

Sparrow

A Chronicle of Defiance

Grant McLachlan

An epic account of
The Sparrows
– Battle of Britain gunners
who defended Timor
Sparrow Force as part of
in 1942.

THE STORY

*Sparrow is a seldom-heard but uplifting story of The Sparrows
– Battle of Britain vets who defended Timor as part of Sparrow Force.*

It is the story of Charlie McLachlan's war: a triumph of stubborn Scottish defiance and laconic Aussie genius over the relentless violence of man and nature.

From the Rudolph Hess crash-landing to the atom bomb, from history's last bayonet charge to the war's greatest aerial bombardment, Charlie McLachlan survives and bears witness to some of the landmark days of World War II.

At one time or other in a four year ordeal, he is fired upon by the armies, navies and/or air forces of Germany, Japan, Australia, the Netherlands, Great Britain and the United States of America – pretty much everyone but the Russians.

He defies or evades the ravages of tropical ulcers, tropical heat, alpine cold, gangrene, cholera, malaria, beriberi, dysentery, mosquitoes, crocodiles, snakes, sharks, scorpions, sadistic Sikhs, Japanese hellships, falling coconuts, flying shrapnel, beatings, beheadings, bullets, bombs, bayonets, torpedoes, a crushed leg, a fractured skull, malnutrition and premature cremation.

He's presumed dead by the British Army, left for dead by Japanese guards, and declared dead by a Dutch Javanese doctor.

Yet through it all, Charlie soldiers on.

Half a world away, his wife Mary, fashioned from the same mental granite, stoically awaits his return. Not even an official telegram confirming the near-certainty of Charlie's death, or later rumours of his torture, can shake her iron faith.



Photograph of Charlie McLachlan
taken by a Mitsushima guard.

Sparrow Force – the force who defended Timor in 1942 – was one of Australia's most successful military units. At the lowest point in the Second World War, soldiers equipped with First World War weapons destroyed Japan's most successful and elite special force.

Cut off from Australia, a commando campaign held off a Japanese division for almost a year at the turning point of the war. Low in medicine and ammunition, they built an improvised radio that regained contact with their homeland. It was the first good news of the war for the Allies.

Sparrow Force was unique. They were the first force to defeat Japan in battle. They were the last to be captured. Those who escaped to pursue a guerrilla campaign spent more time in combat against the Japanese than any other Allied unit. They were set up to fail. Instead, they endured, defied, and succeeded.

Newsreels were made, victories were recorded, medals were awarded, Australia's morale elevated. As Winston Churchill famously said,

"They alone did not surrender."



Signaller Keith Richards, Corporal John Donovan
and Sergeant Jack Sargeant (left to right), from the
Australian 2/2nd Independent Company, using a
radio on a mountain top in Japanese-occupied
Timor, about November 1942.

THE AUTHOR



Grant McLachlan in the Yokohama War Crimes Tribunal.

“Sparrow was a life changing experience that filled gaps in my life and my family’s.”

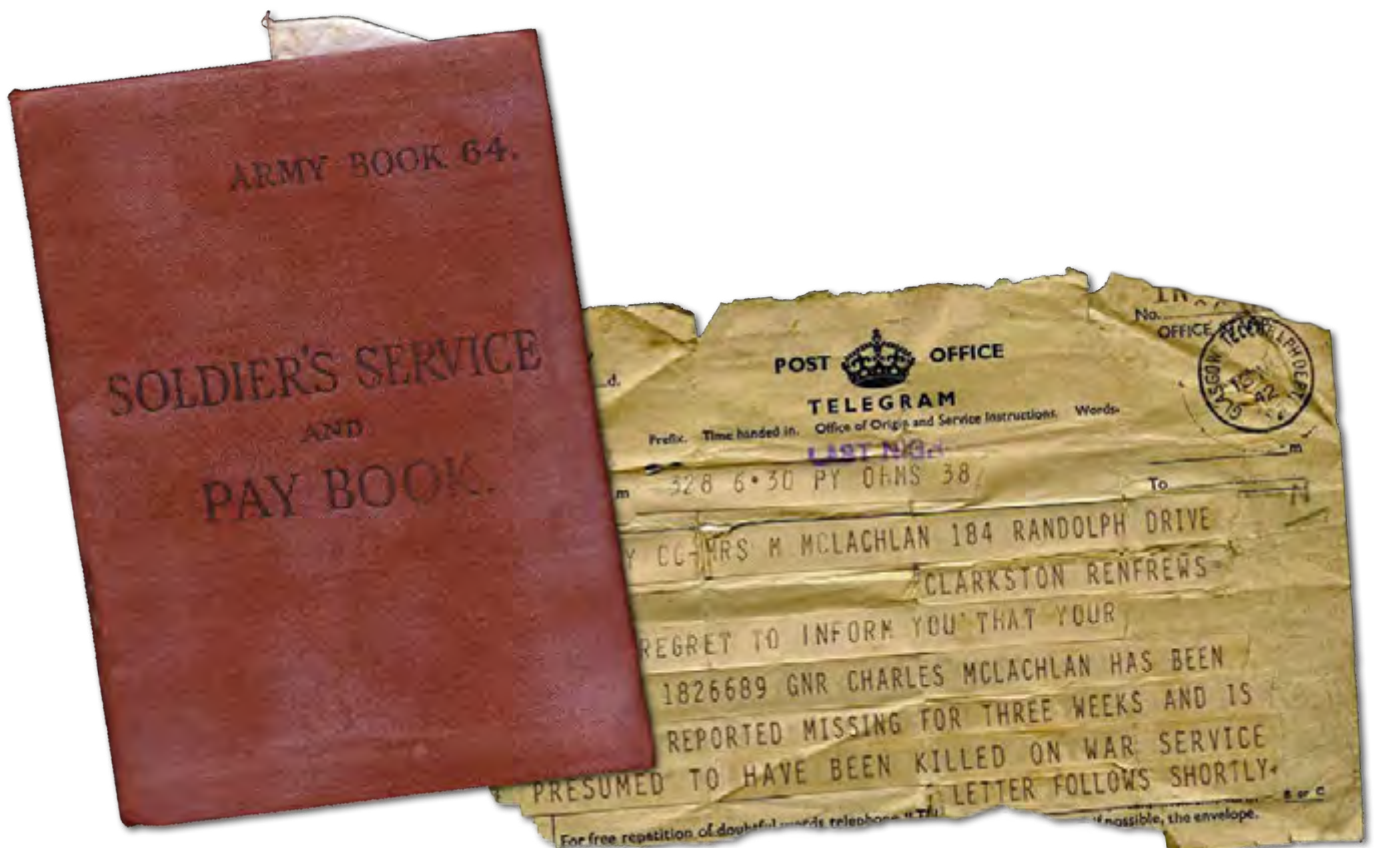
Grant McLachlan is the grandson of Charlie and Mary McLachlan - the central characters of *Sparrow*. Born on the 30th anniversary of his grandfather’s liberation, Grant interviewed over 100 war veterans and travelled throughout twelve countries to research a true story told in the way the veterans of Sparrow Force wanted them told.

A qualified lawyer and hearings commissioner, Grant has worked in Parliament as a researcher and advisor. His columns in New Zealand newspapers and his pro-bono work has assisted many people involved in disputes with central and local government authorities.

Starting his research with the purchase of a Sony Handycam in September 2003, as each day of interviewing his grandparents completed he verified the accounts. Grant slowly unravelled the story of his grandparents’ war as he collected copies of books and then shared his research with Mary and Charlie. Over time, Grant travelled to Sparrow Force reunions in Australia and other places that Charlie visited during the war.

“With each place I visited, I was fortunate to meet people who remembered Charlie. Charlie was the barber who was the central figure in the camps and he also had a remarkable story of survival.”

The prologue describes Grant’s journey to research and write *Sparrow*.



Charlie’s service and pay book and a replica of the telegram that Mary received informing her of Charlie’s disappearance.

THE LEGEND

"You alone do not surrender to us."

- Lieutenant General Yuichi Tsuchihashi

In February 1942, there was no good news for the Allies. Germany were in Egypt and on the doorstep of Leningrad, Moscow, and Stalingrad. The Japanese were advancing through the Far East. The Americans were retreating along the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines, Hong Kong fell the previous Christmas, Singapore fell on 15 February, Ambon and Rabaul fell on the 3rd.

Reinforcements were on the way to Timor but were attacked twice; as they departed and when they returned to port at Darwin on the 16th. Darwin was attacked by the same fleet that attacked Pearl Harbour but twice as many bombs were dropped.

The men on Timor, known as Sparrow Force, were next to face the Japanese advance. Mostly equipped with weapons from the First World War, their only advantage over their enemy was that their bayonets were longer. In the last full battalion bayonet charge, Japan's elite 3rd Yokozuka Special Naval Landing Force were decimated.

Those members of Sparrow Force who escaped the Japanese onslaught fought a successful guerrilla campaign for 60 days cut off from Australia. When they ran low on ammunition and medicine, they stole parts to build a radio - which they nicknamed 'Winnie the War Winner' - and contacted Australia to ask for supplies.

General Douglas MacArthur arrived in Melbourne on 18 April 1942 to take up the position of Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA). Bataan had fallen the previous week and Corregidor would fall on 6 May. On 19 April 1942 Sparrow Force regained radio contact with Australia. Sparrow Force was the only Allied unit under his command still fighting the Japanese.

The message of Sparrow Force's exploits reached far and wide. To many, it was the first good news of the war.

Japanese morale was devastated as they thought that the commandoes were ghosts that came out of the ground. The attempt to raise morale by deploying 'The Singapore Tiger' to flush out the commandoes backfired.

The Allied guerrillas would become associated with the phrase "You alone do not surrender to us", which were contained in a message to the men of Sparrow Force by the Japanese commander on Timor, Lieutenant General Yuichi Tsuchihashi. Winston Churchill later stated: "they alone did not surrender."

In late 1942, Army public relations sent the Academy Award winning filmmaker Damien Parer, and war correspondent Bill Marien to Timor, to record the efforts of the Australian commandos. Parer's film, *Men of Timor*, was greeted with enthusiasm by Allied audiences. Marien's report for the *Sydney Morning Herald* can be viewed here.

The legend lives on in *Sparrow* in the most comprehensive account of their achievements .



The medals awarded to Sparrow Force. To view a list of recipients, please visit the Wikipedia link to the right.

20 FOUGHT OFF 500 JAPANESE

Timor Exploits of A.I.F. Commandos

BY W. MARIEN,

30 ATTACK GARRISON OF 3,000

The Japanese retired from this area on April 26, and on May 12 the Australians carried the fight to Dili, where 3,000 Japanese were quartered.

Captain (now Major) Geoff Laidlaw of Newcastle, former New South Wales junior surf champion, was chosen to lead a party of 30 into the town. His second in command was Lieutenant T. O. Nesbit, of Perth. Lieutenant J. Garnett, of Brisbane, was to lead a party on to the beach at Dili. His object was to open fire simultaneously with the five in the

At that signal the entire party opened fire. So surprised were the Japanese that in many cases they shot their own men.

Under cover of the confusion the Australians withdrew the way they had come, and it was then that Laidlaw discovered that one of them was missing. He was Paddy Connolly, of North Sydney.

Laidlaw went back. He found Connolly lying in the gutter, still bleeding away with his Bren gun. Laidlaw tapped him on the shoulder, and the two went out a different way.

JAPANESE INCREDULOUS

Next day the Japanese made a dash for the Aus-

Guerillas Make Good

The Australian guerillas on Timor are now rivaling Speed (or Flash) Gordon and Popeye. The New York Post is featuring a comic strip titled "The Australian Sparrows"—so called because the official name of the guerilla unit is the Sparrow Force. The Japs have another name for it.

TIMOR MEN HONOURED

AWARDS FOR TWO MEN

Defence of Dili

Both men earned their decorations during the heroic defence of Dili aerodrome, which is described in a despatch by W. Marien on this page. Lieutenant McKenzie was in charge of the defence force and was

MAKING "WINNIE, THE WAR WINNER"

For long weeks after the Japanese landed at Dili on February 19 nothing was heard in Australia of the commandos.

Then 89 days later, on April 19, this dramatic signal was heard in Darwin:—

"Force intact. Still fighting. Badly need boots, money, quinine, Tommy-gun ammunition."

This signal was transmitted by "Winnie the War Winner," a crazy contraption built from scraps of wire and tin and pieces of discarded radio sets.

From February 19 the commandos had heard nothing from the rest of the world. There was little prospect of building a radio.

SIGNALLERS BEGIN JOB

Among those who had fought their way from Koepang when Dutch Timor fell, were two signallers, Corporal John Sergeant, of Bonshaw, N.E.W., and Lance-Corporal John Donovan, of Lindfield, N.E.W. These two men worked under Captain George Parker, of Earlwood, N.E.W., with Signallers Max (Joe) Loveless, of Hobart, and K. Richards, of Victoria, two members of the original commando force.

On March 8 the four men began work—Loveless just out of sick bed and Sergeant just recovered from malaria.

Loveless, whose knowledge made him No. 1 man of the team, planned a circuit, and all the commandos were asked to be on the look-out for anything that might serve as a radio part.

The first transmitter was made from parts salvaged from three sets. It was completed on March 26, but it would not work.

The four signallers had been working with inadequate tools—a tomahawk, pair of pliers, and a screwdriver. They had no means of establishing a calibration for the set which would

give them a known transmitting wave length. The coils were wound round lengths of bamboo. This was responsible for the failure of the first transmitter.

On March 28, Donovan returned from Atiamboa. He was loaded like a treasure ship. He had the power pack from a Dutch transmitter, two aerial tuning condensers, 80 feet of heavy aerial wire in short lengths, and a receiving set. Next day the men had to move because the Japanese were getting too close. Loveless began to work on a second transmitter. It was built into a four-gallon kerosene tin.

PIERCED ENEMY LINES

A battery charger was recovered from enemy-held territory. To get it, 14 commandos went through the Japanese lines to the old Australian headquarters at Vila Maria. There within 100 yards of Japanese sentries, protected only by the dark, they dug up the charger which had been buried when the headquarters were evacuated. The second transmitter was also a failure. Again the fault was calibration.

Loveless, undaunted, designed and built a third set to operate when the Japanese lines were raided for tins of kerosene. This they mixed with diesel oil, also captured from the Japanese, and the charger was started on kerosene and run on diesel oil.

They signalled Darwin on April 19 but got no reply. They did not know that their messages had been picked up on the Australian mainland and passed on to Darwin, that all transmitting stations had been warned to keep off the air and to listen to Timor the following night.

On the night of April 19 they got an answer from Darwin. Then their batteries failed but on the night April 20 they established contact.

The commanding officer of the force told me with feeling that but for the amazing job done by these four signallers they would not have been able to contact Australia.

KILL-AND-RUN TACTICS

On March 7 the commandos' leader was told that the Dutch and Australian troops in Dutch Timor had been wiped out or had surrendered. "We knew we were on our own," he told me, "and we decided to fight as long as our ammunition held out and as long as we were physically able." He decided to adopt kill-and-run tactics. The commandos mined roads and blew up bridges. And after several enemy trucks had been blown off the roads the Japanese restricted all transport to a speed of 5 miles an hour.

The Australians continued to harass the Japanese, who soon refused to move in the mountains unless their patrols were at least 50 strong. On April 2...

FOR LOSER 40 TO 1

Throughout June and July the Australians kept up their commando warfare. Then, on August 9, the Japanese made their most determined attempt to crush all resistance. Attacking from 5 directions, including both the north and south coasts of the island, a force of 2,500 drove against the Australians for 10 days. The Japanese lost at least 200 dead. Only 5 Australians were killed.

But it was a terrible 10 days for the commandos. They were constantly on the move. What food they had was snatched from the country and eaten raw. Many of them had malaria or dysentery. All of them suffered from lack of nourish-

The Glasgow Herald Saturday, Jan. 2, 1942.

The "Singapore Tiger"

The Japanese have received such a rough handling from the Australian Commandos still holding out in Timor (says Reuter's Sydney correspondent) that they brought in a high ranking officer known as the "Singapore Tiger," who boasted that he would crush them.

The natives told the Commandos about the "Tiger." They decided to get him, and Sergeant Ray Aitken, of West Australia, was put in charge of an ambushing party. They watched the "Tiger," with three other Japanese officers, approach behind a screen of natives, followed by 40 or 50 Japanese soldiers, with more natives forming a rearguard.

Aitken instructed four marksmen to pick off the four officers as they came round a bend 200 yards away, while his Bren gunners blazed away at the remainder of the party. Their task accomplished, Aitken's men withdrew without suffering any casualties.

Later from Dili came reports of an imposing ceremonial funeral for the "Singapore Tiger." His body was boiled down to the bare bones in an oil drum, the skeleton dismembered, and the bones carried ceremoniously to a destroyer for transport to Japan.

AMERICAN VISITORS ON BENCH

The legend of Sparrow Force was the first good news for the Allies, which gained a worldwide audience.

SPARROW FORCE



*The first force to defeat the Japanese in combat,
the last full battalion bayonet charge,
Sparrow Force can claim to have spent longer in
contact with the enemy than any other Allied unit.
In fact, when MacArthur became Supreme
Commander in April 1942, Sparrow Force was his
only force still fighting the Japanese anywhere.*

Sparrow Force was a detachment based on the 2/40th Australian Infantry Battalion and other British and Australian 8th Division units during World War II. The force was formed to defend the island of Timor from invasion by the Empire of Japan. It formed the main part of the Allied units in the Battle of Timor (1942–43).

The majority of the personnel in Sparrow Force were from the 2/40th Infantry Battalion, which had been formed in Tasmania and was part of the 23rd Australian Infantry Brigade. The force was initially commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William Leggatt, although later command was taken over by Brigadier William Veale before being passed on to Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Spence. A commando unit—the 2/2nd Independent Company (recruited mostly in Western Australia)—was also part of Sparrow Force. With the other forces from the 23rd Brigade, it shared contingents from 18 Anti-Tank Battery, the 2/12th Field Ambulance unit, 23rd Brigade Signals unit and the 2/11th Field Company. Sparrow Force was reinforced on 16 February 1942 with 189 British anti-aircraft gunners, from A & C Troop of the 79th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery of the Royal Artillery, mostly veterans of the Battle of Britain. Further reinforcements, an Australian infantry battalion and an American artillery regiment, were attacked en route to Timor and returned to Darwin. The 2/40th and most Sparrow Force units were based at Penfui Airfield, outside the capital of Netherlands Timor, Kupang. The 2/2nd Independent Company was based across the border, at Dili in Portuguese Timor.

The rest of the Australian 8th Division were in Singapore, Malaya, Ambon (Gull Force), and Rabaul (Lark Force). The only force still fighting the Japanese after February 1942 was Sparrow Force, which fought until December before being reinforced and then replaced.

Sparrow assembles the stories of the most Sparrow Force veterans in the most detailed and frank account of their experiences. To view clips from interviews, please click [here](#).

To find out more about Sparrow Force, please visit the [Wikipedia](#) page.



★ THE SPARROWS



“These Poms turned up dressed like tiger hunters. Then I found out they were Battle of Britain-hardened Cockneys. They’d fire a clip, dive for cover, then climb back on their gun and shoot more Jap planes to pieces.”

- L/Cpl. Clyde McKay,
2/40 Inf. Bn AIF

The 79th Light Anti-Aircraft (Ack-Ack) Battery was an independent Territorial Army unit (‘the weekend warriors’) of the Royal Artillery of the British Army.

Formed in the winter of 1939, they were based initially at Walton-on-Thames to defend key installations including water reservoirs supplying London. Originally containing mostly London volunteers, the battery became a full-time unit at the start of September 1939 when war with Germany became inescapable. As with all Territorial Army units, the battery was absorbed into the regular army by the end of that month. Together with three other similar batteries they became part of the 36th Light Ack-Ack Regiment.

During the first two years of the war the unit was employed on anti-aircraft protection duties in the Luftwaffe’s Blitzes of London. The unit saw action during the Battle of Britain where it served with distinction defending the Hawker Aviation factory at Langley, Churchill’s country home at Ditchley and the oil refinery north of Bristol. Later, they were used in the protection of airfields and key installations in Cornwall and the Scilly Isles.

During the months the battery converted to using Bofors 40 millimetre automatic anti-aircraft artillery the battery was preparing to become a mobile battery. Conscripted 19 year old cockney drivers were being trained in Blackpool. Replacement gunners were sourced from the 79th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment trained at Hadrian’s Camp in Carlisle. In November 1941 the men were all issued embarkation leave.

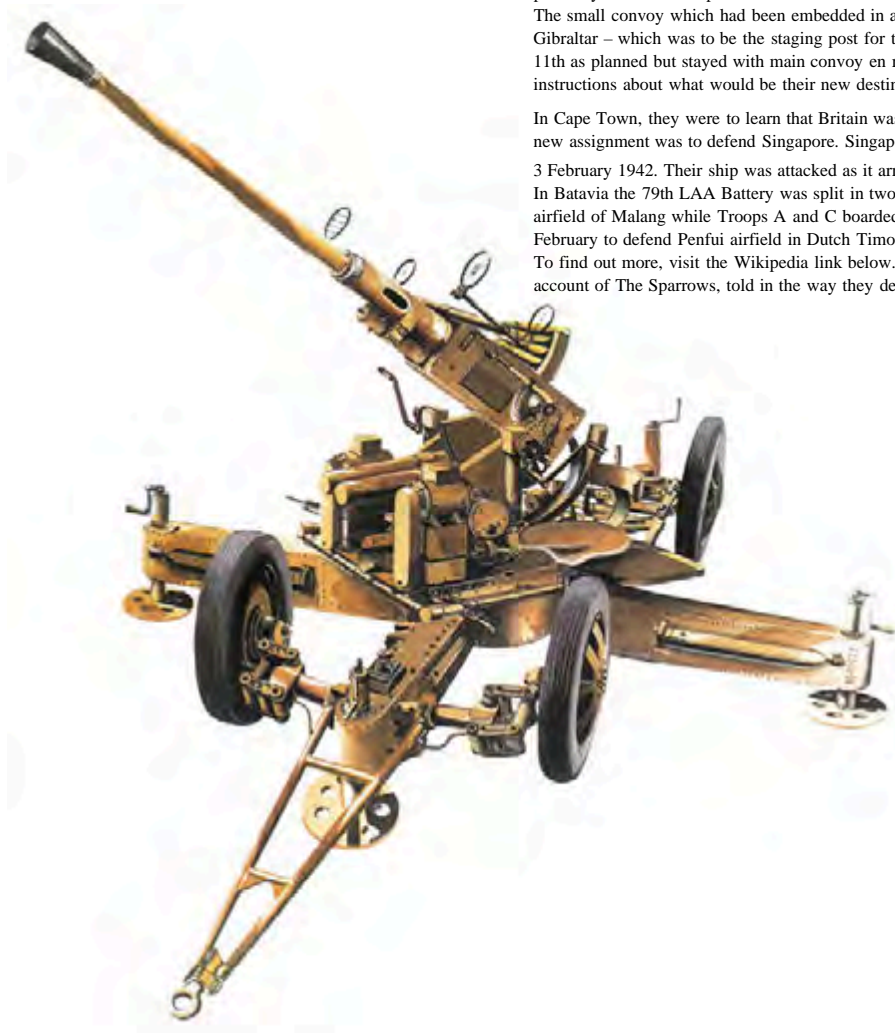
The battery was then formed with other batteries, including the 48th and 69th LAA batteries, into the 21st Light Anti Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery for service overseas. The battery received some cursory training in mobile warfare during ‘Exercise Bumper’ and were now issued with desert kit and their equipment was painted in desert camouflage ready for overseas deployment in mid-November. The battery gunners left Gourock on the MV *Warwick Castle* at 8am on 7 December 1941. A small team from the 79th accompanied their equipment on the SS *Malancha*, which sailed independently from Liverpool on the same day as the Japanese launched their attacks on Malaya and Pearl Harbour.

Whilst at sea, the planners at the War Office decided to reschedule the operation which had been one of Winston Churchill’s pet projects, but without letting him know. The Operation would eventually take place a year later as “Operation Torch”.

The small convoy which had been embedded in a much larger troop convoy WS(14) for their voyage to Gibraltar – which was to be the staging post for the invasion of Algiers – did not detach on December 11th as planned but stayed with main convoy en route to South Africa. The ‘Force’ received no instructions about what would be their new destination and mission.

In Cape Town, they were to learn that Britain was now at war with Japan and their new assignment was to defend Singapore. Singapore was under attack before they 3 February 1942. Their ship was attacked as it arrived in port.

In Batavia the 79th LAA Battery was split in two. Troop B was sent to defend the airfield of Malang while Troops A and C boarded the HMS *Ban Hong Liong* on 9 February to defend Penfui airfield in Dutch Timor – the closest airfield to Australia. To find out more, visit the Wikipedia link below. *Sparrow* is the most detailed account of The Sparrows, told in the way they described.



EVERYWHERE

“The Royal Artillery motto is ‘Everywhere,’ which is exactly where we went.”
 – Charlie McLachlan

Shortly after conscription, Charlie McLachlan was offered a job as a battery barber. He would be given a motorbike to travel around the English countryside and barber the anti-aircraft gunners at various gun sites. Charlie was talked out of that deal but, as Charlie said, “I missed out on that deal but I have come this far for the better of it... as unpleasant as it was.”

Charlie’s attitude was the culmination of travelling to the furthest corners of the globe, meeting a diversity of situations, and immersion with several cultures.

By focussing on the positives, Charlie’s eyes opened to different perspectives and learning alternative means of survival.

Sparrow follows Charlie’s journey from the start of the war in Glasgow, to conscription and training in Northern England, to deployment. On the night of 6 December 1941 Charlie’s convoy leaving Gourock is destined for North Africa but those plans take an unexpected turn as the men wake to the news of Japan’s attacks on Pearl Harbour and British ports in the Far East.

As the map below demonstrates, Charlie ended the war visiting most of the major battlefields of the Pacific War. During the long journey home, he discovers that the world is a very different place.



Places & Dates

Glasgow, Scotland - 24 July 1941	Singapore 24 – 27 October 1942
Carlisle, Cumbria, England 24 July 1941 – 17 October 1941	Saigon, French Indo-China 3 – 7 November 1942
Redford, Edinburgh, Scotland 23 October – 8 November 1941	Tacao, Formosa 17 November 1942
Aldingham & Hale, Cumbria 14 November – 7 December 1941	Mitsushima Camp, Hiraoka, Japan 28 November 1942 – 16 April 1944
Gourock, Scotland 7 December 1941	Kanose, Japan 16 April 1944 – 6 September 1945
Freetown, Sierra Leone 21 – 26 December 1941	Yokohama, Japan 6 – 7 September 1945
Capetown, South Africa 9 – 13 January 1942	Okinawa, Japan 7 – 10 September 1945
Batavia, Java, Dutch East Indies 3 – 9 February 1942	Manila, Philippines 10 – 23 September 1945
Koepang, Dutch West Timor 16 February – 23 September 1942	Manila – Batavia – Singapore – Ceylon October 1945
Koepang – Dili – Batavia 23 September – 1 October 1942	Ceylon – Aden – Suez Canal November 1945
Makasura Camp # 5, Batavia 1 – 17 October 1942	Liverpool, England 9 December 1945
Batavia – Singapore 17 – 24 October 1942	Glasgow, Scotland 10 December 1945



- The above Google interactive map includes:
- Locations of every place mentioned in Sparrow;
 - Footprints of each camp;
 - Routes of Charlie’s journey;
 - Military movements;
 - Locations of cemeteries and memorials;
 - Locations of monument events.

Please scroll down the box to the left of the map, click on a place, and then zoom in using the buttons to the bottom right of the map.

To view a full screen version of the map, please click on the link below.

Regimental badges of prisoners of war portrayed in Sparrow.

HORYO

Horyo (捕虜) is the Japanese word for 'captive of war.' The men of Sparrow Force were led to believe that the Japanese did not take prisoners in war

To be taken prisoner in combat was the greatest shame a warrior could endure, worse than defeat. The Japanese code of Bushidō — 'the way of the warrior' — was deeply ingrained in Japanese culture, especially as the war escalated. The concept of Yamato-damashii equipped

each soldier with a strict code:

"Never be captured, never break down, and never surrender. Surrender was dishonorable. Each soldier was trained to fight to the death and was expected to die before suffering dishonor. Defeated Japanese leaders preferred to take their own lives in the painful samurai ritual of seppuku (called hara kiri in the West). Warriors who surrendered were not deemed worthy of regard or respect."

For centuries, Japan was skeptical of the West. Japan's borders were closed to Western influence during the *Sokoku* ("locked country") but those borders were forced open by gunboat diplomacy from the West. The United States sent warships to the entrance of Tokyo Bay in 1853 to force a trade agreement on the Japanese Shogunate.

The Japanese went through a major modernisation during the Meiji ("enlightened rule") Restoration between 1868 and 1912. The Emperor's goal was to combine "western advances" with the traditional, "eastern values." Over time, Japan developed the *fukoku kyōhei* ("enrich the country, strengthen the military") strategy to maintain its security — both militarily and psychologically. An important objective of the military buildup was to gain the respect of the Western Powers and achieve equal status for Japan in the international community. Many of the social and institutional reforms of the Meiji period were designed to remove the stigma of backwardness and inferiority.

The problem with the *fukoku kyōhei* strategy was that industrialisation needed steel, steel needed trade, trade needed security, security needed steel. Most of the sources of raw materials were in colonies of the Western Powers.

The Meiji Constitution also had one flaw — that the executive was separate from the elected legislature and executive decisions needed military support. Effectively, the military had veto power and curbing military spending was out of the question.

victories over China in 1895, rubbed shoulders with the world powers during the Boxer Rebellion, then world power status after victory over Russia in 1905. Japan even entered an alliance with the United Kingdom in 1902 and helped Britain suppress an Indian soldier rebellion in Singapore during the First World War.

As part of Japan's desire for acceptance from the West, they signed and ratified the Hague Convention of 1907, which stated that prisoners must be treated the same as the captor's forces. During the First World War, Japan invaded German territory in China, taking 3,900 prisoner. In all respects, the

"Those sons of bitches can beat me to death but they aren't gonna starve me to death!"

— PFC Robert Gordon Teas,
19th Bomb Group,
United States Army



The letter from King George VI welcoming liberated prisoners of war home.

Japanese observed the Hague Convention. Relations with the West deteriorated following the League of Nations Conference's rejection of a racial equality clause in the Covenant. When the United States did not join the League, the United States then set about negotiating multilateral agreements, which were designed to break the Anglo-Japanese alliance and restrain Japanese expansion. What it achieved instead was isolation and aggression from the Japanese.

Japan developed its own path in the East after annexing Korea, invading Manchuria, China and French Indo-China. They adopted the cynical and self-serving role of liberator from Western imperialism. As trade embargoes started to bite, Japan prepared for war. They studied their enemy, how they treated those they colonised, how they treated captives. *Sparrow* said the same thing: Japan wanted to liberate the Far East of western imperialism so it could trade with its neighbours. *Horyo* also recounted how their Japanese captors knew how the British treated prisoners during the Boer War, how the Americans treated Filipinos, how the Australians treated Aborigines, and how the Americans treated Japanese Americans.

By February 1942, the Japanese slaughtered Chinese soldiers in Nanking, captured Hong Kong, and massacred Australians at Laha on Ambon. Sparrow Force were next.

The Fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942 — where 130,000 British, Indian and Australian troops became prisoners of war — saw a change in Japan's approach to prisoners of war.

Although Japan did not ratify the 1929 Geneva Convention, it did promise to abide by its terms as well as the Hague Convention of 1907. The Red Cross was promised access to prisoners of war.

Japan did not expect to capture so many enemy and most soldiers were not aware of The Hague or Geneva Conventions. Another 100,000 Americans and Filipinos would also be captured during the Fall of the Philippines in May 1942. With so many captives and fearing that prisoners of war would be close to the front line, many would be transported on unmarked ships to Thailand or Japan to work in labour camps.

Sparrow follows the journey of The Sparrows throughout the Japanese Empire, experiencing different conditions with inmates captured in Bataan, Malaya, Singapore, Java, Hong Kong, Timor, and at sea. In the most comprehensive research undertaken, it explores life as a *horyo* in mainland Japan as the Allied blockades tighten and bombing raids escalate.

To compare the treatment of prisoners of war, visit the following Wikipedia page.

THE RULES OF WAR

“The trial of the vanquished by the victors cannot be impartial no matter how it is hedged about with the forms of justice.”

- U.S. Senator Robert A. Taft,
October 5, 1946.

The momentum of the Western World and Modern Japan collided at Mitsushima Prisoner of War Camp. Isolated in the Tenryu River valley of Japan’s Central Alps, a *Lord of the Flies* scenario played out where Bushido culture and Western jurisprudence argued about how prisoners of war should be treated.

How prisoners of war should be treated became the *Rules of War*. Japan ratified the Hague Convention. Japan, a military-run government, did not sign the Geneva Convention of 1929 though, in 1942, it did promise to abide by its terms.

Among the ruins of Japan’s defeated capital, one of the Mitsushima guards would become the first person to be tried for war crimes against the *Rules of War*.

At the Yokohama War Crimes Tribunal, the concept of the *Rules of War* would set the legal precedent upon which every successive war crimes trial would rely. Every murder, beating, summary punishment, brutal treatment, forced labour, medical experimentation, starvation rations, and poor medical treatment would rely on the effectiveness of the trial of a civilian guard and injured former corporal with the nickname “Little Glass Eye.”



Footage of the first person tried as a war criminal. Tatsuo Tsuchiya (also known as ‘Little Glass Eye’) was also a guard at Mitsushima Prisoner of War Camp.



Liberated prisoners of war filling out War Crimes Questionnaires in Manila, September 1945.

Sparrow brings together all the evidence submitted at the Yokohama, Singapore, and Darwin War Crimes Tribunals and incorporates a broader range of perspectives into the story. It is the first portrayal of the events that led to the deaths of 48 prisoners and the eventual execution of six guards, whilst another four guards (including Tsuchiya) received life sentences.

Sparrow also includes an historiographical analysis of the events that led to the formation of the *Rules of War*. Western and Eastern attitudes and motives are compared and contrasted in an attempt to understand why cultures clashed in the largest event in human history - the Second World War.



Mugshots of former guards at Mitsushima and Kanose prisoner of war camps tried for war crimes.

BLITZED

*“There is a recurring theme in Sparrow:
the experience of being on the receiving end of an aerial bombardment.”*
– Grant McLachlan

Before Roosevelt sent the diplomatic wire, the Rules of War regarding aerial bombardment were straightforward. It was illegal. On 14 March 1902 the United States Senate ratified the Hague Convention 1899, which specifically forbid the use of poisoned weapons, killing an undefended enemy, or employing material calculated to cause unnecessary suffering. Furthermore, it prohibited the bombarding of undefended towns, unless there is prior warning. The main effect of the Convention was to ban the use of certain types of modern technology in war, including bombing from the air, chemical warfare, and hollow point bullets.

The second Hague Conference was called at the suggestion of U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt in 1904, but postponed because of the war between Russia and Japan. The U.S. Senate ratified the 1907 Convention on 10 March 1908. Here, Declaration I extended Declaration II from the 1899 Conference to other types of aircraft. This extension was signed, among the great powers, only by United Kingdom, United States and Austria-Hungary.

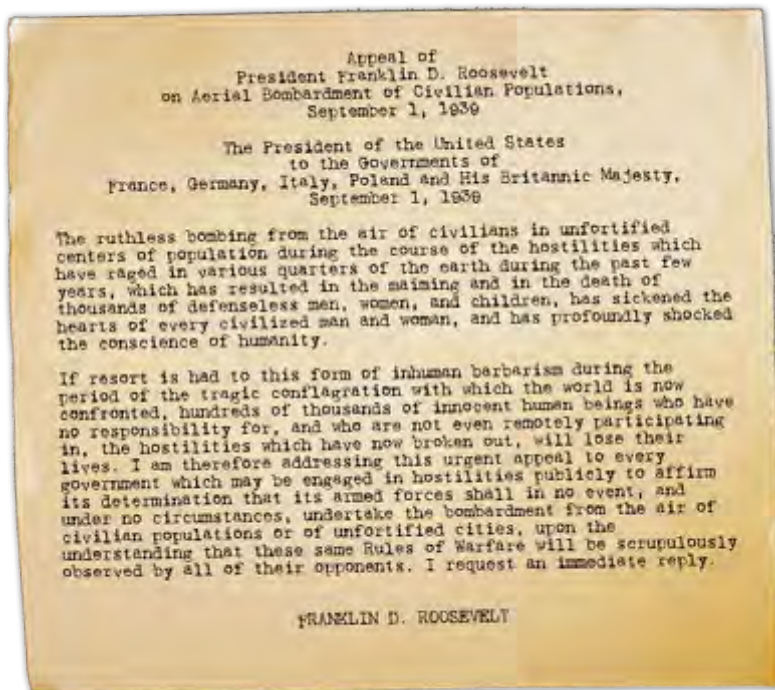
In 1938, the League of Nations declared for the “Protection of Civilian Populations Against Bombing From the Air in Case of War.” The resolution stipulated three principles:

- The intentional bombing of civilian populations is illegal;
- Objectives aimed at from the air must be legitimate military objectives and must be identifiable; and
- Any attack on legitimate military objectives must be carried out in such a way that civilian populations in the neighbourhood are not bombed through negligence.

Although the United States never joined the League of Nations (and Japan left in 1933), the 1 September 1939 letter from Roosevelt mirrored the sentiment of the resolution.

Regardless of what the Rules of War were, the major powers all equipped themselves with bombers. The definition of ‘military target’ soon expanded to cover armament factories, which were often surrounded by residential areas that supplied the workforce.

Initially, Germany did not target civilian areas. After a stray Luftwaffe bomber bombed a London residential area, RAF Bomber Command then raided Berlin. Tit-for-tat bombing raids escalated to the Blitz of major British cities, including Clydebank and Greenock. In 71 raids over London, 18,291 tonnes of bombs were dropped, which killed as many as 43,000, injured 139,000, and damaged or destroyed over a million houses.



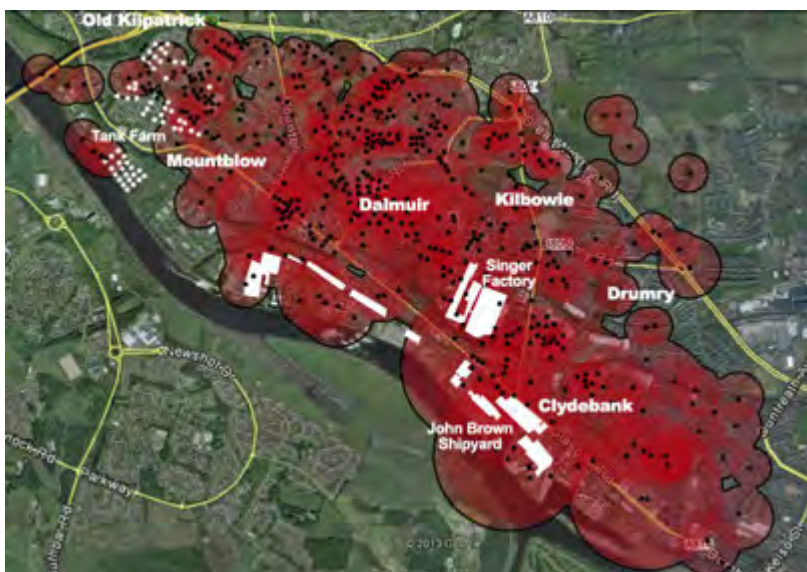
The United States' position was unequivocal: bombing civilian areas reduced the ability of Japan to wage war. While Japan's factories were made from concrete and steel, its residential areas were mostly wooden. Incendiary bombing raids that could burn a city to the ground was a war crime.

The Operation Meetinghouse air raid of 9–10 March 1945 was the single most destructive bombing raid in history. The firebombing destroyed approximately 16 square miles (41 km²) of Tokyo, killed 97,000, injured 125,000, wounded 124,711 casualties and destroyed 286,358 buildings and homes. Undersecretary of the Navy Ralph A. Bard warned that use of the atomic bomb without warning was contrary to “the position of the United States as a great humanitarian nation,” especially since Japan seemed close to surrender. Nonetheless, the four cities shortlisted for the bomb were chosen so that “clean data” could be collected in an area with a small military targets “in a much larger area subject to blast damage in order to avoid undue risks of the weapon being lost due to bad placing of the bomb.” Effectively, Hiroshima and Nagasaki weren't bombed to destroy Japan's ability to wage war. They were chosen to see how much destruction the bomb could cause to an urban area.

The raids on the Clyde were meant to target industrial areas. Instead, the Luftwaffe mostly destroyed residential areas. As a result of the raids on the nights of 13 and 14 March 1941, Clydebank was largely destroyed and it suffered the worst destruction and civilian loss of life in all of Scotland. 528 people died, 617 people were seriously injured, and hundreds more were injured by blast debris. Out of approximately 12,000 houses, only seven remained undamaged — with 4,000 completely destroyed and 4,500 severely damaged. Over 35,000 people were made homeless.

Clydebank's production of ships and munitions for the Allies made it a target (similar to the Barrow Blitz). Major targets included the John Brown & Company shipyard, ROF Dalmuir and the Singer Corporation factory. A total of 439 bombers dropped over 1,000 bombs. RAF fighters managed to shoot down two aircraft during the raid, but none were brought down by anti-aircraft fire.

In his book *Luftwaffe over Scotland: a history of German air attacks on Scotland, 1939-45*, historian Les Taylor qualified the Clydebank Blitz as "the most cataclysmic event" in war-time Scotland. He claims that while the raid on 13 March was not intended as a terror attack, it caused extensive damage because there was a lot of housing near the specific targets. But the bombing the following night was indeed a terror attack as it "was intended to crack morale and force the people to call for an end to the war. However, it had quite the opposite effect, strengthening resolve for the war in Scotland."



The Greenock raids of 6-7 May 1941 targeted the many ships and shipyards around the town but like the Clydebank Blitz the previous March the brunt of the bombing was taken by civilians. Over the two nights 280 people were killed and over 1,200 injured. From a total of 18,000 homes nearly 10,000 suffered damage and 1,000 were destroyed outright.

An Air Ministry 'decoy' behind Loch Thom prevented the number of casualties being even higher. The decoy was lit on the second night of the blitz. It consisted of a large number of mounds of combustible materials scattered over a wide area of the moorland to simulate a

burning urban area. Scores of large bomb craters were found after an inspection of the decoy after the air raids.

The Blitz began around midnight on 6 May when around fifty bombers attacked the town in an apparently random fashion. Bombs fell all over the town and surrounding area: serious damage being inflicted on East Crawford Street and Belville Street. Many civilians fled to the tunnels in the east end of the town, significantly reducing casualties the next night.

Air raid sirens at 12:15am on 7 May marked the beginning of a second night of bombing. Initially, incendiary bombs were dropped around the perimeter of the town. The second wave attacked primarily the east end and centre of Greenock; the distillery in Ingleston Street had been set alight in the first wave, providing a huge fire which acted as a beacon for the rest of the bomber force. The final wave came around 2am; dropping high explosive bombs and parachute land mines which caused widespread destruction.

At 3:30am the "All Clear" sounded; the whole of the town appeared to be in flames. The sugar refineries, distillery and foundries were all extensively damaged, and several churches were left as burnt out shells. However damage to the shipyards was minimal.



RESEARCH LINKS

*“Those who don’t know history
are destined to repeat it.”*

– Edmund Burke (1729- 1797)



Sharing research is as important as collecting information. As Grant McLachlan traveled the world to research *Sparrow*, he shared his research with those he met. As many veterans were reluctant to share their experiences with family, Grant helped start families on their journey of discovery. Since completing *Sparrow*, many resources have become available online. On this page are some useful resources that help assemble a better picture of the experiences of those who shared similar experiences to Sparrow Force.

A full bibliography of resources can be found in *Sparrow*.

The Australian War Memorial holds many mementos of Sparrow Force, including Winnie the War Winner. The Museum also holds extensive photo collections and material on Damien Parer, the Oscar-winning documentary producer of *Men of Timor*.

The National Archives of Australia should be the first port of call for any Australian wanting to find out more on Australians captured by the Japanese and held as prisoners of war. Every identification card of POWs has been digitally scanned. Also, the war crimes trials and military records are held there.

Trove is a searchable online newspaper database offered by the Australian National Library. Here, one will find articles relating to Sparrow Force, including Bill Marien's articles for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Argus*, as well as *Army News* publicity of Sparrow Force's exploits. Click here to view all the articles relating to Sparrow Force.

The Imperial War Museum in Lambeth, London holds the archival material of Bill Rose and the remaining pieces of Rudolf Hess' Messerschmitt Bf 110.

The National Archives at Kew, London holds the original index cards of Allied prisoners of war held by the Japanese. The archives also hold the original Liberated Prisoner of War Interrogation Questionnaires that were used in war crimes trials after the war.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission hold a searchable online database of every Commonwealth soldier who died during service and provides details of rank, unit, and place of interment.

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in College Park, Maryland (just outside Washington DC, USA) holds many records relating to prisoners of war held in Japan, the camps where they were held, and the Yokohama and Tokyo war crimes trials held after the war. Click here to download a guide to the archives.

Although soldiers were forbidden to keep diaries whilst in active service, many Canadians kept war diaries during their time as a prisoner of war. As donations of war diaries to the national archive are tax-deductible, the Library and Archives Canada holds a large collection of war diaries, including Les Chater's diary used in *Sparrow*.

Anyone wanting to know about prisoner of war camps in Japan should contact the POW Research Network Japan. This volunteer-run network helps break the translation barrier to connect people with information and people. They also maintain detailed databases.

Roger Mansell and Wes Injerd tirelessly collated a list of all the prisoner of war camps in the Japanese Empire during the Second World War. Gradually, a page for each camp has been populated with liberation lists, photographs, and other useful information.

The Far East Prisoners of War Association (FEPOW) remains the hub for the FEPOW community. Here, you will find accounts and research that helps piece together a picture of the experiences of those held by the Japanese during the war.

The War Crimes Studies Center at UC Berkeley maintain a copy of all the war crimes documents held at NARA. They also provide many online tools to help with research. Click here to view the Pacific War Crimes Trials page.

Ian Skennerton is the foremost archivist on Sparrow Force. He has collated the rolls and equipment on his website and has DVDs for sale that is a good start for any research project on Sparrow Force. British Pathé is a searchable online film database. Many of the Second World War newsreels, including Rudolf Hess' flight to Scotland, *The Men of Timor*, war crimes trials, and the Bofors gun

As part of Grant McLachlan's commitment to share his research, he has built and maintained many Wikipedia pages in the areas of: Sparrow Force, The Sparrows, Mitsushima, Kanose, the *SS Tofuku Maru*, and a raft of other subjects mentioned in *Sparrow*.

Grant maintains a Google Map that includes all the locations mentioned in *Sparrow*. Many other locations, such as the locations of other POW Camps where Sparrow Force were held and the route of the Bataan Death March, are included.

Grant maintains a Youtube channel that includes photo albums of people and locations mentioned in *Sparrow* as well as newsreels and excerpts from interviews with veterans. A gallery of the clips of photo galleries is below.

The 2/2 Commando Association of Australia (Inc.) - the veterans and their families of 2/2 Independent Company (also known as the 2/2 Commando Squadron) - have a website that provides useful information, including upcoming events, news, and historical resources.

Other links that include information covered in *Sparrow* include:

- Department of Veterans Affairs profiles on Timor veterans;
- Department of Defence Dare Memorial;
- University of New South Wales Companion to East Timor page;
- ABC interview with Keith Hayes;
- ABC coverage of veterans' return to Timor;
- TEN coverage of veterans' return to Timor;
- ABC television interview with Keith Hayes;
- "Justice reaches dead end" - a *Japan Times* article by Satoko Kogure; and
- Interview with Al Gordon, an American POW at Mitsushima.

BUY THE BOOK



“When I completed Sparrow, I realized that it wasn’t just a book, it was the legacy of those who endured the unendurable.”

– Grant McLachlan

Available at all good online bookstores utilising print-on-demand technology, *Sparrow* is laid out in ten parts, each part consisting six chapters that follows Charlie’s journey through the war. The epilogue follows the author’s journey to research and weave the stories of veterans into the *Sparrow* story.

Sparrow - A Chronicle of Defiance also contains:

- The first complete nominal roll of each Sparrow Force unit;
- Unit photographs of Sparrow Force;
- Profiles and photographs of prisoners, guards, and the camps;
- Yokohama, Darwin, and Singapore War Crimes Tribunal analysis;
- Over 100 pages of historiographical analysis of the Pacific War; and
- A comprehensive bibliography for researchers, including online content.

Title: Sparrow - A Chronicle of Defiance
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VISIT SHOP

CONTACT THE AUTHOR

“Through sharing my research, families have a greater understanding of experiences that veterans were reluctant to share.”

- Grant McLachlan

Grant McLachlan
AUTHOR

P.O. Box 8157
Havelock North,
Hawke's Bay
NEW ZEALAND 4157