie Cecil  
of Rathobyres, died 2nd Feb, 1640

m. Jonet Wilson

Jonet David James William Christian  
Margaret of Rathobyres the "zealous Covenanter" John  
Joseph  
First Marriage Second Marriage  
Janet Wilson Eliz. Houston

David James Janet Rev. Patrick George  
Rathobyres Minister of St. Marys died in  
born 1685, d. 1771 childhood

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

### THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION

By the late middle ages (1400-1500), the Catholic Church had become, in the eyes of many of its followers, excessively materialistic. In Germany, the Augustinian monk Martin Luther openly criticised the Papacy in 1517, triggering Luther's excommunication, and this was followed by a chain reaction of reform movements.

The main reason for the Catholic Church's increasing materialism was probably the very efficiency of the well educated Catholic clergy and international expertise through the Church's central organization that led to so many clergymen being promoted to positions of power.

In England, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, as both Lord Chancellor and Cardinal Legate in 1515, was the most powerful man in the kingdom, even more powerful than his young king, Henry VIII. In Scotland, James Beaton, Archbishop of St. Andrews, came to occupy a similar position of power.

The Scottish reformer John Knox in his book *"History of the Reformation of Religion within the realm of Scotland"* identified 1528 as the beginning of the upheavals that eventually broke down the episcopal or hierarchical system of Church government in Scotland and replaced it with the presbyterian system. In 1528, Archbishop James Beaton had Patrick Hamilton, aged 24 years, burned alive, slowly, outside the castle of St. Andrews, for preaching Martin Luther's theology in Scotland.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Beaton had made sure nobody could appeal to the young King James V for Patrick Hamilton's life by talking the King into undertaking a short pilgrimage so he could not be contacted. Some time after this, a Benedictine monk Henry Forrest of Linlithgow, after a long imprisonment in the Sea Tower of St. Andrews was burnt at the stake allegedly because he had in his possession a New Testament written in English.

These murders produced a widespread feeling of revulsion in the town and University of St. Andrews and gave rise to a particularly strong response from the staff of St. Leonard's College and the students studying theology. These included the novices next door at the Abbey in St. Andrews, and their sub-prior John Winram, who then joined the reformers.

Among the students at St. Leonard's at that time were John Knox, James Wilkie, and George Buchanan. John Knox was destined to become the most fearless spokesman for the Scottish reform movement, George Buchanan would become Principal of St. Leonard's, and James Wilkie would succeed Buchanan in that position in 1570.

Meanwhile King James V had aligned Scotland with France and Catholicism through two successive marriages to French women. James was strongly influenced by Cardinal David Beaton, nephew of James Beaton, who had succeeded his uncle as Archbishop of St. Andrews. In 1542, on the advice of David Beaton, James sent an invading army into England against Henry VIII, which was routed at Solway Moss. Not long afterwards, James V died, his death possibly related to the stress of this loss, associated with diminishing support

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

from the Scottish nobility, and the deaths of his legitimate infant sons.

However, James V's illegitimate son, James Stewart, 4th Earl of Moray, was to play a very important role later as Regent for the child king James VI.

(Edgar Wilkie's great great grandfather was the son of the great great grand-daughter of James Stewart. So some greatly diluted royal blood flowed in Edgar's veins.)

James V's daughter Mary Queen of Scots was one week old when her father died. Mary was immediately proclaimed Queen and Scotland was once again ruled by regents representing factions. When we remember that three rulers of Scotland in succession - James V, Mary Queen of Scots, and her son James VI, were babies on inheriting the throne, we can understand why Scotland's politics, ruled by competing factions interested in consolidating their own power, was so chaotic.

The political history of Scotland in these years is complex and difficult to follow, with the Stuart royal family remaining Catholic and politically allied to France, regents taking alternately pro-French and pro-English policies, a growing opposition to Papal authority in the ordinary clergy, and similar struggles for authority in England always influencing events over the border in Scotland.

At the top, the regents of Scotland and their factions were dominated by powerful Bishops strenuously opposing the changes to the episcopal system of Church government, which

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

was based on a hierarchy under the authority of the Pope in Rome. The reformers educated at St.Leonard's College at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, proposed a system where authority in individual parishes rested in a council of elders, amongst whom the minister was one among equals. These ideas were modelled on the ideas of John Calvin.

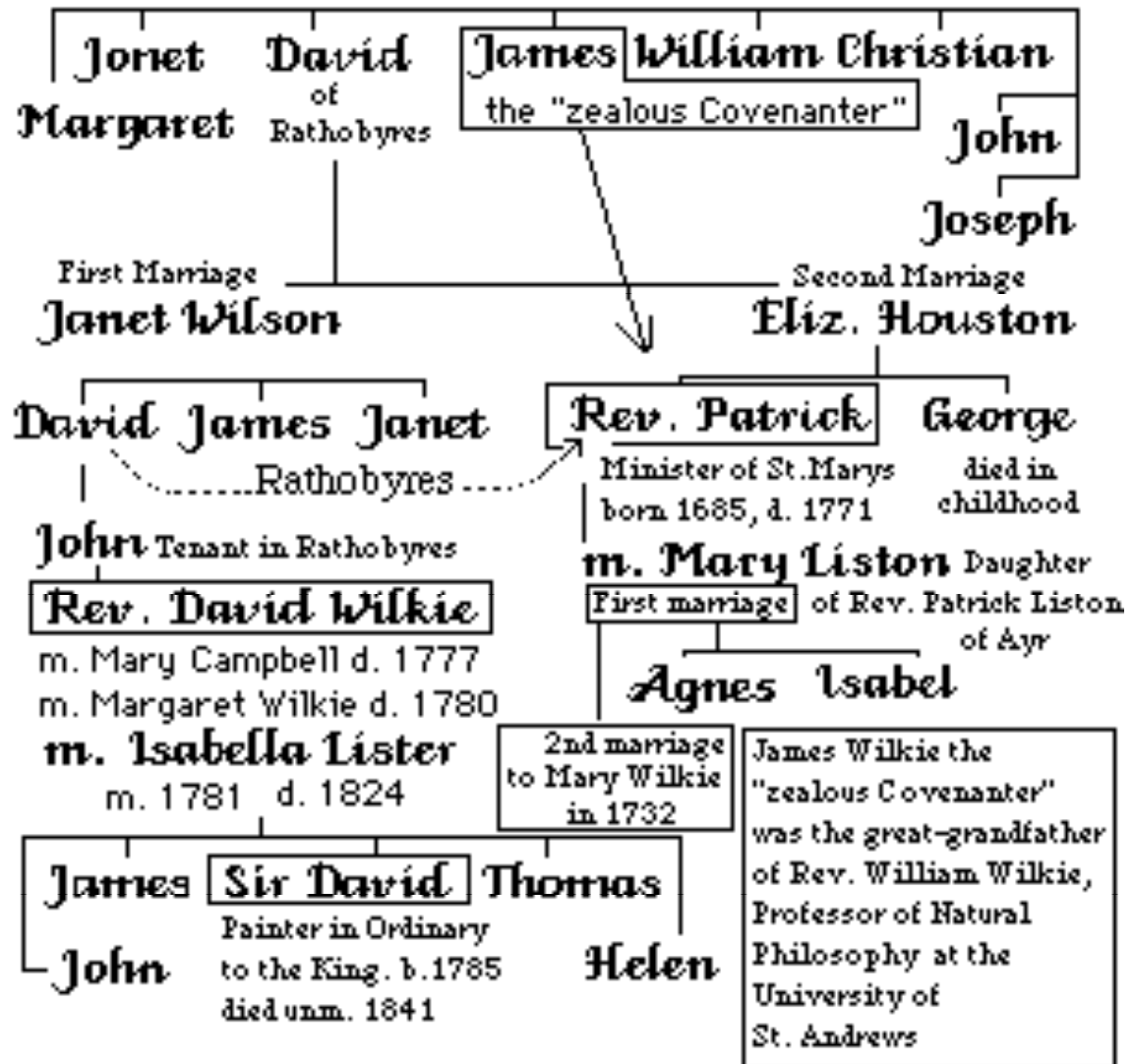
On March 1st, 1546, following his uncle's horrific example in 1528, Cardinal David Beaton had popular reformer George Wishart burned at the stake in St.Andrews. The reaction this time, however, from the citizens of St.Andrews was violent.

A group of Protestant nobles organised an attack on the Cardinal's residence, (the castle of St.Andrews), murdered Beaton, and then occupied the castle as an ongoing demonstration of Protestant resolve. The regent Mary of Guise, mother of Mary Queen of Scots, called in the French navy, which captured the castle in July 1547. Among the Protestants taken prisoner and taken to France as galley slaves was John Knox. Twelve years later, Knox would return to Scotland to find that power had begun to shift in favour of the reformers.

The strength of the protestant cause owed a great deal to the support of James Stewart, 4th earl of Moray, the half-brother of Mary Queen of Scots. By 1555, Moray was the Prior of the University of St.Andrews. In 1567, he became regent for Mary's son, King James VI, then a year old, after Mary abdicated in 1567. Subsequently Mary tried to resume the throne, and Moray had to lead an army against her forces, defeating them at Langside on May 13th, 1568. Mary Queen of Scots then fled to England, where she was later executed for

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

allegedly plotting against Elizabeth I of England. Moray himself could not escape the violence of that time; he was assassinated in Linlithgow in 1570.



**JAMES WILKIE, PRIMARIUS OF ST. LEONARD'S**

James Wilkie, intimate friend and fellow student of John Knox, had matriculated at St. Andrews University in 1525. He distinguished himself academically and became a Regent in

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

St.Leonard's College, and in 1570, succeeded George Buchanan as Primarius, or Principal.

In 1578, James Wilkie was elected Rector of the University. Over a long period he had been a minister of St.Leonard's parish, and later in his life was Prior of St.Serf's within Loch Leven. He died in 1590, leaving all his possessions to St.Leonard's College, and was buried in St.Leonard's Chapel itself. James Melville recorded his passing and described him as "a good, godly, honest man". Andrew Melville, James Melville's uncle, succeeded James Wilkie as Rector of the University.

### ROBERT WILKIE, PRIMARIUS OF ST.LEONARD'S

James Wilkie's brother Robert Wilkie of Rathobyres had married Barbara Bathgait and they had four sons, James, David, George and Robert. Robert Wilkie followed the lead of his uncle James in the study of theology, entering St.Leonard's College at the University of St.Andrews in 1563 at the age of 15 years.

He graduated two years later, and eventually became a Regent in the University. In 1589, before his uncle's death, Robert succeeded James as Principal of St.Leonard's.

Later Robert Wilkie became Rector of St.Andrews University, while serving as the parish minister and moderator of the presbytery of St.Andrews. On 28th March, 1600, Robert Wilkie was elected Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. He never married, and he died in 1611 at the age of 63 years.



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

### THE EXCOMMUNICATION FARCE

In 1586, the Bishop of St. Andrews, Patrick Adamson, attempted to excommunicate Andrew and James Melville, who immediately made a formal appeal to "the King, the estats, and privie counsell". Andrew Melville had become the leading spokesman for the reformers after John Knox's death in 1572. The statements by Bishop Adamson on the one hand and the Melvilles in reply as recorded in Calderwood's *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, focus on whether Robert Wilkie as moderator of the presbytery of St. Andrews had the authority to oppose Bishop Adamson's excommunication order against the Melvilles. Adamson claimed Robert Wilkie was a layman with no authority.

The reply sought to establish Robert Wilkie's authority on two grounds: "..You are saying that Mr. Robert Wilkie was no office-bearer nor governor in the kirk, and therefore, could not be a lawful moderator. "I answer that your previous statement is plainly false; for it is widely known that Mr. R. Wilkie was appointed by the act of reformation of the colleges to teach Theology and expound the Scriptures. And so, where you first term Mr. Robert a layman, and next call him a regent in a college, the second convicts the first of an untruth, and by repugnance overthrows it. Moreover it is also noteworthy that the same Mr. Robert has been propheta upon the exercise the last sixteen years, and at the first erection of the presbytery in St. Andrews, by common vote of the brethren to have been elected and ordained an elder of the Presbytery, and since then has continued labouring in the Word and doctrine, especially during last year in the town of St. Andrews, to the great comfort of the people, when the hireling bishop, their

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

pretended pastor, had shamefully left them in great misery and desolation; and therefore, is rather worthy of double honour...."

The outcome of the arguments demonstrated that by 1586, the power had shifted to the side of the reformers. Adamson himself was put under a sentence of excommunication, but this was absolved after he made a recantation to the synod convened at St. Andrews on 8th April, 1591. Robert Wilkie was one of the witnesses to Adamson's claim that his recantation was not made under duress.

There are many subsequent references to Robert Wilkie's role in the early history of the presbyterian Kirk of Scotland, recorded in James Melville's autobiography and Calderwood's History. Robert was a member of the General Assembly which would meet to decide on general church policy and to hear complaints against ministers. In 1600, Robert was elected Moderator of the general assembly, and was therefore for a period following, the spokesman for the entire Kirk of Scotland.

### TWO MORE GENERATIONS

Robert Wilkie's brother James inherited Rathobyres but he and his wife died leaving a daughter Isobel Wilkie as their only heir. The property then passed to David Wilkie the other brother. David Wilkie of Rathobyres died in November 1615 leaving his wife Margaret Mitchell and two sons, James and Cecil.

James Wilkie of Rathobyres, the eldest son, inherited the property. He had married Jonet Wilson, and they had five sons

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

and three daughters: David Wilkie of Rathobyres, James "the zealous covenanter" who lived in Cliftonhall Mains, William, "who went to Barbados" and John who became a merchant in Edinburgh. Then came Joseph, then Margaret, who married James Anderson in Ratho town, then Janet who married and lived in Edinburgh, and Christian, who married Robert Brown.

### JAMES WILKIE WAS HANGED IN 1685

One would hope that after King James VI of Scotland became King James I of England as well in 1603, and Protestantism was accepted in both countries, that religious wars might cease. Instead, we find in the late 1600s, Wilkies embroiled in a passionate defence of Scottish Presbyterianism against the actions firstly of King Charles I, and later of Charles II, in attempting to impose the forms of the Church of England on the Scots.

The Church of England, although it did not recognise the authority of the Pope, nevertheless kept the episcopal or hierarchical system of Church government, very different from the presbyterian system of the Kirk of Scotland where individual churches were governed by elders from their own congregations.

James Wilkie, of Cliftonhall Mains, was one of those who paid the extreme penalty for resisting King Charles II's intrusion into the forms of worship in Scotland. He was one of the 1200 "Covenanters" taken prisoner in the Battle of Bothwell Bridge in 1679. They were called "Covenanters" because they had signed one of the "National Covenants", declarations of resistance to episcopal church rule in Scotland.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

The following history of the Covenanters is taken from the website of the Scottish Covenanter Memorials Association:

THE COVENANTERS were Scottish Presbyterians who signed the National Covenant in 1638 to confirm their opposition to the interference by the Stuart kings in the affairs of the Church of Scotland.

Charles I and II harboured the belief of the Divine Right of the Monarch. Not only did they believe that God wished them to be the infallible rulers of their kingdom - they also believed that they were the spiritual heads of the Church of Scotland. This latter belief could not be accepted by the Scots. No man, not even a king, could be spiritual head of their church. Only Jesus Christ could be spiritual head of a Christian church.

This was the nub of the entire Covenanting struggle. The Scots were, and would have been, loyal to the Stuart dynasty but for that one sticking point, and from 28 February 1638, when the NATIONAL COVENANT was first signed in Greyfriars Church, followed by copies throughout Scotland, until the Glorious Revolution - when Prince William of Orange made a bloodless invasion of Great Britain in 1688 - a great deal of suffering, torture, imprisonment, transportation and executions would ensue.

This period of Scottish history became known as '*the Fifty Years' Struggle*'

The Covenant had been prepared by Alexander Henderson and Archibald Johnston, with revisions by others. It was signed by thousands in the church, after which it was removed to the kirkyard where many more signatures were added.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

There followed a period of very severe repression. Ministers with Covenanting sympathies were "*outed*" from their churches by the authorities, and had to leave their parishes. Many continued to preach at "*conventicles*" in the open air or in barns and houses.

This became an offence punishable by death. Citizens who did not attend their local churches (which were now in the charge of Episcopalian "*curates*") could be heavily fined, and such offenders were regarded as rebels, who could be questioned, even under torture. They could be asked to take various oaths, which not only declared loyalty to the king, but also to accept his as head of the church. Failure to take such an oath could result in summary execution by the muskets of the dragoons, who were scouring the districts looking for rebels.

The persecutions became more frequent and cruel on the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. As time went on more and more ordinary folk became involved, and skirmishes and battles took place against Government troops.

At the Battle of Bothwell Bridge, which took place on 22 June 1679, over 1200 prisoners were brought to Edinburgh, of which around 400 were held in Greyfriars Churchyard, in a spot now known as the Covenanters' Prison.

They were kept their under guard for five winter months, with little more than four ounces of bread and water, and little shelter, before either being executed, transported abroad as slaves, or else were given their liberty on signing oaths of allegiance to the king. Many Covenanters died in the prison and were buried in Greyfriars kirkyard, in the spot traditionally

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

reserved for criminals.

The first National Covenant was signed in Greyfriars Kirkyard in Edinburgh in 1638. In 1679, the Covenanters taken prisoner were held imprisoned in that same Kirkyard. Many died from starvation and exposure. The survivors were eventually dealt with in 1685, most of them sold into slavery "on his majesty's plantations" in the West Indies, many going to work for the English planters in Barbados. One hundred were hanged.

Rev. Robert Woodrow in his "History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland" quotes from court records that Thomas Stodhart, James Wilkie and Matthew Bryce, "prisoners in the tollbooth in Edinburgh", were not "banished to his majesty's plantations abroad" but were "put in irons and sent to trial before the justices." These three men had "not only obstinately refused the oath of allegiance, but most impertinently and indiscreetly misbehaved themselves before the Privy Council". James Wilkie was found guilty of treason and was hanged in Edinburgh at the Grassmarket, on Wednesday 12th August, 1685.

James Wilkie, the "zealous covenanter", executed in 1685, had four children, Janet, Anna, William and James. William had two sons, James and Matthew. James, who was born in 1684, married Margaret Brand and they had four children, William, Janet, Margaret and Mary. William became quite famous.

### PROFESSOR WILLIAM WILKIE, D.D., POET

William Wilkie was born at Echlin, in the parish of Dalmeny, just north of Ratho, west of Edinburgh, on 5th October, 1721.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

At the parish school, William impressed his teacher Mr. Riddel with his genius for poetry. He was sent to the university of Edinburgh when he was only 13 years of age, and here he distinguished himself in the study of the classics and of theology.

At the university William became close friends with Dr. Robertson, David Hume, Adam Smith, and John Home, among the intellectual celebrities of the 1700s. Mr. Mackenzie, the biographer of John Home, claimed that friends all spoke of him as "superior in genius to any man of his time, but rough and unpolished in his manners, and still less accommodating to the decorum of society in the ordinary habits of his life."

Mackenzie goes on to record a statement from a well known politician of the day that he "had never met with a man who approached so near to the extremes of a god and a brute as Dr. Wilkie."

Unfortunately, William had to leave his full time studies when his father died, leaving nothing except an unexpired lease on a farm just south of Edinburgh, some livestock, and three sisters to provide for. William suddenly had to become a farmer, but he continued his studies in divinity part time and was eventually licensed as a preacher of the gospel.

He obtained a position as assistant and successor to Mr. Guthrie, minister at Ratho, and was ordained by the presbytery on 17th May, 1753. However, his farm had to support him for the next three years until Mr. Guthrie died and then William was supported by the parish. William became an expert in growing potatoes, and while his farm was

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

supporting him as Mr. Guthrie's assistant, William became known around Ratho as "the potato minister". In 1757, William published at Edinburgh his major work, "*The Epigoniad, a Poem in Nine Books*", and in 1759 a second edition, corrected and improved, with the addition of "*A Dream, in the manner of Spenser*".

In 1759, William was given the Chair of Natural Philosophy at St. Andrews University. After settling in St. Andrews, he bought some land and resumed his farming. Again, he was so successful that at his death he left property to the value of 3,000 pounds.

After his appointment, the University conferred on him, in recognition of his merits, the degree of Doctor of Divinity. In 1768, William published a series of sixteen "*Moral Fables, in Verse*". He died at St. Andrews on 10th October, 1772, aged 51 years.

William Wilkie left a reputation as an eccentric genius. His outdoor dress was considered "grotesque" and he so feared the damp that he refused to sleep between sheets that had not already been slept in by someone else. He might accept an invitation to stay the night only if guaranteed "a pair of foul sheets". He often slept under 24 pairs of blankets.

These days, the eccentric Professor's fear of the cold and damp would prompt medical investigations for hypothyroidism, which condition could have contributed to his relatively early death. On the other hand, William's early demise could have been related to the fact that he "smoked tobacco carelessly and in excess".



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

REV. DAVID WILKIE, AUTHOR & FATHER OF THE  
FAMOUS PAINTER

At the University of St. Andrews, Professor William Wilkie took an interest in the career of a distant cousin, David Wilkie, whose father John was a tenant of Rathobyres. (John would have inherited Rathobyres from his father David, but David sold Rathobyres to his brother Patrick. John then leased his land at Rathobyres from Patrick who was living in Haddington, east of Edinburgh.)

David was born at Rathobyres and first matriculated in 1757 at the University of Edinburgh, where he studied Latin, Greek, and Philosophy, but did not graduate. He matriculated at the University of St. Andrews in 1769. Partly as a result of William's influence, David was ordained minister at Cults in County Fife in 1774.

### SIR DAVID WILKIE, R.A.

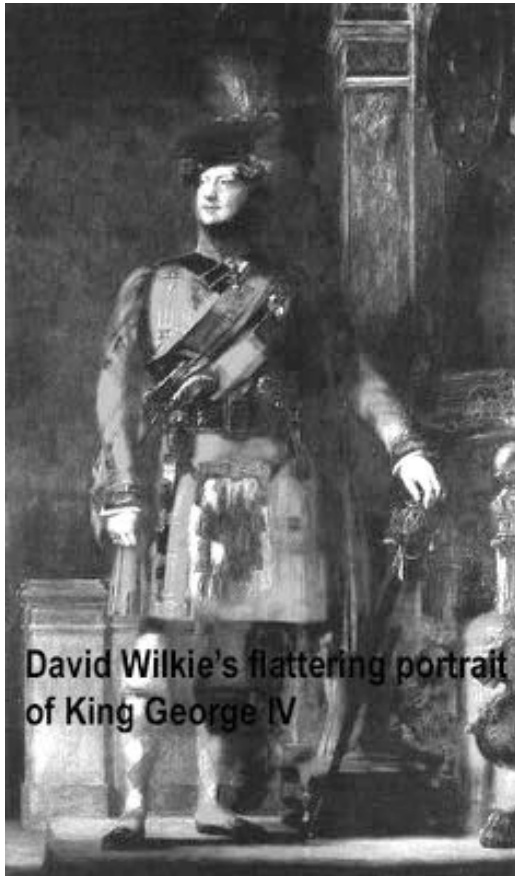
Sir David Wilkie was born on 18th November, 1785, in Cults in his father's manse. His great talents as a painter were recognized early in his life, when David began drawing all over the walls and floor of the manse, and sketching his friends at school. He studied in Edinburgh and entered the Royal Academy schools in London in 1805, exhibited there from 1806, and was elected to the Royal Academy in 1811

David Wilkie was totally absorbed in art; it was his whole life. He never married. His paintings are famous for their "anecdotal" style. They tell a story, and his work was so popular that when he exhibited his *"Chelsea Pensioners Reading*

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

the Gazette of the Battle of Waterloo” at the Royal Academy in 1822, barriers had to be erected to restrain the crowds of admirers.

In 1824, David Wilkie's health suffered from the stress of family bereavements and financial worries, and he took a prolonged tour to Italy, Germany, Switzerland and Spain. When David returned he had developed a broader and bolder style and a stronger use of colour.



In 1829, David Wilkie finished a flattering portrait of King George IV wearing a kilt during a royal trip to Scotland. The portrait avoided showing the King's knees or the pink tights the King was wearing at the time.

In 1830, David Wilkie was appointed "Principal Painter in Ordinary to the King and Sergeant Painter to His Majesty". He was knighted in 1836.

Sir David was a regular churchgoer, a robust Protestant. He always refrained from painting on Sunday, and in 1840 he visited Palestine to discover the true background to religious painting. On the return voyage, after a brief call at Malta, David was taken ill and died. He was buried at sea on 1st

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

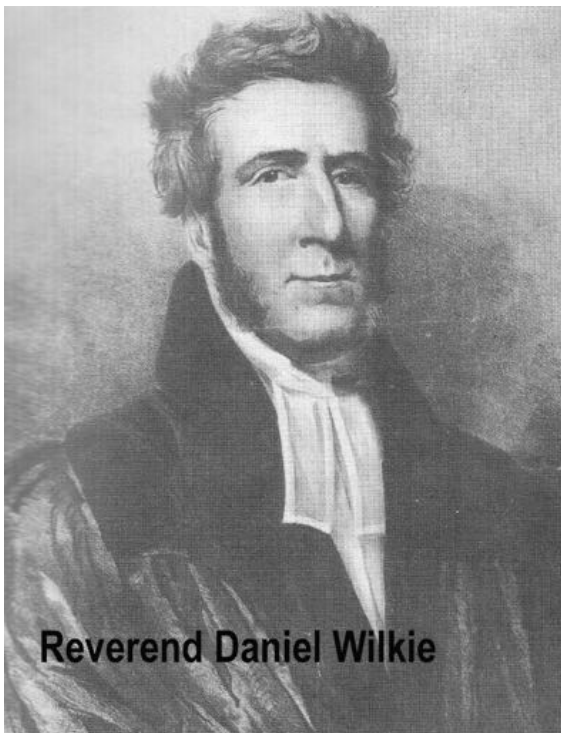
June, 1841 off Cape Trafalgar. This event was memorialised by J.M.W. Turner's famous painting "Sir David Wilkie's Burial at Sea".

Sir David Wilkie's work was admired by his fellow artists, including his good friend William Collins R.A., who honoured Sir David by asking him to be godson to his son William Wilkie Collins. This man became a famous writer, achieving lasting recognition for his mystery novels, including "*The Moonstone*" and "*The Woman in White*".

### REV. DANIEL WILKIE of Rathobyres MINISTER OF THE KIRK OF THE GREYFRIARS

Daniel Wilkie of Rathobyres was born on 28th October, 1782. Like both his grandfathers, Daniel studied for the Ministry. In

1829, at the age of 47, he became the Minister of The Kirk of the Greyfriars, Edinburgh.



Reverend Daniel Wilkie

Daniel was Minister from 1829 until his untimely death in 1838. He was buried in Greyfriars churchyard the place where the National Covenant was signed in 1638, and where his ancestor James Wilkie had been kept as a prisoner from 1679 to 1685, surviving the exposure to Edinburgh winters dressed

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*



only in the bits of hessian bags given to the prisoners after their clothes had been taken from them. (And after six years of exposure to the elements, starvation, humiliation and deprivation of liberty, James was hanged for standing up for his religious beliefs.)

The picture on this page is the headstone of the family grave in Greyfriars Kirkyard, honouring Reverend Daniel Wilkie. Edgar Wilkie's great-

grandfather Dr David Elliott Wilkie, is also buried in this grave.

### DR. DAVID ELLIOT WILKIE, M.D., of Rathobyres

Rev. Daniel and his wife Jane's third son David Elliot Wilkie was born at Haddington in Scotland on 14th August, 1815.

He studied at Edinburgh University medical school, and was admitted to the Royal College of Surgeons. His M.D. thesis was "On Acute Pericarditis".

David then undertook postgraduate study in Paris, and immediately afterwards became a ship's surgeon on the immigrant ship "Lloyds" which was bringing settlers to the proposed British free colony of South Australia. They arrived in Adelaide in October 1838.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

David's younger brother Daniel was also a passenger but he died on the voyage from a "brain fever" and was buried at sea.

David was disappointed with the disorganized state of the colony at that time and he moved to the settlement at Port Phillip, now Melbourne, where he arrived on 10th March, 1839.

David Elliot Wilkie was one of the first few doctors in the Port Phillip Settlement, later to be named Melbourne. From that time, the 23 year old Scot was to make an indelible mark on the medical, intellectual, spiritual and political life of the colony of Victoria.

David was a surgeon, scientist, inventor and politician, and he played an important primary role in the development of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria.

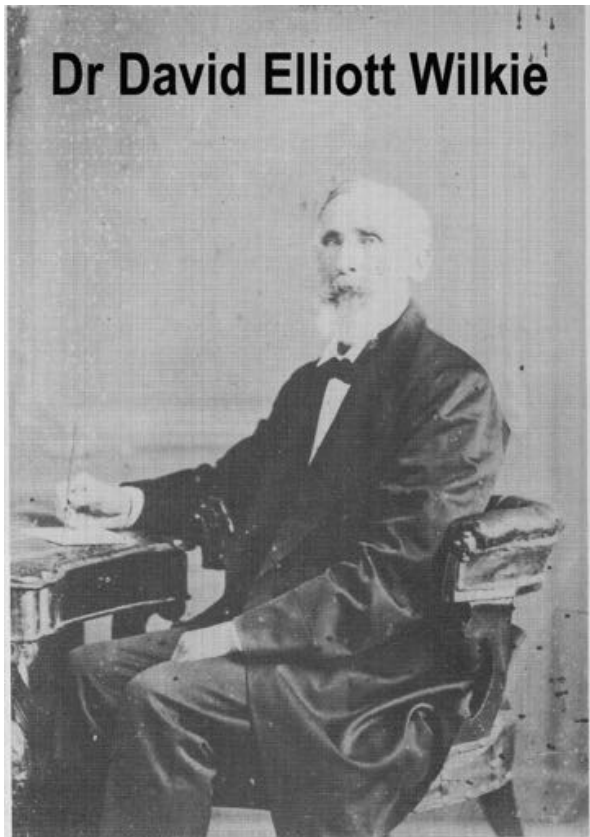
Immediately after arriving in Melbourne, David Wilkie set up his medical practice, developing a special interest in diseases of women and children.

On 20th October, 1842, David married Mary Elizabeth Clow, the third daughter of the Reverend James Clow.

Mary Clow was only seventeen years of age and David was 27. In the following December, David was ordained as a Presbyterian elder.

David's father-in-law, the Reverend James Clow, had arrived on Christmas Day 1837 with his family, from Bombay. Clow had exercised a successful ministry there for 18 years, but his health had broken down, and he had corresponded with Dr.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*



Dunmore Lang of Sydney who told him of the shortage of ministers in the developing Australian colonies.

Some idea of the wide range of David's interests and expertise can be gained from the titles of the papers he presented to the Philosophical Institute of Victoria, (of which he was a founding member), later to become the Royal Society of Victoria:

- 1855-"On the Failure of the Yan Yean Reservoir, Embracing an Examination of the Report of the Committee on the Yan Yean Scheme".
- 1855-"On What Data Does the City of Melbourne Depend for an Adequate Supply of Water from the Yan Yean Reservoir?"
- 1857-"On a New Form of Propeller for Steam Ships."
- 1859-"On a New Application of Lever Power in the Extraction of Teeth."
- 1861-"On the Multisection of an Angle by Means of the Cycloid".
- 1863-"On a Double-jointed Uterine Pessary".
- 1863-"On Delivery on the Right Side".

As one of the early editors of the Australian Medical Journal, David wrote several editorial articles in 1858: "The Journal", "The Small-Pox and Quarantine", "Public Health, and Public Works", "The Late Dr. Maund", "Public Health, and Medical Education", "Melbourne Water and Lead Poisoning". In 1859, the Journal published the "President's Address before the Medical Society of Victoria" (David Wilkie was the Medical Society's first President).

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

### DAVID WILKIE AND THE BURKE AND WILLS EXPEDITION

When David arrived in Melbourne in 1839 much of the interior of Australia was still unexplored. In fact, the interior of the small Australian State of Victoria had only recently been mapped following the explorations of Sturt and Mitchell as late as 1838. The further exploration of Australia by land excited the curiosity and enthusiasm of the European colonists, particularly after Kennedy followed the Barcoo River in Queensland in 1847, noting that it flowed to some inland destination.

What would this inland sea be like? Would it be a great inland lake surrounded by good pastures, like a jewel in the middle of a dry continent? Looking back after 150 years, when each night on the television weather segment we may see the afternoon's satellite photograph of our entire continent, it is hard for us to imagine how unknown and mysterious the interior of Australia was to the early colonists.

Although most Australians today would know little about the extensive exploratory journeys of A.C.Gregory, we seem to have all heard something about the Burke and Wills Expedition in 1860-61. We remember it in somewhat the same way as we recall the famous bushranger Ned Kelly, a grand failure, an example of how not to go about exploring the interior of a desert continent, although the expedition did achieve one of its objectives of crossing Australia from south to north, from Melbourne to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*



### **Route of explorers A.C. Gregory and Burke & Wills**

The expedition had set off in a grand manner, with lots of equipment purchased with enthusiastic public donations. However, most of the men died because of their lack of knowledge of how to survive in the interior of Australia.

In December 1857, Dr. David Wilkie was appointed Chairman of the Philosophical Institute's "Exploration" Committee, and on 18th August, 1860, a memorandum of agreement was signed "between the Honourable David Elliot Wilkie, as Treasurer of the Exploration Committee of the Royal Society, Melbourne, of the one part, and several other persons whose names are hereto subscribed of the other part; the said persons, forming an Expedition about to explore the interior of Australia under Robert O'Hara Burke..."

The failure of the expedition marks a turning point in the consciousness of the early European colonists where they



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

began to realise that they were not going to shape this continent; it was going to shape them. European colonists were to discover what the Aboriginal people of the continent had learned over the previous 65,000 years- respect and know the country, or die.

David was also a politician. He was elected to Parliament in 1858 as the representative for the North-Western Province in the Legislative Council, for a term of 10 years. He served out the full term.

In 1881, he retired from active medical practice, sold his house in Collins Street, and moved to a house in East Melbourne, where he continued to see some of his patients. He had a bout of bronchitis in 1884, but recovered.



**Mary Elizabeth Wilkie**

In November 1884, David appeared in excellent health when he left Melbourne with his wife and younger daughters on a visit to Europe. He died unexpectedly in Paris on 2nd April, 1885. His body was taken to Scotland and was buried in the Kirkyard of Greyfriars in the family grave.

David and Mary Wilkie had ten children:

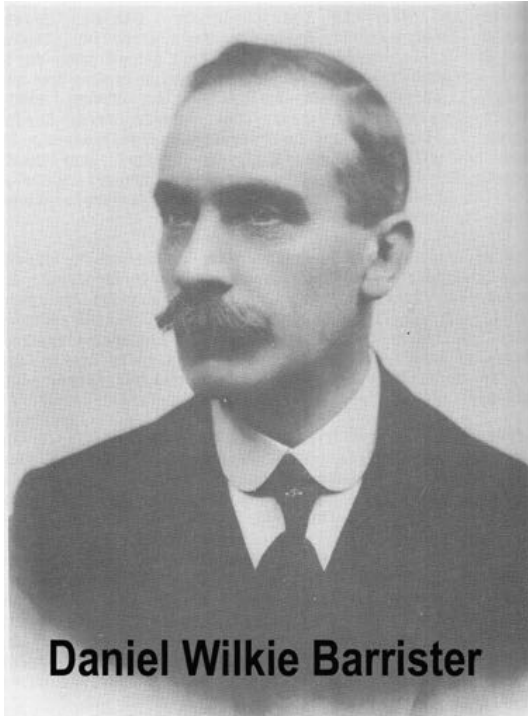
## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

1. **Daniel**, born 1st December, 1843. Daniel was Edgar Wilkie's grandfather.
2. **Margaret**, born 1st March, 1845, married Patrick Alexander Agnew. She died in 1928. There is no record of any children.
3. **James** born Dec 10th, 1846. He became a stock & share broker. James married Susannah Jones in 1873, and had two sons and a daughter. James died on Aug 31, 1922
4. **David** was born on 23rd November, 1848. He studied medicine at the University of Melbourne, graduating in 1873. He later joined his father's practice. David never married and died in 1898.
5. **Mary** was born on 12th July, 1850. She married John Nankivell, and had two sons and two daughters. Mary died July 15, 1896.
6. **George** born 19th May, 1852, became a well known Melbourne solicitor. George died on 24th February, 1895 in Melbourne. He never married.
7. **John** was born on 30th November, 1853 and died at the age of seven years on 24th April, 1861.
8. **Caroline** was born on 23rd September, 1857 and died in 1926. She never married.
9. **Isabel** was born on 7th September, 1859. She married Sir Robert Baillie, 5th Baronet of Polkommot, Linlithgow-shire, Scotland. They had two sons. Isabel died in 1945.
10. **Emily** was born on 16th June 1862. At the age of 29, she married Brigadier-General Frederick Rainsford Hannay. She died in England in 1948, leaving a daughter.

### DANIEL WILKIE, Barrister-Cricketer

Daniel, the first child, was born in the cottage in Swanston Street, Melbourne. When Daniel was 7 years old, the family, consisting then of Dr. David Wilkie, his wife Mary and the three boys Daniel, James and David Jnr. moved into the new brick home David had built in Collins Street. David Wilkie practised from this address, 106 Collins Street East, one of the first and largest brick residences in Melbourne at that time. After the renumbering of the streets from Spring Street, the combined practice and residence became 151 Collins Street.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*



Daniel attended Scots School across the street, growing up in this grand house where important meetings took place and the intellectual elite were frequent visitors. Daniel became a barrister and solicitor, and his younger brother George followed him into the legal profession. They both became well known and successful lawyers.

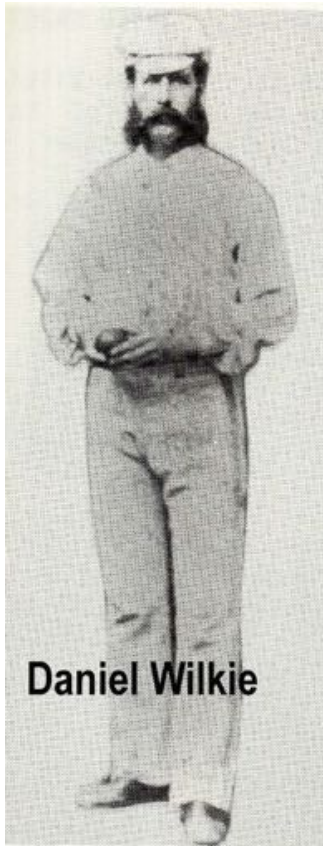
At the age of 30, Daniel married Jean Frances Moody from South Yarra. Initially they lived in a house at 42 Collins Street, where the disappearance of the family dog necessitated this newspaper advertisement in the *Melbourne Herald*.

*Will the man who took the spaniel  
From the house of Mr. Daniel  
Wilkie, 42 Collins Street, Melbourne East,  
Please return the sporting little beast."*

Daniel and Jean later moved to "The Pines" in Toorak, somewhere in the vicinity of Como Park, enjoying the lifestyle of people financially well off and socially respected. As well as his success in his law practice, Daniel enjoyed some fame as a cricketer. The 11th November, 1910 issue of the *Melbourne Herald* carried this article on Daniel along with a photograph entitled "Player of the Past":

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

"PLAYER OF THE PAST"  
"MR DANIEL WILKIE"



"Dan' Wilkie was a noted player of the sixties and seventies. He was an active member of the East Melbourne Club when it was formed fifty years ago. He was captain of the first eleven from 1867 to 1875, and led East Melbourne in the famous lost ball match, the scores of which are published on this page.

From 1860 to 1877, when he gave up cricket, he took considerably over 500 wickets at a cost of 7 runs apiece. The last cup match he played in was against South Melbourne, and it extended over eight weeks. He afterwards took about 200 wickets at something under 7 runs apiece for the Bohemians.

He was a famous slow underarm bowler of those days. He had a peculiar delivery, which was higher than that of most underarm bowlers. Against Tasmania in 1866, he took eighteen wickets for 27, and in 1865 he took two for 12 against N.S.W. He excelled with the bat on many occasions.

Mr. Wilkie is a member of the Victorian Bar, and still takes a keen interest in the East Melbourne Cricket Club."

"LOST BALL MATCH - FEATURE OF THE SEVENTIES"

"In an article on the East Melbourne Club, published in these columns on October 25th, I referred to the "lost ball match". It was one of the most sensational and exciting matches played

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

in the fifty years of the club. Many of those who took part are still alive, and some will be present at the jubilee celebrations next week.

The game was played on the East Melbourne ground in November 1871. It was for the challenge cup, and East Melbourne won by two runs. At a critical stage of the game Goldsmith fell while vaulting a fence after a ball that went out into the road and down into the gutter. He became unconscious. After five runs had been registered, 'Dan' Wilkie, captain of East, called lost ball. The scorer, however, recorded eight runs, but after protest by Wilkie this was altered to six. The incident caused considerable newspaper controversy, there being a difference of opinion on the question of whether a side could claim lost ball when the ball was not really lost. There was a great deal in the point for both sides, for had eight runs been allowed, the result would have been a tie, for East only won by two runs.

Right up to the last ball there was great excitement. When W. Ford and P. Clay, the last of the Melbournites were in, Wilkie called out to the scorers, "How many do they want?" After some hesitation a reply came, "One to tie; two to win."

Everyone was nearly past himself with excitement. East's captain went over to Darke, who was bowling, and remarked, "Now, the ball of your life!" Darke looked piteously at his leader, straightened himself up and whirred one in. The ball hit Ford on the foot, and then rolled onto the wicket."

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Daniel and Jean had a large family, with nine children: Nora, David, Gladys, Jean, then the twins Pearl and Ruby, then Lesley, Mary and Gilbert. (Lesley was Edgar Wilkie's father).

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

### THE FINANCIAL CRISIS OF THE 1890s

From 1892 onwards, a run of bad seasons in New South Wales, a fall in the wool price from 12 pence to 7 pence a pound, and the great strikes of 1890 made British investors wary of investing in the public works of the colonial governments. Because of this, the Australian banks were short of money to lend, and were forced to restrict credit. Governments had to begin curtailing their public works and unemployment increased.

The financial crisis was most severe and prolonged in the colony of Victoria, in Melbourne in particular, where many people had been making money by speculating on rising prices, borrowing money to buy and sell. A lot of people suddenly went broke. There was great distress, with homeless people sleeping in public parks, and the crash triggered an exodus of unemployed people from the city of Melbourne to country districts in Victoria and to New South Wales.

Meanwhile, like other professional men accustomed to prosperity, Daniel Wilkie tended to send out his accounts for legal fees twelve months after the work was completed. From 1892 on, many of Daniel's clients went bankrupt and bills were unpaid. Daniel apparently also lost a great deal of money speculating on gold shares. He was forced to make good his losses by selling the fine family home and the inheritance in Scotland that went with the title "of Rathobyres". And then Daniel walked out on his family.

**Nora** the eldest child (born 25th September, 1874) immediately went out and found a job in an office. She was 21 years old at the time and was studying art. We have some of the water-colour landscapes for which she was well known. Nora lived with her mother, and never married. She died in 1950.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

**David** the second child was 19 when his parents separated. He was taking a second leisurely year in the Sixth Form at school, studying extra Greek and expecting to go to Melbourne University the next year to study Law. David was suddenly faced with the prospect of having to help support the family, his prospects of higher education having evaporated, and he became an office boy in the North British Mercantile Insurance Company, working under 16 year olds who had seniority. David stayed on in the insurance industry. At the age of 26 he married Mary Burden. Their daughter Jonet, who became well known as a ballet dancer, married Francis Doolen and went to live in England. They have two sons.

The second daughter **Gladys** (born 3rd October, 1877), married Hugh Thompson when she was 33 years old. The Thompsons had one son and Gladys died in 1959.

**Jean** the next child (born 2nd December, 1879) was married in June 1910 to Eric Inglis. They had a daughter. Jean died in 1946. It was not recorded what sort of work Gladys and Jean did before they were married. Jonet Doolen tells me her father David bought Gladys and Jean a sewing machine to make clothes for their friends. Perhaps they earned some income that way.

After Jean came the twins **Pearl** and **Ruby** (born 11th March, 1882). Pearl was married late in life at the age of 53 to Archibald Baird. They had no children, and Pearl died in 1951. Ruby was married to Edgar Rich when she was 37. They had one son.

The next child was **Lesley Alexander**, born on 3rd August, 1883. Lesley was named after his mother's father Lesley Alexander Moody. He was the father of Lesley Edgar George Wilkie, the author of the diary.

**Mary** was born on 2nd September, 1884. She was married at 27 to Hampden Beaumont. They had three sons. Mary died on 14th March 1972.

The youngest child, about 8 or 9 years old when Daniel left them, was **Gilbert** born on 18th August, 1886. He never married.

### FAMILY BREAKDOWN

We don't know what went wrong with Daniel and Jean Wilkie's marriage. Whatever happened, it seemed that the nine

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

children never forgave their father for leaving them. Jonet Doolen tells me the only comments she ever heard about her grandfather Daniel were negative ones. "Perhaps he found fatherhood too much. I gather Nora got on his nerves and she said that Daniel was very hard and unfair to my father (David). So I suppose he was a highly strung poor man.

As a child I once asked my father whether he hadn't hated his father (Daniel) for leaving them the way he did; he didn't answer for a moment and then he said 'Well..I don't know whether perhaps under the same circumstances I mightn't have done the same'."

Jonet recalls, "My memory of my grandmother (Jean Moody) was of an old lady in a big armchair on the verandah of a bungalow in Washington Street, Toorak (I think!) I just remember a sweet smiling face.

I was only three, on a visit from New Zealand. I don't think any of the family ever saw their father again, although someone got in touch when he was either dying or dead."

### LESLEY ALEXANDER WILKIE

Lesley was 12 years old when his family plunged into hard times and his parents separated. On one of the rare occasions he spoke about his family, Lesley described to his son Keith something of the shock of moving from "The Pines" into less glamorous rented accommodation in which he and his younger brother Gilbert shared a room infested with bedbugs. They would have to strike a match in the dark and swoop



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

swiftly in order to have any chance of dispatching their tormentors.

After leaving school, Lesley worked for some time in Daniel's law firm. He mentioned to Keith that he had a racing bicycle with wooden rims that he used to ride to work in his father's office. However, Lesley turned down the offer of becoming an articled clerk and studying law, and instead joined the growing tide of Victorians looking for work in New South Wales. New South Wales had recovered much more rapidly than Victoria from the financial crisis of the 1890s, mainly owing to a massive expansion of wheat-growing. Lesley found a job working for the pastoral company Goldsborough Mort as a bookkeeper on a property on the Darling River. He was later transferred to a property near Laura, and it was here that Lesley enlisted in the Fourth Light Horse when the First World War started in 1914. Lesley became a Lieutenant with the expeditionary force in Egypt.



Keith says of his father, "He was very definite about being in the Fourth Light Horse, but from what I heard in later years, it seemed as though the Fourth Light Horse was almost wiped out and they were merged into the Fifth Light Horse." Lesley was in the famous battle of Beersheba where the

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Light Horse soldiers rode straight through heavy Turkish gunfire to take the city.

The Australians galloped in so fast the Turkish soldiers were not able to alter their gunsights that had been set at a range of 2,000 yards. As the Light Horse soldiers rode in, the Turkish bullets were falling behind them. Lesley told Keith the effect of the continuous roar from the guns and the bullets coming down just behind them was as though they were riding into a heavy thunderstorm with large hailstones falling on the ground.

Keith described his father Lesley as "a kindly, considerate, honest and trustworthy person who believed in reliability to the minute. He was a loyalist; we always had to stand whenever 'God Save the King' was played, and on Anzac or Armistice Day he would stop the car if we were travelling and observe the minute's silence."

Lesley was wounded in action in a fall from a horse which fractured a vertebra in his back, and was admitted to the Officers' Hospital at Abbassia, Egypt for treatment. It was there he met Ruth Robson, a nursing sister from the Gatton district in South East Queensland. At that time, Lesley was preparing to be sent to fight in France, and had been studying French. Ruth used to tease him about his French lessons.

### LESLEY'S NOTES ON THE DUTIES OF AN OFFICER

Amongst the family papers which included Edgar's diary from World War 2, was a hand-written note book from lectures on military topics that Lesley had attended and written up in

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

World War 1, supplemented with notes from military regulations. The notebook is good reading, providing an insight into the military skills demanded of Australian soldiers in the 1914-18 War, and in particular, of the mounted cavalry known as the Australian Light Horse. An examples:

"Discipline means prompt obedience, intelligent obedience that welds individuals into a concentrated whole. It is one of the means by which men can be handled. Darwin says, 'The superiority of disciplined soldiers over undisciplined masses is primarily due to the confidence which each has in its comrades..Discipline includes steadiness on parade, the way work is carried out, the carriage and appearance of the men, payment of compliments, and the spirit of the men. Punishment of men is at times necessary to obtain discipline. (Lesley originally wrote "enforce" then crossed it out and substituted "obtain"). Without discipline, soldiers would become a mob in times of excitement or danger."

"Officers should keep up good relations with men but not get familiar. Be kindly but firm. Officers should always keep their temper, even when reprimanding or punishing men- never let them see you are angry. Be firm, concise, clear and courteous in regard to orders. Punishments should be uniform, certain, exemplary and appropriate to the offence. Officers should know their men, their names, characters, capacities for certain work etc."

### THE JAPANESE ARMY OFFICER'S APPROACH TO DISCIPLINE

One of the major obstacles to understanding between Australian soldiers taken prisoner and their Japanese captors in the Second World War was the Australians' reaction to observing the open display of hostility and aggression on the

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

part of Japanese officers towards their own troops and towards prisoners of war.

From Lesley's notes, it is obvious that an open display of anger was frowned on in an Australian officer, because the basic concept of the officer is that of a gentleman. On the other hand, the system through which discipline was maintained in the Imperial Japanese Army was one of instant physical punishment meted out by a superior, with the erring soldier of inferior rank prohibited from resisting. The concept underlying the behaviour of the Japanese officer appears to be that of the scowling Samurai warrior.

The use of this scowling system of "facing down" the opposition by Japanese officers against Australian prisoners of war was simply misinterpreted by the Australians as sadistic brutality indulged in for its own sake. However, it was always freely admitted by prisoners that the lashings administered to the prisoners for stealing food were simply the same punishment that the Japanese soldiers themselves received.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

### SOME NOTES ON THE ROBSON FAMILY

Lesley Alexander Wilkie married Ruth Maughan Robson in Cairo on 20th January, 1917. Unfortunately our knowledge of Ruth Robson's family extends back only as far as the beginning of the nineteenth century. The name "Robson" means "son of Robert", and is equivalent to "Robertson" and "Roberts". "Robson" is a common surname in the north of England.

The Robson ancestors of Edgar Wilkie's mother Ruth can be traced to James Robson, who married Susanna Gray on 17th May, 1811, in Kirkclinton, Cumberland, England. Susanna was born in London in 1786, so she was 25 years old at the time of her marriage, and was still alive at the time of the 1851 census. James had died by 1851.

James and Susanna had five children, four daughters Ann, Mary, Jane and Susanna, and a son Arthur Robson, who was to become Edgar Wilkie's great-grandfather. Arthur was born on 7th June, 1823. The family's birth records were found in a ("Quakers") Society of Friends Register.

The Robsons lived in Richmond Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne. Arthur Robson became a librarian in the Newcastle LITERARY, SCIENTIFIC AND MECHANICS INSTITUTION. At the age of 31, in 1854, Arthur married a girl from the same street, Sarah Maughan. She was 21.

The wedding was just a year after the death from cholera of Sarah's father, Joseph Maughan. There was a widespread cholera outbreak in Newcastle in 1853. Joseph had come from

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Allendale, Northumberland. His widow Jane Maughan (formerly Jane Ritson from Allendale) also aged 50, was left with four of her seven children. Sarah, the eldest at 21 was married to Arthur Robson, Joseph was 18, Isabella was 15, and Mary (known as Polly) was 10. Another son, and daughters Ann and Jane had died in childhood.

Arthur and Sarah had six children. They were living in Liddell Street, Gateshead, Durham. Arthur had left his librarian job and had taken on an agency, representing an iron manufacturer. One of the Robson children, Joseph Robert, died in early childhood. The other five were William, Arthur, Jane, Frank and Louisa. William Robson was to become Edgar Wilkie's grandfather.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, a fall in lead prices in association with problems in the glass and iron industries left a lot of people unemployed in Northumberland. The fledgling colonies in Australia were trying hard to attract immigrants, and many people from the north of England, including Isabella and Polly Maughan, Sarah Robson's unmarried sisters, made the decision to seek a better future overseas. Isabella was 22 and Polly was 18 when they set sail from England in October 1861 on the "Jessie Munn".

Their first experience of Brisbane in the settlement at Moreton Bay on their arrival about three months later was one of total disgust. In a letter to friends Charles Story and George Green in Newcastle-on-Tyne of 10th February, 1862, the two women reported: "But I must tell you about the depot. It was not as good as a barn, no window in it, neither was it floored, merely the bare ground. It had two large doors, and contained two

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

tables and forms. There were 32 beds for 132 girls, but the worst of it all was they drove us in like so many cattle and locked us up. Of course, we could get nothing to eat or drink. We had not had anything since breakfast!" The friends made an official complaint on their behalf.

Notwithstanding the totally inadequate facilities provided for new arrivals, Isabella and Polly found love was alive and well in the colony. Within eighteen months of arriving in Australia they were both married. Isabella married Samuel Dear in Ipswich.

Sam's family had emigrated from Bedford, England in 1856. Polly Maughan married Charles Dittmar at Rockhampton within a year after her arrival. This marriage didn't last, and she later married Peter Woodward at Charters Towers. Polly had four children and she died at the age of 41 years in Townsville in 1884.



**Sarah Robson**

Not long after Isabella and Polly were married in Australia, Arthur Robson died in England on 7th October, 1864, also at 41 years of age, of "acute rheumatism". Louisa, the youngest daughter, was just a few weeks old when her father died. Sarah Robson had become a widow at the age of 32 years. Her widowed mother Jane was 61 at the time. The two widows, mother and daughter, decided to

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

join Isabella and Polly in Australia.



Jane and Sarah and the five Robson children sailed from Liverpool for Moreton Bay on board the "Naval Reserve" towards the end of 1866. William celebrated his eleventh birthday about two weeks before they arrived in Moreton Bay on 21st February, 1867. On arrival they went to live with Isabella and her husband Samuel Dear in the Purga district just inland from Brisbane in south-east Queensland.

About four years later, William went off tin mining at Tenterfield, in northern New South Wales. He was then 15 years old, his wages helping to support the family. In 1875 the Robsons and the Dears selected property at Mt. Whitestone, about 18 kilometres south of Gatton. Their properties fronted Ma Ma Creek. They called their small selection "Allendale" after the town of Allendale in Northumberland where Jane (and Joseph) were born.

Around 1880, William Robson married Elizabeth Cameron. The Camerons had emigrated from northern Ireland and were farming at Ropely near Gatton. Elizabeth had a little sister Beatrice Cameron, who was 27 years younger. Beatrice died in July 1986 at the age of 102 years. She remembered Willie Robson and his wife Elizabeth as very devoted to each other. She described Willie Robson as a man who was known for his bad tempers, likely to react to frustration by destroying pieces



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*



Elizabeth Robson

of furniture or farming equipment. His placid wife would simply comment that William would have to replace the damaged object.

William and Elizabeth Robson had eight children. Ruth, Edgar Wilkie's mother, was the sixth child. The first born was Edith, then came Grace, Arthur, Edgar, Frank, Ruth, Jane, Selina and Gertie. Grace died at the age of seven years.

In a letter in 1983, Isobel Hislop, daughter of Edgar Robson, describes the Robsons as "mainly hardy, argumentative, fearless and stubborn people who command respect. My father, Edgar Robson, certainly had all these characteristics, and his uncle at Innisfail, Francis Joseph Maughan Robson, also appeared to have them."

Ruth Robson was trained as a nurse at Ipswich General Hospital, completing her fourth year and gaining registration as a trained nursing sister in 1912. From Ipswich, Ruth went to work in the Cairns District Hospital for twelve months, before returning home to become the matron of a ten bed private hospital in Gatton for two years. On 15th May, 1915, she joined the Australian Army Nursing Service, and was sent to work with the Australian Expeditionary Force in Egypt. Her brother Frank and her sister Selina also joined the Army in 1915.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*



Selina was a nurse as well. On the way to Egypt, Selina volunteered with some other nurses to return on a troop ship to nurse soldiers suffering from Spanish Influenza. Frank Robson was killed in France in 1916.

Ruth was nursing in the officers' ward at No.14 A.G.Hospital, Abbassia, Egypt when she fell in love with Lesley Alexander Wilkie. They were married in Cairo, and Ruth returned home. She was pregnant when she left the Army Nursing Service on 8th March, 1917. Edgar was born in Australia three months later.

### EDGAR'S EARLY LIFE

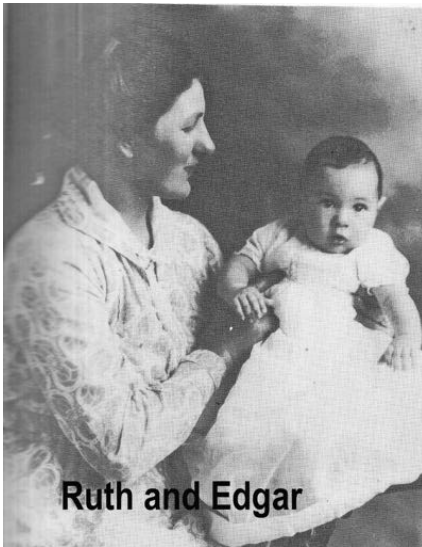
Ruth returned to Australia after her marriage to Lesley and was discharged from the Australian Army Nursing Corps. She was staying with her friend Mrs. Georgina Adams at Redcliffe



in Queensland, when Edgar was born in Georgina's home on 27th May, 1917. Baby Lesley Edgar George was given his third name in honor of Georgina.

At the end of the war Lesley

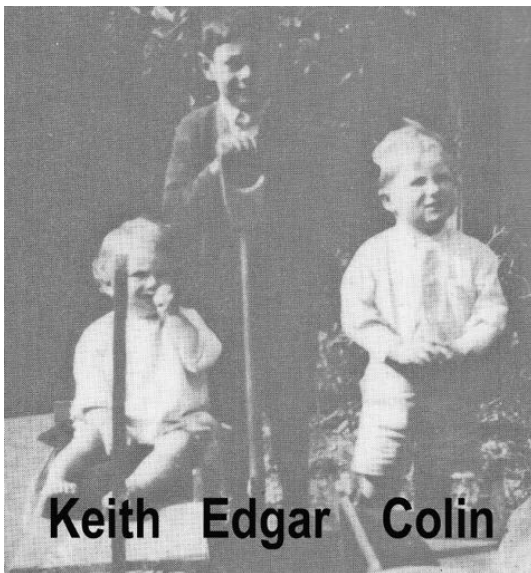
## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*



**Ruth and Edgar**

returned to Queensland to work for the same pastoral company. He had impressed the company with his diligence as a book-keeper before the War, and he was immediately given a job managing a property called St.Helens, near Pittsworth on the Darling Downs. It was while Lesley was managing St.Helens that two more sons were born.

Colin and Keith were born in Toowoomba. Towards the end of 1924, a property became available to be balloted under the Soldier Settlement scheme at Jerodgerie about twenty miles north of Albury in New South Wales, not far from the Victorian border.



**Keith Edgar Colin**

The property had been once owned by the Hume family. Lesley took part in a ballot and had the good fortune to draw an allotment of two square miles which included the homestead, a large house built with sandstone blocks; it was a very comfortable home with a fireplace in every room.

Keith remembers how cold it was going to school in the winter, sometimes with ice on the ground in the puddles. Cold winds blew off Mt.Bogong or

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Mt. Feathertop which lay to the south-east, and sometimes the fogs would last until well into the afternoon.

They ran sheep, grew wheat, and also had dairy cows. Keith says his father was congratulated by Dalgety's for having some of the highest class wool at that time. However, Lesley and Ruth decided to sell Jerodgerie and go back to Queensland where they had heard of land being thrown open in the Callide Valley.

It is not certain why they decided to do this. Ruth became pregnant while they were living there and she insisted on travelling to Toowoomba in Queensland to give birth to Margaret in the same private hospital where Colin and Keith were born. Margaret was seven years younger than Edgar. Perhaps Ruth didn't like Jerodgerie. Margaret thinks her father was advised to take his wife and children to a warmer climate, because they were often ill.

The property was sold and Lesley took his family for an extended holiday at Cowes on Phillip Island in Victoria. They lived in a home there owned by people called Roberts who had the Broadwater Guest House. Colin, Keith and Margaret have all kept vivid memories of Phillip Island, its beautiful scenic walks and interesting places to play, with its fairy penguins and koalas.

In preparation for the long trip to Queensland, Lesley had a trailer built in Melbourne for their Hupmobile car. The car was taken by boat to the mainland and they drove to Melbourne where the trailer was hitched on. Travelling through New South Wales, a decision was made to avoid the mountains

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

near Orange because the engine was overheating, and so they travelled west and up into Queensland through the town of Texas.

They had crossed the border and were driving on newly made roads on the western Darling Downs when they had a major breakdown with the car. Keith remembers it because as a boy he felt partly responsible. An advance party making the new road was pulling down trees with a winch and one tree wasn't far from being pulled down. "They waved us on and I wanted to stop so we could see the tree come down.

Dad said we couldn't stop, we had to keep going because dark clouds were gathering and he didn't want to waste time and be caught in the black soil if it rained. So I said, 'I hope you get a puncture!' We came out onto some formed road and Dad started to give the old Hup some throttle. Next thing there was a tremendous bang and a crash and a tyre blew out. Dad said, 'There, you've got your wish! Never wish bad on anybody ever again!'. "

The universal joint had broken and the tailshaft had come off, wrapping itself around one of the brake rods. This skidded the wheel and blew out the tyre. Eventually Lesley got a lift into Clifton and borrowed a newly painted Overland utility. Everything was piled onto it, and the children were told not to touch the paint.

Keith recalls: "In those days paint took about a week to dry. It was in a hell of a mess when we'd finished with it. We boys had to sit up in the back of this thing on top of all the goods, and going down the Heifer Creek Road it was just sheer cliffs.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Edgar would have to keep shaking us to keep us awake because it was pretty late at night. We were heading down to Mt. Whitestone where Mother's brother, Uncle Edgar Robson, lived."

The Wilkies stayed with the Robsons until they found a house to rent in Gatton, and there Ruth lived with the children while Lesley went north to look at the land in the Callide Valley. He was accompanied by Edgar Robson and Mr. John Bailey. They drove up to Biloela via Toogoolawah and Monto.



The Wilkies are fond of stories. The story was often told of how, on their way out from Biloela, looking on the map for the land, they asked a woman for directions. She was living on a property in a tin shed, allegedly with 13 or 14 children. One of the boys was causing this lady some consternation by walking on the top wire of the fence as if performing a tightrope act. She said, "Look at the little b---, I should have held me water when he was being born and drowned him!" John Bailey, who

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

was a very religious man said, "Come on Lesley, let's get away from this terrible woman- she'll have us all in Hell!"

They found the land at Argoon and approved of it, then set off back to Gatton, packed up all their belongings and returned to the property. Ruth, Edgar, Colin, Keith and Margaret travelled up by train, through Rockhampton and Mount Morgan, and then west. The children were very impressed with the special rack engine which had to be connected to the train to get it up the Mount Morgan range.

To begin with they lived in tents on the property. Keith remembers "There was no water. We had to carry water for four miles in kerosene tins. They had bungs stuck in the holes where the kerosene had been taken out. These bungs were pieces of rag wrapped around pieces of pine or sticks and they used to get covered with bees and hornets and you'd get your hands stung if you weren't watching what you were doing".

Lesley's first priority was to build a roof and set up some tanks to collect water if it rained. Then they began splitting slabs to build the house, while clearing the land and building fences. It was hard work with occasional comic relief provided by "goannas coming out of trees, and people chasing them when they fell on the ground and that sort of thing."

Incidents which stick in the memory often serve to provide a description of what life was like in those days. Keith recalls "I can remember one occasion there when Dad and Edgar were putting a gate up down at the entrance. It was where the old Kilburnie road used to come right past our house and up along the flat until they cleared the road further to the south.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

There was a girl aged about sixteen who used to live at Kilburnie Station. She used to ride past on a big black horse on her way down to the railway station at Argoon to pick up parcels and things that were urgently needed. Everything had to come on the train in those days. There wasn't even a post office there, and if you weren't there to pick it up it might disappear.

This particular afternoon it was getting pretty late, winter time, and it was just getting dusk. We could hear this horse galloping and Edgar said, 'It's Sheila!' He stepped out and the horse balked and he grabbed its reins. She half slid off one side and they got her back on and she began complaining about losing a parcel back along the road. They got in the old Hupmobile and went back along the road and they found bits from this parcel of car parts for about a mile along the road."

"The parts were for an old Buick they were doing up. She got up here to the house and they started to re-wrap all these bits. We used to get a lot of southern newspapers but it had to be a Brisbane newspaper that she re-wrapped the parts in or her Aunt Ruby would know she'd had a buster. Everything was wrapped up and she was sent on her way. I don't think her Aunt ever knew about that. Later on, she was one of the women who escaped from Singapore with General Bennett, very lucky to escape from the Japanese."

They all worked very hard towards preparing to plant cotton but their money ran out and Lesley accepted a job managing Brighton Downs, a property 140 miles south-west of Winton in the Channel Country. From then on for some years Ruth



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

would travel between Brighton Downs and Argoon. Much of the time Edgar was left to try to work the farm on his own.

Part of the terms of the lease on the Argoon property was that the owner had to live on the property he had selected for five years. Since Lesley had left the farm to work on Brighton Downs, a neighbour who was interested in acquiring the property had reported to the relevant authorities that Lesley wasn't living there, although other members of the family were. To save a lot of worry, Lesley transferred ownership of the property into Edgar's name. This in turn meant that Edgar was also required to live on the property and he spent long periods of time there on his own.

After Lesley took the job at Brighton Downs, Edgar went out to work for a short time with his notorious Uncle Bob Cameron (the brother of Ruth's mother) on Toolebuc Station near McKinlay in central outback Queensland. Keith thinks it was Ruth's idea, but Margaret says Edgar begged his father to let him go to work for Bob. Ruth wrote to Uncle Bob asking him to employ Edgar. In his reply Bob inquired, "Can he milk and ride and kill a sheep?" The reply must have been satisfactory and Edgar was given a job. Margaret provides a job description:

"Edgar asked to go out to work with Uncle Bob on Toolebuc for ten shillings per week, and we heard he worked like a little slave out there. He had to be up before daylight and catch the night horse and bring in the other horses each morning before anyone was up. However, Edgar's pony put its foot into a hole one dark morning and he had a nasty fall. Uncle Bob would not have Edgar's injuries examined, and Edgar could not turn

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

his head. It was bent back over one shoulder and unable to be straightened." "Edgar's ten shillings a week was cancelled, and he was put in to cook for the men instead, for a few weeks. Dad heard about this incident at Toolebuc, and brought Edgar back to Brighton Downs."

At that time Colin was out with his father at Brighton Downs and he remembers Edgar "attempting to ride a buckjumper at Brighton Downs and was thrown and badly knocked about. He half crawled and limped back to the stockyard rails, where one of the other blokes said, 'What happened, mate?' Edgar replied, 'I just had a difference of opinion with a horse and the horse won.' A few days later he emerged from the stockyard with a grin from ear to ear, and related that he and the horse had just reached a mutual agreement. They were now friends. Nobody else could ever ride that horse."

When Edgar came back down to Argoon, he tried to work the property with no capital, no farm machinery and only a few farm animals. The farm needed clearing and he had no way of paying anyone to help him. He supported himself by working at Kilburnie Station for Miss Ruby Campbell, and sometimes for other members of the the Campbell family who owned properties at Collard Creek, "Craiglands" and "Inverness".

Australia was in the depths of the depression years. Margaret remembers that although there was great hardship in the cities, "in the country, poverty was not nearly so noticeable, as most country people on the land always had plenty to eat and could produce most of the important foods. A lot of recycling was done, especially with clothing, and improvising with other items to save a few pennies. Of course, the person on the

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

land did not get much for his produce either. These conditions no doubt made Edgar very versatile, and he was always clever with his hands. In his diary Edgar several times mentioned making shirts and cooking utensils with simple materials available. This didn't surprise the family."

**Keith recalls** "Colin stayed with Edgar for a while, and Mother came down with him for a good while in 1933, and then eventually I was sent down so I could be with him and go to school. I used to be packed off to school at Callide. They'd bought a pony, and I was expected to ride it six miles to school and back again. I remember I used to learn a few good yarns riding with the boys up through the scrub and I'd come home and tell Edgar a spicy yarn and he used to say to me, 'Listen, if you were as good at lessons as you are at smut, you'd be a genius!'"

Edgar must have been about 17 years of age when he was attempting to fill the role of parent and survive on the property at Argoon. Some of his attempts to earn money were grand failures. Keith relates an example:

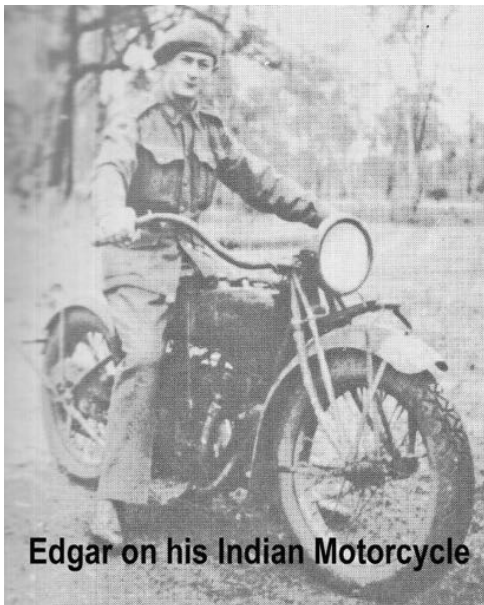
"It was about this time that the possum season was thrown open. The economy of the country wasn't so hot, so they allowed possum shooting so we could export the possum skins to America. The shooters were given about 3 pounds 10 shillings a dozen, so Edgar got the old Hupmobile, his father's prize sedan, and along with Wally Green and Oliver Nagorcka, went up to Inverness Station possuming.

They got a lot of stuff together, booked up a lot of bullets and set up a camp. They had gas lights; they used to put an old

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

motorbike carbide generator on their belts and have a tube running up to a light on their heads, and they'd shoot possums from horseback. They'd shoot possums all night and skin them next day and peg out the skins. The skins would have to be pegged out somewhere where they wouldn't be seen and stolen.

I remember my mother arrived home from the west unexpectedly to find the house all pegged out with possum skins- all up the walls and across the floors, with bundles of skins. She was going to boil Edgar in oil! Eventually the possum season ended and Edgar ended up with a debt of 80 pounds with the local storekeeper, with no hope in the world of ever paying it."



Edgar on his Indian Motorcycle

And another: "To attempt to pay the storekeeper back Edgar went timber-getting. All the trees had to be cut with axes and cross-cut saws. One day we were cutting girder timber for bridges, and we'd had a bad day- most of the trees we'd felled were all hollow. One particular tree didn't have much of a hollow, only about an inch and a half or so. So Edgar cut off a limb with the same type of ring grain in it, trimmed

it down very carefully and drove it up into the log. He then went to great trouble to cut another piece off the end so nobody would ever see the log had been plugged.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Next morning when the chap with the truck came to pick up the logs he walked around and said, 'Edgar, that log's been plugged!' Edgar said, 'Like hell it has, that's one of the most solid logs on the plateau!' After Edgar had gone on for a while insisting the log was solid, the other chap said, 'Edgar, when you plug a log, always plug the stump!' Edgar had forgotten that to see if the log was solid all they had to do was to look at the stump."

Brighton Downs Station was sold in 1938 and Lesley was offered a lesser position by the new owners. He decided not to stay on and returned to Argoon to develop the farm. Ruth had to take housekeeping jobs in western Queensland to pay for Margaret's education. I cannot achieve full agreement between Colin, Keith and Margaret on the frequent comings and goings of individual family members from western Queensland to and from Argoon.

It seemed that the farm was not able to provide enough income for the family, and like many rural families today, they were frequently separated by sheer economic necessity. Lesley and Ruth insisted the children should have the best available education and so Colin, Keith and Margaret were sent to boarding school. This meant that after 1938 Ruth really had to find regular work.

After his father came back to Argoon in 1938, Edgar found a job working with his Uncle Arthur Robson, one of Ruth's brothers. Arthur was building houses in the Nambour area. Edgar apparently learnt a lot from his Uncle Arthur about carpentry but their working relationship terminated quite

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

suddenly when Arthur criticised Edgar for making a mess of a flight of steps.

Arthur had made one side with all the slots cut in it and he told Edgar to cut out the other side. Edgar made some mistake and one side was longer than the other, so that the steps looked like a winding staircase. Because there had been some ambiguity about the measurements he was given, Edgar felt Arthur's anger towards him was unjustified. They exchanged some heated words and Edgar walked off in the direction of the camp with his lunch in a sugar bag.

The track to where the men were camping while building the houses went past the railway station at Nambour. Edgar saw a northbound goods train parked in the station and he decided there and then to go home to Argoon. He climbed up under a tarpaulin which was covering a goods wagon and found a brand new car, in which he made himself very comfortable. At Maryborough station he was arrested by a policeman with a truncheon, given a bed for the night in the local watch-house, breakfast in the morning and was tried by the magistrate.

A conviction was recorded against him and then the police told him he could go, reminding him what time the next goods train left Maryborough. He accordingly boarded the next goods train, and when it arrived in Bundaberg the same thing happened. He dined at His Majesty's expense and next morning he was told when the train left for Gladstone. Just before Gladstone, however, Edgar jumped off the train as it slowed down coming in to the station. He found the mailman who delivered the mail to Biloela from Gladstone and hitched a ride with him, eventually arriving home. Some time later the

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

police arrived looking for him. His uncle had reported him missing, having disappeared with only a razor and a sugar bag.

Edgar then went to work for the Campbells. Lesley and Keith were at Argoon, Ruth was housekeeping in western Queensland, Margaret was at school in Charters Towers and at that time Colin was a jackaroo on Clonagh station near Cloncurry in north-western Queensland.

### **Here is a letter from Lesley to Colin:**

Boon Boon, Argoon  
9th Sept, 1940

Dear Colin,

I was glad to hear from you after such a long silence and also to receive your greetings for my birthday. Your birthday will soon be around again 15th and both Keith and I wish you many happy returns of the day.

The news of the loss of your job at Clonagh was very disappointing - also your other troubles. No doubt the Clonagh Company expected you to journey out of the district for your holidays, because a change of climate is considered necessary occasionally, but more especially to visit your parents as these companies place some value on your personal life, if you are to rise in their employ. A man that lives for himself alone gets nowhere and soon becomes a "nobody". I hear from Edgar now and then - the last letter received was from Grovely and he had apparently transferred to 2/11 Field Company R.A.E. - this of course is a reinforcement of Engineers and for some reason that Edgar did not explain, he

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

did not go with his original unit which have embarked some time ago.

Last Thursday Byrne Motor Co sent one of the Chettar boys out from Biloela and took repossession of Edgar's utility. It appears that no instalments had been paid for a considerable time and Edgar did not reply to my question as to his intentions, when Byrne Motor Co long ago, talked about taking repossession, and so we are back to the bikes again as a means of transport. We had a severe though short winter and now weather is getting quite hot again, though nights are chilly.

Your affectionate father,  
L.A. Wilkie

Just after World War II broke out, Edgar joined the 2nd AIF Infantry. His service number was QX2984. He was initially in intelligence and had been made a corporal. The photograph on the front cover of this book was taken in Anzac Square in Brisbane. It shows Edgar wearing corporal's stripes. Edgar was to go overseas with his unit to the Middle East in 1940, but he contracted severe mumps and was too ill to go.

He was transferred to a Tank Corps in the Armoured Division as a private. Colin was also in the Army, in the 2nd 26th Infantry Battalion AMF, but did not get to see his brother much because Colin was stationed mainly from Bowen to Townsville, and Edgar was at Redbank and later in Puckapunyal. On one occasion, however, Colin was sent to Enoggera Training Camp on a special intelligence course, and he and Edgar hired a car and drove up to Ma Ma Creek to visit the Robsons.



*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

**Here is a letter Edgar wrote to Colin from Grovely Camp on 11th January, 1941:**

“Dear Colin, Thanks for your letter of 5th and also good wishes. I won't be leaving Australia but will be leaving Queensland for Cowra in New South Wales to join the Armoured Division I hope before long although not on 16th January, 1941 now.

Glad to hear of rains and of the feed. I was at Argoon for a few days but it only unsettled me and I wish to move on soon. Only it is hard to leave Arlie. She said to remember her to you when I wrote. There is very little to say Colin except that I only wish to get to action to smash the German war machine and to come back knowing that I did my bit and settle down somewhere where I can rest for the rest of my life with sheep or cattle and have a home away from worries of towns etc.

Well good luck Colin and here's how till I see you again when I come back. Yours sincerely, Edgar”

Edgar's father Lesley had suffered for years with peptic ulcers, and he regularly used bicarbonate of soda. Towards the end of 1940, Lesley and Keith were living at Argoon, and Lesley began to suffer more symptoms. He had joined a medical benefits scheme and he decided to go to Mt.Morgan to see a Dr.Watkins about the possibility of surgery. Keith remembers his father riding his bicycle to the railway station to catch the train. Lesley wrote to Keith from Mt.Morgan hospital, saying he was fasting prior to having a gastrectomy operation. By the end of the week, Keith received word his father had died post-operatively, on 10th February, 1941.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

**Here is a letter from Edgar to his mother Ruth written on 11th February, 1941:**

Cav. Trg. Sqn., Grovely

“Dear Mother,

I was very glad to hear from you the other day. Arlie is well thanks or was when I saw her Sunday - quite happy.

What are you going to do now? Will you leave earlier now? We will all have to arrange a date and all meet at Argoon. I am writing to Colin tonight and will ask him to tell you his plans. Had a letter from Keith today. He says Dad's will was not witnessed and also you were not included which will complicate things as you can claim a third and get it from the estate.

I didn't hear any more than that. So we will just have to settle things up and leave you in charge. I don't know what you will do with Keith. I'll have to see if he can be put somewhere he will behave himself. Well I'll close now hoping you are well and I'll hear from you soon.

Best love to you both,  
Yours affectionately  
Edgar”

### EDGAR'S PERSONALITY

The information set down in this section so far describes mainly the conditions in which Edgar grew up. He did not receive the benefit of a secondary school education; most of his schooling was via correspondence lessons supervised by his mother. The quest for my uncle reveals him to me as a highly intelligent, adaptable resourceful optimist with personality

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

weaknesses of impulsiveness and hyper-sensitivity to criticism. Some further stories from Colin, Keith and Margaret in their own words might give us more insight into Edgar's personality.

Colin says that "Edgar was a real Australian. Nothing that he did surprised anyone who knew him. He was always full of humour and had a very inventive mind. He was what could be called a perfectionist. He had the ability to amuse people, and his actions and words were original. For example, one time he borrowed a sharpening stone (a scythe stone) to sharpen a pocket knife. He dropped the stone and it broke into four pieces. When he returned it, he kept at a safe distance from Edgar Robson's walking sticks and told him that while he had the stone it had had little ones, and he should have been informed of its being pregnant so he could have treated it with more care."

Margaret says Edgar was very popular with his neighbours. "Our property at Argoon years before used to belong to our longstanding friends and neighbours, the Campbells, and they became very fond of Edgar and he often used to work for them, particularly Miss Ruby Campbell and her brother Mr. Gordon Campbell, a returned soldier from World War I. Gordon particularly used to like to steal a march on Edgar. One day, he left for Rockhampton, returning a day or two later. The morning after he returned, he came out to the kitchen where Edgar was preparing breakfast for the other men and himself, and announced, 'Edgar, you needn't worry about getting breakfast this morning, the wife will see to that.' Edgar used to be, for bachelors, only attired in a pair of shorts and a singlet and bare feet. He just fled! Mr. Campbell had not

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

even told anyone he was going to be married, let alone bring his wife home the same day."

"Miss Campbell always thought the world of Edgar. She had given him the beautiful camera mentioned in the diary, which he lost. Also Miss Campbell took care of her father until he passed on during the war. Grandpa is also mentioned in Edgar's diary. Edgar, whenever on leave, used to visit them all, particularly Grandpa."

Margaret remembers Edgar's relationship with the farm animals: "We had a cow named Judy, our own house cow. She used to give a terrific lot of milk. Edgar used to tease her. As time went on, he showed her how to poke her tongue out. He used to walk up with his tongue out, and the cow did the same thing. Even when Edgar came home on leave, (Judy was getting old by then), he'd walk up to her and say "How are you Judy?" and she'd poke her tongue out at him. He did things like that with the animals, they just absolutely adored him. He could teach them to do almost anything."

"Another one of our cows was called 'Darkie'. One evening, while Edgar was milking her, Darkie kicked him, milk and all. He got up, regained his composure, and after washing out the bucket, patiently started again. He had just about finished when she kicked and put her foot in the bucket. Edgar extricated the bucket, gave her a whacking and tipped the rest of the milk over her head before letting her go. She was cured of kicking from that time onwards."

Keith remembers Edgar curing another cow: "One of the cows used to go a bit potty on the full moon. It'd get towards late in

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

the afternoon and you couldn't get her near the yard. I can remember this time we were milking by hand wondering where the hell Edgar had got to and the next thing I saw this cow arrive. Then she disappeared and took off up the scrub and didn't come near the yard. Then Edgar disappeared and I saw him streaking off with a shotgun and thought 'What the devil's he going to do?' Next thing I heard a hell of a bang. It was just getting dusk, and next thing this cow arrived and went straight over the rails into the yard. She never ever gave us any more trouble, she had a bum full of buckshot."

Edgar had a reputation for technological innovation. Keith reports that while Lesley was away from the farm, Edgar decided to modify the Hupmobile sedan in which the family had travelled up from Victoria. He traded the collapsible hood for an electrical coil and converted the car from magneto ignition to battery ignition, cut out the "Dicky" seat and replaced it with a timber floor. The car was then more serviceable as a farm vehicle, but Lesley wasn't pleased about its appearance. One time the Hupmobile wasn't running because a gear had been stripped. Edgar recognised a similar gear on a broken-down winch belonging to a traveller, bought it, and got the car going again.

Keith described how Edgar and Oliver Nagorka, a neighbour, built a tractor from parts of a four cylinder Dodge utility truck. It had no radiator, and they improvised with drums of water. Apparently it looked so improvised that it was stripped of parts by passers-by when it was broken down on the roadside on one occasion.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Finally, Colin relates a story concerning Edgar's creative use of explosives: "While trying to clear land at Argoon, he decided that explosives for clearing large timber and stumps was the answer. He went to Biloela and purchased a supply of gelignite, detonators and fuse. He asked that the 'gelly' be placed end to end and wrapped in a long roll so that it could be easily carried. He tied the ends of the parcel together, slipped it over the horse's head and around its neck and rode home.

Someone saw this, and it wasn't long before the whole district knew about it. Edgar was quite aware that the gelignite was comparatively harmless unless detonated, so he carried the detonators very safely in the saddle bag."

"At that time, he had several 'hangers-on' living in the house. Having observed the impact that the 'gelly' wrapped around the horse's neck had, he decided to plan a way of getting rid of the freeloaders. He came home one day putting on a drunk act, and staggered through the house with four sticks of 'gelly' with fuse attached, and announced that he was going to blow up the house.

They watched him very closely for a while and when he went outside and let off one 'stick', they started to panic. He then came running into the house with the four sticks with fuses lit and sparking. The freeloaders left in a hurry and kept going. They told everyone they saw that 'old Ned' had 'gone off his rocker', and should be locked up. When they were safely out of the way, Edgar explained that he was not drunk and the 'gelly' was in fact four sticks of cut off candles drilled in the

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

centre to accommodate the fuse, and wrapped in brown oily paper. It certainly looked like the real thing."

### EDGAR AND ROMANCE



Colin and Keith claimed that Edgar had been interested in several girls, but became really serious about only one, Arlie Spackman, who lived at Wynnum. At one time on leave from the Army, he brought Arlie with him to Argoon.

They became engaged, but broke off the engagement before Edgar went overseas. Arlie was later killed in a road accident at a level crossing.

Years later it was found that Arlie's niece had married a brother of Keith Wilkie's wife Shirley.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

### **BACKGROUND TO THE DIARY**

Here is a piece from the website [japan-guide.com](http://japan-guide.com) entitled *Militarism and WW2 (1912-1945)*

“During the era of the weak emperor Taisho (1912-26), the political power shifted from the oligarchic clique (genro) to the parliament and the democratic parties.

In the First World War, Japan joined the Allied powers, but played only a minor role in fighting German colonial forces in East Asia. At the following Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Japan's proposal of amending a "racial equality clause" to the covenant of the League of Nations was rejected by the United States, Britain and Australia.

Arrogance and racial discrimination towards the Japanese had plagued Japanese-Western relations since the forced opening of the country in the 1800s, and were again a major factor for the deterioration of relations in the decades preceding World War 2. In 1924, for example, the US Congress passed the Exclusion Act that prohibited further immigration from Japan.

After WW1, Japan's economical situation worsened. The Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 and the world wide depression of 1929 intensified the crisis.

During the 1930s, the military established almost complete control over the government. Many political enemies were assassinated, and communists persecuted. Indoctrination and censorship in education and media were further intensified.



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Navy and army officers soon occupied most of the important offices, including the one of the prime minister.

Already earlier, Japan followed the example of Western nations and forced China into unequal economical and political treaties. Furthermore, Japan's influence over Manchuria had been steadily growing since the end of the Russo-Japanese War 1904-05.

When the Chinese Nationalists began to seriously challenge Japan's position in Manchuria in 1931, the Kwantung Army (Japanese armed forces in Manchuria) occupied Manchuria. In the following year, "Manchukuo" was declared an independent state, controlled by the Kwantung Army through a puppet government. In the same year, the Japanese air force bombarded Shanghai in order to protect Japanese residents from anti Japanese movements.

In 1933, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations since she was heavily criticized for her actions in China.

In July 1937, the second Sino-Japanese War broke out. A small incident was soon made into a full scale war by the Kwantung army which acted rather independently from a more moderate government. The Japanese forces succeeded in occupying almost the whole coast of China and committed severe war atrocities on the Chinese population, especially during the fall of the capital Nanking. However, the Chinese government never surrendered completely, and the war continued on a lower scale until 1945.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

In 1940, Japan occupied French Indochina (Vietnam) upon agreement with the French Vichy government, and joined the Axis powers Germany and Italy. These actions intensified Japan's conflict with the United States and Great Britain which reacted with an oil boycott. The resulting oil shortage and failures to solve the conflict diplomatically made Japan decide to capture the oil rich Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) and to start a war with the US and Great Britain.

In December 1941, Japan attacked the Allied powers at Pearl Harbour and several other points throughout the Pacific. Japan was able to expand her control over a large territory that expanded to the border of India in the West and New Guinea in the South within the following six months.

The turning point in the Pacific War was the battle of Midway in June 1942. From then on, the Allied forces slowly won back the territories occupied by Japan. In 1944, intensive air raids started over Japan. In spring 1945, US forces invaded Okinawa in one of the war's bloodiest battles.



On July 27, 1945, the Allied powers requested Japan in the Potsdam Declaration to surrender unconditionally, or destruction would continue. However, the military did not consider surrendering under such terms, even after US military forces dropped two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, and the Soviet Union entered the war against Japan on August 8.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

On August 14, however, Emperor Showa (Hirohito) finally decided to surrender unconditionally."

**When Edgar Wilkie began his diary on 1st January 1942,** Australia had been at war for two years and three months. We had sent troops into battle in the Middle East and Greece, and as 1942 began, Australian troops had been sent to Singapore, Malaya, Timor, Rabaul, and Ambon. On 7th and 8th December, 1941, Japan had attacked Pearl Harbour, the Phillipines and Malaya.

At that time in Singapore, **Captain Charles Huxtable**, an Australian doctor who had arrived in September 1941 with the Australian 8th Division troops, was impressed by the lack of preparedness against the threatened invasion by the Japanese. He wrote: "Life in Singapore continued as usual, regardless of the gathering storm clouds. To be honest, I think that most of us in the Army, no less than the civilian population, clung to the belief that the Japanese were bluffing and would not strike; the northern borders were 600-700 miles away; the Siamese were pro-British; Singapore was a fortress; and the defence of Johore was safe in the hands of the Australian 8th Division (2 Brigades!)" .

Huxtable blamed changes in society for an overall lack of national resolve which he perceived as weakening the will of the people of Malaya and Singapore to defend themselves. "There can be no doubt that leftists and their libraries and clubs and their so-called Communism have had a baneful influence on this lowered morale in our own country as also in France, England, America and elsewhere. Many well-meaning but immature minds were deceived into a kind of disloyalty to

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*



Source: Tezji, M., Singapore: The Japanese Invasion (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961), p.212

their country and kinsmen by the high-sounding praises and professed altruism of political agitators who styled themselves socialists, near-Communists or whole-hearted Reds...In Malaya there was not only a lack of adequate preparation for defence, but also weakness and irresolution in the local command (civil and military) and apathy amongst the civil population in the cities."

Huxtable's focus on Communism weakening national resolve against the Japanese, contrasted sharply with the experiences of some Australian and British soldiers trapped behind the Japanese advance on the Malayan peninsula. These soldiers were to find that the only real resistance to the Japanese came from the Chinese Communist guerrilla units. Allied soldiers learned not to trust their security to Malays who seemed less interested in taking risks to ensure the soldiers' survival or escape.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Charles Huxtable was sure that local apathy led directly to the military successes of the Japanese. "One salient fact of our predicament has been the lack of air defence in Malaya. I have seen in Johore, during the last weeks, frantic efforts made to complete airfields that should have been completed a year ago.

I have heard from higher authority just how unaware we were of Japanese preparations in Thailand...There were not enough airfields, and those that did exist on the peninsula were so placed that they fell an easy prize to the enemy- for example those at Sahro and Kuantan on the lonely and undefended east coast. There were not enough troops or ground defence to guard what airfields there were, and there were too few planes.

Grand and heroic stands were made, such as the Argyles at Telokanson and the AIF on the Muar Road in front of Yong Peng and Parit Sulong where the 29th and 19th Battalions suffered a week of fiery ordeal by battle seldom equalled during the last war."

"Another salient factor was the complete lack of static defence for Singapore Island from the north. The High Command had laid their 'Maginot Line' of barbed wire and land mines along the sea beaches on the south and east, but Johore, its vital naval base, was completely undefended from the north. Those responsible failed to visualise an enemy advance down the peninsula from the north, or if such a danger were known, no defence plans were made for such a contingency."

A year later, Edgar Wilkie would be working as batman for Dr. Charles Huxtable and Dr. Alan Carrick in Changi Prison

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Camp. Huxtable died in 1980; his widow Barbara published his memoirs in her book "From the Somme to Singapore", published by Kangaroo Press in 1987.

### EDGAR'S LETTER

Just before he left Australia, Edgar wrote to his mother from Melbourne:

"2nd January, 1942.

Dear Mother,

Just a few lines to let you know I am well and thank you for your telegram. By the time this reaches you we will be at sea I suppose. The unit is 2/10 Field Workshops I think, and so will just let you know as soon as the place is reached. I am sending some old clothes of mine home; a couple of plates, photos and boots. The boys may be able to do something with them. The kit was overflowing and I had to dump some of the things. The old uniform has been handed in for tropical dress and there is supposed to be the equipment ready for us. There is no news to tell you so I will say "bye" till I see you again and we will then be able to have a good Christmas.

Best love and good wishes,

Your fond son, xxxxxxxxxxxx

Edgar xxxxxxxxxxxx

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

### THE DIARY BEGINS

*Thursday Jan 1st, 1942:* Caulfield, camped in the horse boxes. Came from Puckapunyal yesterday to form an ordinance unit for Malaya.

*Sat 3rd Jan:* Met Alexander and did some packing at Gipps St. Drill Hall, Richmond.

*Wed 7th Jan:* Still packing enormous quantities of ---Unit known as 2/10 Field Workshops.

*Thurs 8th Jan:* Packed engines and other spares at Broadmeadows and put them on the train at Spencer Street Station.

*Fri 9th Jan:* Left Caulfield 12.30 en route for Sydney via Wangaratta. Snags, bacon and potatoes for breakfast. We left at 1700 hrs, got to Albury about 2100hrs, changed trains, and departed about 2330.

*Sat 10th Jan:* Breakfast at Moss Vale, very short run to Sydney and to Pyrmont wharf. Ferry to Woolloomooloo and on to the "Aquitania". Our unit was the last to board, at 11.30. I am in cabin 99, on the aft deck over the screws. There are four of us in the cabin: Dasey, Armit, Fosbery and myself. Cleared Sydney Heads ---00hrs. Our escort is the "Canberra". We sailed at 1400.

*Sunday 11th Jan:* Keith's birthday. At sea; we entered Bass Strait about 1700hrs. Enjoying the voyage, ate and slept well.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Mon 12th Jan:* Course is westward. A bit cold on deck but stuffy below.

*Tues 13th Jan:* Same course. Boat drill every day and life belts are worn or carried always.

*Wed 14th Jan:* Odd ships on the horizon. All is quiet.

*Thurs 15th Jan:* Rounded Rottnest Island and into Fremantle. Anchored about 1100. No shore leave. Water lighters and a fuel oil tender alongside and boats with vegetables. Hell of a mob broke ship and went ashore.

*Friday 15th Jan:* Sailed about 13.45. The shoregoers came back in all sorts of vessels. One ass fell overboard and climbed up the life ladder which was let go as we were sailing.

*Sat 17th Jan:* Mid-ocean, seeing occasional flying fish.

*Sun 18th Jan:* Went on church parade. News of escort vessels coming to meet us.

*Mon 19th Jan:* An escort of four vessels turned up about 1030. Two Dutch, two British. The Dutch cruiser is a very well designed vessel. The British ship is a bit ancient but fast and efficient.

*Tues 20th Jan:* Land everywhere at daylight. Entered Straits of Sunda and anchored in Lampong Bay Sumatra 0830. Escorts everywhere, and the six small boats for us turned up in ones and twos soon after anchoring. A beautiful bay. Boarded our ship about 2130 and worked in the forward hold of the



*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

"Aquitania" till 0330 and our ship cast off and anchored about a quarter of a mile from the "Aquitania". Depth charges were dropped in the evening but we never saw them. They were said to have got a submarine.

*Wed 21st Jan:* Sailed in convoy about 1000. We saw the "Aquitania" sail at the same time and disappear in the Islands of the Straits about 1130hrs. Wished her safely back to Australia.

*Thurs 22nd Jan:* Bridge. The Captain and his officers are very decent and courteous. Give us everything.

*Fri 23rd Jan:* Two aircraft alerts but they were both friendly. The Captain says 27 enemy bombers just missed us at dusk and bombed Sumatra. The water is a brownish green and oily looking, and very calm. We passed many small islands.

*Sat 24th Jan:* Arrived at Singapore about 1100 and with AA guns onto train. Saw one plane and it was ours. Same as ever, wrong train. Dumped at a wayside station so back to Singapore and then found someone in an ambulance to take us to camp in Johore. Couldn't find our crowd so we slept in a rubber plantation. There have been planes about all night.

*Sun 25th Jan:* Found our crowd and some of our gear. There were several air raid alarms during the day but no bombs fell near us. They have been all on Singapore Island, dropped on the Naval Base and Changi Base.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Mon 26th Jan:* We moved back to Hume pipe works. Most of our stuff is there and the pure white tents among the trees. What a target!



*Tues 27th Jan:* I have been the driver of the water supply. Quiet day. Watched AA shells bursting among enemy raiders. Lone raider at night. He straddled Ford and Hume pipe works with five bombs but did no damage and gave us all a damned good fright.

*Wed 28th Jan:* The camp is being erected and work got under way for the repair of vehicles.

*Thurs 29th Jan:* Fairly busy and on many jobs in the tent with Bill Armit and a couple more.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Fri 30th Jan:* There are air raid alerts every day. So far we're safe but for how long?

*Sat 31st Jan:* Busy at repair jobs and several alerts.

*Sun 1st Feb, 1942:* Still the same except for air raids.

*Wed 4th Feb:* Enemy guns ranging and shells coming too close for comfort. Moved from camp to a Bivouac.

*Sun 8th Feb:* We were shelled all day and bombed three times. I cleared out to another camp in the evening. Two casualties. Nearly hit, myself.

*Mon 9th Feb:* About the new camp, back to the old one for our tools and spares at night, then shifted camp.

*Tues 10th Feb:* Had to shift again and we spent the day on the roadside in Singapore and camped at night in the grounds of a house out of Singapore.

*Wed 11th Feb:* Rushing about like maniacs. Orders countermanded every few minutes. Shells everywhere. Plenty of enemy planes but none of ours. Stationed in front of Government House.

*Thurs 12th Feb:* Nothing doing for us. Can see shells on to Government House. Sitting with my trunk in the line of fire. Found a pack of clothes. Shifted to Marlborough camp in the evening: a Tommies camp. I slept in the back of a car.

*Fri 13th Feb:* We've been formed into infantry companies, and I was promoted to corporal. I left a pack of things including the

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*



camera of Miss Campbell's and went to the reserve line, found two good dugouts for the boys and never slept all night, being with the guard.

*Sat 14th Feb:* Mortar bombs and shells all around us but no one was hit. Fired at a few times by a sniper but I couldn't see where the shots were coming from. I hear now that my pack and camera and all is lost for ever as well as my kitbag which had my instruments, books and notes, all being burned. I nearly wept for the loss of the camera particularly. No sleep again last night.

*Sun 15th Feb:* Hell on earth. Dive bombers bombed and machine gunned all around and then we received a dose of Mortar bombs and shelling. Our supports can't hit back. I suffered a slight fracture and bad sprain of the ankle dodging a shell, a bomb, and a sniper at once. There is rumour of

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

surrender. Moved to line. Cease fire 20.30hrs and back to H.Q. 1130 to hand over our arms and ammunition. Taken to A.D.S. who shook his head over the ankle, bandaged it and gave me a whisky, a good one too, and a stretcher to sleep on.

*Mon 16th Feb:* Wakened at 0400 to move to hospital so I crawled out to our camp about 200 yds and slept on the ground near a truck. Managed to walk over to artillery and saw Tassy Mills.

*Tues 17th Feb:* Taken in an ambulance to the prison camp. Changi Barracks, north-east corner of Singapore Island. Arrived about dark, so slept with three others and fed on a few things we had.

*Wed 18th Feb:* Crawled about and found our unit in the officers' houses and settled down.

*Thurs 19th Feb:* Asked to drive the water cart and I found a pair of field glasses in it. Very useful. Plans of escape with R.K.McLaren as soon as the foot is well.

*Fri 20th Feb:* Mother's birthday, Her 53rd I think. I had hoped to send her a Radiogram but now I feel remorse at not having written. The scarcity of food is now being felt.

*Wed 25th Feb:* Review by victors. We had to stand for three hours by the roadside and wait until the procession of cars passed which took a few minutes, and then we were marched home. Plenty of guards. Doing nothing except nurse the foot and make enquiries about the peninsula.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sun March 1st, 1942:* Examined the countryside and saw where our guards are. Two guards went through us. They took Jock's knife, but let me off.

*Mon 2nd March:* Talking over an agricultural project and review by Japanese naval officers. No guards this time except for a few in cars.

*Thurs 5th March:* Food getting scarce. Diet of rice now. The Japanese fleet steamed up the Strait of Johore to the naval base this afternoon. There can't be any Allied warships about.

*Sun 8th March:* Went to Church parade this morning and I feel worried. Malaria and dysentery are becoming prevalent in the camp. There is plenty of shipping in the Strait of Johore these days.

### ESCAPE FROM SINGAPORE ISLAND

Not long after Changi Base became a prison camp, Edgar Wilkie escaped from Singapore Island in company with Private R.K. (Jock) McLaren and Private Eddie (Ginger) Burnett. They all belonged to the 2/10 Field Workshops, and had been watching for a chance to escape since they had discovered a rotting sampan in the mangroves near the camp.

There is no doubt that Jock (Robert Kerr) McLaren aged 42, would have been the initiator of this escape plan. Jock was born in Scotland and had served with the 51st Highland Battalion in the First World War. After the war he worked as a veterinary officer in Queensland, and had enlisted in the A.I.F. at the outbreak of World War 2.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Hank Nelson in "Prisoners of War- Australians Under Nippon" describes McLaren as "tough, fit, and flamboyant". Jock's later exploits in the war were to be recorded in a book called "One-Man War, the Jock McLaren Story" by Hal Richardson, published in 1957 by Angus and Robertson.

McLaren kept a diary too, and the early pages of the book faithfully record the details of their escape, survival on the Malayan peninsula, and eventual recapture. Edgar's daily notes agree closely with the material in Hal Richardson's book, and material from the book has been used here to amplify Edgar's brief comments.

*Mon 9th March:* Today I was working in the garden scheme, and the camp is just driving itself mad with false rumours. Where they come from I don't know.

*Tues 10th March:* We found the camp is being enclosed by barbed wire fences so we decided to put our plans in operation.

*Wed 11th March:* Left Changi about midnight and after some solid work got a boat afloat and paddled over the Strait of Johore with two shovels for paddles. Nearly ran into a Japanese guard. Landed at a jetty and pushed the boat off. We found we were on an island so we camped in weeds all day, found a boat again and set off to go round the island, but again ran into guards. Landed and camped for the night.

(The island was Pulau Ubin, a small island in the Johore Strait between Singapore Island and the Malayan mainland. The sinking boat had barely made it. Only the gunwale had been

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

clear of the water when they reached the island. At a minute to midnight the three men, Jock, Edgar and "Ginger" Eddie Burnett pushed the old hulk into deeper water and let it sink. As they made their way across the island in the dark amidst an increasingly sickening stench, the three dropped to their bellies. The light came from numerous torches and lamps carried by Japanese soldiers searching for escaped prisoners on the Johore shore-line across the water from the island.

They lay in the grass until first light when they discovered all around them were the rotting bodies of hundreds of Australian and British soldiers who had died on the island when the Japanese had first attacked Singapore. Jock, Eddie and Edgar could see they were not far from a native house about two hundred yards away to their left, and then a dog began barking, presumably at them, from another house off to the right. The men spent all that day hiding in the grass, suspecting correctly that there were Japanese soldiers on the island.

After night fell they began to move around and fell over a dug-out hulk hidden in the bushes. After cautiously pushing it through the mud and mangroves, they quietly paddled off-shore in it with their shovels. Not long after, however, they heard the breaking of a branch in the mangroves and a Japanese command with an answer from further inland. A torch shone out in the darkness. The three men realised they couldn't get off the island then and allowed the boat to glide in to the shore where they quietly tilted it and allowed it to sink. They hid again through the night.)



*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Thurs 12th March:* Found a Chinese who although in peril of his life gave us a bit of food and promised to help.



(At dawn that day, Jock had approached one of the houses they had seen before and revealed himself to a Chinese man in the doorway. Jock was urgently ushered into the house out of sight of Japanese planes and allowed to wash the mud off him in the bathroom. Later a young Chinese man called Lek arrived and introduced himself as one of the Chinese working against the Japanese. He told Jock there were 400 Japanese soldiers on the island. Jock was given fish and rice to take back to Eddie and Edgar, and that night Lek rowed them over in a sampan to the Johore shore. Lek warned them not to trust any

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Malays or Tamils, only Chinese. He gave them each a packet of rice, fish and tobacco.)

*Fri 13th March:* Moving in Johore. It rained like fun all day. Chinese rowed us from the island to the mainland early last night. We found some pineapples this afternoon that someone had left, and were they good!

*Sat 14th March:* Crossed Kota Tinngi Road this a.m. Got a good handout last night. Brought pancakes and tea at 2030 and we never felt so good.

*Sun 15th March:* Just left our night's camp and were brought back to a secluded gully and fed. To be taken to the jungle. It rained and we didn't move. Spent a cow of a night.

(That morning the three men had been sitting round a small fire in the jungle. Jock felt decidedly depressed. Suddenly a Chinese man appeared and cautioning the startled trio to silence with a finger against his lips, wordlessly led them to a rubber plantation where they were left to wait in a cavity behind a ridge. An elderly Chinese man appeared and welcomed them. In Hal Richardson's reporting of Jock's recollections, the old man said, "Rest. Shortly we shall take you to a big camp of jungle fighters, and there you need not worry any longer about the Japanese. We shall guide you. The C.P. will look after you. Our General and our C.P. secretary know you are coming." At that time, none of the three men had any idea of what "C.P." meant. A little later other Chinese people appeared carrying rice, tinned fish and fresh tea.)

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Mon 16th March:* We moped in the hideout, during the day, and were moved tonight to a hut in the jungle.

(From this point, the three men were led by Chinese members of the C.P., travelling north, given new guides at intervals of 7 to 8 miles, and provided with food by the Chinese)

*Tues 17th March:* Sitting around, wondering if this is a catch. Given little things by passing Chinese- tinned food and a bit of pork.

*Wed 18th March:* Moved to another camp.

(That day, some Chinese armed with .303 rifles appeared, with a warning that some Japanese footprints had been seen in the area, and advised the three men to move further into the jungle.)

*Sat 21st March::* Moved on again. Stirring welcome.

*Mon 23rd March:* Talk of men who have been in the jungle for 9 weeks. Cut off?

(Hal Richardson: "They were taken to a jungle camp where they saw about thirty Chinese, all busily cleaning tommy-guns, Vickers machine guns and British army rifles. Amazingly, standing in a clearing on its own with no indication as to how it had been brought there, stood a British 25-pounder gun-howitzer. Here, McLaren, Burnett and Wilkie stayed for seven days. They were soon joined by other Australians who had been brought there by Chinese guides,

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

for many Allied soldiers were still at large in the Malayan swamps and jungles.")

*Mon 30th March:* I've been doing nothing except build cattle yards with Eddie using pencil and paper. We've been promised all sorts of help and none forthcoming, so we're moving on.

(The band of Chinese and the Australian soldiers moved out in a large armed party. Hal Richardson says "They passed through the jungle to a wide road normally used for carrying timber to the Johore town of Kulai. They marched in file on either side of this road, past the decomposing bodies of more than a hundred Chinese women and children. Giant green flies rose in swarms from the swollen naked bodies of the women, where they lay after they had been chased down the road, ravished, shot, and bayoneted. Their children lay sprawled beside them, just as they had been indiscriminately cut down. The Chinese guerrillas marched impassively on, inured to the sight by now. McLaren, averting his eyes, resolved that one day he would even the score."

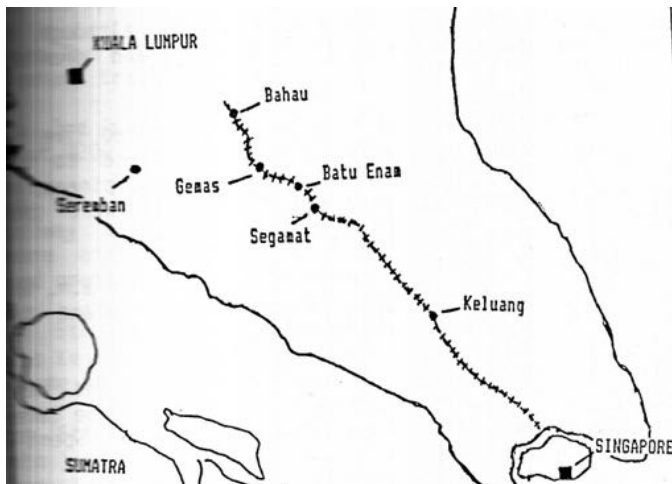
Eventually the guerrilla band turned into the jungle, and halted for a meal of coffee and biscuits. In a clearing was a wide cloth sign painted in black lettering in English: WELCOME, INTERNATIONAL FIGHTER. JOIN OUR ANTI-JAP LEAGUE- THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY. Now Jock, Eddie and Edgar finally knew what C.P. stood for!)

*Wed 1st April, 1942:* Moved. Camped near pineapples.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Thurs 2nd April:* Rained like the devil. Saw tiger and elephant tracks.

*Fri 3rd April:* Short of tucker. Good Friday. Struck camp about 0200.



(The Japanese Army was harassing Chinese civilians and more and more refugees had joined the Communist guerrilla camp. Food supplies soon dwindled. The Communist General in

the camp agreed that the Australian soldiers should go north in search of help from the Allied forces in Burma. Jock, Eddie, and Edgar, with two other Australians from the 2/4th Machine Gunners who had been brought in by the guerrillas, set off.)

*Sat 4th April:* We camped all day, and moved along the railway at night. We struck it at the 444 mile peg. There are 4 of us and it is our 3rd night. Is it a good omen?

(The fourth member of the party was the Chinese guide. That day the other two Australians had turned west for Malacca, where they hoped to commandeer a boat to Sumatra. These two Australians were captured a few hours later, sixteen miles from where they left Jock, Eddie and Edgar. Hal Richardson records that they were later sentenced to four years' solitary confinement in Outram Road Jail in Singapore.)

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sun 5th Apr:* Moving through a rubber plantation to pass Keluang. Met another. Tea in Jungle. We camped in a home on a plantation.

(On the other side of the rubber plantation the trio suddenly came upon the main north road and were seen by a group of men on the road. The Australians ducked back into the shelter of the rubber trees, but a Chinese man followed them. Then he stopped and with his foot drew a circle on the ground- the sign of the Chinese communists. Then he called out, "We have been expecting you! You have taken a long time to get here! We have been waiting to give you help!" They then followed the man to a guerrilla camp outside Yong Peng where they rested and were given rice and tobacco.)

*Mon 6th Apr:* Up at 0200. Crossed plantations and into jungle. More mess up. Promises fail. Travelled through the dark, the rain and the jungle for three hours to a bitumen road 11 miles to Paloh north of Keluang.

*Tues 7th Apr:* Camped in a rubber plantation. More rain. Did 14 miles along the railway line.

*Wed 8th Apr:* Camped. Moved in the afternoon in more rain. Did three and a half miles advance in four hours. What would it have been if in our proper direction? Did eleven and a half miles at night on the line.

*Thurs 9th Apr:* Camped in a patch of jungle. Worried. We were seen by two Tamils and thought we saw a Jap at a plantation house. First sun for days.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Fri 10th Apr:* After a successful night in passing through Segamat. It took a couple of hours. We're camped in good rubber with undergrowth. Water laid on. Mosquitoes in droves. We had the sun again today and travelled 14 more miles. No food except rice twice daily now. Tea and coffee without sugar is the rule. The country has been flogged out for food by the Japs. We've been told of many \*\* of \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*. (These words are deliberately obscured) Who could help us? Very sore feet. I washed everything and myself as well. This is the best camp we have had. Beautiful day.

*Sat 11th Apr:* We started well last night. Tried for a bit of dry rice and got a feed as well. Caught in the yards at Batu Enam by a train. The place must have been an engineers' stores dump and fuel depot. We struck Gemas about 0100 and cleared it by 0230 and started on a new line. Walking very rough. Sore footed and weary. We covered about 15 miles. Having trouble finding water. Shifted to jungle 0900. Malays about us and didn't like their behaviour. Got some bananas from them. Had good sleep and bananas and rice for tea. Our camp was on the S. Muar River in the jungle.

*Sunday 12th April:* We covered about 20 miles last night. Found that the railway on the map had been demolished. Trouble in finding a camping place and water. Rice for breakfast. Thoughts of home. Bahau, our goal on one railway was passed. We start on road travel tonight. **1100hrs we were captured.** Taken to Bahau for lunch, rice, tinned sausages, pineapple. Believe we are to be taken back to Singapore. **Such is life.** Being well treated. Rice, vegetables, stew for tea. Only one wanted to --

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

(They had been seen by a Malayan man who offered to bring them food in return for money. The Australians handed over eight dollars and the Malay said he would return in three or four hours with food. The men were uneasy. Some time later they discovered they were surrounded by Malay and Indian police officers with guns and fixed bayonets, in company with the man who had betrayed them. McLaren darkly threatened to come back one day and deal with him. The man retorted, "You will never come back, gentlemen. You will be shot!" McLaren then appealed to the police chief not to hand them over to the Japanese. After all, they had been allies until the Japanese invasion. The traitor spoke up, "You are worth twenty-five dollars each to us, gentlemen.")

*Mon 13th Apr:* Slept well, a few mosquitoes. Rice, cucumber and crab soup for breakfast. Lunch of fish, rice and vegetables. Questioned by the officer commanding the troops here and he wanted us to join the Japanese army.

(At Bahau, Jock, Eddie and Edgar were marched before a Japanese guard commander and a Captain of the Japanese military police, who soon began arguing whose prisoners the three men were. The military police captain wanted them shot immediately, "but the older and more stolid commander refused to agree until at last the captain stood up, disgusted, and marched off, his sword swinging against his highly polished top-boots. The guard commander had British ribbons from the First World War on his drab, faded olive tunic, and he continually glanced at similar ribbons that McLaren wore sewn on to his well-worn leather belt. Later the men were to learn that the man's father had won them, and all Japanese soldiers are allowed to wear their fathers' decorations.")



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Richardson's record of Jock's recollections don't indicate if the guard commander was seriously asking the three Australians to join the Japanese forces. When he learned that the men had escaped from Changi prison camp and were not panicked by the threat that they would be shot, he said, "You very good soldier. You escape from Nippon army. More better you become soldier for Nippon and for me!")

*Tues 14th Apr:* We slept on canvas beds last night. I still felt the same during the day, with the stomach disorder still persisting. They brought us a bottle of stout this evening, like nectar to us. They are generally very considerate and courteous to us. I was given pills for my stomach trouble.

("The Japanese guards were mostly men who had been wounded in action and were now doing guard duty while they recuperated. That night they gave the three Australians their own stretchers and slept on the guardhouse floor. For two days, in fact, the Australians were pretty well treated.")

*Wed 15th Apr:* Taken from Bahau to Seremban by truck. Lunch of three tins of meat, rice and vegetables. Tea of biscuits and butter. Our trip by boat didn't look too good when we saw what we would have had to pass.

("These front-line Japanese soldiers treated the prisoners much more kindly than did the occupation guards, who had not actually fought during the war and made up for that deficit by brutality. When a truck arrived to take the three Australians away, the soldiers gave them tobacco and an almost affectionate farewell.")

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Thurs 16th Apr:* Stomach worse, given some pills. Breakfast of crook biscuits, butter and marmalade jam. Lunch was jam and worse biscuits. Tea the same. Had a bit of rice and ma--

(The three Australians were taken to Pudu Prison in Kuala Lumpur. Russell Braddon in his book "The Naked Island" describes Pudu as "a place of fascinating stories. Every man in it had been captured in extraordinary circumstances miles behind the Japanese lines. Some had been betrayed by the native population- in return for a reward from the Japs: some, having succumbed to exhaustion, had woken to find themselves surrounded by curious Nipponese soldiers: some had given themselves up rather than allow the enemy to take reprisals (because their presence in the area was known) upon the local population. A few, like myself, (Braddon) had been dazed by the swiftness of events, and unable to act decisively to avoid capture, had been forced to surrender." (page 100)

*Fri 17th Apr:* Brought by truck from Seremban to Kuala Lumpur into prison. Believe should we try to escape again we will be shot. Plenty of Australian men here. No breakfast. Lunch of rice and a little stewed pork. Tea was rice and green vegetables. Lit by two electric lights in corridor. Lights out 2030hrs. So ends the first day in Pudu Prison, Kuala Lumpur. In time for an issue of cigarettes and soap.

*Sat 18th Apr:* Reveille at 0600hrs. Count of troops, washed. Breakfast 0800. Rice and vegetables. Talking to the boys on the various atrocities that have been committed on them and what they have seen. Shooting of prisoners tied together with signal wire, machine gunned and petrol poured over them then fired, many still living; massacre of wounded. Lunch of pork, rice

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

and "gyppo" (name for a cross between gravy and soup). Very tasty. Stomach trouble seems to be passing. Tea of a little fish and rice. Rumours of Tokyo being bombed. Feeling very weak from the diarrhoea.

*Sun 19th Apr* It is a week since our capture. The unlucky day, as everything happens to us on Sundays since our arrival in Malaya. Breakfast of rice, vegetables and tea. Told we will not be allowed on any working parties until permission is given by Japs. We must be regarded as very bad characters. Lunch of rice and greens, and we shared a small tin of pineapple between four. Three carcasses of pork came in, but it was bad. We heard a side of beef was brought in place thereof. Kelly seems to be hankering for a booze up or something, he is very sour and disagreeable. Tea of rice, beef stew and a spot of vegetables. A crowd of others were shifted into this wing today. The Japs tell our working party that Tokyo was bombed by planes from Alaska.

(Richardson reports: "McLaren and Burnett and Wilkie found life in Pudu Jail hard going because they were known as escapees and were not trusted to go out on working parties. But Scots of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who had been captured early in the assault on Malaya, smuggled in food and supplemented their starvation diet.")

*Mon 20th Apr:* Breakfast of rice and vegetables. Feeling very hungry always. Did some washing and got my back well sunburnt. Lunch of rice and meat and gravy. My lucky day, a large piece of meat (as big as a two year old baby's issue). Still feeling very weak. Death of a poor Chinese prisoner. We saw a Jap with a cat o'nine tails, so some one else has been flogged.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Tea of rice and vegetables cooked in meat gravy and I had a bit of Marmite with it.

*Tues 21st April:* Breakfast as usual and lunch the same, only a bit short, and I feel very hungry. Eddie and I are at our old stunt of yards etc. Still sore about the back. We hear that someone outside calls out words of cheer from up a tree over the wall, and is supposed to have called "Cheer up Aussies you won't be there long!" This morning. The padre brings us news and has gone out. There might be something tonight. Latest furfy is that we are to leave here for Singapore and others tells us there is a rumour of a shift every week. Another poor Tommy died today.

(The padre was Rev. Noel Duckworth. Braddon says "The Padre discovered a non-existent 'well-dressed Eurasian' while on his numerous visits to bury our dead, and from him, obtained a daily news bulletin which made our hearts glow. Duckworth's news was no mealy-mouthed, faint-hearted news. Having determined to give us good cheer by lying, the noble padre lied most blackly. Russian tanks swarmed through Poland towards Germany: Britain planned a huge invasion of Italy: millions of Japanese were being annihilated in Burma- all this in early 1942, at a time when the advance on Stalingrad was about to start, India seemed about to fall and Italy was still only being vaguely referred to as the 'soft under-belly' of Europe! But to men who were ill and starving and dying off at a quite alarming rate, the padre's 'well-dressed Eurasian' was exactly what was required.")

*Wed 22nd Apr:* Breakfast of rice and a spoonful of sugar this morning, no increase of rations as yet. Our few dollars are

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

dwindling so we won't be able to supplement the ration soon. Feeling a bit better today and strength returning. Another death in the place. Lunch of rice and pork, just enough to aggravate my hunger. The air-raid siren blew at 15.10hrs near here. Are they getting them ready for an attack by our planes? Weighed this afternoon: ten stone, three and a half pounds. Lost a stone since I was last weighed about the beginning of November. Doing not so badly anyway. Tea of rice and prawns (of all things! about six of them too!) and greens. Rumours of bombing Tokyo, Kobe and Yokohama, supposedly correct.

*Thurs 23rd Apr:* There was another death last night. The poor fellows can't recover on rice and dry bread. Breakfast of rice and cooked cucumbers. Eddie gives me an account of myself and points out my failings:

1. Intolerance
2. Bit of hatters trait.
3. "Back seat driving" in more ways than one.

Lunch of rice and a little bit of beef. Tea of rice and gyppo. Acquired a tin of Marmite and this made tea a bit more appetizing. Issue of cigarettes.

*Fri 24th Apr:* End of the first week in here. Breakfast as usual and the meat has gone bad. Heard that three lots came in, all bad. I shaved for the first time for ten days. Lunch of rice and vegs, meat is all rotten, none for us, other food all very short. What for a good plain feed of home cooking! Showery most of the day. Tea of rice and a little gyppo. A quarter of beef was saved. Hear we are shifting to an island off the coast of Japan. This goes round regularly I believe. Hope not, anyway.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sat 25th Apr:* Anzac Day. There was a short service at 1100, lasting about quarter of an hour. Last Anzac Day I was just two days at S.T.C., the Anzac Day before that I was at Redbank; the one before that, at Nambour in 1938 when I was working at Brighton Downs. I heard them thrash some poor Chinese this morning. The blows and cries were pitiful. The day is coming however, and the Chinese will return these doings with interest. Lunch of rice and gyppo. First time I have felt satisfied after a meal. Death of the first A.I.F. man since we came in, and only the third in the prison.

*Sun 26th Apr:* My first duty in prison: as mess orderly. Went on church parade. An American missionary delivered the sermon "Seek good not evil that ye may live". I resolved henceforth to go to church at least once a week from now on. A good motto I saw in a story: "Prevail by patience", and also to remember "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage!" It suits your mood and place at the time. Meals as usual, only all meat is off today, it went bad. Managed to pinch a drink of dripping. Drink mid jobs in cookhouse, satisfied some of the craving for good food.

*Mon 27th Apr:* It's Jock's 43rd birthday. We all hoped his next is in Australia. Breakfast of only plain rice. Lunch and tea was very short and the little meat there was, went over again. Had the first piece of bread, brought in by one of the working party. More prisoners flogged. Went out to the garden.

*Tues 28th Apr:* Weighed ten stone, and three-quarters of a pound. Lost two and three-quarter pounds in the week. We have heard that our chances of getting meat are very slender as all is rotten in the freezer here and Port Sivcatenhana. The

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

flogging party was in again today. I did a bit of washing again. Bob had a good day out. He pinched two tins of salmon and a one pound bottle of mustard, bought two coconuts and Chinese sauce, and brought two full bowls of cooked rice. Tea of rice and greens. I am so full I am uncomfortable but not contented. There was good news from the B.B.C. Heavy rains in the afternoon.

*Wed 29th Apr:* Today is the Emperor of Japan's Birthday. We were paraded by the guard about 0700 to pay our respects to him and we prayed that he will be blown to hell before dark. Breakfast of rice and sugar. Given a tin of pineapple and a packet of cigarettes in honour of the day. Kelly left our cell, he thinks we'll be happier without him. He is right for once and he can have all his bums with him too. There is news of American planes leaving Seattle to fly to Alaska, Japan and land in China.

*Thurs 30th Apr:* I was grass cutter and drain cleaner today. There was another death last night. We heard Singapore was bombed. Half a million Yanks in Australia. Kelly was taken to hospital.

*Fri 1st May:* End of the second week in here. News collectors were unable to pick up anything as they were well watched by the guards because May Day is a Chinese day out always.

*Sat 2nd May:* It started to pour at daylight, continued until 10.00. I'm craving for something; it must be meats and vegetables or perhaps milk or sugar, not tobacco or beer, as smoking doesn't alleviate the feeling. There was a good little concert in the evening.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sun 3rd May:* I went to communion for the first time since I left Grovely and went to prayers in the evening. Concerts are forbidden. Daily feeds are the same. Bob had no luck today. No news and Padre is being watched and is suspected.

(The Padre, the Rev. John Noel Duckworth was a man impossible to ignore. He was only a short man, but he made up for his small stature with a strong personality. Noel was the son of an Anglican clergyman, one of a family of eight children. After completing his schooling in Lincoln, he studied at Jesus College, Cambridge where his small size was an advantage in rowing. He was cox of the winning Cambridge crew in the years 1934-35-36, and coxed the Great Britain eight into fourth place in the Berlin Olympic Regatta.

Duckworth followed the family tradition and was ordained in the Anglican Church. At the time of his ordination in 1936, the family established something of a clerical record, for he was licensed to a Hull parish and his father and two brothers were also in Holy Orders in the diocese of York. He was called up into the British Army at the beginning of the war, because he had been in the Army cadets at school.

At first light on the morning of Monday 26th January, 1942, (Australia Day) while Edgar Wilkie was getting his belongings together to move back to the camp that had been set up at Hume Pipe Works on Singapore Island, Royal Army chaplain Rev. Noel Duckworth was striding out of a clearing at Sengarrang to confront the advancing Japanese troops. Duckworth, the chaplain of the Cambridgeshire Regiment, along with two doctors and a dozen nurses and orderlies from the Royal Army Medical Corps, had stayed behind with 300



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

soldiers who had been wounded too badly to be evacuated from the path of the Japanese.

They had remained with the wounded men with the clear understanding that the Japanese were not expected to take any prisoners, and that their death was reasonably certain. All throughout the preceding night, Noel had regularly walked out into the dark shouting out, "Don't shoot, we're the Red Cross!" The response was sometimes a burst of gunfire in the dark. The wounded soldiers and those caring for them spent the night anxiously waiting for the dawn. When it was light enough to see, the Padre followed by two other officers set off down the road to confront in his characteristic manner, the advancing Japanese.

The Japanese advance was being led by a nervous young officer brandishing a pistol and who appeared to Noel Duckworth decidedly "trigger-happy". The anxiously awaited confrontation, however, had a totally unexpected outcome as the young officer looked carefully at Noel and said in perfect English, "You're Duckworth!" The Japanese officer had been the cox of the Japanese eight in the rowing in the Berlin Olympics! That Providential coincidence may have saved the lives of those British soldiers. The Padre, the doctors, orderlies and wounded men were all brought to Pudu prison in Kuala Lumpur where Noel Duckworth continued to care for them and all the other prisoners.)

*Mon 4th May:* I was water carrier today. I've been going without clothes in the daytime to save the ones I have. I washed everything I have and I'm burnt from top to bottom. Constantly hungry, and I pray for the time of release to get

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

some milk and sugar and jam etc, even some biscuits. I'm feeling old and cranky. Cement floors always gave me corns on the hips and bad backs. The officers have got hold of a wireless, hope we get some news.

*Tues 5th May:* Still losing weight, nine stone twelve. Loss of two and three-quarter pounds for this past week. The food supply still seems to be dwindling. Can't sleep, and every night I lie awake until midnight. Bought two coconuts, four eggs and three pineapples today. One coconut grated for tea.

(One of the early effects of significant starvation is sleeplessness)

*Wed 6th May:* No sleep again last night. Eggs for breakfast with rice. Some fool cruels our news supply by complaining about the wireless. No sugar today, our weekly issue. Same food as ever.

*Thurs 7th May:* Sugar came to light this morning. Managed to get two coconuts and two eggs today. Fish for tea. No news today except news of the British occupation of Madagascar.

*Fri 8th May:* End of our third week in Pudu. Missed duties today. I must stop smoking. Half an egg each for breakfast in the rice. What-o for eggs, bacon and toast again! Just another day. Two suspects in our crowd.

*Sat 9th May:* Same as ever. Jock bought a tin of dripping for 65c! A fortune, (equals one and tenpence three farthings) when you have nothing, only my pay will be mounting up at home.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Might have a few pounds to start something with when I get back. A bit of a concert on again tonight. No outside news.

*Sun 10th May:* No cigarette issue this week. Things must be tough for the monkeys as the Padre calls them. Wonder of wonders! Two spoons full of burnt dripping this morning for breakfast, and I felt very content after it. Church again. Padre's sermon was on "The Apostles Creed" and its relation to the faith. There is supposed to have been a naval battle somewhere off the Solomon Islands or east of Cape York and we lost five ships to the enemy's thirty. Is it true?

*Mon 11th May:* Confirmation of the naval battle. It rained like the devil during the lunch mess parade. Bob went out on a working party, was unable to buy anything but brought home a bit of rice and prawns cooked in some kind of sauce.

*Tues 12th May:* I was floor sweeper today. I heard a couple of shots outside last night. Did a bit of digging in the trench for the latrine.

*Wed 13th May:* Found a couple of chats in my shirt this morning and I have been itchy all day. Rumours from outside speak of British and Chinese success in Burma and that the Japs admit naval defeat.

*Thurs 14th May:* Ascension Day. I was going to communion as I have never been on this day, but I was sent on a working party loading petrol drums onto lorries then to rail trucks. Never lifted so many in my life. Lunch of half a loaf of bread and a teaspoon of margarine. Never brought anything home. Death of another boy from the Argyles. Hear Singapore,

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Penang and a couple of other places were bombed by our planes. 60 on Singapore.

*Fri 15th May:* Jock went on his first working party, and it is the end of our first month in this place. Went out on a digging party to the garden for an hour- new ideas on rice cooking and serving on today; might be a success. Issue of soap and cigarettes.

*Sat 16th May:* Mess area cleaner today. I must have just about completed the round of duties. Went peeling sweet spuds at the kitchen, got a little bit of rice, cup of tea, and found a bit of rice which was cooked hard. Hear that the bombing of Singapore and other places was correct. The Japs are bringing men to take charge of railways, post and telegraph from Singapore.

*Sun 17th May:* Found another blasted chat in my shirt this morning so I held a bangtail muster and inspected each shirt and a pair of shorts but found no more. These fiends belted some of the Chinese prisoners again this afternoon. The working parties were well fed today and the place is fairly contented tonight. Didn't go to church today. Padre is down with dengue. I wonder how everyone is at home, hope to see them before 17th May next year. Hope mother isn't worrying her dear self grey over me.

*Mon 18th May:* Working party again today, same place, and laying bricks with plenty of cement on them. Hands are as sore as the devil. Lunch of a loaf of bread, spoonful of margarine. Rumours are that things go well for us and

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Singapore was bombed again. Eddie was out with me today working.

*Tues 19th May:* Jock went out on a working party humping rails, poorly fed. We see the guards are having their photo taken, they must be leaving us. The bombing of Singapore naval base was confirmed with the Jap casualties at 200 killed and 400 injured. Supposed to be a lot brought to hospital here.

*Wed 20th May:* Duty day again, on grass cutting and cleaning. One of the Chinese prisoners died last night. We saw four others carrying out a rough coffin and guarded by the Japs. I've been designing country homes with Eddie and having many arguments. First yards, now houses, what next? Still, it passes the time and helps to take the mind off the worries of home.

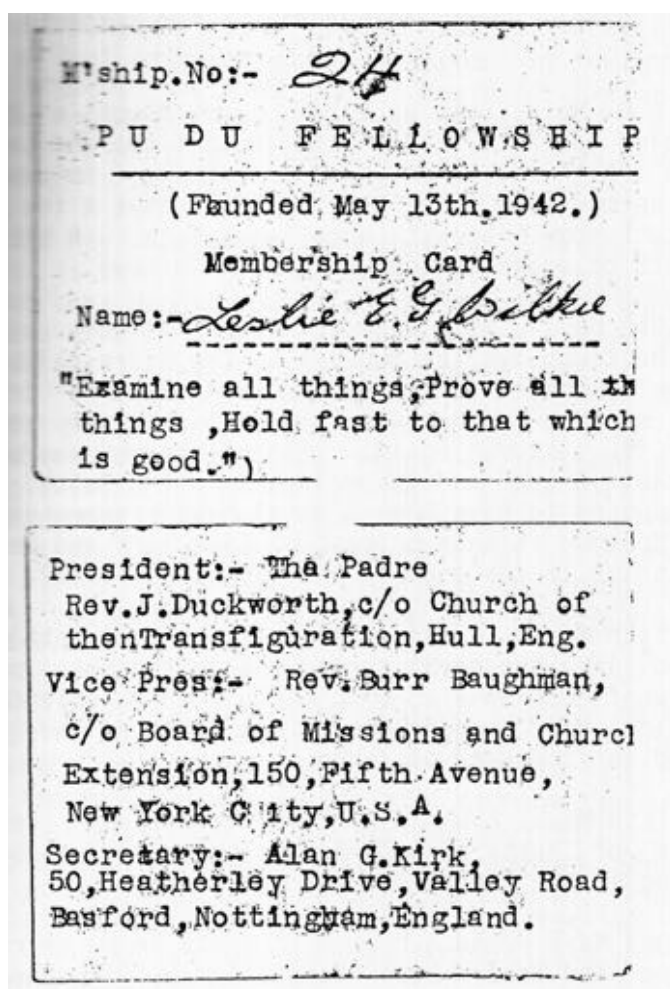
*Thurs 21st May:* Working party today at railway workshop. Eddie and I were stacking rails and sleepers into Thailand State Railway trucks. Lunch of rice, loaf of bread and margarine. I saw a Tamil fall off his bike and cut himself on a scythe he was carrying, apparently in the calf and forearm. He wailed worse than if he were being flogged.

*Fri 22nd May:* Jock went out to the Railway workshops today. Those at home had a good midday feed. Had a good feed tonight, but although I feel full, I'm not contented. Decided we were no architects as we can't create the home we would like so far. Slept well last night for the first time in weeks. No news from outside. Posters of the local papers say the Japs expect the next two months to be the critical ones of their war.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sat 23rd May:* I went out again today to the car park, road building with the bricks, and the hands are very sore. Rice, and some not-too-good-a-tasting gyppo. No news or rumours. The monkeys seem very busy; it looks as if they will be here for years. Two prisoners died last night, one A.I.F. and another, soon there won't be anybody left in hospital.

*Sun 24th May:* I was mess orderly today. I went to church this morning. Believe it is Whitsunday. We were given a third of a



loaf of bread each, tonight, approximately two or three ounces. I toasted mine and wished for a little butter. We had a pay tonight for the working parties, at 15 cents a day. I got 30 cents or tenpence halfpenny. Things are looking up. First and last I suppose.

*Mon 25th May:* The Jap guard is supposed to be changing today and going to Burma. Two were here looking for watches and fountain pens, they want them given to them at two or

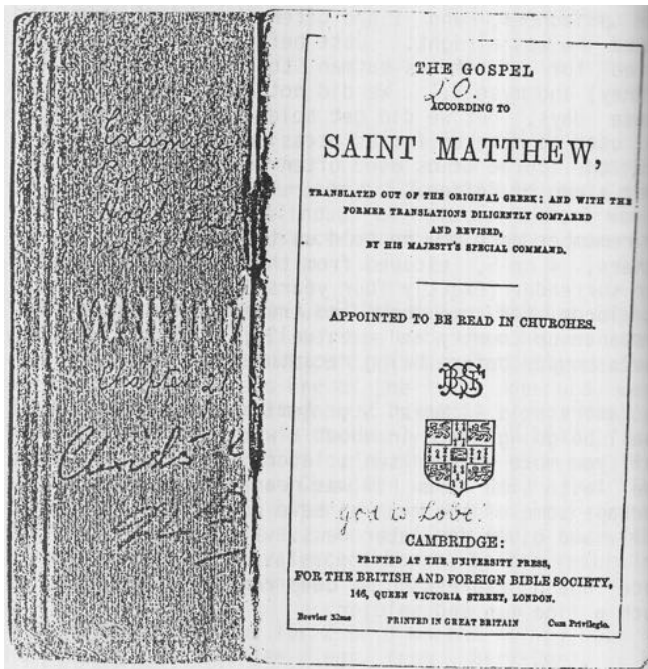
three dollars. I had a touch of diarrhoea again and I feel very

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

off. The guard changed at 10 o'clock and counted the mob. We had bread twice today, half at lunch with a little meat stew; gave the rice away, and half a loaf at tea with vegs; also gave the rice away. Heard a bit of news, hope it is true.

*Tues 26th May:* Still feeling very off, I was up several times through the night. Quarter of a loaf of bread, dripping and a spoon of sugar for breakfast, and did I enjoy it! We saw a couple of planes yesterday, wonder what they were hanging around for. Roasted a bit of coconut and it wasn't bad. Tea wasn't too plentiful but it didn't worry me.

*Wed 27th May:* Today is my 25th birthday. Went to communion in the little chapel. Four was the congregation. Lunch brought forth a quarter of a loaf of bread again. Eddie gave me his in return for giving them the rice and because I have been sick.



No meat for tea; the new lot aren't looking after us well at all. Went to the evening service, and stayed for a fellowship meeting after. Yarned with Padre for a while after that on church matters.

(Braddon says: "A small group, very small, became fanatically religious and convinced themselves that ALL ills

could be cured solely by faith. Part of their way of life

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

consisted of calling everyone-even the most improbable types-'brother': part in praying vociferously and fervently at all sorts of unexpected times". p.143.

Braddon is undoubtedly referring to the prisoners who formed the "Pudu Fellowship" of whom Edgar was member No.24. His membership card which I found with his diary says the Pudu Fellowship was founded on May 13th, 1942. The President was "The Padre" Rev.J.Duckworth, c/o Church of the Transfiguration, Hull, England. Vice-president was the American missionary Rev. Burr Baughman, c/o Board of Missions and Church Extension, 150 Fifth Avenue, New York City, U.S.A. Secretary was Alan G.Kirk, 50 Heatherley Drive, Valley Road, Basford, Nottingham, England.

### PASSAGES IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL THAT WERE UNDERLINED BY EDGAR

Along with the diary and the Pudu Fellowship membership card I found a small copy of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Several passages are underlined, while the rest of the Gospel is relatively unmarked. Edgar's daily notes indicate that he began taking his Christian religion seriously. The underlined passages might therefore indicate his own personal thinking or perhaps the topics the Pudu Fellowship were studying at that time.

In the front cover, Edgar has written the Pudu Fellowship motto:

"Examine all things,  
Prove all things,  
Hold fast to that



*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Which is good."

As well, he has written: "Chapter 21", "Christ's coming, 24th Chapter" and "God is love"

Matthew 5:6- Edgar has underlined "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Matthew 6:45- Edgar has under-lined part of verse 45. This begins in 44 with- "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Edgar has underlined "and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Matthew 6:26- "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are ye not much better than they?"

Matthew 12:28- "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Matthew 12:50- "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Matthew 13:16,17- "But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

Matthew 13:30- This section underlined by Edgar begins at verse 24: "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence came it tares? He said unto them, An enemy has done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then, that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them." Edgar has underlined the following- "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." Edgar has noted "SORTING".

Matthew 16:25- "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Matthew 23:37- "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

Matthew 25:41- "Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

**Now, back to Edgar's daily notes:**

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Thurs 28th May:* Feeling a lot better today, not so much activity in my back. Bit of sugar for breakfast, very nice. Quarter of a loaf of bread for lunch again. Another Chinese prisoner was carried out feet foremost again. Russians are still holding, and Tokyo was bombed, we hear.

*Fri 29th May:* Very short breakfast this morning. Jock went out on a working party. Eddie found a nest of chats in his pyjama coat. I feel much better today, but I'm to report again. Jock had a good outing and feed, brought a bit. Kelly was discharged from hospital. Played Mahjong in hospital with Newton, Bert and Carl. Jock brought a bit of his dinner home- was at the hospital. Placards outside announce British on the Continent.

*Sat 30th May:* Jock, Eddie, Bob and Bill were out today. Feeling fit myself. Got another 30 cents last night. I'll soon have enough to buy my passage home. The boys were at the school, and didn't have much of a day. Jock managed to slip the Chinese prisoners a few bananas and a packet of cigarettes tonight.

*Sun 31st May:* End of the month, another year nearly half gone. A third of my life spent. How? And what does the future hold? Bob was out again today. Jock has a touch of fever and isn't too good. Should have seen the load of stuff Pinocchio brought home! It included some books which will be very entertaining and a tin with some peanut oil, a duster and a tennis racquet. I'm very worried with stomach pains.

*Mon 1st June:* Jock is not too well, and I spent a rotten night myself with my trouble. There was another death this morning. Jock was taken to hospital and I saw him this

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

evening. He isn't very bad. Living on a piece of bread and tea myself. The Japs had to hold another count. They were 55 out in the first one, this is the worst of changing the guard every couple of days.

(Braddon says: "A second ground-floor office was the gaol's hospital. It was, perhaps, 10 feet by 8 feet, with a tiny alcove off it about 6 feet by 6 feet. Into this 'hospital' we carried those of our dysentery cases who were so ill as to be helpless. They lay on the floor side by side in filth and squalor and under a cloud of blue-nosed flies. The stench and helplessness of it all was abominable and they died quickly, those unfortunates who entered it. The Japanese occasionally visited it, wearing heavy gauze masks. Far from granting us the drugs that one would imagine such sights would invite, the little Nip only made gestures of disgust and looked as if it were all our fault." p.102)

*Tues 2nd June:* Had a foul night. Sugar went well with bread for breakfast. Nearly all the company went out on work parties. 28 left in, I think. How I long for some home food. I've been smoking a lot lately, it seems to be a great help when everything is upside down. I'll most likely forget it when we are free again. Eddie, Bill and Bob didn't have such a good day out. Jock is feeling a bit better and I have fairly maddening stomach pains.

*Wed 3rd June:* Frightfully crook this morning, went on sick parade. A Jap doctor visited the hospital. Hope we get some supplies, as there is none. News of 1,000 planes bombing Cologne and the Germans report the damage as indescribable.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Some mess up in tucker supplies again. Not much news. Jock is still in hospital and is alternately sick and well.

*Thurs 4th June:* Feeling a bit better today. Visited Jock and he is not so good. Eddie, Bill and Bob were out today and they came home like drowned rats. It poured like fun for a couple of hours this afternoon. 112 men of D Company were on a work party, shifting an ammunition dump of ours. The Japs must be windy of being bombed. Muck up in the roll call again. We were just having tea, and we had to line up for another count in the middle of it. Seven men were missing. A wireless was smuggled in by one of the chaps on the work party. The gong was over an hour late tonight.

(Braddon: "Having resurrected all the bridges which our own troops had blown in the course of their evacuation, the Imperial Japanese Army now required us one morning to remove bombs and heavy shells from a huge underground dump outside Kuala Lumpur, and to load them onto trucks, thence on to trains. We refused. The Japanese brought out all their machine guns and lined them up opposite our mutinous squads. They repeated their request. We agreed." p.134)

*Fri 5th June:* Had a hell of a night, and at lunch no bread for me. I ate some rice and suffered for it. Seven weeks here today. I've been trying to make a pipe, so far no success. Bill pinched some rock salt, very nice indeed. The gong was very much on time tonight.

*Sat 6th June:* Nothing much today, went on sick parade, still with stomach pains. Had some rice crusts for tea and some fish cooked with oil and onions. Very tasty. Jock is a bit

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

brighter, still cranky though. The Japs brought us a baby grand piano. One Jap tried to play "Shall we gather.." It surprised us all.

*Sun 7th June:* Eddie and Bob were both out today. I went to communion this morning. There is news of submarines in Sydney Harbour, and they are supposed to have torpedoed ships. Not feeling the best yet, and I've been eating salt in handfuls. My body must want plenty of something.

*Mon 8th June:* Bob was out in my place today, Jock is out of hospital. It rained like hell at dinner time and the work parties were home for dinner, then went out and had another helluva feed. It was a clever idea of the Japs to allow a note to be written home and then they wiped it. I didn't bother to write as I guessed there was a catch in it. It's too good to be true. News of other theatres of war is supposed to be good but is it, or is it like the local Jap rag we see occasionally?

*Tues 9th June:* Duty company today, and no one went out on work parties. I went on sick parade again and was remanded for another three days with a small piece of bread for each meal. Some cow got down on mine at tea time, so I saw the RAP Sergeant, and he said the same had happened at dinner to another of our men- I got a piece from him then. We haven't heard much news except of a supposed naval battle off Midway Islands- to the enemy's disadvantage.

*Wed 10th June:* Touch of dengue again, and I was up and down all night, so I carried my blanket to the lower floor and slept there as I would not make the stairs. There is supposed to have been a battle in the Straits of Malacca and the enemy lost 18

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

ships. I wonder if all these rumours are true. We heard that two Argyles came in today and went to hospital. They had been with the Chinese in the jungle, food is very scarce with them. Glad in a way we left them. This damned headache is making me feel very cranky and I have been praying for a bit of home, then I would be happy to have another go.

*Thurs 11th June:* Never got to sleep till 01.30 this morning and I feel off still. No news for a couple of days. We've been having some sort of meat in tins lately, very strong, eight men per tin gives us enough for our weak stomachs. We all agree it is horse flesh. Odd tins have beans, and I'm sure it is seaweed as well. We heard this evening that the campaign in Lybia has ended in our favour. When I see the ones here with beri-beri from this blasted rice, I feel quite ill. Poor devils, will they ever recover? Or for that matter, will any of us see home again and when?

(Braddon: "Almost concurrent with the fall of Singapore, four other factors entered our lives- and these factors were to colour our entire modus vivendi for the next four years. They were, to employ the vernacular of those days, Bastardry about Drugs (which the Japs refused at all times to provide): the Imperial decree that only working men got food: Happy Feet, and Rice Balls...Rice Balls meant the ripping raw (by the denial of even a tiny quantity of Vitamin B2) of a man's scrotum and genitals..By refusing us a spoonful each day of the worthless polishings taken off rice (and they could have easily given us a sackful), the Japanese wilfully condemned their prisoners to years of living with a scrotum that was red weeping flesh. We ate rice. We ate rice only. Consequently we had Rice Balls..Happy Feet were another symptom of the same thing-

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

lack of vitamins. This scourge struck about half the men in gaol only..a persistent series of searing stabs in the soles of their feet...". p.105)

*Fri 12th June:* We can buy a tin of jam for 30 cents, this equals tenpence halfpenny. Will I or won't I? It's a fortune in this place. They brought in a survivor from a party of 30 this morning and he is a wreck, poor fellow. Hope he lives now, after losing 29 of his mates. I am off the sick list and bread list now. Sorry to lose the bread as I didn't need any rice, I could make do with bread, about two ounces a meal. Today is a Jap holiday. Only a small working party went out. Issue of twenty cigarettes and our eighth week in here. The diarrhoea started again. Didn't buy the jam, I might later on.

*Sat 13th June:* I made about four trips to the latrine last night and am suffering damn fine pains this morning. Tried to work but couldn't and am weak and headachy this evening. There is a concert on tonight and it sounds a success anyway. The work party didn't bring in any news. I will sleep on the ground floor tonight so as to save the drag up the stairs. Here's half the month gone, wonder how much longer? I would give anything to be free again, even my deferred pay.

*Sun 14th June:* Jock, Bill, Eddie and Bob were out today and had a picnic, a good feed, and did very little work. They were allowed to buy stuff in a village. I went on sick parade again, bad diarrhoea again. I have to report on Tuesday for further treatment. The mess servers couldn't give the rice away at lunch time. Some was like glue. Missed church today, will make up next Sunday.



*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

(Braddon:"-rice, with no salt or flavouring or vegetable matter of any kind, and cooked as only Army cooks who do not know the habits of rice can cook it. We consumed a couple of pints of this glue a day." p.103)

*Mon 15th June:* Jock, Eddie and Bob were out again loading and unloading, they had a good day and good tucker. Bill is down with a touch of fever. Lunch of some sort of tinned mussels, foul. I fried some though in oil afterwards, and they were quite edible. I felt a bit better this evening except for a headache and feeling a bit feverish. Had some of a pineapple I bought from Jock and enjoyed it. News of shelling of Sydney and Newcastle. Battle in Lybia is still in progress, and here in Kuala Lumpur we were supposed to have had a leaflet raid.

*Tues 16th June:* In RAP again today, still off colour. Hope I can lose it soon. Jock, Eddie and Bob were out again today. The Japs must be going to get all the work done and then let no one out. Buying parties have been suspended. The boys enjoyed themselves. Bill is still feverish. We heard for the first time of the Japs flogging Brigadier Paynter to extract information.

*Wed 17th June:* Duty company, and no parties out. There seemed to be tons of tucker today and everyone is sick of rice and don't seem to want it. Pay tonight, I got 45 cents. Hope to get some money in good Australian currency before many months. The natives are all poorly off for tucker, so the reports from outside say, and are very displeased with Jap rule, which is good. They should appreciate the British rule on its return. No news from our source which gives us BBC reports.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Thurs 18th June:* Jock, Eddie, Bob out again, and from their yarn, they must have had a hell of a day and very little tucker. Stomach pains again this afternoon and my stomach is tight and distended with wind. Small issue of soap, one bar of soap to nine men.

(Braddon: "The Japanese declared generously that they would pay us for our work-10 cents a day. Thus, if one worked every day of the month, one earned the lavish sum of \$3. This would buy a small handful of dried fish, a little coconut oil to fry it, and perhaps a banana or two. As soon as we received our pay, we seized the opportunity to do something for the men who lay day after day in the hospital in our courtyard. We all gave 25 cents from our \$3 and Padre Duckworth took this into town with him and bought soap and food and odd tit-bits. No money was better invested. It was sheer delight to see the faces of those near-corpses, who for months had been living a life of the most complete squalor, as the little padre dished out his purchases to each one." p.142)

*Fri 19th June:* Ten trips to the latrine last night and I suffered the pains of the damned with my stomach. Sugar for breakfast. Jock, Eddie and Bob out again, wet through coming home, and plenty of work. Bill is still off with fever. The local rag stresses the power of Nippon and the Axis and the weakness of the Allies and their particular inability to open a second front in Europe. The Japs brought in another batch of prisoners. All sorts. Chinese, Malays, Indians, so perhaps things don't look bright for them outside.

*Sat 20th June:* There is talk of the prisoners from Taiping coming here on 26th. Four hundred of them, and rumour of

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

cutting our meals to two per day. Eddie went out for me today, went to the ammunition dump putting up barbed wire. Bob went out, too. Went to H.Q. of the monkeys. I'm still having trouble with the runs and stomach pains. The new latrines opened for use today. The Jap rag has defeated all the Allied powers today. Rommel's troops have scattered ours far and wide. The Italian fleet has done wonderful service chasing ours in the Mediterranean. A bit about Australia is quite true, only they are regulations which have been in operation since the outbreak of war.

*Sun 21st June:* Duty company today and no one out. Planes about, first for a long time. Midsummer day here and Midwinter at home. I wonder how they are? I do hope they are not worrying and know that I am O.K. Today's rag is full of more rubbish than ever. How the war drags on when they have rubbed out all resistance, I don't know.

*Mon 22nd June:* Eddie and Bob were out today. Both came home like poisoned pups, well fed and an easy day. The news says we are having a bad time in Lybia and that we have lost Tobruk again. We had that stinking tinned rubbish again for lunch and the smell made me want to retch. Gave it away to someone who likes it.

*Tues 23rd June:* Jock, Bill, Bob and Eddie went out today and had an easy day. No news from outside. The paper is full of Churchill's flight to America to BEG for help for Britain.

*Wed 24th June:* No one went out today. A General is supposed to be coming to inspect his troops. I'm off sick parades and trying to get on permanent fatigue at 10 cents a day. Made an

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

egg slice- now for eggs! The paper is full of the false reports of Coral Sea and Midway Islands.

(Braddon: "As each man entered the gaol he was stripped of everything which could possibly be used as a weapon. This included as well as the obvious items, all nail files, knives, razors and blades. Beards consequently became unavoidable and for many days we itched maddeningly. Not only that, but we had no eating utensils- no plates, knives, forks or spoons. We ate out of the lids of gaol bedpans, old hub-caps, battered kidney dishes. We ate with our fingers and bits of wood.." p. 103)

*Thurs 25th June:* I'm mess orderly today and a substitute is out in my place on a work party. The place is being cleaned up in readiness for the coming of the Taiping crowd. I fear Eddie has fever. Made a cooking fork, will soon have a complete kitchen set. The paper says now Churchill didn't fly to America and is over discussing independence for India. Still makes a mouthful of the lies the Allies are telling about the Coral Sea and Midway Island battles, so I think they must have got a hiding.

*Fri 26th June:* The day for the prisoners from Taiping but they didn't come. Jock and Bob were out today. Jock had a picnic and Bob had a hard time. I am positive I heard aircraft at a great height today and feel sure they sounded like ours. Much ado in the paper about a vote of no confidence in Churchill. R.McDonald is in the limelight. Eddie is still very off and seems to be no better.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sat 27th June:* Jock and Bob out today again. Much air activity today. Planes all heading south, flew over very high and very fast. Went out to garden this afternoon. There is a concert on tonight, and there is much noise from that direction. Eddie was down for lunch but isn't himself yet. It hardly seems a month since my birthday.

*Sun 28th June:* We found out about the planes. The nine were ME 107's after a bomber of ours. Bob went out as a substitute for someone. Rumour of airmen escaping from Singapore in some of the Jap planes. Eddie is a bit brighter. I cooked a lunch of some fish and oil mixed with some rice, and it filled us up. Many rumours of all sorts. The paper is full of the fall of Tobruk.

*Mon 29th June:* Carrying party today. Jap Q.M.S. gave us each a coconut as big as a cricket ball each for unloading a truck. There is much aerial activity these days, with planes about every day. Paid tonight, 75 cents for me. I squared up all I owed and have some to spare.

*Tues 30th June:* Bill went out today. It is the end of the financial year, so I have fifty-four pounds, sixteen shillings in my pay book, and seventeen pounds two shillings in deferred pay now owing. Seventy-one pounds eighteen shillings is very handy, plus the other deferred from October 1940 to January 1942. Bill's outing was fairly profitable. He came home with a new shirt and shorts but worked fairly hard. I played housie tonight at one cent a time but had no luck. I wonder how much longer? Hear we have lost Mersa Matruth and that the conquest of Egypt is inevitable. How I hope it is all lies, and

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

what I would give to be with the boys there instead of rotting here.

*Wed 1st July:* The Taiping mob arrived this afternoon, that is, some of them. They have been living like lords in comparison to conditions here, and we were realizing we weren't too badly done by. They brought yesterday's midday B.B.C. news and we were pleased to hear it. I made a saucepan from an aluminium bowl, a police baton and a bit of sheet iron- quite a success. Spent all of my few cents tonight- eight bananas for 10 cents, that is, threepence halfpenny, and growled how dear they were. Eddie is up today and he came to tea with us, so he must be feeling much better. No working parties out today from D Company and we are duty company tomorrow, so won't be out.

*Thurs 2nd July:* Eddie is up and around today and feeling better. Bill and two others heard planes at 00.15hrs this morning, said there were quite a few of them, and they were going south. I made two spoons today from aluminium for Bill and a chap in hospital. Told I am to be runner for a week to start tomorrow.

*Fri 3rd July:* Running quite well today. Issue of 20 cigarettes and a roll of toilet paper. Sixteen more sick from Taiping arrived suddenly this afternoon. I got 15 cents for my cigarettes, and I was given a coconut by a Jap Officer as I was knocking off and came home to find Eddie had washed my shirt and shorts. Swiped 8 dozen photographic plates from the junk room and now to swipe the camera. It's there too, it used to be used for the criminal photography here.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sat 4th July:* Bob and Jock went out today. Jock, Pit, Swetenham and some others were in a smash up and some were hurt, none badly. Busy day as runner. My boots chafed the skin off my feet in half a dozen places. I can't get a pair of shoes. Bought a few bananas. American Independence Day. I wonder if anything exciting is happening outside? Bit of a storm on tonight. We just finished tea in time. Hear that all the A.I.F. has returned to Australia, supposed to be authentic- B.B.C.

*Sun 5th July:* Had a very busy day as the runner. Jock and Bob went out today working on an ammunition dump. We hear of the ambushing of a Jap convoy of cars having the G.O.C. in them. Unfortunately he was in the first car and as it is always his habit to travel in the second car, they bagged the second to the sixth and let the first one go. He was in it and so he lives.

*Mon 6th July:* Very busy day, I will be glad when this job is over, and not feeling too well. Just a day of days.

*Tues 7th July:* Today is supposed to be something big in Chinese history and we hope things happen outside. 25 planes went over in formation to the south, wonder if they are reinforcements.

*Wed 8th July:* Nothing seems to have happened yesterday and we are a bit disappointed. Very busy as runner. The last of the Taiping prisoners arrived. They have been expected for the last week but as usual it is tomorrow.

*Thurs 9th July:* The Taiping prisoners were expected tonight about midnight but they came last night. They included priests and brothers and Chinese. Think also some Danes.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Fri 10th July:* Jock, Bob and Eddie were out today. Hard work and nothing else. End of our twelfth week in here. News that these clever ones who were parading themselves as specialists will be removed to Singapore and we guess further still.

*Sat 11th July:* Went on sick parade again; I'm breaking out in septic sores. It's very worrying with nothing to treat them. Stomach trouble again, and I can only put it down to the rice. I will just have to go without.

(Braddon: "Japanese Bastardry applied to our requests for drugs. Of these they had captured vast quantities and also had vast quantities of their own. Yet, despite the ready availability of emetin to cure dysentery, of quinine to cure malaria - the Dutch East Indies are the source of all quinine and the Japanese now owned all the Dutch East Indies- and of Vitamin B tablets to counter the deficiencies of a rice diet, the little Nip constantly refused all requests for any of them. His best answer was 'Ashita'-'tomorrow'- which in the Jap mouth means 'never': his more common reply was a savage bashing for him who was courageous enough to ask." p.105)

*Sun 12th July:* Went to communion this morning. Twenty there out of over 800. No wonder the Padre gets very disgusted with everyone. The garden produced a handful of vegetables today, didn't notice any difference in our issue.

*Mon 13th July:* All quiet, nothing exciting happened. I'm very sore under the left arm, and it doesn't seem to be improving at all.



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Tues 14th July:* Eddie's birthday, 27. Eddie, Jock and Bob out. Eddie and Bob were together. Jock was out at the ammunition dump. No news from the outside world. Wonder if the tide has turned and we are beginning to get things our way.

*Wed 15th July:* I bought some eggs and had a couple for breakfast, a terrible luxury. I will always appreciate the little joys of home life after this. It should teach a lot of us how much we had and how little it was appreciated.---at lunch time and again at tea time.

*Thurs 16th July:* The specialists went to Singapore this afternoon. Wonder what will become of the poor brutes, if they will go to Japan? The guard here says "go Tokyo". Heard a bit of news and it seems we are and aren't so far. No news of any activity in this part of the world.

*Fri 17th July:* Sugar for breakfast this morning. The place has gone mad three times from last Saturday. Since the others went, we have had to change our platoon. Now in number 1, we were in 2. It is only for duties and messing that platoons are needed.

*Sat 18th July:* Nothing of interest after all the aerial activity of last week. Their absence is noticeable, they must want them elsewhere. How I am praying for our release and ability to fight again if necessary. It seems to be my sole thought nowadays. To do something. Life isn't to be spent behind brick walls and prison bars.

*Sunday 19th July:* Just the same. Settling down to a daily round of the same things, now that work parties are nearly cut out.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Mon 20th July:* Jock, Eddie and Bob went out today. They weren't too pleased with the outing.

*Tues 21st July:* Tired of being short issued with sugar, so I made a scoop to go one ounce. Will try it tomorrow.

*Wed 22nd July:* The scoop is a success, it proved us having been short weighted from the kitchen. Everyone is satisfied.

*Thurs 23rd July:* Feel very sick with all these septic sores. The ones under the arm are as big as five shilling pieces. Three of them. I'm back on bread.

*Fri 24th July:* There was a smash with some of the Japs taking a work party out. They turned the truck over. Six are in hospital outside and five others with cuts and bruises.

*Sat 25th July:* Feeling very off colour. I just pray for anything but this. There was an air raid alarm last night and all the lights were switched out. One tin of pineapple to four tonight.

*Sun 26th July:* We heard that eleven planes were seen but no bombs were dropped, so it must have been only a reconnaissance flight. Ate pineapple for breakfast.

*Mon 27th July:* Bit of news last night, and it could be much worse. Don't think the European lot will be over this year.

*Tues 28th July:* Six four-engined planes flew north today. They looked like troop carriers. Other air activity also. Jock, Eddie, Bill and Bob went out. Bill fell foul of a couple and was belted with a stick. My arm is very sore; I'm not as good as I can be.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Wed 29th July:* I was clapped into hospital this morning, not feeling too good. Nice tea. Bread pudding with two doughnuts and rice, and bread.

*Thurs 30th July:* Restless night and fomentals all day. Tea of rice, stew and bread pudding with custard. Quite a mob of visitors.

*Fri 31st July:* Eyes failing.

*Tues 4th Aug:* There were more brought in today. Officers of F.M.S.V.F., I think.

*Wed 5th Aug:* Eighteen bombers flying around today. I feel a bit better but still painful. I can hardly see at all now.

*1st Sept:* Feeling a bit better now. My eyes are improving. Throat: I swallow and food comes back through my nose. No feeling in -- or buttocks. Hands and fingers also very numb, and almost useless.

*--Sept:--* weeks in here. Good lunch of fish, both fresh and saltwater fish. Freshwater fish was from -- I enjoyed every mouthful. 8 D Company in now.

*5th Sept:* George Fullerton collapsed and died at midnight, this makes 91--out on grave digging party. Very crook myself, can't stop coughing and choking.

*6th Sept:* Humid day, I had a very trying time-----

(At this stage Edgar was obviously suffering from polyneuritic beri-beri. The symptoms are primarily those of malfunction of

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

nerve fibres as a result of vitamin B group deficiency. His body had been fighting a spreading infection from the tropical ulcers. The sore armpit would have been from swollen infected lymph glands.)

*10th Dec.1942:* No entry since 6th September, 1942. I'm now back at Changi in the A.G.H. Left Kuala Lumpur on 2nd October, 1942, a stretcher case, paralysed in all limbs and no feeling in them. It was a hell of a trip in steel trucks. We left at 1700hrs on 2nd October and arrived on 3rd in hospital at Changi about 1730hrs. I remained affected for another five weeks. I had to learn to walk again between two orderlies, then in sticks, and as all the limbs are back in shape, I am now in irons and at night in splints. The place is full of Dutch, American and Javanese troops and sailors. The Dutch are very decent fellows, and fond of Australians. Yanks a bit --ular. Of the medical orderlies from Kuala Lumpur, only one is left, I've seen him a few times. Odd concerts in what was ---are very good.

(John Byrnes, who was a close friend of Edgar's in Changi and later in Japan, wrote to me in January 1988: "I first met your uncle in the Hospital in Changi. He had been admitted the previous evening and was in a very poor condition from malnutrition and inability to walk without assistance. He half-sat, half reclined in a bed on the end of a row near the entrance to the ward in N Block, Roberts area.

From the day room to the ward I had to pass this bed. Edgar was being cared for by a Victorian lad, a very fine orderly whose name I can only recall as Bill. Edgar, as I found out his name was, used to watch everyone who came and went with a

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

look I have only been able to think of as a kind of 'child-like pleasure'. On the second day of his hospitalisation he put up his hand to stop me as I passed him. This was to ask my name. I gave mine and he replied his was Wilkie.

He had no further conversation that day- but the next day was a change-he was becoming better in himself- he saw I was not busy and asked me to stop and talk. This I did. His question was quite a shocker! He wanted to know how I kept my boots clean and shined when we no longer had boot polish. He confessed to me in Kobe House later that of all the things he most remembered of his first days in Changi were the clean sheets in hospital and my clean boots.")

*Wed 16th Dec:* Have been too lazy to fill in this diary. Found a couple of cav. boys from Grovely, also one of the lads who was in the Chinese camp in the jungle. My feet are still in iron supports. Today there is an exhibition of toys made for the poor little kiddies over in the Changi gaol, where these yellow hogs have the civilian internees. Money has also been collected to give the inmates a Christmas. There was a good concert this evening. The toy exhibition was excellent.

(Huxtable: "Throughout December, in little scattered groups, the men have been making Christmas presents for the children in Changi Gaol. A week before Christmas these were sent across (for which permission was sought and granted by the Japanese) to our entertainment hall at the main building of the Convalescent Building to be on display. The collection would not have disgraced the toy department of David Jones or Farmers; the ingenuity, the patience and the kindly thoughts

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

behind it all combined to make one feel the kind of happiness that is near to the shedding of a tear." p.99)

*Thurs 17th Dec:* Inspection by an Imperial Japanese Army General. Mass check parades are to be held every night by the Japs now. I'm getting a bit stronger in the legs so I will be alright by next Christmas.

(Huxtable: "The Japanese instituted a system of parades at which, about 7 p.m., each formation must be on parade for the purpose of being counted. When we are all on parade on the Barrack Square, or at the various other parade grounds scattered about the area, a motor truck drives into the area and drops a Japanese NCO and a couple of private soldiers at each point. We are called to attention and have to salute the NCO which he returns ceremoniously in Japanese fashion, holding hand at the salute and bowing at the same time in all directions. We then number off and are counted by the Japanese soldiers, then more saluting and off they go and we are dismissed. In the early mornings we hold our own system of roll call parades without the visits of the Japanese." p.102)

*Fri 18th Dec:* Saw the little Pommy chap who came from Kuala Lumpur in the same condition as myself. News is supposed to be good. Short church services are to be held every Friday evening from now on.

*Sat 19th Dec:* Nothing much on. Furphys are flying thick and fast. There was a salvo of heavy guns fired this morning, only to clean them out, I think.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sun 20th Dec:* Old Jock came over to see me today. All the troops in Singapore are to come home. It looks as if they are feeling the time is near.

*Mon 21st Dec:* A good concert by the Tommies. Seven good acts and a clever Dutch illusionist. But the Dutch in our ward vote the Australian concerts better. Troops are marching out in batches of 500 or 600 and at 2,000 a day. What a Christmas we'll have!

*Tues 22nd Dec:* Just another day. Nothing much doing.



Unidentified prisoners acting in a stage play in Roberts Barracks, Changi Camp. This photo was taken secretly by Major John Rosson, and his camera and the negatives kept hidden from the Japanese throughout his internment. Reference P04485.029

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Wed 23rd Dec:* Quiet. Boys coming in to Singapore. Plenty of rumours.

(Huxtable: "During the days before Christmas Day, the AIF working parties began to arrive back in their thousands from Singapore. The great Barrack Square and its surrounding three-storied buildings began to fill to overflow. The last detachment arrived on the 29th, a torrent of rain drenched the Square and the men and their baggage as they were unloading the trucks. The latter were loaded to perilous heights with extraordinary collections of what appeared to be mere junk. Ancient and blackened boilers and cooking utensils, impoverished beds, tables and other 'furniture', stacks of weatherbeaten kit bags, loads of tins and boxes, mostly empty and battered. The whole 12,000 of us must be back again.

December has seen the finish of all meat rations and the Japanese have announced that there is no more meat to be issued. Occasionally we are to have fish. On one occasion there were prawns which not one of us could eat as they looked and tasted too stale. Another time I had a steak of stingray, size about 3 x 2 inches, and it was quite nice. Apart from these rare occasions we are now vegetarian because tinned fish can no longer be bought at the canteen; we hope it will again become procurable as it is a great help even at the price of a dollar for a tin of herrings. We make one tin do for four..."p.100)

*Thurs 24th Dec:* There was a hell of a crowd brought in to hospital from work parties. The place is all decorated with leaves etc. Quite a festive air. Arthur Farmer was over today and said he saw Eddie. All lamps have blown out, shield on



*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

now, and there was a scare last night. Carol singers are in the ward.

*Fri 25th Dec:* Christmas Day. Went to midnight communion last night and got to bed at 01.20hrs. Church parade at 1130 again this morning. Both services were very impressive. Eddie came over to see me, the first time for nine weeks. He has been in Singapore. Eighteen Victory cigarettes this morning and a breakfast of rice, cocoa milk and a rice flour- his unit with butter. Dinner of Bully Beef, asparagus, peas and beetroot. Pudding of rice flour and sauce of a custard powder. Tea of Bully Beef, peas and spinach and fresh mashed sweet potatoes. Cake made from rice flour and peanuts. It wasn't a bad Christmas after all.

(Huxtable: "To return to Christmas festivities, 1942, there was a good program of sorts including relay races, tugs of war, wood chops, throwing cricket balls, etc, also some stalls and side-shows provided coconut shies, etc. And so passed Christmas Day very happily. That evening at the theatre building, there was a crowded attendance at a sacred concert to which Carrick and Frank Wright and I went together." p.101)

*Sat 26th Dec:* It's back to rice again and now we have next Christmas. Where will we be?

*Sun 27th Dec:* Went over to the convalescent depot today about 1500. Met a few I know, and as all the units will soon be in, hope to find more.

*Mon 28th Dec:* Margaret's birthday. Went over to 26th and found a few I knew, also a couple in 2/10 ART. Went down to

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

the concert and found about two acres of humanity around the building, apart from those inside.

*Tues 29th Dec:* Got a bit of a look in on the concert tonight. Wandered around and found a few more. Talked of old times and tarts.

*Wed 30th Dec:* Had a haircut this afternoon after waiting for two hours at the camp barbers. Got a hat, Red Cross issue. Good lid except for its brim. The other one, Roaring Reg. borrowed to come from Kuala Lumpur and I haven't seen it since. Plenty of yarning with the boys of the 26th. ("Roaring Reg." was Captain Reginald Newton, one of the senior Australian officers later with D Force).

*Thurs 31st Dec:* Went broom making and evening -- got a tot of Jap brandy and was it wicked? Eddie, Doug and Phillip were over, and we went to a talk on the riots of Chittagong. Well, here endeth 1942. On New Year's Eve last year we were in Caulfield race course. Where will be our next? Generally this has been a pretty hectic year all round.

(Huxtable: "The Japanese Army supplied us with some liquor, about 1 oz. per man. It tasted like a mixture of brandy and dry sherry. It was not saki." p.104)

*Jan 1, 1943:* Hell of a row, up to 2 this morning. That should have given the old year a good send off and the new year a fair welcome.

(Huxtable: "We five yarned and joked until, shortly before midnight, a Highland piper appeared in the semi-darkness of

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

the Barrack Square below and surrounded by a crowd of cheering Australians, he serenaded each building in turn. At midnight there was a beating of gongs and tins in the time-honoured fashion and we five sang 'Auld Lang Syne'." p.104)

*Sun 10th Jan:* Nothing much through the day. It is the Anniversary of our leaving Australia-----

*Mon 11th Jan:* Keith's Birthday. Great rumours---

*Wed 13th Jan:* Bill Lancaster came over to see me tonight.

*Sun 17th Jan:* Church parade, excellent sermon by padre.

*Sun 24th Jan:* Anniversary of our arrival here in Malaya. I went to church parade.

*Mon 25th Jan:* First injection against dysentery. To have four, one every week. News of the fall of Tripoli.

*8th Feb:* The day of our being shelled out of Bakit Temah last year.

*Fri 12th Feb:* Heaviest rains for last three days I have seen here.

*Sat 13th Feb:* ?000 Prisoners of war lined the camp for three hours--Japs film

(Huxtable: "On three mornings all troops except sick or disabled were marched to the large playing fields that spread themselves out before the hospital area. These, with British troops from the other area, assembled in their thousands and were paraded in order to be filmed, evidently for display in

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Japan and abroad. On two mornings, filming was postponed owing to rain." p.110)

*Sun 14th Feb:* Anniversary of capitulation of Singapore. We saw them towing a floating dock up the Straits. It must have come from Java.

*Thurs 18th Feb:* ---experience ---joined -PR Sub went out first--- seen. Hope it never returns.

*Sat 20th Feb:* Mother's ?54th Birthday, the second since I have been a P.O.W.

*5th March:* News of the destruction of a Japanese convoy off New Guinea. Landing on continent. 2,500 to go north.

*Thurs 11th March:* Anniversary of our leaving here. There are supposed to be letters here for us, when will we get them?

*Fri 12th Mar:* Letters have started to come in.

*Thurs 18th Mar:* 2,500 men were taken away in the last six days. I went on a wood party.

(Huxtable: "On each afternoon of this weekend, troops who are going away were paraded for the usual Japanese examination 'medical'. Ten tables were placed in a row along the ground-floor verandah of this building, a medical officer in charge of each table and a line of 100 men opposite each table. This meant that 1,000 men were examined each afternoon. The number so examined, i.e. about 2,000, left us for another area, travelling by train in parties of 500 each day." p.111)

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Tues 23rd Mar:* I started as batman for Captains Huxtable and Carrick. Their other batman went to hospital with bad eyes.

(Huxtable: "My batman patient Wilkie said Private Mudge of the 2/26th Battalion was annoyed about something today and said it was enough to make a boong swear. Boong is the Army name for our dark-skinned brothers. I knew Mudge at Caloundra camp, a fine old soldier, MM of the last war. He is generally useful and repairs boots and clogs and is the tidiest man in the 100 on the ground floor. Being short of a blanket, he spreads his bed with a Gordon kilt which I expect he acquired by bargaining in his early POW days. His kindly black face and grey whiskers look quaintly out of place with the tartan." p.115)

*Mon 29th Mar:* First letter today, Margaret's, over nine months old. Eddie left with a party of about 500 yesterday.

(Huxtable: "Barbara's letter, dated 29 June, and Mother's letter dated 28 June..The sensation I had before opening the first letter was a mixture of joyous anticipation and a kind of dread. Others amongst my friends have said they have reacted in the same way..This Sunday evening, the Sunday before Anzac Day, is a memorable date because of this farewell gathering. I was also invited to it A.G. MacAlister, Jock White, Frank Wright, and Alan Carrick. I opened a tin of herrings and gave them two rissoles each made of herring and rice, also a slice of brown bread made by the hospital and sold at 25 cents. A layer of dripping and salt and pepper on each slice, and plenty of black coffee sweetened with gula malacca for each man. We sat at a long table under the electric bulb on our balcony.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Wilkie, our batman, did the serving with Alan and me and he also shared in supper with us. 19 sat down to table.." p.117)

*8th May:* Mothers Day. Wonder how she is, and also Mum. The place is nearly deserted now. Troops have been leaving every few days. Yesterday I had a breakup of my home. Carrick went to a house near the H.Q.A.I.F. Hux and Griff (David Griffin) were stuck on the third floor. Orchestral concert in the Y.M.C.A. hut.

(Huxtable: "My happy home for the last 7 months is finally to be broken up today as Rickety Kate tells me we are both to go. Alan Carrick is to leave the Convalescent Depot, preparatory to going away with the next party, and I am to move a floor higher up to join the other medical officers of the new composite unit." p.121)

*Tues 10th May:* On J Force. There is much speculation as to our destination. Tripoli etc. supposed to have capitulated A.O.G.R. again this afternoon.

*Thurs 13th May:* Went to concert at A.G.H. last night. A plane flew over carrying a torpedo this morning. First I have seen; and also a type of bomber like a Wellington has been around lately and a cruiser of an old type went out. Pictures were old as the hills but very amusing.

*Fri 14th May:* Bob Wright and many others are to come back to hospital as boarders for the duration. Carrick says they will arrive within the week.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sat 15th May:* Left Changi by truck. Searched in dock yards in Singapore. On board 1900hrs. 409 in a small hold.

(Huxtable: "Alan Carrick came early about 7 a.m. to tell me that J Force (Lieutenant Colonel Byrnes) is leaving today at about 3 p.m., and he was going with him as adjutant. Also going is Major Ron Campbell, ex 2/40th Battalion, Alan's friend. They are to go overseas. Several of my patients are going: my batman Wilkie of Queensland, and Sapper Bourne, the very thin man. Captain Boyce from Queensland and Major Murray and Captain Nairnsey are the medical officers, the last two from BGH. Major (Lord) d'Ramsay was also to have gone with the party (his sister is reported to be the wife of the French ambassador at Tokyo), much to Alan's delight as he derives amusement out of the idea of having a 'belted earl' under his command. The party were issued later in the morning with woollen pullovers and balaclavas so they must be going to Japan or somewhere near it. Everybody appeared in great spirits now and are very optimistic." p.122)

(In "The Story of J Force" edited by Alex Dandie, published in 1985, Captain Boyce's report is quoted: "J Force was truly a convalescent party; they had been promised before leaving Singapore that they would have no marching but that motor transport would be provided, that they were going to a rest camp and a good camp, that they would have no hard work, and that there would be plenty of food, plenty of medicines and that there would be a hospital of 600 beds." Dandie says "Those comprising the Australian section were mainly convalescents, either from the Convalescent Depot or recently discharged from hospital." p.1)

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sun 16th May:* We spent the night hot as hell in Singapore. Sailed about 10.00hrs. In the hold all day, out for meals at 0900, 1330, 1900 hrs. Three others with us.

("The party boarded a dirty, rusty old tramp cargo ship of some 5,000 tons, built some 50 years beforehand, and quite evidently taken off the scrap heap for its war-time duties...Eric Mitchell (2/26 Bn) said, 'I have always been under the impression that the ship's name was the Wales Maru. I can remember the name S.S.Wales still visible somewhere, and the Nips had tried to obliterate the S.S. and added Maru. I understand that the British gave it to Japan after the First World War.'..

Personnel of J Force were divided amongst three of the four holds. One doctor, 10 medical orderlies and approximately 300 prisoners to each hold. Space available per man plus kit was less than 25 cubic feet. The fourth hold was occupied by Nip troops." The Story of J Force p.3)

WALES MARU: Japan S/S 1921 6586gt. 1941: 3/13. 5/24/1944: Torpedoed and sunk by submarine USS Lapon in South China Sea at 07 20N-109 20E.

*Tues 18th May:* Second day at sea. We passed a mountainous barren island this morning.

*Wed 19th May:* Anchored off Saigon (I'm told) about 0800. Some very pretty houses ashore. Mountains to the east, and the foreshore is very rugged.

*Sun 23rd May:* Sailed at 1400. Pleased to get to sea again. It has been very hot and stuffy for the last few days. Eleven ships in the convoy. Escort of a motor sub chaser. Hell of a place for



*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

ships, up to thirty in the place at a time and many at Saigon about 25 miles up river, I am told.

*Thurs 27th May:* Today is my 26th Birthday. The second as a prisoner of war. Eleven ships in convoy. Bit of a scare other night.

*Sat 29th May:* Arrived in Tako (Formosa). Quite a busy port.

*Thurs 3rd June:* Sailed from Tako.

*Sat 5th June:* Real sub scare this morning. There was supposed to have been a torpedo fired at the ship in front of us. Hell of a lot of depth charges were dropped. They shook the ship up properly. Hope they didn't get the sub.

*Sun 6th Jun:* Another scare this morning. I was on deck and thought this is goodbye to this ship as it has been deserted by the rest of the convoy. They blazed away with their guns at what turned out to be a float stick (a fishing buoy).

*Mon 7th June:* Disembarked at Moji (a port on the northern tip of the island of Kyushu). Given a air feed 2000hrs, left the wharf, crossed by ferry to Shimonoseki, and now on a train for somewhere.

*Tues 8th June:* Arrived Kobe 0800hrs. Marched for half mile to ----lunch of

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*



("The men were marched from the station along a tarred road, with tree-covered hills behind them, towards the port, as they later realised when work was commenced. Dandie commented later that he always felt nostalgically that they reminded him of the hills on the Illawarra coast south of Sydney.

The roadway was on the right of a park. The park was long and not very wide. It was divided by a cross street at about its mid point. The German swastika flag alerted the party to the site of the German consulate. Some eucalyptus trees were noticed in the park. At the end of the park was a sports ground, into which the party was marched. It was found out later that this had been the headquarters of the British Cricket Club in Kobe.

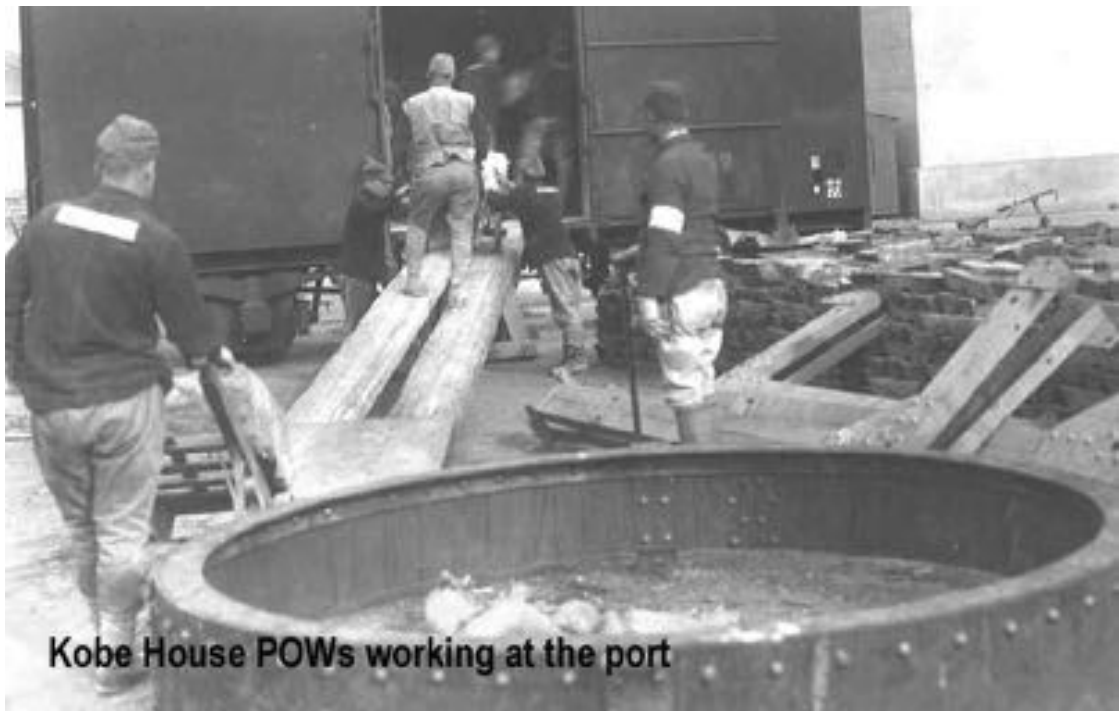
The party was lined up, opened out and searched once more. Orders were given that all valuables were to be handed in. Once again the requirement that a form, promising not to escape and also promising to work as required, was to be

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

signed by all. Lt.Col. Byrne and Major Campbell made the usual objections about signing, but did sign and told the men to do likewise, saying that it had no validity anyhow in the circumstances, after the Selarang Square Incident.

The Commander of all the prison camps in the Kobe/Osaka area, Colonel Morata, addressed the men. He said that the men would be housed, fed and clothed by the Imperial Japanese Army; that they would be treated under Japanese Army Law, and that disobedience and refusal to obey commands would be severely punished." J Force p.10)

(Graeme McCabe, in his book "Pacific Sunset", remembers: "A bevy of junior Jap officers formed a respectful background and nodded vehemently each time the middle-aged colonel made a point. One of these stooges, a fat, pot-bellied lieutenant named Morimoto, was then introduced to us as the



Kobe House POWs working at the port

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

commandant of the Kobe sub-camp. He bore a rather striking resemblance to the jovial Hollywood star Jack Oakey, and that is what we called him. Unapproachable, distant, remote, he never worried about his charges. They could die from lack of medicines, drugs, treatment and food. He did not care." p.75)

("An American, who introduced himself as Cpl. Hoblett, followed the Japanese orations with a quick run-down on what the Japanese expected of the men. He pointed out the buildings which the men were to occupy on the other side of the street, opposite the cricket ground. They were warehouses (previously premises of the British firm of Butterfield and Swires) which had been converted into barracks. Inmates already there were mostly Hong Kong garrison troops: Middlesex and Royal Scots Regiments, Royal Engineers, Artillery and Signal Units. They had been there eight months, and had come to call the barracks Kobe House. There were also some Americans from the Phillipines and some merchant seamen of various nationalities." J Force p.11)

*Wed 9th Jun: Reveille 0500. Tenko (roll call) 0330. Breakfast 0600. Mucked about to -----*

("The Japanese have a perfect mania for counting and searching, and the men were subjected to this. Then they were organised into groups, organised into other formations and organised again. It seemed that the Japanese officer was trying to work out how to house the men. The whole day was spent in being divided into sections, grouped, ticketed and numbered. Ian Doherty said 'We were then buggared about by the world's experts in buggaring about.'" J Force p.11)

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Thurs 10th June:* Same routine. Raining, settling in --Stayed inside all day. Suppose we'll catch it tomorrow. Leaving -- is far from funny. I'll get thin---

*Fri 11th June:* Same routine this morning. PT for five minutes. I can see some funny sides to all this. Three hours drill and said to be No.1 --afternoon off. Tea of salmon soup.

*Sat 12th June:* First sunny day for over a week first inf.dysentery injection, fooled about all day. The smallpox inoculation took. Feeling off as a result of the injection.



*Sun 13th June:* Had a lazy day and were allowed to make merry as chums said --gramophones ---Piano Accordion and Mandolin.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Tues 15th June:* First day out by electric train to the factory and back about 6. Working in the foundry.

("The factories to which the Australians travelled were Showa Denki carbon factory, the Yoshihara Oil factory, whilst the iron foundry was owned by Toyo Steel. The group going to Yoshihara was treated fairly well and provided with bathing facilities after a while. The Showa Denki factory was a particularly filthy, dusty job. The firm provided a work coat and pants but the cloth was very loose weave and left the underclothes and skin dirty. The hot bath provided was a necessity. Toyo Steel was a reasonable job with light work, but it was the lightest fed.



Dockwork or stevedoring was carried out for various firms: Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, Utsumigumi, O'Hamigumi, Takahama. The jobs involved loading railway trucks from warehouses and unloading ships and barges. A choice job was

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*



working on ships in the harbour. Sanpaku was the firm involved in this type of work, seemingly with a monopoly of the harbour. Some ships provided good looting, while others such as coal, meant hard labour. The firm's handout for lunch was two packets in dried bamboo leaves, one of rice and the other pieces of vegetable or seaweed and green tea." J Force p. 18)

*Sun 20th June:* Very tired and off colour. I was given an injection of some sort last night. Very hard week and am glad to see the last of it.

*Sun 27th June:* O what a week! Worked as a wharfie for four days and the last two in the Showa Denki shop and today Wow! The bash expert is back and many fell foul of him.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Barrack inspection, and how! No musical afternoon. It will be a pleasure to go to work this coming week- I'll be away for 11 hours every day.

("The men in the work parties shortly after their arrival in Kobe, witnessed the way the Army maintained its supremacy in Japanese society. One woman had dared to break through the Australian ranks, in making her way hurriedly towards the gate for her own train. She had committed a crime. She should not have done it.



The prisoners of war were 'the guests of the Emperor', the lowest of the low ranks in the Imperial Japanese Army, so we had been told. So she was rude to the Emperor. Although she wore spectacles, Wingie, a guard who had lost his hand fighting in China, a nasty little brute, ran over to her and slapped her face two or three times, breaking her spectacles in doing so.

Clarrie Latimer reported 'At the same departure station on another occasion, a well dressed Jap carrying a briefcase



*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

stepped through our lines on the platform. Darkie, the guard on this day, did this fellow over in the biggest belting I had seen. Another day, there was one woman only on the platform as the train arrived at the station. The door opened as the train came to a stop and the woman stepped forward to board the carriage. I was about to step onto the platform, having pressed up against the door during the trip with Smiler leaning on me. He brushed past me and landed a full-blooded punch right into the woman's face, smashing her glasses into many pieces." (J Force p.17)

*Sun 4th July:* Quiet day after a hectic week. A few bashed during the week by the Basher.

*Wed 7th July:* Another cessation of hostilities between Germany and the Allies.

*Sun 11th July:* Great day -- Air Raid Practice drill. News of our capture of Crete, Sardinia and Sicily etc.

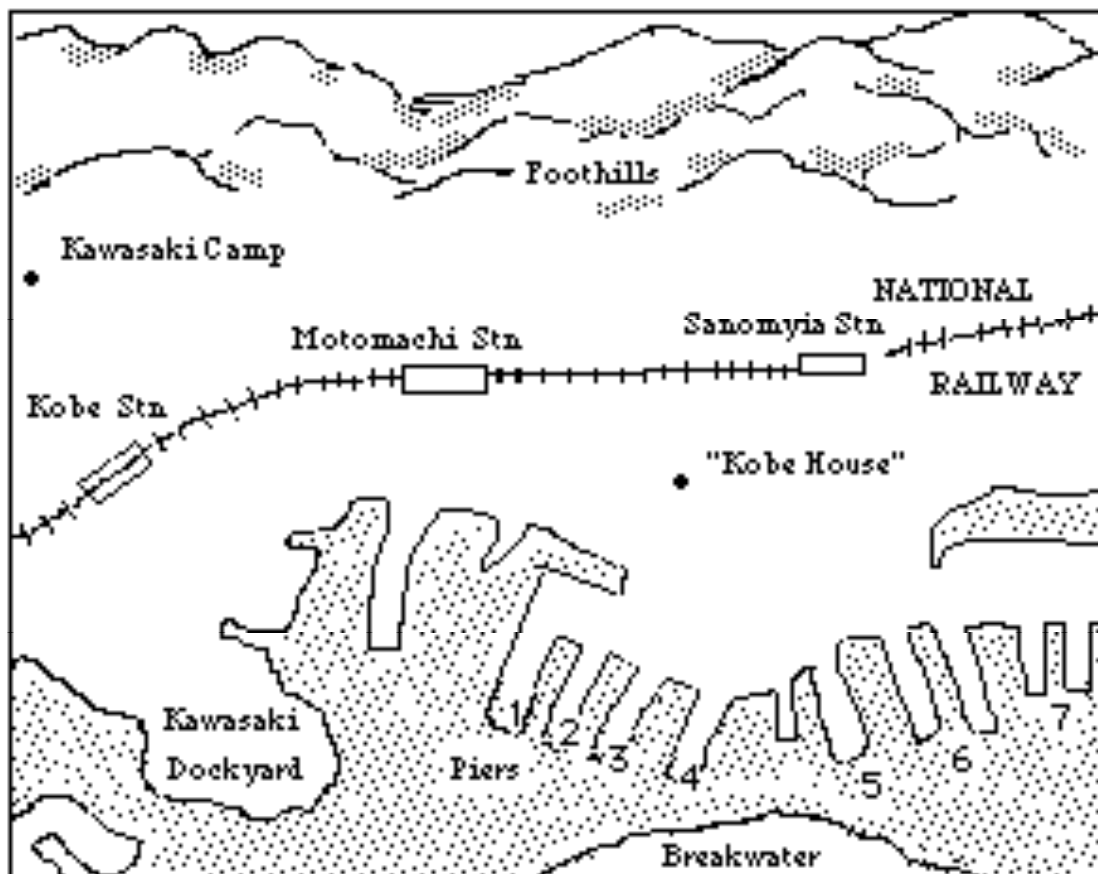
*Wed 14th July:* Day in, in place of 18th. Lot of rot again, given shirts we would use as a dish rag, and underpants. Present from Nippon Government.

*Mon 19th July:* New job today. "Sanpaku". Day off from Yoshihara as they are having an overhaul. Went out to a ship in the harbour to load rice, and it rained, so we knocked off, had a feed and came back about 4pm.

*Tues 20th July:* Same job again, only unloading rice today. Within coo-ee of an aircraft carrier being built by prisoners of war. Decided to stick to this as the feed is not to be sneezed at.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

(There was no communication possible between the prisoners of different camps in Japan. Men from Kobe House working on the docks could see prisoners of war building ships. They found out later these prisoners working in the Kawasaki Shipbuilding Yards were part of C Force).



Sketch of Kobe City- with permission from "The Story of J Force"

*Sun 25th July:* Had a fairly comfortable week. Thursday on a ship "AKI MARU" --- 42. Unloaded rubber and tin ingots. A pleasure to work on, it has electric hoists, and is clean. The feed provided at lunch time makes the job twice as easy.

*Mon 26th July:* It rained, and I went to the graphite factory. Never again. I am on fire all over from the dust and ash, and black all over.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

(McCabe: "Showa was typical of the factories in which Allied prisoners toiled in Japan. It specialised in the manufacture of carbon electrodes, and the graphite for use as a base was largely obtained from mines in Siam. The work was not hard, but we found it so. Shovelling coal, coke and powdered black dust, carrying 160 lb. bags of graphite, and loading and pushing trucks which had a penchant for continually jumping off rails which were rarely repaired, are not tasks that come easily to men many pounds underweight and not getting enough to eat." p.25)



**Kobe POWs working on the wharf**

*Thurs 29th July:* Yesterday unloading coal, and today pig iron. I am just about tired out. A few went out to a German boat and were treated like people again, and had an easy day.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Fri 30th July:* Unloading paraffin wax in bags. On the ship was rubber, brass shell cases of all sorts, aeroplane engines and stuff like pitch. Fairly easy day.

*Sat 31st July:* Loading rice from barges to ship, it looks like the same rice as we unloaded a week or so ago. We emptied two barges. News a day or two ago of Mussolini being kicked out and his place taken by Bodaglia.

*Sun 1st August, 1943:* What a day! The Doctor was Tenko Officer and he amused himself at our expense all day. No rest was possible. ("The Mad Doctor" - 2nd Lieut. Miataki.)

*Mon 2nd Aug:* Same job we were doing on Saturday. A ship was launched yesterday. Felt a bit off colour, didn't work in the afternoon.

(Captain Boyce's notes for July 1943: "Hard battling with the Nip administration is beginning to secure recognition of the fact that this party is really a 'convalescent' one, and lighter jobs are being obtained for some of the older and infirm ones." J Force p.50)

*Tues 3rd Aug:* There was a submarine launched this morning. They have been building her since we came out on the job, and it never seemed to have any more done to it. Two lunches today, and I bought two ice creams (so called) 20 yen each.

*Wed 4th Aug:* Rained all day at Yoshihara for a change. Fooled about and feel tired from dodging work. Rumours of the war not lasting much longer.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Thurs 5th Aug:* Yoshihara again today. Handling bags of fertilizer all day.

*Fri 6th August:* Now on the Sanpaku job permanently loading rice.

*Sat 7th Aug:* Out to a new collier and didn't start work to our surprise. At 10.00 left some behind and went outside the breakwater to unload drums of benzol. Then up anchor and into harbour. In the day, did about two hours work.

*Sun 8th Aug:* Had a sleep this afternoon. Photo taken this morning. PT display in the European Club in the ground opposite.

*Mon 9th Aug:* Small ship unloading coal. Fair day, it passed quickly.

*Thurs 12th Aug:* Last two days on coal. Nasty accident today, a chap fell from a chute on the side of the ship to the barge below. When the whistle was blown for assistance, first to come was a fast motor cutter from one of the German ships, but they were hunted by the Japs and generally insulted. Case is said to be fractured skull. (The injured man was W.E. "Legs" Hall, of 2/30 Bn)

("There was always the possibility that a Tenko might be called at any time of the night. This was the case especially when a Japanese medical officer-said to have learnt his medical training at a German University- came on the strength of the Guard. He was 2nd Lieutenant Miataki, known to all as 'The Mad Doctor'. Captain Boyce described him: 'A small

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

inexperienced upstart of 24 years, recently qualified and more recently promoted to officer rank of Lieutenant. His supreme effort was giving 73 slashes across the face and ears with his leather belt to an AIF man for smoking after lights out and for denying it.

He was duty officer on the night of the 11th August 1943 and had the whole camp awake most of the night and held a Tenko at 2.30am on the 12th. One AIF man succumbed to a work injury whose cause might easily have been lack of sleep; for he apparently overbalanced and fell into a barge. Strenuous protest by Australian officers succeeded in having this human menace curbed in his activities and finally removed." p.45)

(I spoke to a member of J Force on 6th April, 1988, who had been nailed down to a wooden floor by a nail through the penis for 16 hours by "The Mad Doctor". As well, this man carries many scars inflicted by Miataki for alleged minor infringements. He told me that Miataki was the first war criminal hanged after the war.)

*Sun 15th Aug:* Until Friday on coal. Yesterday copra, being very off colour, and last night shivering and running with perspiration. I feel very sick, this feels similar to dengue. Nearly collapsed on sick parade and I have no work chit for tomorrow.

*Mon 16th Aug:* The injured man passed away 2200 last night. He seemed bad when I was there. Feeling a bit better myself. Day off work.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Tues 17th Aug:* Another day off, thank goodness. Funeral this morning at 1100. Quite a turn out.

*Sun 22nd Aug:* Had three days off this week. Quite a day. "Jack Oakey" inspected. Yesterday I brought home a tin of jam I found in a ship hold, and a face powder.

*Mon 23rd Aug:* Same ship as Saturday. Couple of onions and piece of soap in the boot today. Fearsome yarns of all sorts of fronts. Hell, tummy trouble hangs on.

*Tues 24th Aug:* There must be an Italian ship in. We saw a motor tender flying the flag go ashore several times. Waited an hour or so this morning for a ship to berth to work on her. Darien Maru. Pass -- cargo. Unloaded hemp.

*Wed 25th Aug:* We can see an Italian ship alright,--raider. Today I was unloading gravel from a small ship.

*Thurs 26th Aug:* I am feeling wretched today, went to work and sat around till lunch time and had a snooze, and came home by 1430.

*Fri 27th Aug:* Yasme Day. Washed and mended and had a sleep. We bought some s--- and pot of--. Very nice for a change. So now it will be work until 5th September without a break. Bit of a cow.

*Sat 28th Aug:* Shovelling copper ore today. Pretty heavy work.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Thurs 2nd Sept:* Unloading some red rubbish from "AMA MARU". It is a new ship launched last August 1942. Lead ammonia also on board.

*Fri 3rd Sept:* Four years of war. I feel sick as a pig. Didn't work, lay about on a coal boat.

*Sat 4th Sept:* Had a day in. Fainted in R.A.P. last night. Decided I was a sick man. Not much work about now. Ships very scarce.

*Sun 5th Sept:* Rest day. Feared the maniac may have been on, but our fears were groundless. John and I ate two tins of salmon for lunch and tea and the last of the small bottle of jam.

(John Byrnes: "After Edgar's discharge to the Convalescent Depot in Changi I didn't see him again until chance sat us opposite one another in Kobe House. We both found pleasure in this. The Japanese had put us in a line, given us a number and told to hold to that number. Neither of us had a unit member very near us and both were seated next to chaps we didn't know then, so it was natural we would take up where we left off.

For the short time I went out on work parties, at no time did I go on a similar one to Edgar: this meant talks at night and rest days. When I went back to work in the camp hospital I would see him on sick parade, sometimes when sent to the lines to do a treatment, and on the odd occasion, a short visit before lights out.")



*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Mon 6th Sept:* Day in again. Feverishness returned and diarrhoea. No work at Sanpaku. Boys went to Graphite, Toyo Steel and Yoshihara.

*Tues 7th Sept:* I am having a lovely time. No work again today. Officers all got a clouting. Some misunderstanding. Yanks supposed to have captured --. Naval battle in South Pacific. Nips claim heavy losses for us.

*Wed 8th Sept:* Another day in, quiet and peaceful.

*Thurs 9th Sept:* Went to Graphite works and didn't have to work. Constructing a --opposite and concrete is being laid with post poles and everything.-still standing in --.Many Air Raid trenches are being dug, just deep enough to be useless.

*Fri 10th Sept:* Same place today, chipping carbons. Tucker very off.

*Sat 11th Sept:* Yoshihara today. Carrying tins of oil. Lunch of seaweed, so ate hat full of -- and bread.

*Sun 12th Sept:* Rest day. News of Italians' capitulation confirmed. Quiet day, did my washing.

*Mon 13th Sept:* We hear the Italians from the ships in the harbour were interned. The ship which came in on 24th August, 1942, is tied up at the dock yards and looks a derelict. The Nips are looting it. Some chaps on -one and say the crew had a blow out and booze up before going into internment.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Tues 14th Sept:* Coal boat, good shovelling. Went out and sat in a lighter for a couple of hours waiting for her to come in. Seems to be plenty of subs being built and hulls coming in from somewhere.

*Wed 15th Sept:* Colin's 22nd Birthday. Hoped last year to have been free to celebrate with him. Unloading rice and a deck cargo of bottled pineapple crush. Had a couple of bottles and plenty in the iced water--helped in to pinch quite a bit.

*Thurs 16th Sept:* On a French vessel, the "Comte de Lisle" of Marseilles. Kapok and rubber, I think from French Indo-China. There are supposed to have been some earth tremors in the last few days, and I have been here through five or six and never noticed them so I think the yarn of a good one last Saturday was all bull, but I hear a quake did quite a bit of damage.

*Fri 17th Sept:* On the same ship as on 15th, unloading ingots of aluminium. Feeling a bit off this afternoon and didn't work. Gazed up on this rotten landscape and wondered if we will be here September 1944. Hear we are to work Sunday.

*Sat 18th Sept:* Poor fool in charge today, and he let us be rooked for our times off. Coaling a ship same as coolies do. Filling up little baskets and passing them up a scaffold. Ship was loading only onions.

*Sun 19th Sept:* Quite a day. On a boat loading rice. It started to rain so we knocked off and lay around until 11.30 and shifted on to a German cargo ship loaded with sugar. I only brought

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

back about 15 pounds. The Germans are very friendly to us but share our feelings towards our hosts.

*Mon 20th Sept:* Rest day of work, cleaning, washing, scrubbing etc. We were told the place wasn't good enough when we had finished, so do it again.

*Tues 21st Sept:* On a collier today, finished about 1530. News sounds good, planning everything again. Told now the inspecting officer was very pleased with the place.

*Wed 22nd Sept:* Same boat as Sunday, loading rice. Feeling very weak and off colour.

*Thurs 23rd Sept:* On a cement boat. I drove the winch and saved my lungs from the dust below. Told by a Jap that the Italians sabotaged their boat before they left it.

*Fri 24th Sept:* Went to Toyo Steel today for the first time. Didn't do extra much work but what I did was heavy. Cleaned out a barrack room in the afternoon, from 1300 to 1500. Iron of all sorts is being collected from everywhere.

*Sat 25th Sept:* Pulled a swiftie and went to Yoshihara. Quite an easy day.-a few pots for lunch. One carriage for 150 odd men, a squeeze and how!

*Sun 26th Sept:* Rest day. Scrubbed the floor and cleaned up. Started to make a jacket from a blanket. See the Italians on OUR street.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Mon 27th Sept:* Toyo again today, searing, bagging and stacking some moulders clay. Not too hard a day thank goodness.

*Tues 28th Sept:* Toyo again. Dug a hole about eight feet across and four and a half feet deep for a vat to hold spare water in case of fire.

*Wed 29th Sept:* Graphite works, shovelling coke. Bit of a stew for lunch. Retches mine up again. Must have been off colour.

*Thurs 30th Sept:* Graphite again, same job. See them land a plane on the new aerodrome and there are several in the hangars.

*Fri 1st Oct:* Graphite. Same job till about 1400. Then about a dozen of us armed with skips toured round the works to where the carbons were being machined, and had to bring the skips back to where we started. Two loads for the afternoon.

*Sat 2nd Oct:* Sanpaku. Shovelling coal all day. I had a row with a Yank and came home feeling very tired.

(Australians drafted to Sanpaku Party found themselves taking instructions from British and American leaders of the groups on each ship. These leaders would allocate British or Americans to unload cargoes which offered the best chance of loot, while the Australians would be allocated less desirable cargoes.

The Australians became fed up with this situation and there was a confrontation between Johnny Gilmour and Bob Gardiner versus the American Shaputnick. This led to Johnny

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

and Bob being disciplined by Captain Houghton, the British officer commanding the camp. Gilmour's punishment was Showa Denki for three months, but after a week on Showa, he arranged a swap with another man on Sanpaku on the understanding they shared Johnny's loot. Shaputnick was unhappy about Gilmour being back in his party so soon, but took no action against him. J Force p.40)

*Sun 3rd Oct:* Coal as yesterday, finished the first boat by 1100 and then spent the afternoon on another. Some got a peanut boat. Diarrhoea still has me.

*Mon 4th Oct:* Yoshihara today. Carried a few tins then the rest of the day sweeping up and bagging rape seed from the bottom of the barges.

*Tues 5th Oct:* Yasme Day. Did my washing and had a sleep in the afternoon. They held a service in memory of those lost on the Lisbon Maru last year.

("The first night for the Australians in Kobe House was their opportunity to make the acquaintance of the camp's older inhabitants, who had commenced their journey from Hong Kong on the Lisbon Maru, which was torpedoed on 1/2 October, 1942...846 lives had been lost in that disaster..many had not been able to get out of the holds, many of those who managed to get out were shot by the guards.

Those who jumped into the sea were targets for machine gun and rifle fire from Japanese patrol boats which had come out to the wreck..Survivors were picked up by Chinese sampans or by some Japanese in other boats and taken to Shanghai, to

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

be brought on from there to Japan and Kobe...They had been marched through the streets of Kobe to the cricket ground starving, some practically naked, with the results of dysentery encrusted on their legs, with no permission to cleanse, even if there had been materials and water available." J Force p.16)

*Wed 6th Oct:* Yoshihara again, fooling about with bags of just rubbish and cleaning up and bagging it as well. The train we were to come home on turned up with a hot box and there was nearly an hour's wait. They emptied a train of civilians for us. It was 1820 when we got to Sanomiya.

*Thurs 7th Oct:* Toyo. Mixed and rammed portion of lining into electric furnace. Didn't overwork myself.

*Fri 8th Oct:* Picquet for hour (0230-0330), quite uneventful. Went to the Graphite works, shovelling fine coke. Didn't feel like it and did not do much. Lunch of the same foul mess as is usually supplied by them and some say it is a meal. (My goodness!) The aerodrome is very nearly completed, quite the fastest job I have seen them do.

*Sat 9th Oct:* Toyo, on wheeling barrow loads of slag away from a pile near the furnace. It rained off and on all day. Several smokos, and had one of half an hour, apart from official ones.

*Sun 10th Oct:* Day off, issued with filthy underpants and a good British woollen shirt. Rained again. Tenko inside, had some fun drying clothes.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Mon 11th Oct:* Sanpaku today, loading barley onto a ship. The Italian ship was taken from its moorings into the dock so they must be going to fix it up.

*Tues 12th Oct:* Same as yesterday, on the same ship loading bags of flour, in fifties. It was done by lunchtime, hand and body.

*Wed 13th Oct:* Toyo again. Wheeling barrow loads of scrap around for tonight's shift on the furnaces. Quite a busy day on the whole, and not much for it.

*Thurs 14th Oct:* Graphite- wheeling loads of carbons. Lunch of famous fish sausage and fish, rice. Sausage good, other otherwise.

*Fri 15th Oct:* Yoshihara today. Nearly died of shock when drafted. Found some lice in my clothing last night so I gave my clothes to Dick to boil here today. Given a fistful of peanuts cooked in coconut oil. Were they tasty!

("Dick" was L/Sgt. Richard Thomas Noble Nx35741 of 2/30 Aust. Inf. Bn. He was killed after the war when a United States Army Air Force plane crashed on Kansan Mountain, Formosa on 10th September, 1945.)

*Sat 16th Oct:* Yasme Day. It is supposed to be a day of worship to warrior gods and to the glorious dead. Morimoto inspected, that is, walked through. Acting S.M. went through our gear looking for shirts. After all, not a bad day.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sun 17th Oct:* Toyo again, on the same job carting scrap for the furnaces. I was given a couple of cigarettes. It rained off and on. I was told I was a good man by a Jap. I will have to be careful or will be permanent.

*Mon 18th Oct:* Graphite today. Worked at a kiln of carbons, fortunately not too hard. Had a fairly easy day taking by ---.

*Tues 19th Oct:* Picquet last night 1030 to 1130. Caught by the Guard Commander reading. There were some earth tremors through the night. Toyo today, and a fairly easy day.

("At night a POW picquet was required on each floor, i.e. three picquets in each of the two buildings. The picquet did an hour's duty, and one's turn came round about every ten days. The picquet was given a guard sheet and stood at the head of the stairway. The Kobe House POW number of any man leaving the floor was entered on the sheet and crossed out when he returned. The picquet would report after the shift to the guard house in Japanese." J Force p.15)

*Wed 20th Oct:* Yoshihara. Had a fair day. Loaded up with nuts and a bit of coconut lard. Got them into camp safely. Sold six and a half bowls. Bought a bowl of rice. Kept some for ourselves.

*Thurs 21st Oct:* Toyo again, not very hard, and had the best little bit of tucker they have ever given.

*Fri 22nd Oct:* Toyo again, same job. The baseball stadium has almost been stripped of all steelwork. Home a bit earlier tonight.



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sat 23rd Oct:* Think I will be going to Toyo permanently now. They gave me two packets of smokes today, one for Bill, and two tomorrow for four of us. The train was waiting for us at the station tonight.

*Sun 24th Oct:* Scrubbing etc as it is Yasme Day, cleaned shelves and scrubbed tables. Gathering of German kids on the oval in front. A pleasure to see. There were some women and men as well. Inspection by "Jack Oakey". Fairly quiet for the rest of the day.

*Mon 25th Oct:* Yoshihara. There was a search of the mob on Saturday and today. There were a few searched on the job. Looked very off, so I never tried for any oil or nuts. It rained in the afternoon and I worked in the brown rubbish again.

*Tues 26th Oct:* Toyo. Quite an easy day, carrying three or four shovels full of earth on a bag suspended from a pole. Did a bit of cooking for lunch on a slag pot.

*Wed 27th Oct:* Toyo. Carried out a bit of iron in broken castings etc. Carted a few loads of scrap and wasted time. More cooking in the same way. Wrote a letter and took no interest in it.

*Thurs 28th Oct:* Toyo. Fair day, home 1700, change of time tables which is now to continue.

*Fri 29th Oct:* Toyo. Was on Yoshihara, changed on account of cooking things and then didn't get them properly cooked. Home 1700. -- few nuts for a change.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sat 30th Oct:* Toyo. Busy day. Hand gave us some lunch and say every day in future. Issue of a tin of meat per man at 35s per tin.

*Sun 31st Oct:* Yasme day. Same as usual. Issued with Nip coats, fits like a skin, and a bum freezer.

*Mon 1st November:* Toyo. Holiday for most of the employees. We had an easy day. Home by 1700. Pinched another bottle and made wooden stoppers for them.

*Tues 2nd Nov:* Toyo. Day on chipping castings, there was quite a spill again. In memory of Melbourne Cup Day, a sweep and pseudo race was run, bets laid, and it ended quite well.

*Wed 3rd Nov:* Toyo. Rolling blocks of ingots outside. Yoshihara, had day off and came here. I often wonder what I'll be doing in a year's time, here or elsewhere.

*Thurs 4th Nov:* Toyo. Same as yesterday. Made the job last all day. Yoshihara day off again. They went to Graphite today. Home 1710. Last night I thought of Audrey and families. Wonder if I will be in their company in a year's time. Some rumour of there having been some men from Korea here today. The days are short and getting very cold.

*Fri 5th Nov:* Toyo. Good day. Same work as last two days. Rumours of Red Cross stuff having come in tonight. Bought tea for 1-20. Note Book 50 Yen-- for 40 cigarettes. Have been cooking every day at work.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sat 6th Nov:* Been spelling Toya. It's Toia. Fair day fooling about. Had a falling out with a chap put to work with Bill and I. So I worked on my own. Cooking is a success. Pie made from a piece of bread. Decided with others to form a ring to combat the growing prices of foodstuffs.

*Sun 7th Nov:* Yasme day. Picquet from 0430-0530. Should have been on from -- only one of the other sections pulled out last night. This looking for foodstuffs at reasonable prices is getting me down. Sneaked in a hot bath while others were at lunch. Everything is a half hour early tonight, tea 1730, Tenko 1900. Lights out 20.00. Changed at 1830, back to usual time. Oh well! Jap fashion.

**(There is a gap in Edgar's diary between 7th November 1943 and 11th June, 1944. Edgar makes no comment on this. Obviously one of his notebooks was lost. I have supplemented the diary by extracting snippets from "The Story of J Force" p.50-65)**

14th Nov: Red Cross parcels and extra rations were delivered to the camp. The men learned that the POW Staff claimed a 20% levy, and that the issue of parcels then provided 1 parcel for 9.5 men, 1 parcel for 2 officers, and 1 parcel for 5 camp staff. The Australian officers objected to the allocations, but the office (British and American staffed) would not alter the distributions. The Australian officers then voluntarily put their share in with the men, enabling the allocation to be 1 parcel to 9 men, and they joined in with one of the groups of nine.

The camp was informed that the Pope had instructed the Papal representative in Japan to donate a sum of money to

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

procure foodstuffs for the Ps.O.W. The money was used to buy clothes and on 19th December, 1943 the men were issued with a padded green coat and a pair of trousers.

This green outfit was to be worn only on Yasme days. It was handed in to the store when the warm weather came and was re-issued next winter as work clothes.

18th December 1943: Private Ernest W. Phillips Nx37552, 2/30 Bn. died of a fever following continued stomach trouble.

20th Dec: Captain Houghton, the English officer commanding the Ps.O.W. went to Osaka representing the camp at a ceremony for the last rites of Ps.O.W. who had died during the previous six months. On his return he reported that the service was conducted by Japanese Catholic clergy. "Ave Maria" was sung. There were approximately 200 people present.

22nd Dec: 20 men from Sanpaku were detailed to go to Takahama. They were warned against looting, as a whole section of the men at the Kamagumi job had been caught with sugar the night before. Two men however tried to run the gauntlet with oval half-pound tins of herrings in tomato sauce. They were caught in the search on the job, had the fish taken off them, and were slapped by the Camp guard. On their return to Kobe House they were punished by the Sgt. Major and confined to the lock-up, with six men from their sections having to mount guard over them one at a time, in order to deter anyone else.

Christmas Day 1943: Church service was held at 1100hrs. The men were issued with a second pair of underpants and a

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

winter undershirt. A concert was held at 1330 and again at 1600 in each of the houses in turn, so all could see it. Dick Noble gave mouth organ recitals.

One act in the concert: "Demonstration of a work party and the punishment meted out to its three leaders by the Jap guards" was strongly disapproved of by the Nips. Three men were taken to the guard-house and forced to stay in the lock-up for the night.

Captain Boyce's notes for January 1944: "Records of twelve months ago showed an alarming incidence and death rate among the British as the winter progressed and with the AIF having three deaths in the first month of winter, our outlook was truly alarming. Chest conditions increased in number but the general health of the Australians improved with the cold weather while that of the British depreciated..Small charcoal fires were allowed in the Barracks and in the Hospital and they were a boon for brewing fresh tea and for cooking up the cold tinned meats of the Red Cross parcels..Better cooperation from the Nip staff in taking more notice of my judgement re sickness of prisoners..Medicines and vitamin supply better, and troops responding physically and mentally to new Red Cross parcel food."

7th Jan, 1944: It is the opinion on all jobs that the Japanese workmen now have no interest in their work. Looting is going on, even by police and officials as well as coolies.

16th Jan: A conference was held of the officers and one representative for each of the Australian, English and American soldiers, with Colonel Morata, Commander of all

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

POW camps in the Osaka region, plus interpreter. The Nips were seeking opinions on the aims of the Allies, the Japanese war effort, and the effort of the men in the factories as well as at the front.

17th Jan: Other men were told they had been selected for a similar conference and to hold themselves in readiness. Announcements were made that the Nips wanted PsOW to submit written advice on the names of anyone whose near relatives were politicians in Australia. They were also seeking Australians who had a knowledge of the north-west coast of Western Australia.

The next day there was another questionnaire seeking reports from men who had witnessed men being killed. They wanted to know their relatives, next of kin, educational standards, medical troubles, and liking for tobacco, beer, reading and athletics.

The men were getting very suspicious of the Japanese motives in asking for all this information.

On 1st March, someone recorded: "Feel very tired, tired of it all, the war, Japanese, petty squabbles, tempers, greed, theft and so on."

15th March: Heaviest fall of snow since J Force arrived in Japan.

Captain Boyce noted in April: "American Red Cross medical relief supplies distributed by the Nips, invaluable supply of vitamins of all kinds, plus the SULPHA series of guanidine,

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

diazine, thiazole and sulphanilimide. No further worries with beri beri or pneumonia..

Very little serious illness and sick parades smaller; troops have adapted well, have made the most of their jobs, have learned to loot and scrounge, and can out-trade the British who played havoc with them earlier."

Captain Boyce's notes for May, 1944: "Delightful weather, warm days and cool nights requiring two blankets. Troops healthy, settled and contented. Sugar traded outside for daily paper mostly Nippon Times or Mainichi in English, sometimes Nipponese paper, but some can translate; news percolates through the camp and all are aware of the progress of the war, deducting propaganda and exaggeration."

### **Edgar's notes resume:**

*Sun 11th June, 1944:* Sanpaku today. Party of 200 men. Thirty on our old friend the "Comte de Lisle", carrying a cargo of rubber. Change from Toyo but I would soon be sick of it. Electric winches not too good so had an easy day.

*Mon 12th June:* We were issued with letters tonight. Back at Toyo and had an easy day. Pimple in right nostril making me savage. John Byrnes was on the same job as yesterday. Winches gave out properly.

*Tues 13th June:* Very little work as the furnace is out of commission. News says capture of Cherbourg. Japs say the negligence of the Germans allowed the Allied landing in

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

France. The escalator at the station is being ripped out for iron scrap.

*Wed 14th June:* Easy day. Freddo and I amused ourselves on various small jobs. (Probably F.F. Sparks from the 2/10 Artillery, Queensland regiment.)

*Thurs 15th June:* Sanpaku again, on pig iron. End of first year in this hole. Air raid practice drill everywhere. Iron shutters closed, place like an oven.

*Fri 16th June:* No more work until further notice, announced but countermanded ten minutes later. Sanpaku again and on pig iron again. There is more than air raid practice; the gun crews etc and spotters are all on alert.

*Sat 17th June:* Toyo scared stiff, all in one mob, seven on a cart. Hardly any work done. Came home to hear Moji was bombed, so the scare is explained.

*Sun 18th June:* Yasmé day. Morimoto inspected and check of pillows and covers. Sing Song which fell flat. Half rations for lunch. (Pillows were used to hide loot)

*Mon 19th June:* Toyo day off. Dug an air raid shelter so guess its size. Others did nothing much. Our interpreter, Cpl. Hoblett F. of U.S. Marines was taken from us to Tokyo.

*Tues 20th June:* Sanpaku again, pig iron. All weights and sizes. Fair lunch. Case of biscuits found on board. It rained at 1500 so I knocked off.



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Wed 21st June:* Must be the longest day of the year. At Showa Denki. Not much of a feed, home early. Morimoto (camp commandant) said goodbye to us, transferred to Osaka. Hope he remembers us, as it is H.Q.

*Thurs 22nd June:* Toyo. Busy as blue arse fly. No one looking after my interests and the place upside down. All stuff run out. Fantastic news.

(John Byrnes explained in his letter to Edgar's mother on 12th November, 1945: "Edgar was working at the Toyo steel works at Nishinomiya. His chief racket was washing, having established for himself a miniature steam laundry, doing the washing for some of our lads and charging them peanuts, beans, rice, cigarettes etc.")

*Fri 23rd June:* Easy day. To be 300 for Sanpaku tomorrow. 15 for Toyo. I had a row with John Byrnes. My fault in one way. But he said a few things I think poorly of as I think I have been more than fair to him.

(John Byrnes told me on 30th August 1988 that this entry in Edgar's diary relates to an incident where Edgar had been accused by Sergeant Ian Doherty of stealing something from a fellow prisoner. John remembers there was some confusion and it is probable that Edgar may have used something which he considered was his.

However, Edgar became very despondent about this accusation which he considered unjust, and seemed to "let himself go". John remembers speaking strongly to Edgar about how much he had let his self-esteem slip.)

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sat 24th June:* 300 was right. Self on barley and rice. Loaded and back in by 1730hrs. Cow of a mate to work with, nearly dead.

(They needed extra men because shipping was being directed to Kobe rather than Tokyo. J Force p.66)

*Sun 25th June:* Worked slowly, home early. Freddo pleased to see me. Home 1645. Town of Kobe is dead, very few about. 300 at Sanpaku again, and 20 at Toyo.

*Mon 26th June:* Good day. 32 men. Bottom out of Sanpaku. 30 men, home about 1700. Rained like fun and first thunder storm. Acquired this book tonight- 60 yen.

(The reason the Sanpaku party was reduced was said to be because of lack of barges, but other reports said reservist soldiers had been called in to labour on the ships.)

*Tues 27th June:* Draper gave this one today. Sad tale of a lady's experiences: "I met him..In meeting him I liked him..In liking him I let him..In letting him I lost him..So bugger him!" (Cpl. Arthur M. Draper Wx7777, 2/4 MG Bn.)

It rained this morning. So no work; lying about all day. Concert on the top floor this afternoon, rain off and on all day. Poor lunch, but tea wasn't too bad. I feel full, anyway. Said to be 1,000 letters in camp. I hope there's some for me. All agreed more than rain was the reason for no work, as we have been out in heavier.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Wed 28th June:* Came home to two more letters, March and May, 1943. Grandpa and Deafie are dead, I am sorry to hear. The passing of the old pioneers. Easy day, and home early.

*Thurs 29th June:* John Byrnes came over from the hospital to see me this evening. Exchanged letters. Busiest day at Toyo for a long time (for me). In at 1700. 200 for Sanpaku again, and same tomorrow.

*Fri 30th June:* Change today. First trip to Mitsubishi. Wheeling trucks of beans. Fortunately missed lumping leather. Loaded up with sugar to come in. Convoy arrived in safety. Very modern British or American building. But in Nip hands is not worked properly.

*Sat 1st July:* So we have lived six months of this year, and I hope to live the rest. The time has gone quickly anyway. Arranged for a month at Mitsubishi with "Duke" Craig. He is going to Toyo in my place. (Edwin J. Craig Vx47851, 4 Anti Tk.Gnr.)

*Sun 2nd July:* Shovelled out an air raid shelter. It kept falling in, to our annoyance. Carted 900 bricks for it. Knocked off at 1500, in Kobe 1600. Pair of toe caps for Ian, and a bag stabber for myself.

*Mon 3rd July:* First day of month's change at "Dai Itchi Soko". Wheeled 5 "cassars" of rubber. Got some sugar. Generally a profitable day. Hope for great things tomorrow 4th, Yanks' great national day. New commandant.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Tues 4th July:* Well, something happened somewhere today. The siren went for the second time since our arrival in Japan, at 0900. We were hustled into our underground mess hut and stayed for two hours. They are all as jumpy as cats. The new commandant begins well. The work parties were gone through thoroughly. Many captures and beltings. I lost my loot too on the job, but wasn't caught. Tomatoes for tea tonight.

*Wed 5th July:* Five balloons up all last night. Five for Kobe. "what rot". Quite a raid is being made on looting, and beltings are the order of the day. See a new kind of vehicle on the docks. Tracks with huge rubber cushions on the treads. Busy day, loading beans. It rained and I was on pig iron. Lunch, then cotton for weaving, beans and iron to finish up.

*Thurs 6th July:* Same work as yesterday. They are out to stop looting alright. Some of the parties had to undress and take off their boots. My night's supply of sugar was in my boots, so here's off it for a few days.

*Fri 7th July:* Captain Houghton of the Camp Office says the searching will get hotter, and give it a blow for ten days or so. They seem to be after matches and papers particularly, as we can get the news, which is good tonight, if it's true. On pig iron today, up to 1500hrs, and finished on rubber. I had an open go on loot but didn't touch it.

*Sat 8th July:* The sirens went at 01.00 this morning. I just went to sleep again after wishing good luck to the planes. Good quiet day. Rubber, spinning cotton, and pig iron, rubber and caustic soda. I feel tired and hope to sleep. Harpooned again, YMO search and I'm not loaded. Yasmé tomorrow, and I need

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

it. Captain Boyce questioned me re my medical history in Malaya.

**(Captain Boyce's notes from that interview:**

**L.E.G. WILKIE Private**

During P.O.W. at Changi escaped to mainland; captured and in Kuala Lumpur prison camp, got D.D. scrotal dermatitis, neuritic beriberi with anaesthesia of the feet, legs and hands, paresis of the soft palate and vocal cords, retrobulbar neuritis and nearly blind for 3 months, had diplopia with recovery of vision, brought to Changi in Oct. 1942.

1943..Japan..health good at first, active and working.

1944..Admitted camp hospital 4th-8th May- influenza." )

*Sun 9th July:* It wasn't too bad a day. Inspection on the road at 0900, in by 1000. Cleaned up, snoozed and lay about. Finished the last of the sugar reserve. Will have to run the blockade. I have a boil on the right hand, and it is very painful.

*Mon 10th July:* Went on Sanpaku today. Landed a coal boat. Had the boil lanced tonight. Cleared out a lot of stuff. Quite a gallery to view all the lancing (4 or 5). Brought in the most forbidden fruit of all, a newspaper, meaning a frightful hiding and in the black hole for 14 days if caught.

(Dr.Boyce reported there were a lot of cases of boils, carbuncles, abscesses and pustular degeneration of axillary lymph glands at this time. "All cuts and abrasions show an indolence due to malnutrition and take months to heal with an exuberance of heaped up scar tissue at the abscess margins" J Force p.75)

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Tues 11th July:* Back to Mitsubishi today. Sent off Chinchona bark dust, rubber, pig iron, stacked beans. About 8 ounces of sugar in the boot for breakfast. Searches are still strict as to body etc.

*Wed 12th July:* Did as little as possible. Last of the beans came in, I believe. The place will fall down! We knocked off at 1630 and came home. Unheard of from -- for months. Inside here, it is too hot to live. News is supposed to be good.

*Thurs 13th July:* Started lumping cases of money. Paper for Java and Malaya. Then on the motor for lifting sacks onto stack. Wheeled rubber this afternoon, and was home early.

*Fri 14th July:* Death of another Australian today at 0800. Private MacPhillips. This is the seventh, I think. We have been having a quiet time on jobs. Home early is the order of the day.

(Pte. Frederick S. McPhillips NX37578 of 2/30 Bn. died at 0800 hrs of a "cerebral haemorrhage following on yellow jaundice, dysentery and beri-beri" J Force p.70)

*Sat 15th July:* On pig iron today. I have swiped three large bags of silk. It is parked in the open. They are sixty inches by fifty inches. Have pyjamas and a shirt made from them. Knocked off at 1600 and some swam in the harbour. Home for inoculation about 1640. The new pay sergeant is "tenko" officer. The fattest Jap I have seen and only about five feet high.

*Sun 16th July:* Feeling very off with the "back door trots"- fifteen times before lunch. Had the afternoon off. The rest

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

knocked off at 1430 and home by 1600. Leave Mitsubishi for Toyo today.

*Mon 17th July:* Very easy day at Toyo. It was very hot and I felt none the best. This food is getting worse; soon I won't be able to eat any. To our delight, we came home to find "Darkie" and "Horse Face" had returned. They also made no secret of their feelings. Henry our interpreter had gone. Clears the camp of the greatest menace we have ever had.

("Henry" was a Japanese interpreter. He was transferred to Notogawa Camp. "Darkie" Tanaka was a Japanese guard, previously a front-line soldier who showed a little more respect for the Australians than the other guards, such as Fishface, Paleface, Horseface, Betty Boop, The Boy Wonder, Mickey Rooney, Henry, Chinless Wonder and Jack Oakey. J Force p.17)

*Tues 18th July:* Back on the old job on mixer. Dennis insisted on my going to it. I suggested two of the sick men. Nothing doing. 14.40 knock off as usual. Lay in the mess hut for an hour, home 16.40. (Dennis was "Dennis the Menace", a Japanese Hancho (foreman) from Toyo Steel)

*Wed 19th July:* On the mixer by myself. Felt very off colour. I saw the Doctor on coming home, temperature 101.3. He just said, "See me at 0900 tomorrow." So stay in is in the wind. Orders from Kobe House to Toyo workers- Work faster on account of shorter hours. No increase in food quality or quantity though. The first edible stew for months tonight: tomatoes, onions, spuds, pumpkin, and it was delicious.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Thurs 20th July:* Stew this morning of rotten fish. I believe the cooks were belted for refusing to cook it. The Doctor said I have a slight touch of pleurisy today so be careful. I hoped to go looting tomorrow but no luck. Will never get these bags made up.

*Fri 21st July:* Day in. The food is even more vile than ever. On the playing field opposite, training is on. The screaming and yelling is maddening. It was once remarked to me "As long as there is smoke, dust, confusion, noise and Nips everywhere in each other's road, then there is work being done." The news says there is a change of Tojo's Cabinet and formation of another under General Itu or some such man.



*Sat 22nd July:* Yasme Day. Quiet, all seem worn out, There was a Jap Roman Catholic priest in today. Feelings not so good I fear. I suppose it is as translated by Osaka. Came into hospital at 1500hrs. Temperature 102.8

(This was the first of promised regular monthly visits by the Roman Catholic priest. At the beginning of the Mass, the guards became upset when the priest used some Latin. After some time he was allowed to continue. At the conclusion of his service he spoke in English to wish the men a safe, happy and early reunion with their families. The guards apparently over-



*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

reacted to this and loud arguments followed. The priest never returned. (J Force p.72)

*Sun 23rd July:* Quiet day. Temperature 102.4 at 1600. These two months July and August must be my months for getting ill. Rumours of a change in the Jap Cabinet. Hope they see the light.

*Mon 24th July:* Another day nearer to Christmas anyway if nothing else. Doesn't seem to be anything about. Three poor devils were caught tonight. Two were belted and let off at 2000, but "pineapple" had to stand in front of the Guard Room all night as this is the second time he was caught by fiend searching "Sm". ("Pineapple" Private William J. Trappe from 2/26 Bn. was a little nuggety Queenslander who worked as a circus hand for Bullen Brothers before and after the war.)

*Tues 25th July:* General search this afternoon. Even trousers. Things are getting too hot to handle. This mad commandant is throwing himself about a bit. A lance corporal is as --as one of our generals.

(Discipline in the Imperial Japanese Army at that time depended on the right of a soldier to bash another soldier of inferior rank, who did not have the right of resistance. Under martial law, ordinary soldiers appeared to have the right to bash civilians and prisoners of war. When the Australians first arrived in Japan, the Army was in charge of the country, and a Japanese sailor who walked through the lines of prisoners of war would be bashed by the guards.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Later, about nine months before the surrender, the Navy was in charge, and then anyone wearing a naval uniform could walk through the lines with impunity. However, the Air Force was never in charge, and Air Force servicemen were often beaten up by civilians and wharf labourers because they were unable to stop the high-flying American bombers. (General discussion J Force reunion 6th April, 88)

*Wed 26th July:* Two patients from here were taken to this hospital up on the hills. A truck load of chaps from the other camp went up too.

*Thurs 27th July:* Quiet day. A couple went out and were replaced. John Byrnes is very cheerful, says I will be here quite a while and in camp a lot longer.

*Fri 28th July:* Found an article in an old "Nautical Mag" re the placing for the "Queen Mary". No name is mentioned but size, tonnage, etc point to it. It has been a cool day.

*Sat 29th July:* Up for a walk around this morning. I felt very weak and was glad to be down again. During the 1600 sick parade there was quite a good earthquake. It sounded like a dull explosion at first, the building seemed to rise suddenly and drop back with a bang. I really thought it was a bomb for a minute.

(Down on the docks, the roof of a shed in which one gang was working rippled from corner to corner and a dockside crane set on a concrete base swayed from side to side. (J Force p.74)

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sun 30th July:* I found another paragraph in the "Nautical Mag" re Grace Darling. The boat in which she and her father rescued the survivors of the "Forfarshire" in 1838 was presented to R.N.L.I. in 1913 and was at Cullercoats but is now at Bamburg where she is buried, and Farnel Island, and Longstone Lighthouse are about four miles to sea from Bamburg. Feeling all right. Hope to get up soon. News is good, we hear.

*Mon 31st July:* Nice doings. One lad brought in this morning had been kicked in the testicles by our darling Chinless. The food isn't keeping me alive here anyway. It's the multiple vitamin tablets I'm getting. Only five left in hospital this evening. It will fill up tomorrow I suppose.

(The lad brought into hospital was John Gilmour, a soldier from West Australia. At the time of writing, John Gilmour is the fastest veteran distance runner in the world. Supremely physically fit, apart from poor vision as a result of optic nerve degeneration from vitamin deficiency as a prisoner of war, at 69 years of age John looks like a man in his mid 50s. I met him and his wife Alma at a small reunion of some J Force members in Brisbane on 6th April, 1988, arranged to take advantage of John's competing in the Australian Veterans Championships being held in Brisbane.

John arrived at the reunion with several gold medals. I gather he has held the world record in every event from 800 metres to the marathon in the five year age brackets. Since the age of 52 years, he has been beaten on the track only three times and only three times in the road world titles. At the age of 56, John was West Australian Sportsman of the Year. He has an Order

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

of Australia medal, and won an Advance Australia award in 1987.

John wrote to me later, after reading Edgar's diary: "I dreaded getting Edgar's complaint; it was the biggest killer in Japan. On page 121 of your book, I am the person the Chinless Wonder laid out. As Edgar said in his diary, there were only five in the hospital at the time. Edgar would have remembered the little Japanese guard called Nelson who came up just after I was admitted and before the parties took off for work. He gave me a packet of cigarettes. Then on return from Kobe House after work again he came up and dished out another packet to the patients and staff who wanted a smoke.

Nelson gave me a fair go a number of times. His type was very hard to find, but he just took a liking to me. When I worked at the graphite factory and he was guard, he gave me his lunch which had been supplied by the firm, then got on the bicycle supplied for his use and rode to the Toya steel or Yoshihara oil factory and had his lunch there.

Nelson had one eye and an artificial arm. We had to march about a mile from the train to the factory, and he used to get me to carry his rifle. I don't know what would have happened to him if he he'd been caught, so in return he used to give me his lunch."

In the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2005 edition of Benjo News J Force Kobe House Hakensho, (vol 2, No 38) Alex Dandie has a letter from John Gilmour about John's retirement from athletic competition. John included in his letter an official entry form for the 2005 Perth Mile Festival offering some highlights including "One of

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

the world's greatest ever Masters runners, Mr John Gilmour, will have a special tribute during the evening as he announces his retirement and we may even be able to get him to slip on the shoes one last time at 86 years of age!"

*Tues 1st August:* Quiet day. Had a hair cut. Rumours of the fall of Warsaw. Tommy lad brought home about 1400 with his big toe crushed. Only six in hospital, the least there has been for a long while.

*Wed 2nd August:* I had 750ccs drawn off from the chest cavity this morning. The instruments were hardly as described in the medical books I have seen. They were pleased with the result, said there was no pus in the fluid. I dozed all day. Hear the Allies made a further advance in Europe.

*Thurs 3rd August:* The new commandant loves throwing his weight about. Work parties must be away by 0700 now. He changed some of the NCOs in charge of jobs and says the men aren't working fast enough. Things must be bad. John Byrnes gave me an injection at 1300, and couldn't get the needle into my arm. Supposed to be sharp, too. He finally speared me. I feel fairly well, anyway.

("A quarrel has arisen with the office over the allocation of Australian and British for the factory jobs. It had been supposed that one from each of 18 jobs, plus another one from 12 of those jobs was to be the arrangement for the gang to go to Showa Denki for one month. Instead the 30 men had been made up of two Greeks and 28 Australians. Captain Houghton had been trying to work British warrant officers in charge of

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Australian jobs on the argument that they were British soldiers and hence superior to the 'colonials'." J Force p.74)

*Fri 4th Aug 1944:* Well, it's thirty years since the last war was begun. I hope it is the last year of this war. It would be easier to be fighting than a prisoner of war. This evening, Captain Boyce went off to a chin wag in the office and as he was dining out, he took his bowls and cutlery. We were talking here at 1900 when sirens blew. Hope they got it in the neck wherever it was.

*Sat 5th Aug:* Balloons were up over the dockyard this morning at 0500. Claimed by Nips to be "practice", only it seems to be Moji again. The wind has swung round and is from the north and blowing like hell. Yasmé tomorrow. Fourteen days work on end, been in here since the last one.

*Sun 6th Aug:* Couldn't miss the inspection for the world's yellow bastards. Rev. 0600 and inspection 0800. Fortunately it was over quickly. Seem to have left the men alone today. I had a couple of boys up to see me. Sultry this afternoon, and overcast now. The wind is rising and it looks as if it is going to be a wild night. All seem to think next month will be the end of the European War.

*Mon 7th Aug:* Rain and hurricane all night. The wind fell at dawn but it rained all day and none went out to work. Two days off in succession is good but when will be the next spell? No news of course as no paper brought in.

*Tues 8th Aug:* Flag day again. It has been fine, so all the men worked. It showered a bit in the afternoon, but not much. Had the best stew tonight for months. I got a bone with at least

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

three ounces of meat and gristle on it. I could hear a row from the ship yards clearly today. Another change of wind.

*Wed 9th Aug:* It rained heavily off and on all day. The news brought in from two jobs is identical- Russians on the German border. I am to go to the special hospital in a couple of days' time. It is supposed to have been an American school and I believe is a nice building.

*Thurs 10th Aug:* Sirens went at 0800. All looked at one another and watched the guns we could see, but nothing happened, so we said it was practice again. They went again at 1200. I had my clothes taken out and washed. Packed all my stuff in a kit bag and I got one of the boys to shove it about twenty feet in under the beds.

*Fri 11th Aug:* The alert sirens went at midnight and at 0200 there were aircraft in the vicinity. The steel doors on both buildings were bolted and locked, and there were two guards at each. Two guards on our hospital landing and thousands in the streets outside. The boys told me the trenches in the playing field were packed with civilians. At 0300 the all-clear went, but we can't get any news of where the raid was. It must have been close. No more about my shifting.

*Sat 12th Aug:* Very quiet day, and heard I am to shift on the morning of 15th. No news is being given out, so we imagine that the news must be of the best. Hear we will get some from the English language paper which is all rot and many days old.

*Sun 13th Aug:* Nothing doing, quiet all day. I went to our floor and was done for the rest of the day. Hope we don't have to

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

live in Japan much longer. I will need an extra bag for all the stuff I'm expected to carry for all sorts of pigs who don't bother to say good day any other time for their mates at hospital.

*Mon 14th Aug:* A truck was here this afternoon I'm told, and left a few private parcels and some other stuff. Also said to have had Red Cross boxes on board for the hospital where I'm going. Dr.Boyce gave me ten yen and said I may need it. John Byrnes has shoved some things in my pack.

*Tues 15th Aug:* Brought off to hospital on a hand truck and it was a rotten ride. Aspiration was performed again this afternoon. The Nips grabbed the needles, scissors and razor blades and I only showed one blade and kept the other two good ones.

(This was Surgeon Commander Paige's hospital which had been established in a former school in the foothills at the back of the city of Kobe.)

*Sun 20th Aug:* A band came up from Kobe House and the hospital enjoyed it. I had to plant this book in the roof in case of a search, and haven't been allowed to leave my bed. I have been fairly comfortable. One Red Cross parcel to three on 17th.

*Tues 22nd Aug:* Yesterday I was drained again and went to fluoroscope last night. I don't feel too bad but high temperatures seem to be the trouble.

*Thurs 24th Aug:* Was to have been tapped today but they must have forgotten.



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Sat 26th Aug:* John Byrnes, Paddy Flynn and Paddy Kavanagh brought up a suspected appendix case. I was tapped today- 650ccs again.

(Petty Officer Patrick J. O'Flynn, Royal Navy from Hong Kong. He was in charge of the Regimental Aid Post and the Hospital in Kobe House before Captain Boyce arrived. He died in 1967. He and his wife had the licence for a hotel in Ballycotton, County Cork, Ireland. "Paddy" is Pte. Reg. Kavanagh Nx43462, 10AGH, one of the Australian medical orderlies. He died a few years after the war.)

*Sun 27th Aug:* Dr. Wilson came up from Kobe House to collect a patient and tried to see me. (Dr. Wilson was the Air Force Medical Officer).

*Wed 30th Aug:* Been keeping going. Temperatures seem to be falling to about normal. Heard last night that for the first week or ten days I wasn't expected to live. Quite nice when you know!

*Thurs 31st Aug:* They took another 800ccs from me this afternoon. Some men off a ship bringing prisoners of war from Singapore came -- .Said they were --. Struck submarines and a typhoon, and had a rough time in all.

*Sun 3rd Sept:* Anniversary of the fifth year of the war. Hope they have had enough. We have, as prisoners of war. My doctor hasn't been to see me since Thursday. He is in bed himself. I seem to be alright myself. There is a bum sing-song below and a Roman Catholic service on at the moment. Lovely, isn't it?

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Thurs 7th Sept:* I have had a quiet time for a few days. All the doctors have been crook. Dr. Endorff came to see me one night, looking like a scarecrow. Last night he was looking better. There was a death in the lower ward yesterday and four orderlies had to take him to the Crematorium today on a hand cart. Horrible thought. O nice people the Japanese, so kind and cultured. Yeah. The News says the Allies occupy all France and at the moment are five miles from Brussels. Wallace, Vice President of the U.S.A. thinks they will finish Europe this month.

*Sun 10th Sept:* Eight dysentery patients came in to this ward yesterday. Dr. Endorff wasn't pleased with me either. My chest didn't sound right or something. Last year in September I was on a ship and I wondered as I looked up this way would we be here this year? Now I can look down from here on the harbour and wonder if we will be here next September. One thing, there are very few ships now.

*Wed 13th Sept:* These eight men from Thailand tell some harrowing stories of cruelty, murder and starvation on the railway that was being built. The deaths of white prisoners must be over 2,500 and that of coolies (Chinese, Tamils, and Malays) at least three or four times that figure. A working party of five come up from Kobe House every day now, and we hear spots of news. Hopes are that the European War will be over this month.

*Mon 18th Sept:* No Yasme day yesterday. We had it today to correspond with Kobe House. The band came up and gave us an hour or two of music and turns. I wasn't allowed over but I could hear the music. Dick came and had a yarn, and I spoke

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

to Reg and Lofty for a few minutes. We are supposed to hold France, Holland and Belgium, and to have pierced the Siegfried Line in seven places and to be fifteen miles from Cologne. An American died in our ward at 12.25 today. He was a TB case, and was expected to go, for days.

*Sun 24th Sept:* This week has been very quiet and nothing of importance has cropped up. Two new chaps came into the ward. The news has been verified from three camps, but no fresh news has come in yet. Hope to get some tomorrow as the cooks go to Kobe House. A cigarette famine is on and if I only had a few I could buy all sorts of stuff I want. The last few nights have turned cold and warn us that winter is coming. Seems as if it will be a long and hard one. I am up and poking about the ward and doing odd jobs, but should be in bed. Poor old Doctor imagines I stay in like a good boy. The rations are short but keep us going if we don't have to work. Well, it may not be long to our own food, and I hope never to see rice as a food again. Good for fowls and pigs. Here, men come from the camps in the area, and it is an education to hear how they have been treated and fed. This bloody nation should be wiped out.

*Mon 25th Sept:* Moved down from 3A to 3. Now I can growl about short food. Upstairs DO get a little more. Not so struck with my companions. No news of any sort.

*Sun 1st Oct:* There is no news at all now, seems to be off properly. The boys who went to Kobe House weren't allowed inside or to speak to anyone.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Tues 3rd Oct:* We had a clean up and an inspection by Dr.Ohashi. There's to be an inspection tomorrow.

*Wed 4th Oct:* The inspection went off to form. The canteen is full of goods and there's none for us. The Red Cross representative was told and seemed to be awake to the blind. Surprise was expressed at not receiving Red Cross goods. Still I suppose there won't be anything done.

*Fri 6th Oct:* The days have changed for the worst. There's hardly any rice for breakfast, and it is growing colder fast. I have not seen the sun for days. Lice and bugs abound. (Captain Boyce's notes for October/November 1944: "Rations even lower; they are mainly rice and vegetable tops, so bad in fact that troops are asking not to be kept in when they are too ill to work, because they can get decent food on their jobs. The Nip psychological attitude towards food and work is peculiar. By their ruling, as soon as a man is unfit for work from any cause whatever, he is supposed to go on half rations.

They would let a man with a broken leg or a patient with pneumonia die of starvation, with no chance of getting better on half an already meagre ration, rather than do as we would and feed these cases well so as to get them better quicker and fit for work again. I understand this rule holds for most of the camps. At Kobe House we obviated the rule and gave our sick men extra food at the expense of the commonwealth." J Force p.82. Of course at this time Edgar wasn't in Kobe House. He was in the Kobe P.O.W. Hospital)

*Sun 8th Oct:* It blew like the devil yesterday with rain, and it was cold. It finished off about 0100. Those who know, say it

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

was the end of a typhoon. There were no lights from 1700 yesterday, so the lines must be down. Dull and overcast this morning. The water has been cut off and the cooks are carrying it from a pump about half a mile down the hill. The power came on about 1400.

*Mon 9th Oct:* The water is on again. We had to postpone baths yesterday, as there wasn't any to go through the boiler. It was sunny for a while, but clouded up at lunch time. There has been no news for weeks, so hope for the best.

*Sun 15th Oct:* Quiet week, and no news except the cooks say Kobe House rations are down to what they were when they started two years ago, so there will be a lot of sick men this winter, which has started already. I was X-rayed last night and Dr. Endorff didn't seem to like what he saw in the chest, and I understand I will be here for some time yet. Rations here are a bit better but still far from enough.

*Wed 18th Oct:* I haven't felt too well in the last few days. It rained all day yesterday, so I spent the day in bed. Indigestion has me in its grip again. I woke in the night and my pyjamas were saturated, and I had to change. I had a hot bath day again. It's one pleasure we have.

*Sun 22nd Oct:* Quiet day. On X-ray last night, and all seemed to be very interested. Things are very quiet on the harbour, and we hear the Nips don't like our way of conducting a war.

*Sun 29th Oct:* Good steady week, no upsets or anything like that. My temperature has been high, so back in bed again. A few days of wind and rain, making the place very bleak.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Mon 30th Oct:* Party here from Kobe today. Saw four, and had a yarn to some. Hope they will be up tomorrow, and there is a concert on 5th November. X-rayed onto plates twice today. I hope to be in for Christmas.

*Tues 31st Oct:* The boys were up again from Kobe House. Tin of herrings and socks from Lefty Croft, salt and pepper from others. Say they will be up for the concert on 7th November. News is good, we are told. (Alex. "Lefty" Croft Vx54874, 4 Anti Tk. Gnr.)

*Sun 5th Nov:* Quiet week. Baths only one per week now. Some went on draft yesterday. We hear now the concert will be on 23rd, not on 7th.

*Tues 7th Nov:* Melbourne Cup Day at home. Presidential elections in America. So it will be interesting to hear what goes on in the world. The nights are very cold now, and winter looks as if it will be severe.

*Sun 12th Nov:* Things are about the same. The cold is making everyone hungry. Rumours of Red Cross parcels and stuff in Kobe. To be inspected by General in command of all prisoners of war in Japan, on Saturday.

*Sun 19th Nov:* Inspection went off without a hitch yesterday, and to our delight, 108 boxes of four parcels each- 432 parcels, came in today. Prayers for an issue within a day or two.

*Wed 22nd Nov:* Now no issue of parcels until Christmas. Some at Kobe House today, and they may land up here tomorrow. I

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

might go back to camp early in December. Letter from Mother  
15th Nov 43.

*Sun 26th Nov:* Parcel issue on 1st now. The band did not come up on 23rd either. Two boys from Kobe House were in yesterday and said they were given no reason, just that it is off. News is supposed to be that we will be out mid 1945. Hope so. Some out on 30th, and I might go by 10th Dec.

*Tues 28th Nov:* Boys from Kobe House up here to make a recording for broadcast. Not allowed to speak to them. Others from Kawasaki for the same purpose. Kobe House chaps shut up in the Morgue compound.

("Twenty-one Americans and eleven Australians, that is, all the Americans and all the Australian officers and some Australian NCOs were taken to the Kobe P.O.W. Hospital during the morning for the purpose of making recordings of Christmas messages to their families at home for a broadcast, so that they might be sent before Christmas. A stereotyped draft of what might be said in their broadcast message was given to the men by the interpreter.

Major Campbell told the interpreter that Australian Army Regulations forbade Australians to broadcast, and ordered the Australians not to do so, but they could write a message for Christmas for broadcasting by the Japanese, on the lines of the Christmas 1942 message from Changi as a guide.

However the interpreter threatened cancellation of mail both to and from the Australians. In order to obviate such action, Major Campbell ordered the NCOs to broadcast, but all

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

officers would not do so. His order and the duress by the Nips covered any possible action for breach of Army Regulations." J Force p.87)

*Wed 29th Nov:* Parcels today, one each. No/10. Not as good as ones we have had before, but Oh such a change!

*Thurs 7th Dec:* Quite an earthquake this afternoon at 1500hrs. It lasted a couple of minutes, but was not severe. Continuous rocking of everything.

*Fri 8th Dec:* Three years of war with this brute. Flags out and an air raid warning.

*Sun 10th Dec:* This war is now one year longer than the last one. Quiet day, but tucker still very short.

*Wed 13th Dec:* There is to be a big inspection on 23rd, and a preliminary one on Saturday 16th. I was out cleaning the street and got frozen through.

*Sat 16th Dec:* Inspection just a poor show and included our one and only Morimoto. I often wish I had my last year's diary here to compare days.

*Sun 17th Dec:* Yasme Day. Quiet, and cold as the pole now. Spent the day in bed.

*Mon 18th Dec:* Good scare today. Allied plane over Kobe and very high; the place went mad.



*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Fri 22nd Dec:* I saw the raiding plane myself today. It could have been 45,000 feet up. I could only see the airfoil vapour and exhaust but no plane. It hung around for a long while.

*Sat 23rd Dec:* Anti-aircraft guns fired on a plane today. He came lower, perhaps to draw fire. Big service for the year's dead.

(Edgar was in the Kobe P.O.W. Hospital. Back at Kobe House on 12th December, eleven Australian NCOs and three British NCOs were kept in camp and asked by the camp office on orders from the Japanese commandant to write a funeral oration in honour of those prisoners of war who had died in the twelve months to December 1944. The best oration, in the opinion of Colonel Morata, commanding Osaka area P.O.W. camps, was read by Corporal Colley on 23rd December at the Kobe Hospital. (J Force p.88)

*Sun 24th Dec:* "Christmas Eve". Tenko at 0730 this morning. Quiet day. Red Cross boxes again. I was pleased with mine. All are saying what Christmas Eve will we have next year, just as we did last year. Carol singing in the ward and lights out at 2200hrs.

*Mon 25th Dec:* CHRISTMAS DAY. Quiet and peaceful. The Kobe boys came up this afternoon for an hour or so. A good Christmas spirit prevailed.

*Tues 26th Dec:* Up for discharge this morning, and I am to go on the 28th. Two months light duty recommended.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

(Dr.Boyce's notes record Edgar's pathology results on 26th December: White cell count 6,800; differential count- young forms 4%, polymorphs 65%, lymphocytes 29%, mononuclears 2%. Red cells 4,600,000, Haemoglobin 85%, BI 0.92; Erythrocyte sedimentation rate 24 mm in first hour, 47 mm by 2nd hour; sputum negative for acid fast bacilli, faeces normal.

Several fluoroscopic examinations showed no signs of tuberculosis. Diagnosis: 1.Exudative pleuritis with thickened pleura on the right side, 2.Lymphadenitis simplex colli lateralis sinistra.)

*Thurs 28th Dec:* All ready to go and it is tomorrow now.

*Fri 29th Dec:* Came home today. Had to walk after waiting half an hour for a train. I nearly froze. The place is the same as ever, and everyone came to say how glad they were to see me.

### 1945

*Monday 1st January, 1945:* Yasme Day. The old rice cakes again for lunch of ---rice. So begins another year. Last New Year's Day I was on a coal boat. How I remember!

*Wed 3rd Jan:* Air raid. The boys heard the bombing and 27 planes were seen.

*Thurs 4th Jan:* I am to go out on sick men's job tomorrow.

*Feb 28th:* The job of Higashawada is finished for good, I am sorry to say. Went to Dai Ne-- today and had a fair day.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Mar 1st:* Higohicki is to be my job in future, shovelling coal. I'll try it for a few days and chuck it if no good. Raids seem to be continuous nowadays. The sirens in the night don't wake us now and Kobe has been very lucky, in receiving only a couple of lots of attention.



*Mar 10th:* Got on to Mitsubishi again and have been keeping fairly well.

*Sat March 17th:* Well we got IT this morning. It started at 0230 and although the shutters were closed, we could see that most of our area was alight. We left our building when a couple of buildings were hit in the next block. Cleared out all our stores and found our place would be safe. Had a feed at 1100 and tea 1700. A hectic day, and fires rage all around, and now there are no electric lights.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*Tues 20th Mar:* Some men went out today, and for the last few days, there have been only two meals a day. I pray for a job so we can get some eats.

*Wed 21st March:* Got out to Mitsubishi today and was fed well. Worked on burned rice and sugar. Home early. Place still burning. Said to be about one third of Kobe destroyed, and casualties about 20,000. Homeless a quarter of a million.

*To end of March:* Place very quiet and no raids. Went to view Takahama. The -- for -- are worth seeing to get an idea how much damage could be done in a few hours.



Osaka after 1945 Air Raid

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*April:* I missed writing up this month. Things have been very quiet, only a few raids of one or two planes. I had sunstroke or something and I have been in camp since, carrying wood, pulling houses down, etc. Great hopes of the end of Germany this month, rumours say 29th was the end.

(Edgar didn't have sunstroke. He had an epileptic seizure at work. Dr. Boyce's notes show that after Edgar returned to Kobe House from Commander Paige's P.O.W. Hospital on 29th December, 1944, "he was given extra food and vitamins and was in high spirits. A suitable job was found for him where eating was good and loot available. His response was an increase in weight and strength. Complaints however came to me that he seemed to get 'funny turns' which when described were obviously petit mal".

On April 17th, 1945, Edgar was "brought home from work in a dazed state from which he became quite lear. He then wanted to know why he was in hospital and he displayed amnesia for events of the past two hours. A history obtained from Sergeant Major Soden (British), the work leader of the party: 'He was OK all day and at 3pm returned to the hut for a drink of tea with the other men. He stood by the door with a bag on his shoulder, staring into space, and would not move. He said he was hiding loot and when he began wandering about aimlessly he was taken to the Nip works office; his appearance there frightened the Nips, who ordered him to be taken to the rest hut. There he was made to lie down and almost immediately he went off into a short but real fit. He stiffened and went rigid, then doubled up in spasms, frothing at the mouth and holding his breath.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

He was brought back to Kobe House when he had relaxed and was breathing properly.' The patient says he remembers everything clearly since he passed the Nip guard house on return home; but he cannot account for his not being washed and without his coat (which was brought back from work for him), nor can he remember anything of his march home from the work place. His temperature was 38 deg C; his intellectual sensoria were clear and he was discharged to rampaku for observation." (Dr. Boyce's private notes- "rampaku" was outpatients).



*May 4:* Raid today. Our boys were right in it, and no one was hurt.

("High flying U.S. planes came over. One dropped bombs on the dock area and a bomb fell a few yards from where some of our men were resting after lunch. As they lay flat on the ground they escaped unhurt except for cuts from falling



*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

material. The bomb blew a large crater alongside of them." J Force p.101)

*May 6th:* All the Australians were lined up and fifty sorted out this evening after tea.

(Dr. Boyce recorded their names:

Nx40389 Private F.G. Fohmsbee 2/18 Btn.  
Nx15352 Private K.R. Tully 2/18 Btn.  
Nx67014 Private L.K. Haynes 2/19 Btn.  
Nx50155 Private W. Braddick 2/20 Btn.  
Nx45850 Private N.K. Chant 2/20 Btn.  
Qx18608 Gunner F. Bentley 2/10 F.R.  
Qx14341 Gunner E. Homann 2/10 F.R.  
Qx 9783 Gunner C.J. Noakes 2/10 F.R.  
Qx10081 Gunner G. Wainwright 2/10 F.R.  
Vx25475 Sapper F.A.C. Bourne 2/10 F.C.  
Vx65365 Private S.S. Cook 22 Bde. Workshops  
Qx11810 Private C.R. McIntosh 2/26 Btn.  
Qx20260 Private W.J. Trappe 2/26 Btn.  
Nx937 Private R.R. Burkinshaw 2/29 Btn.  
Nx49168 Private J.F. Cresdee 2/29 Btn.  
Nx2712 Private H.G. Webber 2/30 Btn.  
Nx46178 Private A.J. Carroll 2/30 Btn.  
Nx25700 Private W.J. Delaney 2/30 Btn.  
Nx47377 Private F.R. Flanagan 2/30 Btn.  
Nx54017 Private A.Hollingsworth 2/30 Btn.  
Nx42523 Private J. Martin 2/30 Btn.  
Nx41380 Private E. Mills 2/30 Btn.  
Nx36377 Private F.G. Randle 2/30 Btn.  
Nx26705 Private H.C. Wilson 2/30 Btn.  
Nx34497 Gunner E. Hay 2/15 F.R.  
Nx72831 Private E.F. Coman 27 Bde. Workshops

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Sx11010 Private C.W. Hutton 27 Bde. Workshops  
Nx36527 Private P.T. Lewis 2 Aus. Con. Dep.  
Nx71851 Corporal J.C. Halcroft Provo. Coy.  
Qx9922 L/Corporal J.O. Goodall 8 Div. Sigs.  
Vx23680 Driver J.E. Quinn AASC  
Sx6028 L/Corporal S. McDowell 8D.Amm.Sb.Pk.  
Vx59582 Private F. Crothers 8D.Amm.Sb.Pk.  
Wx10935 L/Sergeant P.K. Martin 2/4 Res.M.T.  
Wx10934 Corporal W.J. Patterson 2/4 Res.M.T.  
Sx11542 L/Corporal E.W. Adlam 2/4 Res.M.T.  
Wx10946 Driver S. Davey 2/4 Res.M.T.  
Vx40548 Driver G.T. La Galle 2/4 Res.M.T.  
Vx58823 Private G.A. Morgan 2/10 Fd. Workshops  
**Qx2984 Private L.E.G. Wilkie 2/10 Fd. Workshops**  
Nx17813 Private J. Coleman M.L. & F.D.  
Vx57292 Private H.A. Dalton M.L. & F.D.  
Vx30323 Corporal G.S. Weymouth 2/2 MAC.  
Vx42779 Driver G.T. Berridge 2/2 MAC.  
Nx47977 Driver J.L. Curtis 2/2 MAC.  
Nx69122 Private T.H. Wheaton 2/3 MAC.  
Vx11933 Corporal H.B. Mouatt 13 AGH  
Vx54874 Gunner A.N. Croft 2/4 Anti-tank  
Wx8198 Private E. Hinriksen 2/4 M.Gs.  
Wx6172 Private H.E. Proctor 2/4 M.Gs.

Dr.Boyce noted: "In place of this party, a very mixed group arrived, composed of 23 A.I.F. from Kawasaki Camp, part of "C" Force from Changi, who had arrived in Japan in early December 1942 per S.S. KAKAMURA MARU, taking 10 days from Singapore to Nagasaki."



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

*May 8<sup>th</sup> 1945:* I am now to go away on this lot, leaving the camp 23 months after coming in. Fifty more came in, in our place. Landed at Kawasaki camp about 1030 in a truck.

(At Kawasaki Camp the fifty men from Kobe House were joined by members of C Force)

*9<sup>th</sup> May:* Fooled about all day and generally did nothing.

*May 10<sup>th</sup>:* All moved out today, and we had to come back.

*May 11<sup>th</sup>:* Yasmé all day.

*May 12:* Raid by one plane this morning. Sirens blowing. I saw the plane overhead. Whistle and crash as they stopped. We moved and entrained in the afternoon. It was a hell of a trip all night.

(There were 200 Australians. They travelled in two carriages, some had to stand, arriving at Moji about 1200 hrs after travelling through an under-sea tunnel from Shimonoseki to Moji. They changed trains at Moji and then two more changes of trains before arriving at their final destination: a mining township Usui, on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu, in Fukuoka Prefecture. Their camp was No.26 Camp, Fukuoka. In June 1945, 100 sailors off the H.M.S. Essex arrived from Nagasaki. (J Force p.127)

*Sun 13<sup>th</sup> May:* We landed in the new camp after an all day journey in a mining district. Raid sirens blew every few hours, seems to be right in the path of them.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*



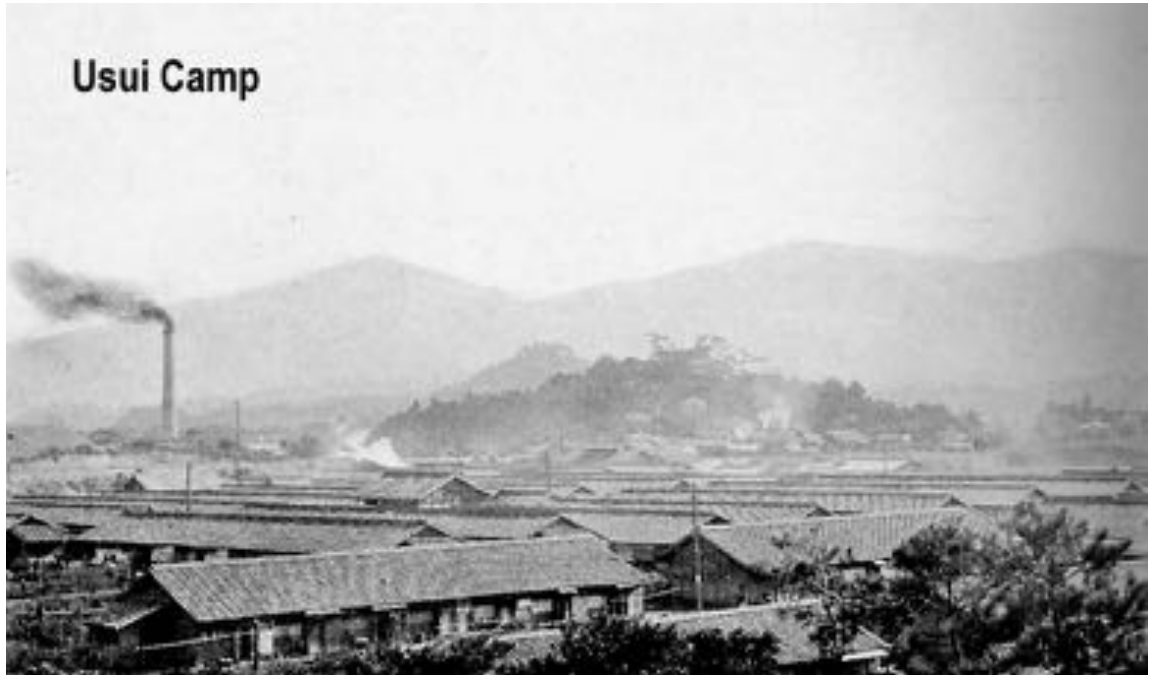
("Air raid warnings were constantly sounded, as the camp was in a direct line between the mainland and Okinawa. Near the end of the war, the men could hear the explosions as the bombs fell on Moji, Fukuoka and some of the other cities nearby on the coast, and the sky was lit up at night with the glare of fires, while smoke filled the valleys." (J Force p.128)

*Mon 14th May:* Usual messing about and snoozed all afternoon. Not a bad camp in its way. Steam cooking, a bath, and a pipe to scald clothes.

("The countryside around the camp was hilly. A type of stunted pine that was used for pit props in the mines grew on the hills, while rice was grown in the valleys. The camp was about a mile from the railway station and situated on a bank above the railway line. There were ten huts connected by a covered passage. The camp was enclosed by a 10 feet high wooden fence surmounted by electric wires. The coal mine township was a quarter of a mile away...One good thing the

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

men appreciated about the camp was the hot bath which was provided each night on return from work." J Force p.127-8)



*Sun 20th May:* End of the week here. Yasmé. Off yesterday on account of rain. Digging an air raid shelter into the hill in the last few days.

("Three tunnels were commenced by the prisoners into the hill just outside the compound fence, but they were never used as shelters.")

*Wed 23rd May:* Down the mine today and fortunately did not work, but walked and walked.

("Most of the men were sent to work in the coal mines. They walked down a steep incline to arrive at the first level 500 feet

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

below ground level, then they walked along the drives to working areas, some of which were 2,800 feet underground.

It was hot below and men worked only in shorts or a loin cloth and rubber boots. A belt and cap was provided for each man, who drew an accumulator and lamp from the lamp room before descending into the mine; the accumulator was attached to the belt, the lamp was fixed on the front of the cap.")

*Thurs 24th May:* Down again today. Only went down and sat around. Came home to find some Red Cross supplies came in, and more coming in to complete the issue. Won't get any until all is here.

*Fri 25th May:* Could not make it out of the mine this afternoon. Helped all the way, legs very weak.

("Charlie La Galle says that he was sent down the mine on the first day, and staggered up from the mine at the end of the first day's work, finding it very hard to get his breath. The next week he was sent out with a garden party." J Force p.127)

*Sat 26th May:* I was in all day. We were issued with one piece of Red Cross soap, five men to a bar of soap six inches by two inches by one inch....

*Sun 27th May:* Here it is again. Fourth year as prisoner of war, and I certainly feel all of 28 and more.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

**THE END OF THE WAR**

Here are some excerpts from The Story of J Force (pages 126-132) about what happened to the prisoners at Usui:

"About 6th August 1945, the men saw 480 bombers in flights of nine, going north. They took two hours to pass. Charlie La Galle commented:- 'It was a sight. One wondered how long Nippon would take it, as these bombers flew on at about 10,000 feet and we could all hear the heavy pop pop of their cannon, as one Nip plane tried to battle with them. But he was shot down.'



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

On 15th August 1945 at 1430 hours, one of the camp guards came out to where the garden party was working and ordered them all back to camp. These men found that the coal miners were also back from work. They all wondered, was it the end?

That evening, the Japs announced that the garden party had worked well, but the miners were not so good in their work. All men were to be kept in the camp for two days until the guards could get permission to work all the men in the gardens.

The men found this information hard to swallow, after their attempts to get all men down the mine. They reckoned something was afoot, and that the best proof would be, would air raids continue or not? It had been customary to have one to three alarms each night, but this night all was silent. The war **MUST** be over.

Next morning, Thursday 16th August, 1945 at 10.00hrs the men were told that the Japs had given in. The war **WAS** over.

The guards also informed the men that they were still in charge of the camp and that no instructions had come through from their Higher Command, as most of the telephone lines were down due to air-raids.

An American Red Cross parcel was issued on the basis of one parcel to three men; also there was an issue of Red Cross clothing viz:- 2 light shirts, 2 pairs underpants, 1 light suit, boots and an overcoat. They had had all of this in store, but would not issue it out before, although the men were in need of clothing, especially boots. An increase was made also in the

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

rice, so that after the midday meal on Friday 17th August, for the first time for several months, the men had a feeling of being really full.

Although the Nips were still on guard duty at the camp, the men were not saluting them. On Friday 24th August, Squadron Leader McCarthy, RAF medical officer took over medical duties from the medico who had been looking after the men, and the camp was under P.O.W. command.

The prisoners had been allowed to buy a cow for Yen 1,300. She gave about 2 gallons of milk per day. This helped the sick over a period of about six weeks. As it was anticipated there would be adequate food supplies from then on, the cow was killed in order to provide meat for the camp.

The Nips still issued out the rations, as the medical officers had not been able to contact any Allied officials. The Nips came to light with 15 more smokes per man. The prisoners found out the Nips had used the camp sugar for their own consumption and that they had appropriated some of the Red Cross parcels.

Monday 27th August, rain fell for for 24 hours after a dry spell of about a month. Tuesday 28th August, Red Cross officials arrived and the men were told that planes would bring food. At 1500hrs over came seven or eight B24s, with their wings marked *P.W. Supply*. They dropped drums of food and clothing. That evening the stew was a mixture of tinned soups, M & V Rations and sweets of tinned fruit. All burst tins were being used up first and as quickly as possible. Most of the men

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

were too excited to sleep, but brewed coffee and set to eating K rations, sitting around yarning as they ate them.



Thursday 30th August, the planes came over again. This time the prisoners had erected a target outside the camp, for where they wanted the planes to drop their loads. Coloured chutes were released, and all landed safely except the last drop, which came through the roof of one of the huts.

The second drop consisting mainly of K Rations came down intact, and apart from the one dropping through the roof of the hut, the only other damage was to the electric light wires, so that the camp was in darkness that night. However, the Japs got a number of miners' lamps to provide temporary lighting. Papers had been dropped with this second drop, so that the men were able to read the latest news.



## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Charlie La Galle said:- 'I went outside the camp for a walk as a free man on Monday 3rd September 1945, the day on which the Nip guards left and the Ps.O.W. took over guarding the camp with Jap rifles. The office had a wireless and issued news soon after 1200hrs. Some of the men went by train to other P.O.W. camps and visitors came into our camp.

Wednesday 5th September, with two others I went by train to the next township four miles away. This township was in the mining area, with a population of about 20,000. We found a place where we could get refreshments. It had a notice written in English and Dutch: *Lemonade 130 Yen, bowl of beans, marrow, egg fruit 100 Yen*. The lemonade was weak stuff. We found our way to No.22 P.O.W. camp and had lunch. There we chatted with Australians who had arrived in June 1945 after being on the Burma Railway job. We walked home following the railway tracks.'

Charlie La Galle: 'On Friday 14th September 1945, I was detailed for a guard at a Chinese Communist P.O.W. camp containing about 200 men. They had had a puppet Chinese Commander in charge. He had treated the men badly, so when they found the war was over and that they were guarded only by Japanese police (the army guard having gone) they killed that commander and broke out of the camp. The Japanese police had called on our camp late one night to see if we could handle the situation. Thirty English Ps.O.W. were sent to round them up, and the Chinese had agreed to re-enter their camp, provided we did the guarding of their camp, and not the Japs.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

The Chinese fed us with food supplied to them by the Japanese police. All the Ps.O.W. guard had to do was stop in the camp during the day and do one hours' patrol at night. The Japanese police station was next to our guard-room, and it was here that I saw some Japanese police prisoners being tried.

From what I could understand, the men had got drunk on saki and had been fighting. The police themselves tried the men. The men had to bow and kneel while the police chief gave them a lecture lasting a couple of hours, and then I suppose the other police would take them to the cells, slap them with rubber shoes and let them go.'

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The basic research on the Wilkie family history was undertaken by an Edinburgh researcher H.B. McCall, F.S.A., (Scot.) His genealogy "A Pedigree of the Family of WILKIE OF RATHOBYRES, in the County of Edinburgh", was commissioned by Daniel Wilkie in 1893.

Some of the information about James and Robert Wilkie, Professor William Wilkie, Rev. David Wilkie and his son Sir David Wilkie and the history of St. Leonard's College came from an article in the series "This is your land / These are your People 82", subtitled "The Wilkies" written by J. Wilkie Nisbet, Emeritus Professor of Political Economy at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland.

Accounts of both James and Robert Wilkie by a man who knew them both personally are found in "The Autobiography and Diary of Mr. James Melville" ed. by Robert Pitcairn, and published by The Woodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1842. The Presbyterian Library at Emmanuel College, St. Lucia, Brisbane, has a copy, donated by Professor Frank Anderson.

The fate of James Wilkie, "the zealous Covenanter" is recorded in volume 4 of "The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland" by Rev. Robert Woodrow, published by Blackie, Fullarton and Co., Glasgow, 1830. A copy of this book in six volumes is held in the McPherson Memorial Library in the headquarters of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales at Scots Church, York Street, Sydney.

There are many references to James and Robert Wilkie in Calderwood's "History of the Kirk of Scotland", published in 1843 in Edinburgh by The Woodrow Society. The Presbyterian Library at Emmanuel College, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, has a copy.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Other sources of information on the Scottish Reformation included "The History of the Reformation of Religion within the realm of Scotland" written by John Knox, edited by C.J.Guthrie, published by Adam and Charles Black in London in 1899.

The historical background was supplemented by reading from the relevant sections and specific biographies in the ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA 15th edition, and the WORLD BOOK. For example, the imprisonment in Greyfriars Kirkyard of the Covenanters captured at the Battle of Bothwell Bridge is on page 305, volume 6, of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (Macropaedia).

A concise history of Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh, is contained in a booklet "The Kirk of the Greyfriars, Edinburgh: A Short History and Guide to the Kirk and Kirkyard." This booklet, printed by Tantallon Press, North Berwick, is on sale in the Kirk itself.

Most of the information about the remarkable life of Dr. David Elliot Wilkie was obtained from a detailed paper written by Howard Boyd Graham: "THE HONOURABLE DAVID ELLIOT WILKIE, M.D.: A PIONEER OF MELBOURNE", and published in The Medical Journal of Australia, April 7th, 1956. A reprint of the 1956 article was obtained from the publishers of the Medical Journal, the Australasian Medical Publishing Company Ltd, Seamer and Arundel Streets, Glebe, Sydney.

The details of David Wilkie's central role in the planning and funding of the Burke and Wills expedition are available in the published Proceedings of the Philosophical Institute of Victoria, later the Royal Society of Victoria; copies of these proceedings are housed in public libraries. The University of Queensland's Biological Sciences Library has an incomplete set.

The history of the Wilkie family after David Elliot is contained in Mowle, L.M.: "A GENEALOGICAL HISTORY OF PIONEER

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

FAMILIES OF AUSTRALIA" 5th edition. Published by Rigby, Australia, 1978. ISBN 0 7270 06525

The history of the Robson family was provided by Hislop, E. Isobel: "THE ROBSON, DEAR, AND WOODWARD FAMILY HISTORY 1861-1981", printed by Klan Genealogical Supplies, Jindalee, Brisbane. This was supplemented by the recollections of Mrs. Beatrice Irwin, the youngest sister of Ruth Robson's mother. Mrs. Irwin lived in St.Lucia, Brisbane. She died in Brisbane at the age of 102 years in July, 1986.

Information about Edgar Wilkie's early life was provided by his two brothers Colin and Keith, and his sister Margaret.

Background information on the history of Australia's involvement in World War 2 was obtained from THE AUSTRALIAN ENCYCLOPAEDIA 3rd edition, published by The Grolier Society of Australia. ISBN 0 9596604 1 0.

Edgar's diary was supplemented with notes from:

"From the Somme to Singapore", the memoirs of Charles Huxtable. Dr.Huxtable's notes were collected and arranged by his widow Mrs.Barbara Huxtable. Published by Kangaroo Press Pty Ltd, 3 Whitehall Road (P.O. Box 75) Kenthurst NSW 2156. ISBN 0-86417-167-6 Edgar Wilkie functioned as batman for Drs. Huxtable and Carrick.

"One Man War- The Jock McLaren Story" by Hal Richardson. Published in 1957 by Angus and Robertson.

"P.O.W., Prisoners of War" by Hank Nelson, published by ABC Enterprises for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Box 9994, GPO, Sydney 2001.

*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

"The Naked Island" by Russell Braddon, published in 1952 by Werner Laurie, London.

Further information about "the Padre" Canon Noel Duckworth, was provided by his sister, Mrs. Stella Jones, who lives in Wales.

"The Story of 'J' Force" was edited and published by Alexander Dandie, 10 Hall Street, West Ryde, NSW 2114. ISBN 0 9589113 0 4

"Pacific Sunset" by Graeme W. McCabe, was published by Oldham, Beddome and Meredith Pty. Ltd., Hobart, Tasmania in 1946.

Some of the material from the files of the late Dr. Clive Boyce, O.B.E., as they applied to Edgar, were provided by Mr. Patrick Boyce, who lives in Brisbane.

Information given to me personally by Edgar's fellow prisoners of war, has been acknowledged in the text.

My thanks to Charles Sale for providing me with pictures of the Greyfriars headstone of the family grave of Rev Daniel Wilkie.

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

### **SOME NAMES IN THIS DIARY**

Adams, Georgina 42	Crothers, F. 200
Adlam E.W. 199	Curtis J.L. 200
Armit, Bill 71	
	Dalton, H.A. 200
Bailey John 47	Dandie Alex from 136
Baughman Rev. Burr (U.S. missionary) 105	"Darkie" Tanaka 161
Bentley, F. 199	Dasey 71
Berridge G.T. 200	Davey, S. 200
Bourne, Sapper 136, 199	Delaney W.J. 199
Boyce, Dr. Clive (Captain) Intro 9, 136	Dittmar, Charles 40
Braddick, W. 199	Doherty, Ian 142, 170
Braddon Russell from 91	Douglas, John 9
Burke and Wills Expedition 22	Draper A.M. 171
Burkinshaw R.R. 199	Duckworth, Rev. Noel (the Padre) from 93
Burnett, Eddie 78, and mentioned through diary in Pudu Prison	
Byrnes, John Intro 7, 126	Endorff, Dr. 170, 186
Byrnes, Lieut. Colonel 135	
	Farmer, Arthur 128
Cameron, Bob 49	Flanagan, F.R. 199
Cameron, Elizabeth 42 (ancestor)	Flynn, P.J. 185
Campbell, Major Ron 192	Fohmsbee, F.G. 199
Campbell, Miss Ruby 59	Forrest, Henry 4
Carrick, Dr. Alan Intro 4, 71, 135	Fosbery 71
Carroll, A.J. 199	Foster, Colonel 45
Chant, Norman Intro 3, 199	Fullerton, George 118
Clow, Ellen 26	
Clow, Rev. James 21	Gardiner, Bob 144
Clow, Mary Elizabeth (ancestor) 21	Gilmour, John 158, 180-181
Coleman, J. 200	Goodall, J.O. 200
Colley Corporal 194	Green Wally 52
Coman, E.J. 199	Gregory, A.C. 24
Cook, S.S. 199	Griffin David 135
Craig, "Duke" E.J. 172	
Cresdee, J.F. 199	Halcroft, J.C. 200
Croft, "Lefty" Alex 91, 199	Hall, "Legs" W.E. 151
	Hay, E. 199
	Haynes, L.K. 199

## *All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

- Hinricksen, E. 200  
Hoblett, Cpl. (American interpreter) from 140  
Hollingsworth, A. 199  
Homann, E. 199  
Houghton, Capt. 157, 173  
Houston, Elizabeth (ancestor) 4  
Hutton, C.W. 200  
Huxtable, Dr. C. Intro 4,68
- Kananagh, R. 185  
Kirk, Alan G. 105
- La Galle, Charlie 200, 205-211  
Lancaster, Bill 124  
Lang, Dunmore (Australian pioneer) 22  
Latimer, Clarrie 145  
Lewis, P.T. 200
- MacAlister, A.G.(soldier) 135  
Martin, J. 200  
Martin, P.K. 200  
Maughan, Isabella (ancestor) 39  
Maughan, Joseph (ancestor) 49  
Maughan, Polly (ancestor) 39  
Maughan, Sarah (ancestor) 38  
McCarthy Squadron Leader 208  
McDowell, S. 200  
McIntosh, C.R 199  
McIntosh, Molly Intro 6  
McLaren, R.K. (Jock): war hero from 78  
McPhillips, F.S. 175  
Melville, Andrew 9  
Melville, James 10  
Miataki ("The Mad Doctor") 149  
Mills, E. 199  
Mills, Tassy 76  
Moody, Jean Frances (ancestor) 37  
Morata Colonel 166, 194
- Morgan, G.A. 200  
Morimoto 160, 169  
Mouatt, H.B. 200  
Mudge, Private 133
- Nagorka, Oliver 52, 62  
Nairnsey, Captain 136  
Newton, Captain Reginald ("Roaring Reg") 123  
Noakes, C.J. 199  
Noble, Richard T 160
- Padre- see Duckworth, Rev. Noel  
Paige, Commander Intro 10,  
Patterson, W.J. 200  
Paynter, Brigadier (soldier in Pudu Prison) 88  
Percival Lt Gen 77  
Phillips, Ernest W. 165  
Proctor, H.E. 200
- Quinn, J.E. 200
- Randle, F.G. 199  
Robson, Arthur 37  
Robson Uncle Arthur 54  
Robson, Edgar 47  
Robson Frank 43  
Robson family in Australia 52  
Robson Ruth 42  
Robson Sarah 39  
Robson Selina 43  
Robson William 40  
Rosson Major John 129
- Shaputnik (American P.O.W.) 144  
Soden, Sgt. Major 179  
Spackman, Arlie 63  
Sparks, "Freddo" F.F.(soldier) 154  
Stewart, James, Earl of Moray 5,  
Swetenham 120



*All of 28 and More, The Diary of Edgar Wilkie*

Tanaka ("Darkie") 176  
Trappe "Pineapple" W.J. 177, 199  
Tully, K.R. 199

Wainwright, G. 199  
"Wales Maru" Intro 8, 137  
Watkins, Dr. in Mt.Morgan 58  
Webber, H.G. 199  
Weymouth, G.S. 200  
Wheaton, T.H. 200  
White, Jock 135  
Wilkie Daniel 26-32  
Wilkie, Rev. Daniel 19  
Wilkie, Daniel (David Elliott's  
brother) 21  
Wilkie, Lesley Alexander 33-36  
Wilkie, Dr. David Elliot 20-25  
Wilkie, Rev.David 17  
Wilkie, Sir David 17  
Wilkie, James, Primarius of  
St.Leonards 7  
Wilkie, James, the zealous  
Covenanter 11  
Wilkie, Robert, Primarius of  
St.Leonards 8  
Wilkie, William, Professor 14  
Wilson Dr. Intro 9, 169  
Wilson H.C. 199  
Woodward, Peter 40  
Wright, Bob 134  
Wright, Frank 129, 133