

Australian Postal History & Social Philately

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SANDY ROBERTSON, AUSTRALIAN P.O.W., ZENTSUJI CAMP, JAPAN, SHIKOKU

This Prisoner of War Post (Service des Prisonniers de Guerre) cover was addressed to NXE5101, Captain Sandy E.J. Robertson, Australian P.O.W., Zentsuji War Prison Camp, Shikoku Island, Japan. It had the usual Australian red Opened by Censor and the purple boxed Passed by Censor hand stamp, as well as a purple Japanese censor 'chop'. The cover was posted from Melbourne on 10 March and it incorrectly appears to be dated 1946 (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Click to enlarge.

He was identified in two lists, the first on the WW2 Nominal Roll of the Australian War Museum, as:

Name: ROBERTSON, SANDY EDWIN JOHN

Service: Australian Army

Service Number: NX35101 (N74526)

Date of Birth: 18 OCT 1915

Place of Birth: COLLACENALIN (No such place)

Date of Enlistment: 5 Jun 1940

Locality on Enlistment: BELLEVUE HILL, NSW

Place of Enlistment: PADDINGTON NSW

Next of Kin: ROBERTSON, FREDERICK

Date of Discharge: 26 Nov 1945

Rank: Captain

Posting at Discharge: 2/10 Field Ambulance

WW2 Honours & Gallantry: None for Display

Prisoner of War: Yes

The second was a listing of Australian, New Zealand & Fijian P.O.W. (1942-45) at Zentsuji Camp, Japan which had a note stating that most of the Australians were moved to Hakodate, Japan and rescued at Hakodate Camp #4. He was one of the 98 Australians originally at Zentsuji, where there were also troops from Britain and USA. His listing was as follows:

ROBERTSON, "Sandy" E.J., Capt., R.A.A.M.C. (2/10 Field Ambulance), AIF, (Rabaul), New Britain. The latter was the place of his capture, and the information in brackets was found in a third list: POWs and Missing of the Far East and South West Pacific Islands.

No further information could be found for Captain Robertson in previous or later

civilian life.

There is considerable information about the Zentsuji Camp which is on an island at the southmost part of Japan. Of interest is the notification of the Allied Prisoners by air-drop that Japan had surrendered and that clothing, food, medicine, towels, soap and insecticide powder would be included in the bundles (Figure 2).

ALLIED PRISONERS

The JAPANESE Government has surrendered. You will be evacuated by ALLIED AIRCRAFT forces as soon as possible.

Until that time your present supplies will be augmented by air-drop of U. S. food, clothing and medicines. The first drop of these items will arrive within one (1) or two (2) hours.

Clothing will be dropped in standard packs for units of 50 or 500 men. Bundle markings, contents and allowances per man are as follows:

BUNDLE MARKINGS			BUNDLE MARKINGS			ALLIED PSA
MAN	500 MAN	CONTENTS	ALLOWANCES PER MAN	500 MAN	CONTENTS	
PACK	PACK		PER MAN	PACK	PACK	
A	3	Drawers	2	B	11-20 Shoes (pr)	1
A	1-2	Undershirts	2	A	1-2 Handkerchiefs	2
B	21	Socks (pr)	2	C	22-26 Towels, bath	1
A	4-9	Fatigues, one-piece, H. B. T.	1	B	30-32	
C	22-29	Jackets	1	B	10 Laces, shoe	1
A	10	Caps	1	C	27-29 Soap, all purpose	1
				C	11-20 Powder (Insecticide)	1

There will be instructions with the food and medicine for their use and distribution.

Figure 2: Click to enlarge.

The bunks at Zentsuji Prison Camp are shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Click to enlarge.

The forced employment of the men marching off for labour is shown in Figure 4.





Figure 4: Click to enlarge.

The plan of the Zentsuji P.O.W. Camp which was operated in 1942-45 is shown in Figure 5.

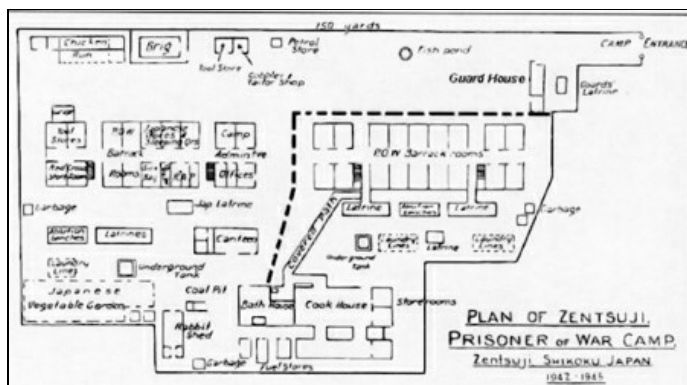


Figure 5: Click to enlarge.

One would have hoped for more information on this man.

Addendum (August 2009): Totally out of the blue and 25 months later, I received an email from a Louisa Wright from Australia asking whether I had more information on Captain Robertson. She supplied information to me as follows: " He left Zentsuji diabetic and blind in one eye but resumed his medical career, became a paediatrician in Double Bay, had two daughters and lived to 1988".

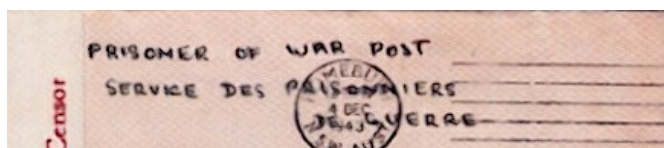
"I am trying to chase up a card delivered to his wife Gwenda in 1943, which was the first information she had about him since the fall of Rabaul. It is said to have been a part of a mail bag dropped over Darwin by a Japanese reconnaissance plane". Unfortunately I could give her no help in this matter. Thank you, Louisa.

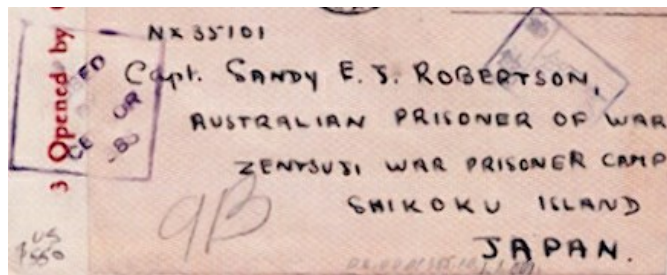
Addendum (April 2010): A reader married to a granddaughter of Sandy Robertson has provided a photo of Dr. Sandy Robertson when he was a P.O.W. in Zentsuji as shown in the following Figure 6.



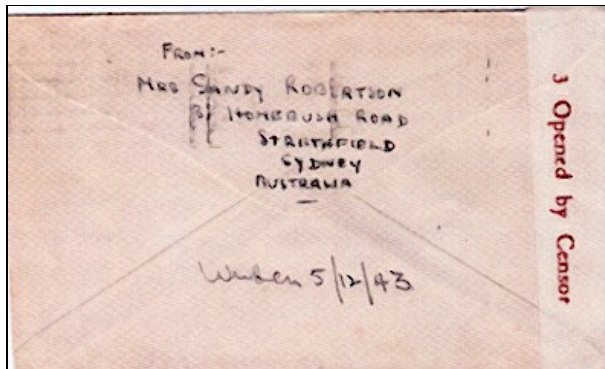
Thank you, Daniel.

Addendum (September 2011): Four years after the original paper was written another cover was found, sent to to Capt. Sandy Robertson (Figure 7).





The reverse was seen and it was sent by his wife, Mrs. Sandy Robertson from Homebush, Sydney N.S.W.



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