

Wendy Matson

## Corporal and Acting Sergeant David Ennis

The ANZAC Spirit is perhaps best known through the actions of Simpson and his donkey in WWI. They've become such prominent faces of Australian values through Simpson's evident displays of initiative, morality, comradeship and his 'never give up' attitude. The spirit has been evident throughout Australia's journey through wars, battles and emergencies as has evolved; the spirit of the ANZACs is now a tale of triumph, resilience, selflessness and good humor. One South Australian man, David Ennis, has portrayed the ANZAC Spirit through his time as member of the Field Ambulance in the little known Malayan Emergency. The Malayan Emergency proved to be demanding for many involved, but Ennis did not let that stop him from saving not only the lives of others, but his own life as well.

In an interview conducted by the South Australian State Library in 2002, found on their website (<http://www.samemory.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=845>), Ennis mentioned he was born and raised in Prospect, South Australia; a town of 20,000 residents all belonging to this community of "A buoyant economy and prosperous growth" (Payne, P n.d., *Living in Prospect in the Playford Era*, Written Accounts, -, South Australia.) not so similar to the quiet, farming community in which I live in, The Riverland. Ennis had always dreamed of becoming a Doctor, but being financially disadvantaged he decided the Army was the best pathway into medicine. Ennis started in the National Service scheme in 1958 for 98 days, a scheme according to the National Archives of Australia (<http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs163.aspx>) 'was sponsored by the Menzies government the *National Service Act 1951*. The legislation provided for the compulsory call-up of males turning 18 on or after 1 November 1950'. Ennis then re-enlisted in the army for six years to train with the medical corp. It was his father who believed that doing medical work was invaluable in Malaya. "I believe that if any body's going to serve their country and take those risks of war or whatever the case may be, somebody should also be there to take the risk to help if they get into strife"(D. Ennis, 2002, interview transcript, South Australian State Library) . Ennis' attitude towards helping others is an obvious display of the ANZAC spirit, showing both morality and comradeship. For me, I need not to join the Army to help others, but my role of President in the Student Representative Council gives me the opportunity to help both my school and the greater community.

The Malayan Emergency was perhaps one of least acknowledged battles involving Australians throughout the 20th century, but despite this the ANZAC spirit played a crucial role. In the 19th century Malaya was colonized by the British. In 1941 the Japanese invaded Malaya and defeated the British, although as it happened the Japanese then imposed their own stern and callous rules upon the Malays. The Malayan Communist party, a group of anti-government guerillas, formed because of

this. After Japan lost the war; England swiftly took back control of Malaya on the 16th of June, 1948 three Rubber Plantation Managers were killed by the Malayan Communist Party, coinciding with the many previous attacks in the country. "I heard very little about it, and it was a bit of a rude awakening, I suppose." (D. Ennis, 2002, interview transcript, South Australian State Library) Britain called a state of Emergency and as a result Australia and New Zealand joined the war in 1950, as did Ennis in 1951, united under the one flag. They sought not to fight the Malays, but in classic ANZAC Spirit, to selflessly risk their own lives to tame the rapidly spreading violence across the country.

Whilst in Malaya the Australians faced many challenges in accordance to a change in both climate and location. Malaya is located in central South-East Asia, and is an area of forested mountain ranges; quite different to the dry plane that is the town of Prospect, where Ennis grew up. The Australians had to work in humid and densely forested areas (as shown in fig. 2), areas in which many of the men were not accustomed to, "It was nothing like Australia," (D. Ennis, 2002, interview transcript, South Australian State Library). Never the less, the Australians showed great spirit in staying both resilient and positive when tackling challenges, despite the rapid change in climate, "It was warm, but that wasn't too bad, you get acclimatized." (D. Ennis, 2002, interview transcript, South Australian State Library).

During Ennis' time in Malaya he participated in many exercises in the jungle, one exercise in particular forced him to show his initiative, a classic ANZAC trait, when one of the men with him became severely injured. Ennis was with his brigade, whilst walking one of the men had an epileptic fit, fell over and finished up with a fractured skull. Ennis took charge of the situation, telling one man to stay with him and the remainder of the group to go on, but to leave guides so that Ennis and his partner could find the group later on. Whilst the group left, Ennis called a helicopter to take the man to hospital. Ennis and his partner then went in search of the guide, but it soon became clear that they had been forgotten. Ennis decided that the best thing to do was to sleep there the night and try to locate tracks in the morning; however there were no visible tracks. The situation then became rather dangerous as many had been known to venture into the jungle, never to be seen again. Whilst for many, including me, the thought of being left alone in an unfamiliar jungle at night would have sent chills down their spines; Ennis used his initiative and decided that the two should compass march, "I knew where [the brigade were] supposed to go, I had the compass bearings to match. The Australian battalion had cut through tracks, [we had] to pick up on these tracks" (D. Ennis, 2002, interview transcript, South Australian State Library). Luckily enough Ennis and his partner soon located the group. Ennis showed initiative in not only saving the injured man and getting him medical help, but in getting himself and his partner to safety. He showed great morality and comradeship in staying with the injured man and providing adequate medical care. But most of all Ennis never gave up even when all odds were against him; showing great ANZAC Spirit.

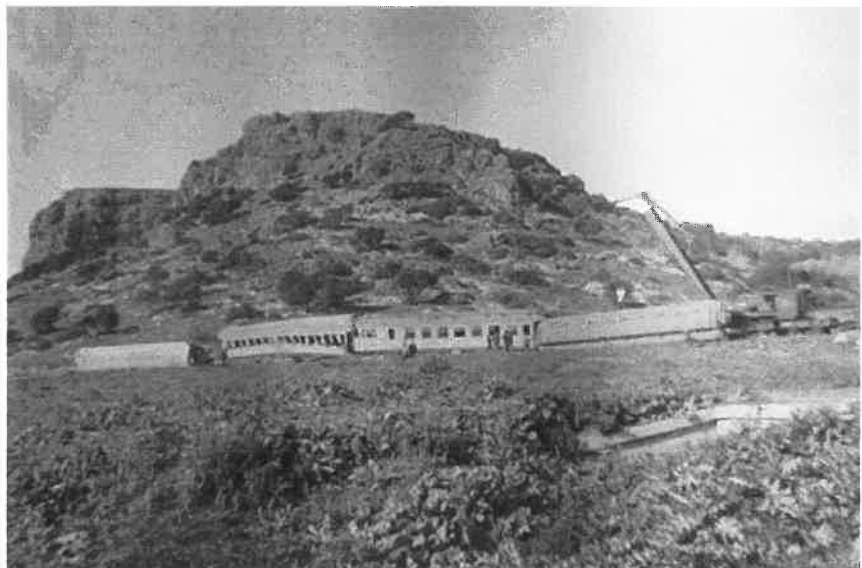
It was not only one occasion where Ennis showed ANZAC Spirit he showed ANZAC Spirit every day that he was in Malaya; one day especially where an Australian truck had

rolled and Ennis was required to help. It was in an air portability exercise where the whole brigade would travel in a convoy. "We went going down on the pass into Kuala Lumpur, a place the convoy should never stop" (D. Ennis, 2002, interview transcript, South Australian State Library). But they did stop. Ennis knew something was wrong and upon investigating he found truck rolled down a ravine, full of Australian men. "It was a very serious accident, the driver burnt about 98% of his body, and so was the Australian Officer next to him" (D. Ennis, 2002, interview transcript, South Australian State Library) Seven of the men also had very severe back injuries. Ennis took control of the situation; he ordered one of the trucks to be emptied to take them to a hospital as ambulances were scarce. Ennis was accompanied by a British Medical Officer whose initial instinct was to leave the men as it wasn't their brigade to care for. But that didn't stop Ennis; he immediately started administering morphine to patients whilst the medical officer complained. For me, I cannot truly say what I'd do in such a situation until it really happens, but I hope I'd behave as admirably as Ennis did. Days later it was revealed that the medical officer had alerted authorities that Ennis was administering morphine illegally, luckily he was never charged. Ennis showed his ANZAC Spirit in risking his job to save these men; showing the up most comradeship. He showed initiative in administering the morphine and getting the men to medical care Ennis' portrayal of the ANZAC Spirit was no doubt the only reason so many men survived that incident.

But it isn't just our war time heroes who display the ANZAC spirit; even I have shown the ANZAC spirit at school, in joining the Student Representative Council, upholding to social and individual morals and taking all leadership opportunities that come my way. Although these may seem rather small, they are all factors contributing to keeping ANZAC Spirit alive not only within myself, but the greater Australian and New Zealand community.

### "Train Wrecked"

This train was destroyed by communist guerillas. This is just some of the incredible damage, and danger, caused by guerillas in Malaya at that time.



### “Perak Patrol”

Members of B Company 2 RAR about to go on a patrol in Perak in 1956. The patrol is responding to reports of communist guerrillas in the nearby jungle. Patrolling in search of guerrillas was the main task of the Australian Army during the Malayan Emergency.



Fig. 1 – “David Ennis”

This is a picture of David Ennis in uniform. This photo not only shows us what Ennis looked like, but the uniform in which soldiers wore in Malaya.



### “Jungle Patrol”

Malay and New Zealand soldiers on a jungle patrol in 1957. Whilst holding heaving guns, these men also had to wade through knee-deep water; this is one of many challenges soldiers faced in Malaya.



### “Parading through Kuala Lumpur”

1 RAR parading through Kuala Lumpur in July 1960. The parade was organized to celebrate the official end of the Malayan Emergency and the victory of the Commonwealth forces over the communist guerrillas.



### “Owen Mk 1”

Designed by an indigenous Australian, this 9 mm sub-machine gun was a tough, reliable weapon and was widely used in both WW2 and Malaya.



Fig. 2 – “On patrol in the Malayan jungle, 1957”

This photo shows some of the harsh and densely forested conditions soldiers worked under in Malaya.



### “Webbing belt”

This belt was captured from guerillas during the Malayan Emergency. It illustrates the type of weapons used by the Communist guerrillas.

“It is an old British Pattern 37 webbing belt strengthened by leather inserts. The leather pouch is probably Chinese in origin and the associated parang, or knife, was locally made.”

– National Army Museum



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