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The Mildura Pipe Band and World War 2

"Shortly after the outbreak of war, two of our band members – Ern and Herb Forrest – enlisted in the army and went to the Middle East. The remaining members of the band, all keen to enlist, felt that the years of band training would be lost, particularly if we were split up into different regiments....A letter was drafted and forwarded to Army Command offering the services of our members as a band,complete with instruments." - **Pipe Major Bill Brown**

After a long delay, this offer was taken up by the 4th Anti-tank Regiment, and ten band members travelled to Melbourne to enlist. In mid-1941 they sailed to Malaya and were stationed at Tampin until the Japanese invasion in December that year.

Following the battle of Muar, in Malaya, the regiment retreated to Singapore where, following the fall, they were interned in Changi. Pipe Sergeant Dick Voege and a small group became separated from the main body after the battle of Muar and managed to avoid capture till about a month after the fall of Singapore.

Then one of the group was shot in the ankle in a skirmish, and they all decided to surrender to the Japanese so as to get him medical treatment. They were taken to a prison in Kuala Lumpur:

"The next morning I heard someone call my name and looked up to see Johnny Hannah, one of the band boys. I was very pleased to see him as I had no idea what had happened to any of our mates." - **Dick Voege**.

After nine months, the prisoners were transferred to Changi.

Dick Voege: "I was anxious to learn the fate of the other Band Boys but it was difficult to obtain information with so many thousands of prisoners in the place. Furthermore, I could not bring myself to go round asking, "Is so and so still alive?" The way I approached this problem was to start a conversation and gradually work around to the Band, and then someone would say, "Ern Clifford is O.K., and Don Scott too". Gradually I found to my amazement, that all the band members had survived the fighting and all were, at that stage, still alive.

[Bob Powis, Herb Forrest and John Hannah later died]