

IN THE MATTER OF WAR CRIMES COMMITTED BY  
JAPANESE NATIONALS AND IN THE MATTER OF THE  
ILL-TREATMENT OF PRISONERS OF WAR (CIVILIAN  
INTERNEES) AT KAWASIKI PRISONER OF WAR CAMP.

THOMAS HITCHEN

SAITH:-

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I am a married man, age 27 years, and reside at 7 Adelaide Street, Platt Bridge, Ince-in-Makerfield. I am a Private No. 3856462 attached to the 2nd Battalion Loyal Regiment.

On 17th January, 1938 I enlisted for Regular Service in the Armed Forces and was attached to the Loyal Regiment.

In October, 1938 I completed my training at Tidworth Camp, England and that same month I sailed with a Draft to join the 2nd Battalion Loyal Regiment at Singapore where I was stationed until October, 1941 when I was transferred to the Independent Company and went to Semoling, Northern Malaya.

In January 1942 I returned to re-join my Regiment at Singapore and on 15th February, 1942 I was taken prisoner by the Japanese. We were placed in Changi Prison Camp, Singapore. I remained in that Camp for about 6 months. The food for that 6 months was very fair and the treatment was decent. We were left under the charge of one of our own Officers, Colonel Ellerington.

About July, 1942 we sailed from Singapore Docks on the 'Fuki Mauri.' There were about 1,000 of us under Japanese Guards. We sailed to Saigon where we stayed on the ship for about 36 hours, when we sailed on to Formosa. When we arrived at Formosa we all had to take turns of short periods of unloading bauxite. We reloaded at the same dock with Rice.

Arthur Butler of 122 Field Regiment was taken ill, but I did not know what was the matter with him, and he was left at Formosa.

After 10 days at Formosa we sailed on again to Fusan, Korea. We disembarked there and were marched through the streets to the Railway Station. The food on the ship for the whole of the 5 weeks we were sailing was very poor. The food consisted of about one egg-cupful of soup and about five ounces of Rice twice a day. The sanitation and sleeping conditions were bad. There was a Japanese

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STATEMENT OF THOMAS HITCHEN ... CONTINUED

Officer in charge, but I do not know his name. During the sea journey one of our soldiers belonging to the R.A.S.C., (I do not know his name) stole some onions on the boat to eat, and when the Japanese Guards caught him they made him stand for a long period with both his arms extended out in front of him with onions in his hand. We were put on a train at Fusan Station which took us to Keijo, where we were placed in a Prison Camp. The food conditions on the rail journey were quite good.

Late in October, 1942 we arrived at the Prisoner of War Camp at Keijo, and we were put to work on various jobs, chiefly loading waggons at a big warehouse in the district. We worked from 7.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. each day.

In the early part of 1943, whilst we were working on excavation work in sand and clay, Bert Collins, I believe his number was 3856442, of the Loyal Regiment, was with me when we tried to relieve Private Myerscough of the same Regiment who had been trapped by a fall of earth, when another fall of earth came down and killed Collins and a Korean civilian. The food and conditions generally in this Camp were fairly good. Colonel Nuguchi, a Japanese Officer, was in charge.

In the middle of 1944 about 50 of us were moved to Ginsin Camp about 18 miles from Keijo, as a working party. We travelled by motor lorries. We worked for a few weeks packing salt onto railway waggons and salvage work, still under the charge of Colonel Nuguchi, and the food and conditions generally were fairly good. I did not see any person ill treated at this Camp.

In October, 1944 we were moved in railway cattle trucks back to Fusan, and continued on by river ferry to Muji, then on to Kusu Island. We then entrained on to Kawasiki, where we were placed in a Prison Camp. We then commenced work in the local coal mines, and we were divided into three shifts of eight hours, shifting dirt in trucks, and the conditions were not bad. After a time we were put to work on the coal face, doing 12 hours duty a day. The conditions

*T. Hitchen*  
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STATEMENT OF THOMAS HITCHEN ... CONTINUED

on the coal face were dangerous. I saw Private Harry Bedford of 'D' Company, Loyal Regiment, along with a Korean civilian and a Japanese Guard, killed by a runaway coal truck. On one occasion I saw one of the Japanese Works Foremen (I don't know his name) place four long heavy props together across two steel rails and make about 7 of our chaps lift them from the ground whilst he stood on top to make it heavier. This was owing to the fact that these men had loaded one truck less than what should have been loaded. I can only remember one of these men's names, Private Robert Byron of the Loyal Regiment.

The food was very poor, chiefly rice and sea weed that we received at the coal face. I cannot remember the name of the Officer in charge.

I developed Pleurisy and Bronchitis whilst working in the coal mines at Kawasaki and was removed to Hospital in the same Camp.

I was attended to by Major Smith, an American Army Doctor.

Whilst in Hospital we got less food. I saw Lance Bombadier Foze of 122 Field Regiment in the same Hospital suffering from Beri-Beri.

I was in Hospital for about 4 weeks and then returned to light duties, chiefly mopping floors and going errands and I continued this duty until 15th August, 1945. We remained in this Camp under the charge of Lieutenant Williams, an Australian Army Officer, until the Americans came and took us to Nagasaki.

During the time I was a prisoner I lost about two stone in weight. I am still in the Services waiting to go into a Military Hospital suffering from chest trouble.

T. Hitchen

Taken and sworn before me  
on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 1946.

Edwin B. Wilcocks  
One of His Majesty's Justices of the  
Peace for the County of Lancaster.