

Umberto
LIBERTO

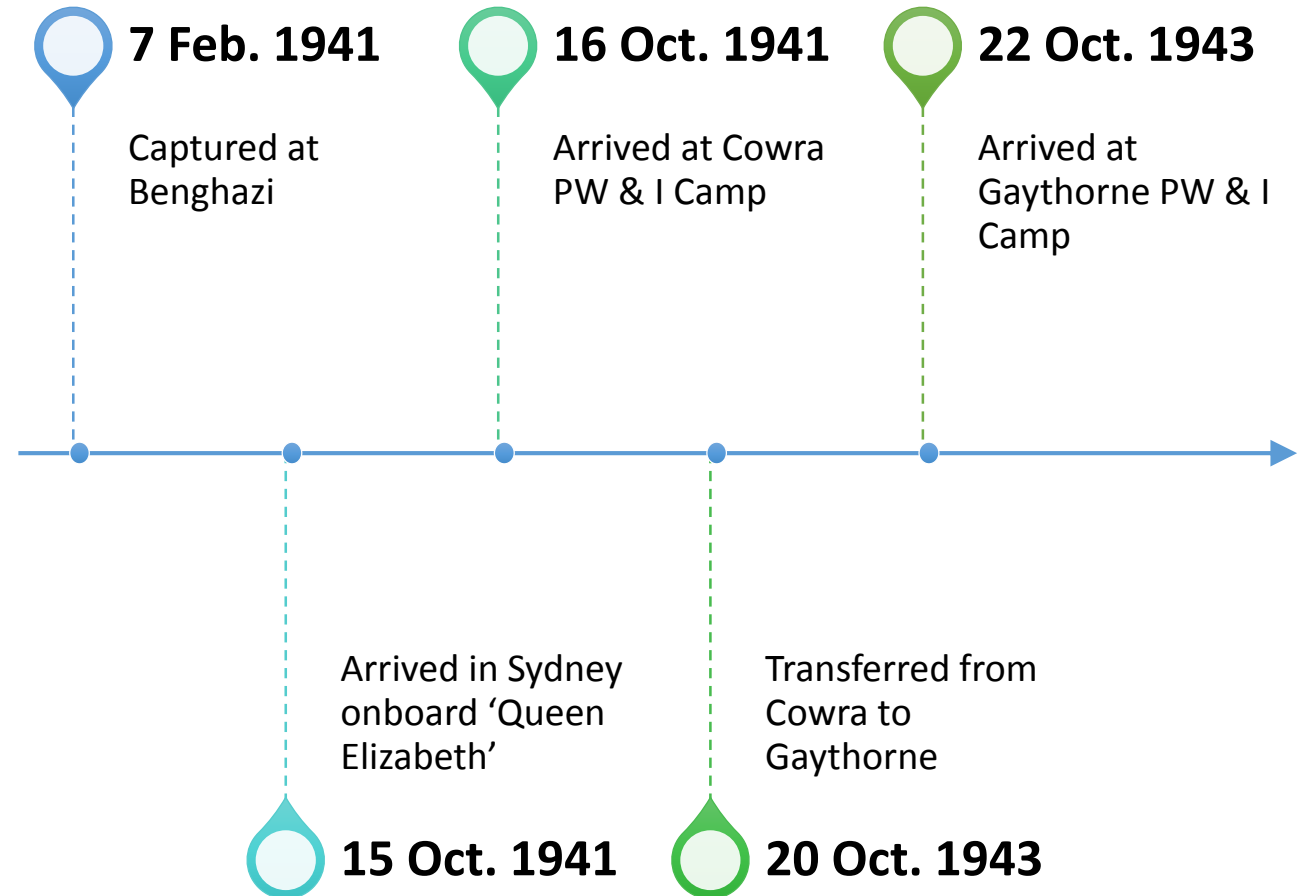


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

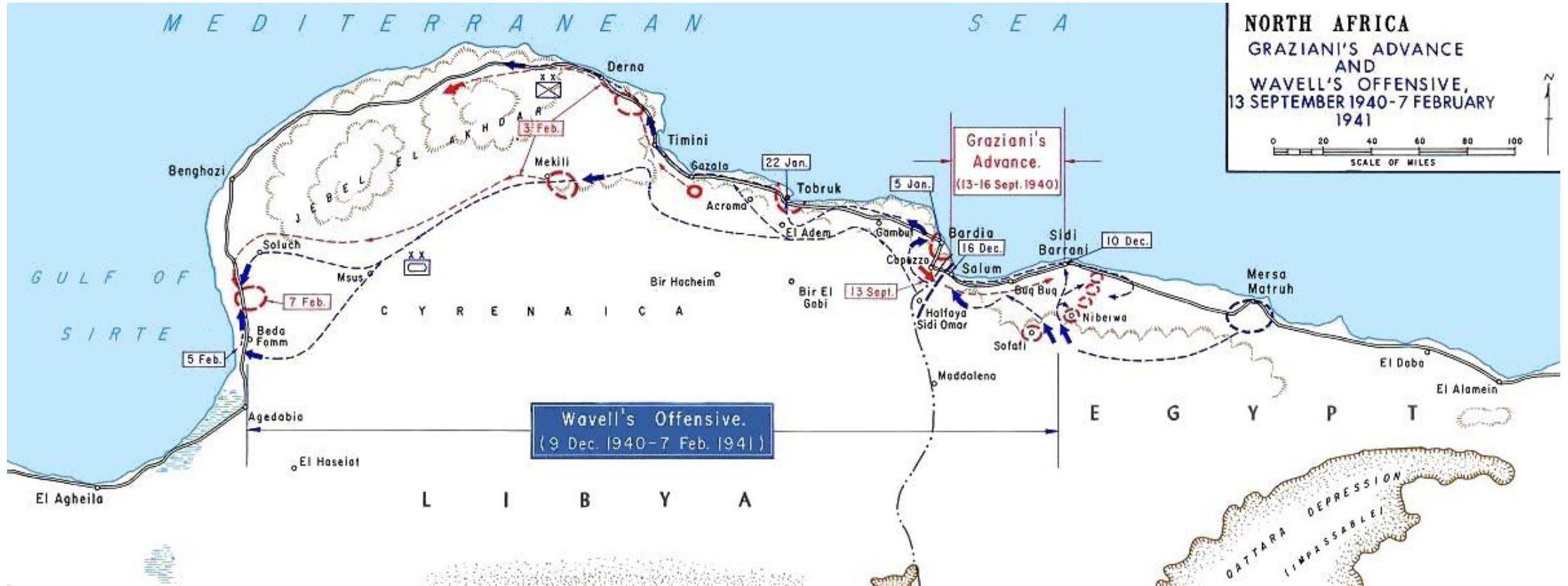
030149/21

Cowra, NSW. 16 September 1943. Group of Italian prisoners of war (POW) interned at No. 12 POW Group. Back row, left to right: 49731 A? Olivieri; 45651 A. Fazio; 49632 D. Mocchetti; 49373 **U. Liberto**; 46913 G. Villa; 49942 L. Volonteri. Front row: 45782 L. Gardini; 49884 I. Paniccia; 49436 L. Casinelli; 49792 A. Alessi. Note: The number is an assigned POW number. AWM Image 030149/21 Photographer Leweck

Libya to Australia



Late on 5 February, Comforce arrived at the Via Balbia south of Benghazi and set up road blocks near Sidi Saleh, about 30 mi (48 km) south-west of Antelat and 20 mi (32 km) north of Ajedabia. The leading elements of the 10th Army arrived thirty minutes after the British who sprung the ambush. Next day the Italians attacked to break through and continued their attacks into 7 February. With British reinforcements arriving and the Australians pressing down the road from Benghazi, the 10th Army surrendered later that day. Between Benghazi to Agedabia, the British took 25,000 prisoners, captured 107 tanks and 93 guns of the Operation Compass totals of 133,298 men, 420 tanks and 845 guns.



Cyril Joly was an officer in one of the tanks and later wrote a classic account of the action:

From my position on the dune I watched an attack which was launched soon after dawn by about thirty Italian tanks against the position on the road. This was beaten off quickly and with little difficulty.

For a time there was silence on both sides. For all the efforts of the previous day, the Italian column still looked huge and threatening. I watched with apprehension the movements of the mass of vehicles before me. On either side of me, hidden behind the crests of other dunes and ridges, I knew that there were other eyes just as anxious as mine, surveying the scene before them. In the mind of each one of us was the sure knowledge that we were well outnumbered. Each of us knew by what slim margin we still held dominance over the battlefield.

Our threat was but a facade – behind us there were no more reserves of further troops. Even the supplies of the very sinews which could keep us going had almost run out. If we lost now we were faced with capture or a hopeless retreat into the empty distances of the inner desert. It was a sobering thought. ***I felt that the day, with all its black, wet dullness, was heavy with ominous foreboding. The scene before me was made gloomy enough to match my mood by the black clouds of acrid smoke which shrouded the battlefield like a brooding pall.***

Gradually I became aware of a startling change. First one and then another white flag appeared in the host of vehicles. More and more became visible, until the whole column was a forest of waving white banners. Small groups of Italians started to move out hesitantly towards where they knew we lay watching them. Larger groups appeared, some on foot, some in vehicles. Still not able to believe the evidence of his own eyes, the Colonel warned, “. . . Don't make a move. This may be a trap. Wait and see what happens. Off.”

But it was no trap. Italians of all shapes and sizes, all ranks, all regiments and all services swarmed out to be taken prisoner. I felt that nothing would ever surprise me again after my loader suddenly- shouted: “Look, sir, there's a couple of bints there coming towards us. Can I go an' grab 'em, sir? I could do with a bit of home comforts.” We took the two girls captive, installed them in a vehicle of their own and kept them for a few days to do our cooking and washing. I refrained from asking what other duties were required of the women, but noted that they remained contented and cheerful.

<http://ww2today.com/7th-february-1941-the-italians-surrender-at-beda-fomm>



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

128415

BEDA FOMM, LIBYA. 1941-02. ITALIAN CARRO ARMATO M13/40 MEDIUM TANKS CAPTURED AT THE BATTLE OF BEDA FOMM. (PHOTOGRAPH REPRODUCED IN OFFICIAL HISTORY VOLUME: TO BENGHAZI, PAGE 282). (IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM PHOTOGRAPH). AWM Image 128415



Italian troops in action near Benghazi during the major British offensive into Cyrenaica,
Libya

<https://germanwarmachine.com/timelines/world-war-ii-day-by-day/world-war-ii-1941/february-1941>

Umberto Liberto 'celebrated' his 19th birthday in the deserts of Libya on 29th January 1941.

On the 7th February 1941, Private Umberto Liberto was captured at Benghazi.

He had served with the 4th Battalion Libyan Colonial Service for 10 months.

Queen Elizabeth

Umberto arrived in Sydney onboard
'Queen Elizabeth' 15th October 1941.

This transport brought 948 Italian
prisoners of war to Australia as well as
German prisoners of war



Queen Elizabeth painted in wartime grey, having just transported
troops to the Middle East in 1942

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS_Queen_Elizabeth#/media/File:British_troops_arrive_in_the_Middle_East_having_been_transported_by_the_liner_QUEEN_ELIZABETH,_22_July_1942._E14706.jpg

Cowra Prisoner of War & Internment Camp

Cowra, New South Wales (1941–47)

The Cowra prisoner of war and internment camp was located several kilometres outside the town of Cowra in south-central New South Wales.

It officially began operation in June 1941, but it was several months before the first prisoners arrived.

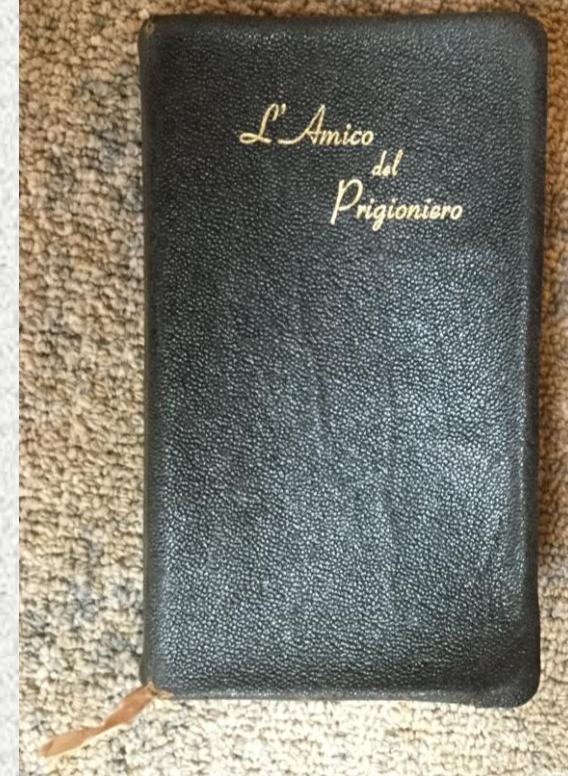
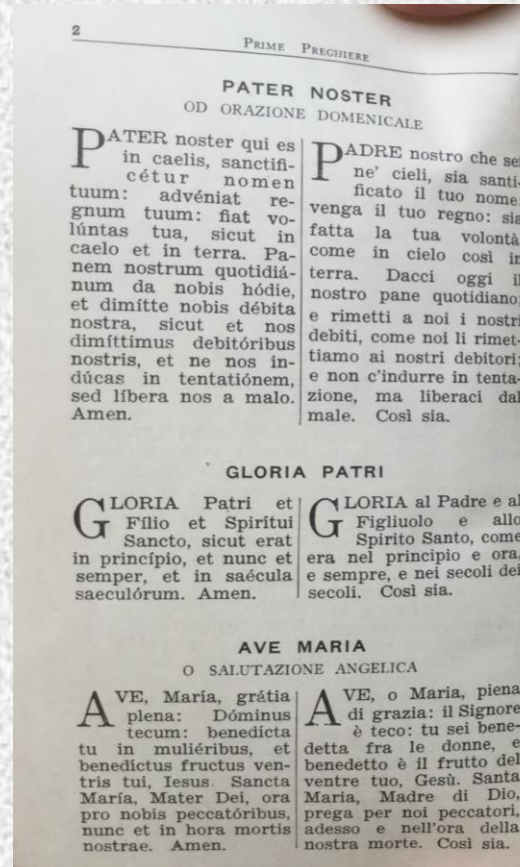
Cowra was purpose-built to house prisoners of war, mostly Italians, brought to Australia from overseas and it operated primarily as a prisoner of war rather than an internment camp. Civilians interned at Cowra included local Italians and nearly 500 Javanese and Indonesians.

Cowra Prisoner of War Camp (NSW) consisted of four compounds with Compounds A and C housing 1000 Italian Prisoners of War.

ICRC, Guerre 1939-1945: Nouvelle-Galles du sud, Camp Cowra, Fontaine; ICRC, Guerre 1939-1945: Nouvelle-Galles du sud, Camp Cowra Serie B, Camp C, Des tenetes pour les prisonniers de guerre; ICRC, Guerre 1939-1945: Nouvelle-Galles du sud, Camp Cowra, No 12, Section C, Vue de l'allee du camp.



L'Amico del Prigioniero



Catholic Prayer Book
Issued to Italian prisoners of war in Australia
in Italian and Latin 1943

Cowra



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P03160.002

Joanne Tapiolas © Footprints



Akers, David Photographs of Cowra PW & I Camp Site August 2017; Australian War Memorial, Image P03160.002 Cowra 6th August 1945.

Magenta dyed Army Issue

Prisoners of War and Internees were given red coloured clothing.

While in the camps or on farms, they could wear their personal clothing. But when moving between camps or going to church on a Sunday, they had to wear their POW uniform.

There were many terms used for the colour of the POW uniforms: burgundy, orange, pink, claret and red; but magenta was the official term.

In essence, disposal Australian army uniforms were dyed to make POWs stand out.



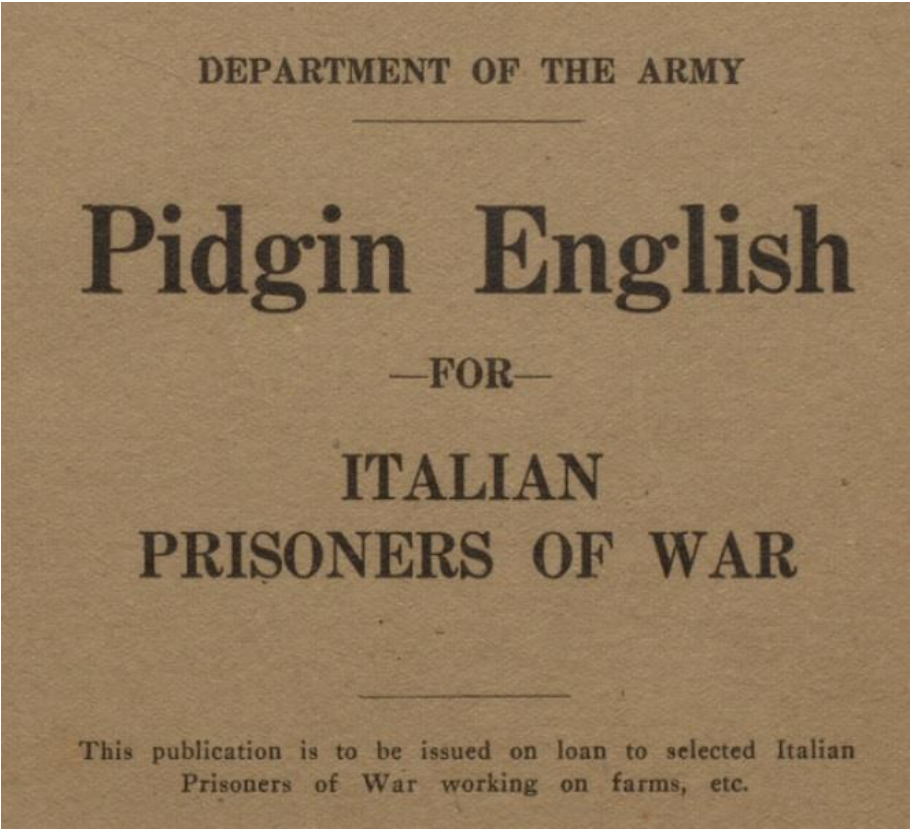
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

REL32594

AWM Shoulder Strap Prisoners of War and Internees held in Australia REL32594, Australian War Memorial

Italian prisoners of war sent to work on farms throughout Australia, where given a copy of *Pidgin English for Italian Prisoners of War*

(photos courtesy of David Dander)



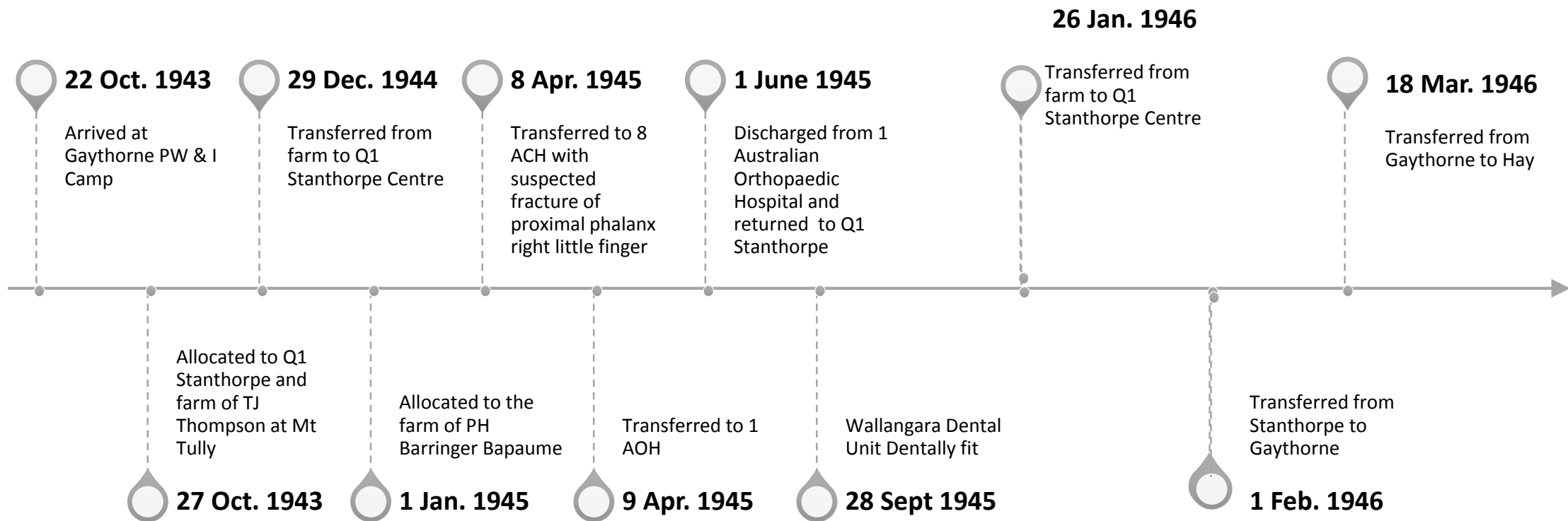
PORCELLANA	CROCKERY	(CROCHERI)
Piatto	Plate	(Plet)
Tazza	Cup	(Cap)
Bicchiere	Glass	(Glas)
Bottiglia	Bottle	(Botel)
POSATE	CUTLERY	(CATLERI)
Coltello	Knife	(Naif)
Forchetta	Fork	(Forc)
Cucchiaio	Spoon	(Spun)
Cucchiaino	Teaspoon	(Tispun)
CUCINA	KITCHEN	(CHETCENQ)
Cuoco	Cook	(Cuc)
Legna da ardere	Firewood	(Fairuod)
Pentola	Saucepan	(Sospen)
Padella	Fryingpan	(Fraipen)
Secchio	Bucket	(Buchet)
ATTREZI Ecc.	TOOLS, Etc.	(TULS)
Martello	Hammer	(Hemer)
Chiodo	Nail	(Nel)
Fune	Rope	(Rop)
Fil di ferro	Wire	(Uaier)
Zappa	Hoe	(Ho)
Rastrello	Rake	(Rek)

Gaythorne Prisoner of War and Internment Camp

Gaythorne is a suburb in Brisbane. There are no remains of the Gaythorne PW & I Camp.

Camp Precinct





In Queensland

Gaythorne Prisoner of War & Internment Camp

Umberto went by train from Cowra 20th October 1943 to Gaythorne 22nd October 1943. On 27th October 1943, Umberto was sent to Stanthorpe and allocated to the farm of TJ Thompson at Mt Tully.

In Queensland, the Prisoner of War and Internment Camp at Gaythorne was the administrative authority for all Italian POWs in the state.

Gaythorne PW & I Camp, located at Gaythorne, Brisbane had a capacity of 1,800. Nationalities held were: PW – Italian, Japanese, Korean, Formosan, sundry and Internees – Italian, sundry. It operated from 1940-1946.

It had three compounds each of 300, one compound of 400 and one compound of 500. The Queensland Italian POWs were transferred from southern camps to Gaythorne.

From Gaythorne, POWs were sent to a Prisoner of War Control Centre: Without Guard (PWCC) or Prisoner of War Control Hostel (PWC Hostel). Some POWs however remained at Gaythorne, deemed 'unfit' or 'unsuitable' for work.

In a May 1944 inspection report it was reported that there was limited hutted accommodation at Gaythorne with the majority living under canvas. The site was 792' x 189' and consisted of six compounds. Residents included Japanese PWs, Javanese PWs, German Internees, an Italian Internee, and Italian PWs. There was no sports ground and the Italians exercised under guard on the rifle range adjacent to the camp.

NAA: BP129/1 NCCR 255/2/627, 1944-1946, Employment of Italian Prisoners of War – Queensland, National Archives of Australia

26 OCT 1943

ITALIAN P W TRANSFERRED FROM

COWRA TO GAYTHORNE 22 Oct 43

PWI	Name	
45077	VUONO	Francesco
45145	GORGIOLO	Attilio
45260	CASERTA	Salvatore
45288	CAMPANELLA	Giuseppe
45421	DE FELICITIS	Amerigo
45940	LAUDANTE	Crescenzo
46194	MUTO	Alfredo
46248	MOSSUTO	Domenico
46411	PERSICILLI	Michele
46450	PES	Salvatore
46566	ROSSI	Antonio
46842	TIROZZI	Raffaele
46938	VILLAR	Domenico
47779	VIRCILLO	Domenico
47783	VENTRE	Cosimo
48179	MASSI	Giacomo
48215	MASSANO	Giovanni
48342	VALIANTE	Angelo
48501	PANTINI	Otello
49296	NICASTRO	Esterino
49332	BARTOLOTTI	Enrico
49391	CELICO	Salvatore
49394	CAMUSO	Pietro
49469	FRANCO	Salvatore
49493	GEREMIA	Angelico
49494	MAESTRI	Italo Redento
49544	MONTE	Vito
49554	MARTUCCI	Ciro
49597	PANTISANO	Cataldo
49606	POZZUOLI	Pasquale
49607	POZZUOLI	Benedetto
49612	PISACANE	Rinaldo
49614	PICONE	Antonio
49623	PETROCCHI	Claudio
49626	PEPRUCCIOLI	Giuseppe
49632	MOCHETTI	Delio
49635	LA TORRE	Francesco
49651	LENZO	Emilio
49652	LENZO	Eugenio
49655	LOMBARDI	Luigi
49663	LIBERTO	Umberto
49665	LUCREZIO	Vito
49703	SCARPATO	Antonio
49792	ALESSI	Angelo
49875	MINICILLI	Angelo
49888	PAOLETTA	Vincenzo
49916	SALVATORI	Elio
49923	SOMMA	Gennaro
49931	SALVATORE	Mario
49937	VILLANI	Raffaele

Identity Card for Umberto Liberto

(2)		(3)	
PERSONAL DESCRIPTION		PHOTOGRAPH Full Face and Profile	
Height	5 ft 8 ins		
Build	Medium		
Colour of eyes	Brown		
Colour of hair	Black		
Notable marks	Nil		
Remarks			
Signature of Holder — Firma Del Titolare	<i>Liberto Umberto</i>		
Finger prints taken from —			
Left Hand	Right Hand		
Finger Index	Finger Index		
			
		REGISTERED EMPLOYER	
		Name	<i>T. J. Thompson</i>
		Address	<i>Fort Tully</i>
		Date: From	<i>27 Oct 45</i>
		To	<i>29 Dec 44</i>
		<i>H. H. Hatcher Capt</i> Signature of Prisoners of War Control Officer	
		REGISTERED CHANGES OF EMPLOYERS	
		Name	<i>P. H. Barringer</i>
		Address	<i>Bapavme</i>
		Date: From	<i>1 Jan 45</i>
		To	<i>26-1-46</i>
		<i>P. H. Hatcher Capt</i> Signature of Prisoners of War Control Officer	
		Name	<i>N 33 Pw 66</i>
		Address	<i>Harper Road</i>
		Date: From	<i>2/1/46</i>
		To	<i>3-12-46</i>
		<i>H. H. Hatcher Capt</i> Signature of Prisoners of War Control Officer	
		Name	
		Address	
		Date: From	To
		Signature of Prisoners of War Control Officer	



Volunteering for Farm Work

The Prisoners of War received a set of written instructions and contractual agreement which they were required to sign. Clause 8. Form of Understanding was provided in Italian and English:

Io sottoscritto..... Prigioniero de Guerra No..... avendo fatto richiesta per un'occupazione remunerativa per un periodo di mesi sei a partire dalla data di questa mia richiesta, dichiaro che compiero qualsiasi lavoro che mi verra assegnato durante il suddetto periodo. Inoltre, mi sottopogno volontariamente alle regole di disciplina accettando le rate di paga stipulate per soldati semplici prigionieri di guerra per qualsiasi period di tempo durante il quale tale lavoro sara richiesto da me.

McInnes, Geoffrey, Yanco, NSW. 1944-02-01. Italian prisoners of war (POWs) from No. 15 POW Camp picking Tatura Dwarf Globe tomatoes which they have grown for seed on the unit's vegetable farm. C282252, Australian War Memorial; NAA: A373, 6221, Employment of Italian Prisoners of War 1941-1946, National Archives of Australia

Joanne Tapiolas © Footprints

Main operational procedures and regulations for PWCC: Without Guards

- Prisoners were allowed to send two letters or two postcards or one letter and one postcard every week on approved Service of Prisoners of War Notelopes and postcards.
- Army to supply the prisoner with clothing (magenta dyed issues) underwear, footwear, blankets (4) and 1s/3d per day credit.
- Army to supply in accordance with Empire Policy from United Kingdom free issues of cigarettes: 35 cigarettes or 35 grams of tobacco per week.
- Prisoners allowed on a Sunday between 10 am and 4pm to go freely up to a mile from the property but to be wearing magenta dyed clothing.
- Army to issue free one razor blade per week subject to exchange of worn blade.
- Army to provide medical and other services and transport to and from medical facilities.
- Mobile canteen to visit farms on a regular basis to sell provisions: tobacco, matches, toothpaste, soaps.
- Prisoners attending Church services will not intermingle with Australian civilians at church or on the way to and from church.
- Prisoners to work a six day week.
- Farmer to pay to the PWCC £1 per week per prisoner of war.
- Prisoners were not to congregate with other prisoners.
- Prisoners were not to go to towns, shops or other houses.
- Prisoners were not allowed to leave the farm except to attend religious services.
- Farmer to supply the prisoner with food, accommodation and bedding.
- Army to supply farmer with ration cards for prisoners.
- Prisoners were not to receive money or gifts.
- Prisoners were not to send letters other than through official channels.
- Prisoners were not to fraternise with the public especially women.



MARIAMAR, Christmas Card 1941, AICPM; Tapiolas, Joanne Walking in their Boots, 2017.

Pay Sheet – Prisoners of War

Prisoners of War were paid 1s/3d per day credit for working on farms.

They could use their credit to purchase items from the Canteen Truck, build up a bank of credit and/or send money home.

Whilst in Australia, cash accounts for prisoners of war were kept regarding money in their possession when they arrived in Australia, money received for working on farms, money sent to family in Italy and money expended at canteens.

Prior to departure from Australia, balance of the POW cash accounts was presented to individuals. Money was paid out upon arrival in Italy.

Form W.F. 122
(Revised Jan., 1943.)

Prisoners of War and Internees PAY SHEET

PAY UNDER PAY ARRANGEMENT ORDER FOR MONTH OF MARCH 1945.

Camp No.: Q-1, P.W.C. Project: STANTHORE Period Ending: _____

No.	Name	Total Number of Days	Rate	Amount	SIGNATURE OF PAYEE I, the undersigned, do hereby acknowledge to have received the amount opposite my name will be credited to my Cash Account.
BROUGHT FORWARD					
45738	GHELOSA	O		10 9	X
49493	GEREMIA	A		10 9	X
56210	GESUALDI	L		10 9	X
45747	GIACOPONELLO	F		10 9	X
57254	GIANNINI	C		10 9	X
45756	GILIBERTI	F		10 9	X
64577	GIORDANO	G		10 9	X
49848	GIOVANNETTI	B		10 9	X
45844	GIRONI	G		10 9	X
45794	GIUDICI	G		10 9	X
64415	GORI	P		10 9	X
49483	GUERNIERI	B		10 9	X
49490	GUIDI	L		10 9	X
57277	IAGGUGGI	R		10 9	X
60572	IPSALE	O		10 9	X
45984	LANDA	A		10 9	X
45942	LARINO	G		10 9	X
49635	LA TORRE	F		10 9	X
45940	LAUDANTE	C		10 9	X
57296	LAUDATI	A		10 9	X
49750	LAZZARA	G		10 9	X
49651	LENTO Emilio			10 9	X
49652	LENTO Eugenio			10 9	X
49653	LEONE	G		10 9	X
49663	LIBERTO	U		10 9	X
CARRIED FORWARD					

NAA: J2258, 12 Italian Prisoner of War and Internees Pay Sheets, March 1945, Brisbane

A teenager to an adult

The photos were taken in 1941 and 1943. The photos combined with Umberto's letter to his mother, gives credence to his words "You will not recognise your son – five years has been a long time." His mother last saw her son when he was 18 years old. By the time he returned to Italy, he was almost 26 years old.

23.10.45

Dear Mum

A couple of lines so as to not leave you without any of my news that thanks to God is good, as I hope is the same for you. Last week my work employers sent you two packages. I hope that they arrive there. I have also sent you my photo and eight pounds Sterling but as yet have not receive a reply. Dear Mum, by now the worst has passed but there are still some months and then all will be finished. Your mail takes 5 to 6 months to arrive and not so often just now and then some letters. Anyway as for now it is not so important because all of this is coming to an end. You will not recognise your son – five years has been a long time. However, it could have been worse.

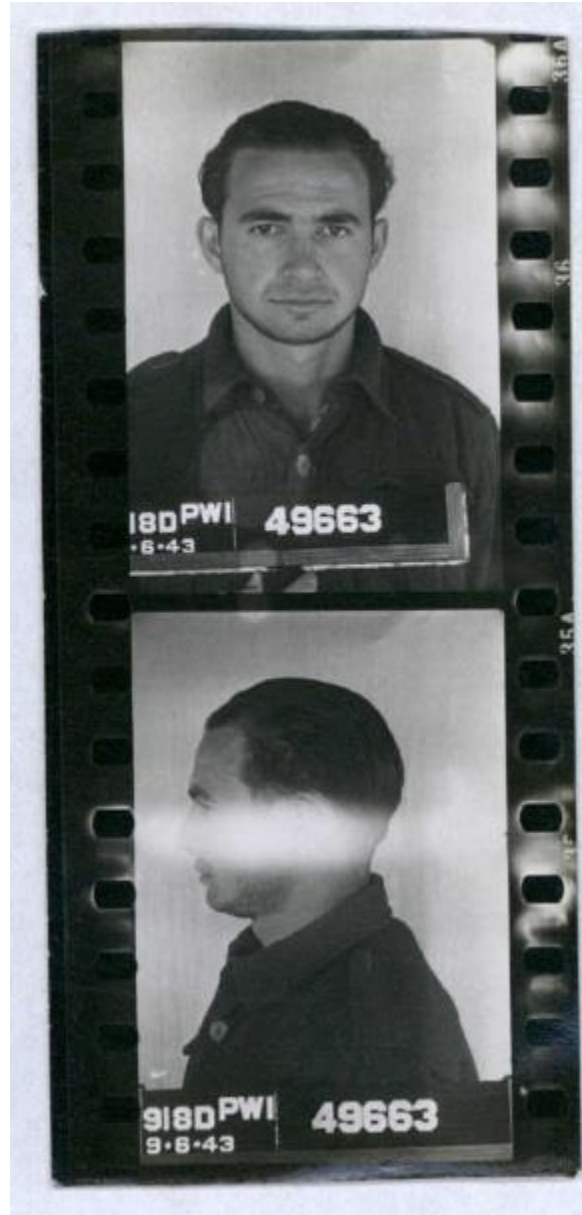
Finally hugs and kisses to share around.

Yours Berto.

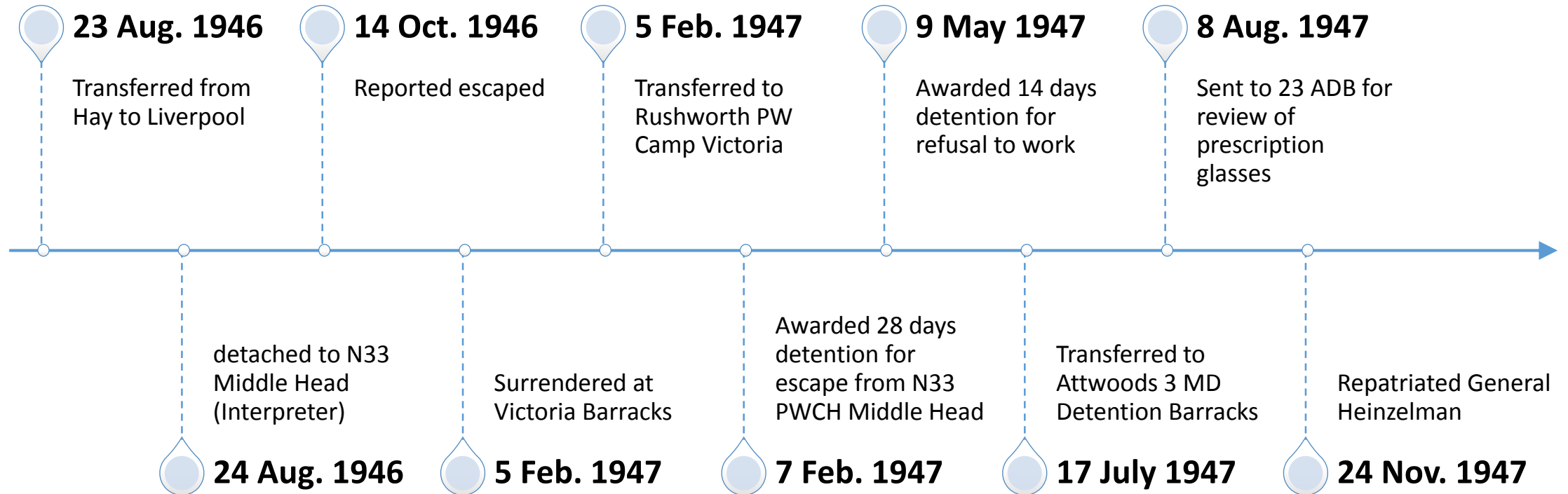
Translation from Italian to English by Morwenna Arcidiacono, Stanthorpe

Letter from Umberto Liberto to his mother in Italy 23.10.45

Special thank you to Reinhard Krieger, Brisbane who graciously shared letters from his collection for this project.



In NSW and Victoria: 1946 - 1947



Character Sketch

- Q1 PWCC Nov 45 Dominant Personality, likes to have own way and employer lets him to a certain extent but gets the work out of him. Well education and a good conversationalist, speaks five languages and can read and write four languages.
- Q1 PWCC Jan 46 A good type and well mannered. Has grasped a good command of English language. His standard of education is fairly high. Has at all times worked well and also got on well with his employer, who states that the P.W. is very trustworthy and can always be relied upon.
- Attwoods July 47 The man behind the scenes in all the compound moves but very careful not to get into much trouble himself. Is just a talker mainly, and would not make a good leader

Wanted

Born 29th January 1922 at Istanbul Turkey. Next of kin father LIBERTO Francesco of via Re Erone 11, 31 Siracusa Italy.

Height 5' 8", weight 154 lbs, build medium eyes brown, hair black, complexion olive. Is a linguist and speaks Italian, English, Turkish, French and Greek and can write and read all the above except Greek. Has no known contacts.

Repatriation General Stuart Heinztelman

Italian prisoners of war were transported by trucks and buses to Melbourne wharf for transfer to *Kanimbla*. The *Kanimbla* shipped the POWs to Fremantle where they transferred directly onto the *General Stuart Heinztelman*.

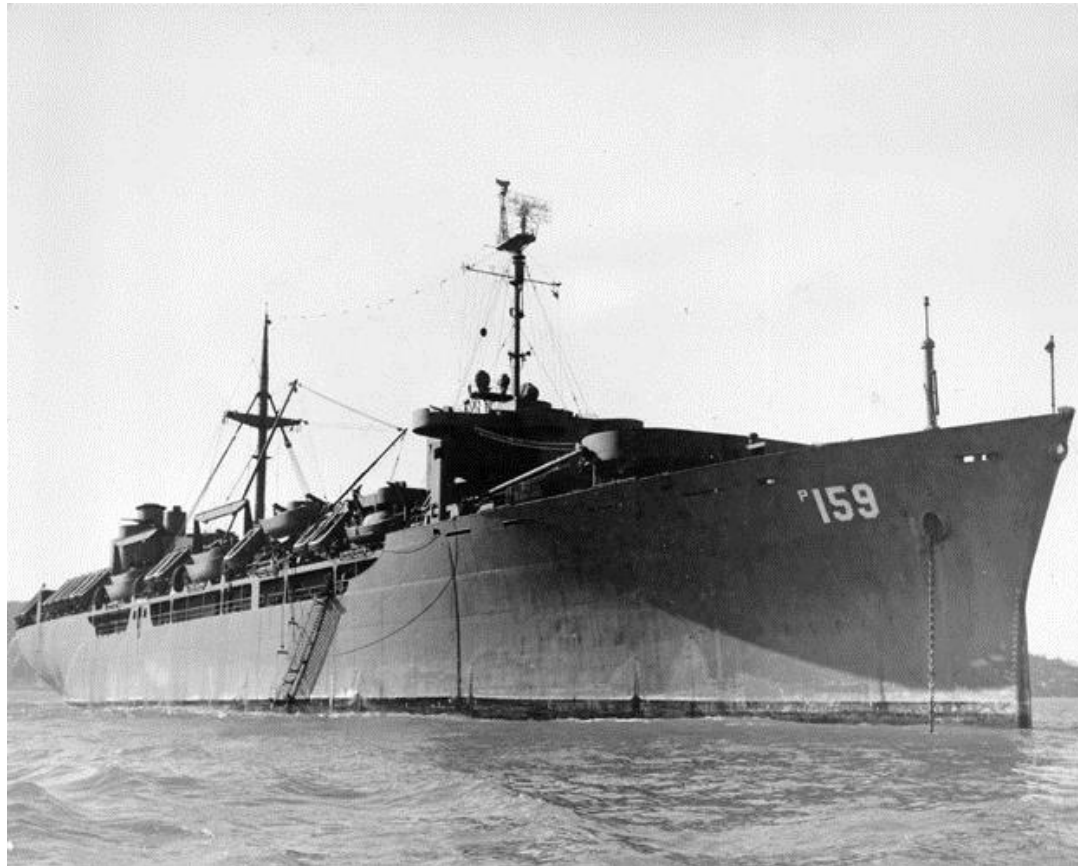


Photo contributed by Stan Svec <http://www.navsource.org/archives/09/22/22159.htm>



LOADED WITH HIS LUGGAGE this man was one of the Italian prisoners of war who boarded the *Kanimbla* at Station Pier, Port Melbourne, on Monday for Fremantle, where they will be transhipped to another vessel which will take them back to Italy.

390 P.O.W. ARRIVE IN KANIMBLA

Carrying 390 German and Italian prisoners of war and internees, H.M.A.S. *Kanimbla* berthed at Fremantle about 8.30 a.m. today.

1947 '390 P.O.W. ARRIVE IN KANIMBLA', *The Daily News* (Perth, WA : 1882 - 1950), 29 November, p. 1. (LATE CITY), viewed 05 May 2018, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article79817424>

1947 'GOING BACK TO ITALY', *Weekly Times* (Melbourne, Vic. : 1869 - 1954), 26 November, p. 3. , viewed 05 May 2018, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article224906937>