

In Memoriam: Robert Vallance and William Heyworth

Robert Hugh Vallance

My mother's father, Robert Vallance, lived in the South Island of New Zealand at Sefton which is located near Rangiora, where my brother Keith now lives.

He served in the Boer War, which was the war between the British Empire and the Afrikaners (whites of Dutch descent) of South Africa. There were actually two wars. The second Boer War (1899 – 1902) was the one my mother's father was sent to.

In 1900, at the age of 20, his troopship sailed from Lyttelton to South Africa. He was discharged in 1901 on completion of his service. His length of service was only 1 year, 97 days. Why he did not serve until the end of the war, I do not know.

He survived the war but not a game of cricket! He died (probably from a heart attack) during a game of cricket (in Wairoa I think, where he and his family then lived) in about 1937 (I estimate, which would have made him about 57 years of age).

William Heyworth

My father had a cousin named William Heyworth, who lived in Hamilton, New Zealand. I do not know much about him as my father seldom talked about him. Perhaps they never actually knew each other. During World War II, he enlisted as a gunner in the *Australian* army. The picture (right) shows him in uniform plus his service number.

I was told he died on the notorious Burma-Thailand railway. However, he *actually* died in North Borneo. I believe his unit went to Singapore and became POWs when it fell to the Japanese in February 1942.

The records say that on 7 July 1942, he was one of about 1500 Australian POWs transported on board the tramp ship *Ubi Maru* ('Maru' rather ironically means 'beloved') arriving in Sandakan

Harbour in Northwest Borneo on 18 July 1942 and then transferred to the notorious Sandakan POW camp. Life at the camp was grim. At one point, batches of prisoners in fifties and sixties were marched out to dig their graves, then shot or bayoneted and pushed into the graves, many before they were dead.

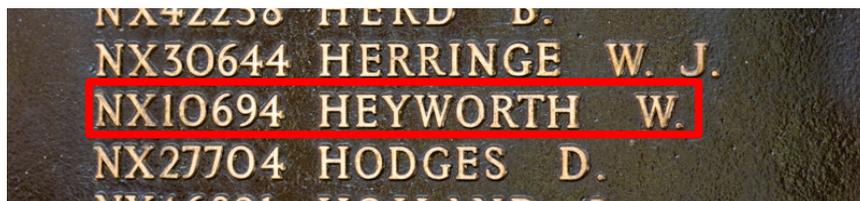
He died there of illness on 19 April 1945, aged 36. He may have died either at the camp itself or on one of the infamous death marches. I do not know if he has a grave there.



He is commemorated in the Labuan War Cemetery on the small Malaysian island of Labuan located in the Bay of Brunei. The picture (below) shows the Labuan Memorial at the cemetery on which his unit number (also shown below) and name are inscribed on one of the panels (panel number 4).



Labuan war memorial on an island in the Bay of Brunei



Although the cemetery is in the Bay of Brunei, I did not know that when I visited Brunei (in connection with Science textbooks I had written for schools there). If I had known, I would have tried to visit it.