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Chris Murphy

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Rare Official Insight into Officer Conduct Amongst Prisoners of the Japanese

CHRIS MURPHY*
Monash University, Australia
Email: chris.murphy@monash.edu

ABSTRACT
This research note article highlights tensions and misconceptions in the dominant narrative of the Pacific prisoner of war (POW) experience by examining a document concerning British officer, Lieutenant Colonel T.H. Newey. On the Burma-Thailand railway and in the last year of the war when he was 'representative officer' in Changi, Newey incurred the wrath of his fellow officers who sought to have him court-martialled after liberation. That request was ultimately denied but the investigation into Newey's conduct provides a valuable insight for researchers seeking to sift through the layers of reticence, story-construction and myth-making associated with survivor-recounts of captivity during the Pacific War.

Introduction

Forty years ago, Joan Beaumont referred to 'an informal conspiracy of silence' in the postwar period regarding the nature and prevalence of officer-privilege amongst Second World War prisoners of the Japanese.[1] This research note builds on Beaumont's contention by arguing that the silence was not exclusively informal. A 1946 report into the conduct of the British Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Henry Newey of 1 Straits Settlements Volunteer Force was kept under seal for more than forty years, and provides an illustration of the way the silence described by Beaumont extended into official circles.[2] Other scholars, such as Katie Lisa Meale, have previously cited a version of the Newey document available at the Australian War Memorial archive but that version features only three pages extracted from the original

*Chris Murphy is a doctoral candidate in the School of Philosophy, History and Indigenous Studies at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia
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[1]Joan Beaumont, 'Rank, Privilege and Prisoners of War,' *War & Society,* Vol.1, No.1 (1983), https://doi.org/10.1179/10698048379030312 6, p.74.
[2]The UK National Archives (hereinafter TNA) WO32/15769, *Enquiry into allegations against Representative Officer Limi Road [sic] Camp and No 1 P.O.W. camp Changi,* 1946. The camp name, Limi Road, should, in all probability, read Sime Road.

document.[3] Testimony given under oath by Burma-Thailand railway survivors and postwar public statements by senior officers served further to perpetuate the belief that the experience of captivity, particularly on the railway, was characterised by equity and accord amongst prisoners of all ranks.[4] In this research note the author argues that this was both an improbable and a partial representation of the reality on the ground where life was 'lived red in tooth and claw'.[5] The value of the Newey report is the insight it provides into the challenges of command for Pacific POW leaders. It shows that, while the role of a POW leader was by no means an easy one, the performance of officers varied considerably. Moreover, it is contended that this was an issue about which there was a lack of frank public discussion in the postwar period. Penultimately, in this note, the author examines competing claims concerning Lieutenant Colonel T.H. Newey's effectiveness as a POW leader. Finally, the author argues that revisiting the issues raised by the Newey case may allow us to scrutinise the Japanese POW experience, in all its gritty reality, with the clarity achieved when discussion proceeds free from vested interest and emotional investment.

The Newey report compiled for the British Judge Advocate General (JAG) in November 1945 and 'registered' on 4 March 1946 is notable for its frank discussion of the challenges, tensions and leadership failures associated with wartime incarceration. It contains forty-two pages of testimony mainly in the form of affidavits from officers, both British and Australian. The front page of the document has a label with the words, 'Closed until 2022'.[6] According to journalist, Noel Crusz, British court martial documents from the Second World War were originally intended to be 'closed for seventy-five years from the last recorded date of entry'.[7] However, public agitation in Great Britain related to freedom of information resulted in these records being released in the 1990s.[8] Despite its entry into the public record three decades ago, the full Newey report is rarely cited in scholarly writing on the Japanese POW experience.

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[3]See Katie Lisa Meale, 'Leadership of Australian POWs in the Second World War, (Doctoral Thesis, University of Wollongong, 2015), p.86, p.88, https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/4620. Accessed 10 June 2026; and Lt-Col. F.G. Galleghan, Australian War Memorial (hereinafter AWM) 3DRL/2313 File 749/36/1, *Report on Treatment of Prisoners of War dated 5 Sept., 1945,* p.49, p.51, p.53.

[4]See, for example, S/Sgt G.G. Rickwood quoted in Robin Rowland, *A River Kwai Story: The Sonkrai Tribunal,* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2007), p.256.

[5]Quoted in Julie Summers, *The Colonel of Tamarkan: Philip Toosey and the Bridge on the River Kwai,* (London: Simon and Shuster 2005), pp. 145-146.

[6]TNA WO32/15769, *Report on Newey*, p.1.

[7]Noel Crusz, *The Cocos Islands Mutiny,* (Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2001), p.118.

[8]Ibid., p.14, p.118.

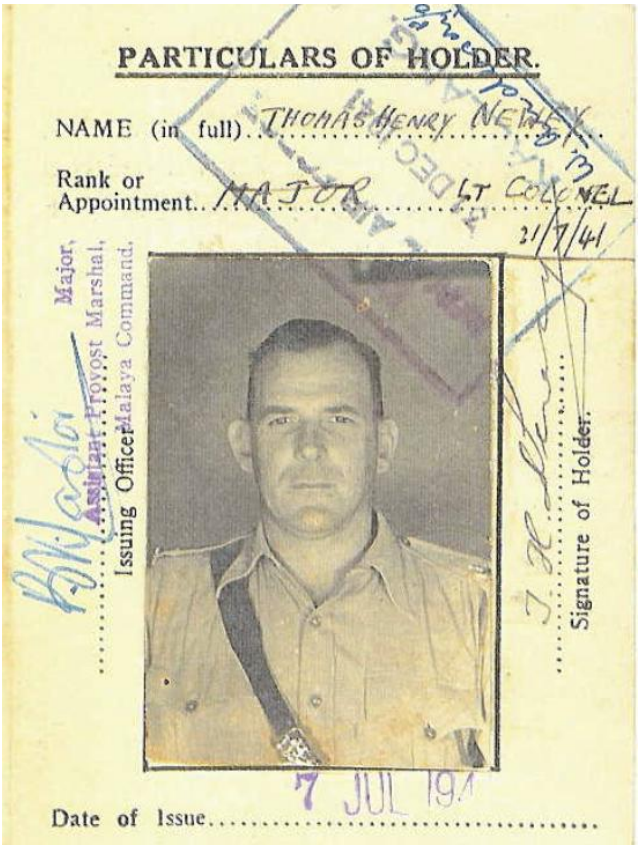


Figure 1: Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Henry Newey.[9]

That the Newey report was considered sufficiently sensitive to be kept from public view for four decades speaks to the official component of the 'conspiracy of silence' on the subject of POW-officer-privilege referred to by Beaumont.[10] In the postwar period, Australian Lieutenant-Colonel R.F. Oakes implausibly described as 'absolutely false' any suggestion that officers were better off than enlisted men on the Burma-

[9]Ancestry.com, *Thomas Henry Newey*. n.d., https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/mediaui-viewer/tree/21160733/person/1048410040/media/f1c96c4a-b5f3-4fc1-8ad4-05c72ade28fa. Accessed 18 December 2024.
[10]Beaumont, 'Privilege,' p.74.

Thailand railway.[11] This was the officer who, at Singapore's Adam Park camp in May 1942, had five enlisted men, who had been planning escape, turned over to the Japanese.[12] Oakes' Hintok railway camp was described by the legendary Australian POW leader, 'Weary' Dunlop', as 'a shambles'.[13] Private Alex Drummond claimed Oakes was so cowed by Japanese camp staff that he retreated into his hut and built a model boat.[14] According to another source, Oakes issued double rations to himself and frequently annoyed those working in the cookhouse by purloining the best portions of their paltry supplies.[15] While it may be quixotic to think officers would expose themselves to avoidable risk, that is, after all, what their role entailed and the ostensible primary reason they occupied their privileged positions.[16] A case could be made to suggest that those whose record was notable for an absence of courage and selflessness to then deny, in the postwar period, the effect of officer-privilege was an even greater affront than their succumbing, under wartime conditions, to the temptations of self-preservation.

The subject of the 1946 JAG report, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Henry Newey, was a British colonial citizen-soldier who had been Assistant-Controller of Posts and

[11]Ivan Chapman, *Tokyo Calling: The Charles Cousens Case,* (Sydney, NSW: Hale & Ironmonger, 1990), p.347.

[12]The five POWs were sentenced to three years' imprisonment at the notorious Outram Road Jail. See Lynette Silver and Billy Young, *Billy: My Life as a Teenage POW*, (Binda, NSW: Sally Milner Publishing, 2016), pp.224-226, p.234.

[13]Edward E. Dunlop, *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop,* (Melbourne: Nelson Publishers, 1986), p.255.

[14]AWM MSS1530, Alexander Hatton Drummond, *The Naked Truth,* n.d., p.207.

[15]2/4 Machine Gun Battalion Ex Members' Association, *'H' Force Group No 3 – H3 & H6 Officers Party*, 2018, https://2nd4thmgb.com.au/story/h-force-group-2-4th-mgb-deaths-pows-of-japan-working-thai-burma-railway/. Accessed 6 February 2025,

[16]An old army adage is 'Never to ask my men to do anything I am unwilling to do myself'; coupled with that is the notion that the welfare of the men should come before that of the officers. For examples see: Andrew Faulkner, *Arthur Blackburn, VC: An Australian Hero, his men, and their two world wars,* (South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2008), p.190; Gilbert Mant, *You'll Be Sorry,* (Sydney: Frank Johnson, 1944), p.36; Sir Andrew Gilchrist, *Malaya 1941: The fall of a Fighting Empire,* (London: Robert Hale, 1992), p.151; Edward E. Dunlop, *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop,* (Melbourne: Nelson Publishers, 1986), p.103; Field-Marshal Viscount William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India, 1942-1945,* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), pp.184, p.468; Thomas M Coffey, *Iron Eagle: The Turbulent Life of General Curtis LeMay,* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1986), p.36, p.95, p.114, p.277.

Telegraphs in Singapore prior to the outbreak of war with Japan.[17] The report includes statements from ten officers: one colonel and five lieutenant colonels; with five of that total members of the Second Australian Infantry Force (AIF).[18] The accusations against Newey included claims that: he was rude and impolite to his brother officers; that he was obsessed with his own status and seniority; that his punishment of enlisted men went beyond the powers laid down by British military law; and that he was unnecessarily friendly with the Japanese commanders to whom he reported as 'representative officer'.[19] Specific complaints include the allegation that, in May 1942, in front of a parade of two hundred Straits Settlements Volunteers, he threatened a public flogging for an individual who had stolen another man's hat.[20] In January 1944 at Sime Road on Singapore, Newey ordered a British soldier to be '"tied up" for a number of days without preferment of charges'.[21] Lieutenant Colonel Oakes charged Newey with 'wilfully and untruthfully accusing a senior brother officer of being a liar before an enemy administration.'[22] At Changi Jail, the senior Australian officer, Lieutenant Colonel F.G. Galleghan, was aggrieved that Newey 'inflicted punishment on Australian prisoners of war' whom Galleghan felt it was his prerogative, as an Australian officer, to punish.[23]

The March 1946 verdict of the brigadier who adjudicated on the JAG report was that Newey was 'a man of violent temper' and 'entirely lacking in tact' whose actions were 'insufferable'.[24] However, this verdict did not warrant the laying of formal charges against Newey. An unnamed major examining the case concluded that the charges against Newey were 'purely disciplinary' and that, in 'cases emanating from the Far East', there were no security implications. On that basis, he concluded, 'the Security Service does not feel that it would be justified in undertaking its handling'.[25] That seems to have provided the final justification the adjudicating brigadier needed to recommend 'No further action'.[26] Notwithstanding, there is a disturbing theme in these affidavits wherein officers seemed more concerned about their seniority, status and reputations than about Newey's high-handed treatment and sometimes extreme punishment of

[17]TNA WO 32/15769, *Report on Newey*, p.2; Jonathan Moffatt, Facebook Messages to author re: T.H. Newey, 31 August 2024.
[18]Ibid., p.4.
[19]Ibid., pp.2-7, pp.13-15, pp.18-19, pp.22-23, p.36, p.41.
[20]Ibid., p.2.
[21]Ibid., p.3.
[22]Ibid., p.2.
[23]Ibid., p.3.
[24]Ibid., p.4, p.7; that brigadier signed his name on p.4 of the document but the signature is illegible.
[25]Ibid., p.5.
[26]Ibid., p.7.

enlisted men, which included beatings for dysentery sufferers who had been 'taken short' and had failed to defecate in latrines.[27] Newey issued order this that included men punished by confinement to a cell only being fed and watered every third day; sentencing a man at Changi to 28 days' solitary confinement for being in possession of equipment he was using to operate a secret radio; threatening to hand defaulters to the Japanese; and acting in concert with the Japanese camp commandant when issuing such punishments.[28] In his memoir, one former POW described Newey as 'a Pro-Jap snob', and accused him of obsessive concern about noise made near his quarters at Hintok, even when the source of that noise was community singing, or emanated from delirious hospital patients.[29] Newey's one-time adjutant, Major D.A. Duke, saw Newey as a self-made man whose prejudices seemed to ossify in captivity. 'He had terrific energy and was blessed with a good constitution. … He would go into every detail of the administration himself. … He detested correspondence and kept it to a minimum.'[30] Duke noted that, in his First World War service, Newey had risen only to the rank of corporal and implies that this led to an entrenched bias against officers, particularly those from the privileged classes. One possible interpretation of the complaints in this report is that Newey's dislike of members of the privileged classes was seen by those who fitted that description as his greatest crime; specifically, in circumstances where excessive punishment could have dire consequences for enlisted men's survival prospects.[31] Officers, both British and Australian, complained most vociferously about Newey's rudeness, his breaches of normal procedure, offensive accusations made in front of Japanese staff, and their own wounded pride.[32]

Another possible explanation for the hostility that existed between Newey and his fellow officers was his status as a citizen-soldier of the Straits Settlements Volunteer

[27]Ibid., p.31; this was at Konkoita in about September 1943.
[28]TNA WO 32/15769, *Report on Newey*, pp. 2, p.15, p.23, p.33 p.37; Lucy Robertson, "Changi: Military discipline in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp, 1942-45", in Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century, ed. Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant, and Aaron Pegram, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2015), p.2, pp.171-172.
[29]Drummond, *Truth*, p.222; State Library of Victoria MS 13716, Alexander Hatton Drummond, *Papers, 1941-2001 [manuscript] Alexander Hatton Drummond 1911-1983,* n.d., p.255.
[30]TNA WO 32/15769, *Report on Newey*, pp.40-41.
[31]Australian Pte David Smith was sentenced by Lt Col. S.A.F. Pond to 28 days' detention on half-rations at Changi for selling a shirt. He was one of twenty men so detained who went to Thailand with 'F' Force. Of those twenty, only three survived the railway. See David F. Smith, Yasme Nei: Memoirs of F Force Thai-Burma Railway, (Self-published, 1996), p.37.
[32]Ibid., pp.2-3, p.13, pp.18-19, pp.22-23, p.24.

Force. The Straits Settlements Volunteer Force was a colonial version of the British Territorial Army. Its members were drawn largely from planters, bankers, professionals and colonial officials who trained on a part-time basis. Two of its Second World War members who wrote memoirs were Captain Stanley Pavillard and Lance-Corporal Denys Peek.[33] Newey's status as a high-ranking citizen-soldier may have been a source of jealousy or enmity amongst those who had been career soldiers in the inter-war period. The Straits Settlements Volunteers' military experience was similar to that of Second AIF soldiers who had served in the inter-war militia and one of the most prominent Australian citizen-soldiers was Major General Henry Gordon Bennett. Gordon Bennett's outspoken nature and his status as a part-time soldier had caused a bitter and long-running feud between him and members of the Australian Army's professional staff corps.[34] But, unlike Newey, Gordon Bennett's service in the Great War was particularly distinguished and he rose to become the youngest brigadier in the First AIF.[35] On the other hand, the parallels between Newey's service and that of one of his loudest Australian critics, Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Galleghan, are striking. In the Great War, Galleghan had not risen above the rank of sergeant but, in the Second World War, was a stickler for protocol and was considered by many apt to become hysterical if denied any of the courtesies of rank.[36] The tension between these two officers was unrelated to Newey's status as a citizen-soldier.

Evidence that the problems facing POW officers were complex and multifarious can be seen in Newey's comments on his experience at the Tonchan South camp in Thailand in June 1943. In his own report on 'H' Force, Newey described the effects of having a large number of officers encamped with his party. Since these officers insisted that, in line with Article 49 of the 1929 Geneva Convention, they do no manual labour, the result was additional pressure on members of the other ranks because the daily quota of men sent to work was calculated from every POW in camp.[37] Accordingly,

[33]Stanley S. Pavillard, *Bamboo Doctor*, (London: Pan Books, 1962); Ian Denys Peek, *One Fourteenth of an Elephant*, (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2003).
[34]Frank Legg, *The Gordon Bennett Story*, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1965), p.200, pp.274–275; John Hetherington, *Blamey, controversial soldier: a biography of Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey, GBE, KCB, CMG, DSO, ED*, (Canberra, ACT: Australian War Memorial, 1973), p.257, p.335, p.339; John Wyett, *Staff Wallah At the fall of Singapore*, (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996), pp.12–13, pp.24–25, p.205, pp.209–210.
[35]Stan Arneil, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of Brigadier Sir Frederick Galleghan*, (South Melbourne: MacMillan, 1983), p.148.
[36]Ibid., p.58, pp.76-78, pp.123-124, p.148.
[37]Joan Beaumont, 'Officers and men: Rank and survival on the Thai-Burma railway', in *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Joan Beaumont,

to make up numbers, sick enlisted men had to join work parties while healthy officers remained behind. As Newey put it, 'This, together with a starvation diet and the hardness of the work on the railway, soon affected the health of the men and a large number became sick.'[38] Many of these same officers then 'sat around on their fat behinds', read books, and played bridge or chess, collected orchids and butterflies, or saved up for cars at the end of the war.[39] As mentioned, it may be quixotic from this remove to think they would do otherwise when the consequences for selflessness were so dire, but, equally, there should be little wonder disaffection in the ranks was widespread. As Newey put it, in the conditions that prevailed, with no hospital facilities and the infirm not being allowed to be evacuated, developing 'any sort of sickness meant almost certain death.'[40] The prevalence of such inequities makes it all the more remarkable that the victims of that injustice, the enlisted men who, on the railway, died at a rate between ten and twenty times higher than their officers, later remained silent, and for so long, about the true nature of the situation, especially in the face of officers' compounding their poor wartime performance by postwar misrepresentations of their record.[41] It has been suggested that Other Ranks (ORs) restraint arose, at least in part, from their postwar ambivalence or guilt about their surrender and survival; their reserve perhaps also speaks to conventions of an era different from those of the present day. However, whatever its precise motivation, its grip on veterans' tongues was both effective and enduring; in the author's view, its

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Lachlan Grant, and Aaron Pegram, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2015), p.179.

[38]Thomas Henry Newey, *Report on 'H' Force,* King's College, London: Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, 1945, p.5.

[39] Stanley S. Pavillard, *Bamboo Doctor,* (London: Pan Books, 1962), p. 119; Peter Brune, *Descent into Hell: the Fall of Singapore - Pudu and Changi - the Thai-Burma Railway,* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2014), p.634; Pavillard, *Bamboo Doctor*, p.119; Newton, *Glory*, p.507. The officer in question was 13350 Lt Col. A.A. Johnson, Suffolk Regiment. See: Ronald Hastain, *White Coolies,* (London: Transworld Publishers, 1959), p.164; Dunlop, *Diaries*, p.218; Robert Hardie, *The Burma-Siam Railway: The secret diary of Dr Robert Hardie 1942-45,* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1983), p.134; Newton, *Glory*, p. 507.

[40]TNA WO 32/15769, Newey, *Report*, p.5.

[41]For the British, as has been shown, their overall railway mortality rate, was 21.1 percent; for their officers, the rate was between 2 and 2.5 percent, i.e., about ten times lower. For Australians, their overall railway mortality rate was 20.5 percent but, for their officers, the rate was 'Less than one percent', i.e., over twenty times lower, figures which rebut the alleged egalitarianism of the Second AIF. Sweeting, *Prisoners*, pp.571, p.588. See also the evidence of Lt-Col. C.H. Kappe at the Singapore trial of 'Lt Col. Banno Hirateru and six others' in: Rowland, *Kwai Story*, p.301.

long-standing hold on Australian POWs speaks to a respect for authority in marked contrast to the larrikinism and indiscipline allegedly prevalent in the Second AIF.[42]

The 1946 JAG report provides strong evidence Lieutenant Colonel T.H. Newey was a controversial POW leader. However, the JAG report is less definitive on the question of whether Newey was an effective POW leader. The brigadier evaluating the case against him argued that Newey's harsh punishments, while probably in breach of Section 40 of the Army Act, were issued 'in order to prevent the Japanese from taking control of discipline, and had they done so the treatment meted out would undoubtedly have been considerably harsher.'[43]

In his own report on 'H' Force, Newey does not explicitly make that same argument. Rather, he refers to himself at Tonchan South in June 1943 being 'often subjected to unpleasantness and humiliating treatment' as a result of his 'frequent complaints'.[44] He wrote that, at the Hintok Valley camp in July 1943, 'Protests [to the Japanese] seemed to produce nothing but retaliatory action'. As a result, 'I came to the conclusion that it was wiser to avoid them.'[45] And that is a damning admission from an officer whose primary role in that situation was protecting and advancing the welfare of his men. Surely 'unpleasantness and humiliating treatment' were not consequences so dire as to prevent an officer from interceding on behalf of his men, especially when there is evidence Japanese camp staff accorded grudging respect to officers who persisted with complaints regardless of intimidation.[46] Captain R.M. Horner was a member of Newey's 'H5' component of 'H' Force and with him at Tonchan South and Hintok.[47] In his diary on 31 May 1943, Horner noted that Newey protested to the Tonchan South camp authorities 'about sending officers out on working parties' but that

[42]Sally Moore McQuaid, *Singapore Diary: The Hidden Journal of Captain R.M. Horner,* (Gloucestershire, UK: Spellmount, 2006), p.25, p.165, p.197; Pyne, "Officers/ORs,", (Location: Publisher, Year), pp.159-160, p.198; Lachlan Grant, *Australian Soldiers in Asia-Pacific in World War II,* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014), p.45.
[43]TNA WO 32/15769, *Report on Newey*, p.6.
[44]Ibid., pp.27-28.
[45]Ibid., p.29.
[46]Perhaps the most celebrated example is that of 'Weary' Dunlop being spirited away from the Kinsayok camp in October 1943 by the notorious Cpl Okada Seiichi, aka 'Dr Death', after disarming a guard. See Dunlop, *Diaries*, pp.298-290.
[47]Guy Newey, *Liberation Questionnaire of Lt-Col. T.H. Newey*, Ancestry.com.uk. n.d.,. https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/574078:61642?tid=&pid=&queryid=8adf05a8-8dc1-4906-8cb6-b13bbfa38e29&_phsrc=EPJ1&_phstart=successSource. Accessed 1 September 2024; McQuaid, *Horner Diary*, pp.86-91, pp.92-100.

protest was met with a denial which Horner described as 'our lowest ebb'.[48] On 24 June 1943, at the same location, the normally restrained Horner wrote: 'It is regrettable to have to state that our CO here is more concerned with a quiet life and appeasing the Japs [*sic*], than taking a strong line of resistance.'[49]

'Weary' Dunlop was with Newey at the Hintok camp complex and, according to his *War Diaries*, Newey's camp was in an 'appalling' condition with entirely inadequate provisions made for the sick and the dying.[50] To assist an Australian gravely ill with cerebral malaria, Dunlop had to 'disregard' one of Newey's orders.[51] On 10 July 1943, Dunlop noted that, in Newey's Hintok Valley camp, 'The Nipponese have interfered in administration matters so much and there is so much starvation and apathy, that there is difficulty in even keeping up the water supply to 280 patients in hospital.'[52] Dunlop went on to describe the high death-rate, the sick in an improvised 'hospital' being left to lie in their own filth, the backlog of grave-digging, and the failure to cremate cholera victims.[53] If, as the JAG brigadier argued, Newey's intention was to limit Japanese intervention and improve the conditions for his men, Dunlop's comments suggest that it was a strategy that failed.

Before concluding this note, it should be emphasised that the argument being advanced here is not that all POW officers had it easy, or that all were bad, or that those who did their jobs properly did not perform a vital role, and a role which made a significant difference to the survival rates of the men in their charge. What is being argued is that the performance of officers varied considerably and that this was an issue about which there has been a lack of frank public discussion in the postwar period. The value of the Newey report is that it provides an atypical instance of official confirmation of issues rarely spoken of in public forums, or written about in memoirs and official histories; diaries, if published in close to their original forms (as a few were), tend to be franker, 'warts and all' accounts and thus can be exceptions to the reticence evident in other records. As an illustration, no official history or other government issued documents have been found that show the stark contrast between officer survival rates and the survival rates of enlisted men. One has to dig deep to uncover those figures. More than forty years ago, Joan Beaumont wrote of 'the paucity of statistical evidence dealing explicitly with the question of officers' as opposed to other ranks' rates of survival'.[54]

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[48]McQuaid, *Horner Diary*, p.87.
[49] Ibid., p.92.
[50]Dunlop, *Diaries*, p.269.
[51]Dunlop's diary does not explain the nature of that order. See p.268.
[52]Ibid., p.258.
[53]Ibid.
[54]Beaumont, 'Privilege,' p.87.

In concert with factors including a dynamic of changing attitudes to war memories, there remained, in the postwar period, a prevailing and prolonged veteran silence, in both formal and informal spheres, on the different experiences of officers and enlisted men while POWs. The silence or omissions by officers on the subject of rank differentiation is readily understood: in Australia such a framing of the narrative was inconsistent with the Anzac legend's tenets on shared privation and leadership by example, meaning that unexpurgated accounts were likely to provide examples uncomplimentary to the Australian officer class. British officers probably shared similar concerns. However, for those who had been members of the other ranks, their prolonged silence is less easily explained. According to Private George Aspinall, while former enlisted POWs remained reluctant decades later to name names, their private discussions could descend into hate sessions.[55] As Aspinall saw it, he and his comrades maintained their public reserve because 'we were supposed to be soldiers' and 'We perhaps tried to live up to a code, something set by our forefathers.'[56] A range of other reasons could be advanced to explain veterans' reticence, but it is less clear why, more than eighty years after the Second World War ended, that illusion is prolonged. While veterans' comments on the subject tended to be veiled, and individuals were rarely named, the disparities in prisoners' experiences based on rank are there for those who carefully read and accurately report on the record. So why don't we? Could it be that such a narrative would clash with the story of courage, sacrifice and fellowship, that we, as a listening public, seem to want to hear about our boys who survived the dreadful privations of Japanese captivity during the Second World War?[57] Could it be that we are so invested in the POW narrative as a

[55]Aspinall, the famous 'Changi photographer', was one of the AIF soldiers listed in Lt Col. F.G. Galleghan's report as being illegally punished by Newey in 1945. See Galleghan, *Report on Treatment*, p.51; Tim Bowden, "I Don't Think I Deserve A Pension – We Didn't Do Much Fighting,' Interviewing Australian Prisoners of War of the Japanese, 1942-1945," (Paper Presented at 'Prisoners of war: A conference on the Australian experience of captivity in the 20th century,' Australian National University, Canberra, Thursday, 6 June, 2013), p.45.

[56]Ibid.

[57]The precise words were used by Australian Prime Minister John Howard in 1998 were 'courage sacrifice and mateship'. In 1994, his predecessor, Paul Keating, spoke of 'courage, comradeship, sacrifice and resourcefulness". See Lachlan Grant, 'Monument and Ceremony: The Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial and the Anzac legend,' in *Forgotten Captives in Japanese-Occupied Asia*. ed. Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn, (London: Routledge, 2008), pp.43-44. In February 2025, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese spoke of 'sacrifice, courage and mateship'. See The Hon Anthony Albanese MP, *Speech at 20th Anniversary Australian Prisoners of War Memorial, 11 February 2024*. Office of the Prime Minister of Australia. 2024,

representation of our national characters, British and Australian, that we simply do not want to entertain evidence to the contrary?

Finally, whatever the precise answers to those questions may be, the Newey court-martial investigation provides a rare glimpse behind the veil and one which emanates from an official source. The JAG document on Newey's conduct has been in the public record for thirty years now but, even after that length of time, its import and implications seem to have been missed in the gloss put on Australia's, and possibly Britain's, chapter of the Japanese POW story. Unlike researchers engaged with this material two, three or four decades ago, those of us grappling with it now are no longer able to speak to the individuals who were there. As such, the Newey report is a valuable resource for researchers seeking to crack what was, in 1983, so aptly described as a 'conspiracy of silence'.[58]

https://www.pm.gov.au/media/20th-anniversary-australia-prisoners-war-memorial. Accessed 15 December 2024. See comments on this subject in Lucy Robertson, 'Changi', p.175; Joan Beaumont, 'Prisoners of War in Australian National Memory', In *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace: Captivity, Homecoming and Memory in World War II*, edited by Bob Moore and Barbara Hately-Broad, (Oxford: Berg, 2005), pp.185-194, p.189.

[58]Beaumont, 'Privilege,' p.74.