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Evidentiary Document # 5074.

IN THE MATTER OF WAR CRIMES AND IN THE MATTER OF ATROCITIES COMMITTED (AT KANBURI PRISONER OF WAR CAMP, SIAM,) IN SEPTEMBER 1943 AND IN THE MATTER OF THE MURDER OF CAPT. HAWLEY AND LIEUT. ARMITAGE.

British National Office Charge No:

United Nations War Crimes Commission Reference:

A F F I D A V I T.

I, No. 3858367 C.O.M.S. GEOFFREY KNOWLES, Reconnaissance Corps, with permanent address at 3 Ruston Road, Worcester, make oath and say as follows:-

1. I was taken prisoner in Singapore on 15th February 1942. I stayed there until June 1942 and was then moved to Siam. Later, in March 1943 I was moved to Kanburi prisoner of war camp. Kanburi was the headquarters of No. 1 Group of prisoner of war working camps. The work we were doing was on the Bangkok - Moumein railway line. No. 1 Group consisted of about seven outlying camps, one of which was called Sakonote. When I arrived at Kanburi I was put to work in the cook-house there, and all the time I was with No. 1 Group I stayed at Kanburi itself and did not go out to any of the outlying camps.

2. The Japanese and Korean personalities at Kanburi Camp were as follows:

- Lt. Comi Commandant.
- Other members of his staff were:
- Lt. Oda
- Lt. Kanematsu This man had been educated in America and had been there 35 years; consequently he could speak absolutely fluent English.

The N.C.Os. were:

- Sjt. Ejema
- Sjts. Watanabi There were two Watanabis; one of them was medical and the other in administration.

The guards were Koreans. The ones involved in these particular atrocities were called:

- Kanashira whose nick-name by us was "The Undertaker"
- Yasimoto

There were more guards involved, but I cannot remember their names.

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3. In September 1943 the Japanese found a wireless set which had been made by Serjeant Major Thew and a friend of his called Sjt. Smith. This set was found on Serjeant Major Thew's bed at Sakomoto Working Camp. A few days later Thew was sent down to Kanburi and was stood outside the guard room when he arrived. I remember seeing him there.

4. At 11 p.m. the Japanese began beating Serjeant Major Thew. None of us were allowed to see what was going on except the British Commandant, Capt. Renwick of the Sherwood Foresters who was called out specially to witness it. I was on duty in the cook-house about 100 yards away and I heard the whole incident. Serjeant Major Thew was beaten for an hour and a half. The method of beating was to strike him on the small of the back and on the thighs with heavy teak poles. I could hear the thuds of the poles as they struck him. Every now and again there would be a short spell when Thew was interrogated about his wireless set. The Japanese varied the beatings by striking him on the face with wooden clogs. When it was all over Thew was left in a crumpled heap outside the guard room for four days. On the first day he was brought down to the cook-house for some tea which I gave him. At first I did not recognise the man; his whole body was marked with weals, his jaw was crooked as though broken, and his face badly marked as the result of blows with the wooden clogs. His nose appeared to be broken and his legs up to his kidneys were a mass of black bruises. He also had a very bad eye injury which was suppurating. I did not see him after that, as for the rest of the four days rice and tea were brought to him and he stayed outside the guard room out in the open. At the end of the fourth day he was taken to hospital where I saw him again. At that time he was barely conscious and I do not think he knew what he was doing or what was happening. It was discovered in hospital that as well as his other injuries he had a burst ear drum. There is no doubt that all the personalities I have mentioned took part in this beating.

5. The day after Thew was allowed into hospital five British officers were brought down from Sakomoto to Kanburi for a beating. They were:

Major Smith (S.S.V.F.)
Major Slater
Major Knights
Lt. McKay
Lt. Lomax (Royal Signals)

The day before these five British officers were beaten the whole camp was warned that there was to be a beating that night, but there was to be no demonstration whatsoever; troops would remain in their bed spaces, otherwise a massacre would take place. I noticed that there were machine guns in the guard room, presumably ready for this. At 11 o'clock that night the beating started. All five of these British officers were beaten in much the same way as Serjeant Major Thew. Major Smith was almost killed and Lt. Lomax had both his firearms broken as a result of trying to protect himself. But I did not witness these incidents owing to the camp order; I only heard the screams and the noise of the teak poles on the

victims' bodies. When that was over the five of them were left outside the guard room for one day; they were then removed to hospital. I saw them in hospital and helped to feed them as none of them were able to feed themselves. Their injuries were terrible.

6. The day after that four more British officers were brought in to Kanburi for beating. They were:

Capt. Hawley
Capt. Gregg (7th Coastal Bty, R.A.)
Lt. Armitage
Lt. Gilchrist (S-D.F.)

As it turned out, neither Capt. Gregg nor Lt. Gilchrist were beaten, but at 11 o'clock that night Capt. Hawley and Lt. Armitage were murdered. Again, I did not witness the incident, I only heard the noise of the beatings which lasted in each case for about three-quarters of an hour. In each case Dr. van der Eyden was called out, but before he got to where the beatings were going on he was motioned back by Kanematsu.

7. The next day two soldiers, Bdr. Rider and Gnr. Cavaney, who were in the workshop about twenty yards behind the Japanese guard room, found a Red Cross issue trilby hat in the swill pit. They also slept in that little hut and told me afterwards that they had heard the Japanese guards drawing shovels from an adjacent tool house. There is no doubt in my mind that Hawley and Armitage were beaten to death and buried nearby, and there is also no doubt in my mind that the Japanese personalities whom I have mentioned above were all responsible for these beatings as they must all have taken their turn at striking those British officers and Serjeant Major Thew.

8. I would describe Lt. Coni as a man of about 40, height 5 ft. 5 ins., weight about 10 stone, very thick set; round face and flat nose and looked more like a monkey than anything else. Lt. Oda was aged about 27, about 5 ft. 8 or 9 ins. tall, rather slim, weight about 9½ stone; he had monkey-like features, high cheek bones, long jaw and was more slant-eyed than the Japanese, upper teeth prominent. Kanematsu, owing to his long stay in America, had rather lost his Japanese features; he was whiter than the majority and wore square cut rimless glasses of an American fashion. He was aged about 50, height 5 ft. 9 ins., weight about 11½ stone. He had had varicose vein trouble and he had had the affected veins taken out, so that he did not have actually a limp nor exactly a normal walk; he moved slowly and rather stiffly. He was, properly speaking, a civilian interpreter attached to the Japanese Army with a lieutenant's rank, and he wore on his left breast a blue plaque upon which were five overlapping stars gradually

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decreasing in size. Of the serjeants and Korean guards they were all very much the same in build, about 5 ft. 5, typically built low-class Japanese or Korean coolie types.

SWORN by the said GEOFFREY KNOWLES)
at 6 Spring Gardens in the City)
of Westminster this eighth day of)
November 1945) (Signed) G. KNOWLES.

Before me

(Signed) A.M. BELL-MACDONALD.
Capt.
Legal Staff.

Mil. Dept.
Office of J.A.G.
London.

Certified true copy:

(Signed) R.B. LAMBE, Lt.Colonel.
A.A.G.
War Crimes, HQ AFSEA.