



SECRETS & SPIES RESEARCH PROJECT

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL
MARITIME MUSEUM
**MU
SEA
UM**

- **THAI BURMA RAILWAY**
- **CHANGI POW CAMPS**

Blog by Erskine Park High School



*Andre Bernardino, Marc Graham, Umair Khan, Isaac Lim, Baylie Luke, Zack Lynch,
Govind Mallath, Tyrone Myburgh-Sisam, Benjamin Tatlock, Lance Woodgate*

WHO ARE WE?

We are a group of Year 10 boys at Erskine Park High school who are all deeply interested and enthusiastic about the many intricacies of Modern History. We are located in the Western Sydney area and take pride in our location and deep history in the area. Currently we have about 1000 proud students enrolled in our school. There are 10 of us and each and every one of us have a deep interest for a variety of reasons in Modern and Ancient History and want to learn as much as possible about our past. Our school motto, “*Pride in Achievement*” means that every time that we achieve something big or small, we will take pride in that achievement and with pride comes confidence and the ability to achieve higher and higher standards of learning and our Vice Principal Nathaniel Doidge is an exemplary example of how we as a school and community strive to take as much pride as possible in our achievement and achieve higher standards than ever before.

WHAT'S OUR TOPIC?

Our topic is the Thai Burma Railway and the Changi POW camps. The Thai Burma Railway was built to supply the Japanese army with necessary weapons, ammunition, medicine, basic necessities of living. It spanned 415 kilometres across the mainland of Thailand. It consisted of over 600 bridges - 6 to 8 of those being long span bridges. This railway was constructed from use of the forced labor of between 180,000 civilians and 61,000 Allied POWs consisting of approx 2710 Australian soldiers and large amounts of American and British soldiers who were forced to cut rails by hand and forced to work inhumane hours with no food or medicine due to how low they were on the Japanese military hierarchy. We won't only be investigating the conditions of the camps, but the interesting ways that the POW secretly communicated and got information from the outside using various methods such as sowing messages into quilts that would tell their husbands that they were alive and generally raise morale and Lieutenant R Wright who made radios which would fit into a water bottle or concealed into a broom head.

HOW WILL WE UNDERTAKE RESEARCH?

We plan on critically analysing various primary sources, searching for government documents from the times, and various interviews of POWs such as Sir Harold Atcherly, who experienced the horrors of these camps. As well pursuing these various primary source, we also plan on using many reliable secondary sources to gain further information into the mistreatment of poor unfortunate POWs in these camps.

WHAT WILL OUR END RESULT BE?

With all the information we have gathered and research we have conducted, we will be creating a short film showing how poor the conditions were in the Changi POW camps, the extent of the mistreatment and the genius ways that they communicated under the noses of their captors.

