



St Raphael's Catholic School Cowra Blog Post

In completing this project, we hope to look beyond the POW camp that Cowra is so widely known for. We strive to uncover stories of people who lived in Cowra at the time of the war and listen to their personal stories about their wartime experiences. In doing this we will be able to promote peace in the wider community and hopefully create lasting friendships between Australia, Japan and America that will mean a tragedy like WW2 will not happen again in the future.

In order to complete the project and achieve the results we hope to achieve, Leo and Ethan have collated information from *A Town at War - Stories from Cowra During WW2* by Graham Apthorpe a local Rotary member. This book incorporates many elements that contribute to the Cowra story. This means that they have been able to find information about events that shaped our town that are not just about the POW camp.

Leo has begun to compose a podcast script that will form our supporting material for the project. In this podcast we intend to speak about our research and what we have learnt. Also we will speak about personal stories of survivors of the war who lived in Cowra. We found these stories very interesting and anticipate that others will too.

Ethan has discovered and summarised a story that details Private Shepherd's death, a guard at the POW camp. On the night of the breakout Private Shepherd was on duty guarding the Italians when the alarm sounded. Shepherd joined a Bren gun crew shortly after the alarm. After a short time 2 Bren gun crew members were shot. There had been no incidents of Japanese prisoners with weapons so it had been accepted that the shootings were a result of friendly fire coming from the other end of Broadway. Shepherd helped one of the wounded soldiers back into the guard room. A short time later he was found dead.

Chloe has contacted the president of the Cowra Family History Group to arrange a time for three of our group members to visit and find out any useful information that we could amalgamate into our banner. She has also been collating all of the sources we have used throughout the project into a bibliography. She is the designer of our banner and also collated the personal stories that we intend to use on our banner.

Upon visiting the Cowra Family History Group, we found some interesting information and primary sources that will be a part of our banner. We collated primary sources such as photographs that support the information we already had. There were plenty of books full of useful information about the ammunition factory, the military training camp and the cannery. As we were not able to borrow these books, we had to take notes from them to bring back to school so we could use the stories we found.

We have also had one of our classmates find out about a personal story from his family about how they were involved in the war. He said when the Japanese broke out of the POW they heard their horses and called the authorities. They shot rapidly into the haystack and found a few dead Japanese men.

Laura and Ruby have collated information and pictures from Cowra on the Lachlan edited by Joan Marriott which has proven to be a useful source that we have used for many of the sections on our banner both information and pictures.

This task has really pushed us out of our comfort zone. When it comes to research normally computers are our first option. For this assignment we had to use multiple books. It has been difficult to find useful information off the internet because the main search results are about the POW camp. This has meant that books have been a very useful source although we have had to scan a text and effectively and efficiently find the information we are looking for.

We were fortunate to have someone who lived in Cowra at the time of the war come to talk to us about her experience. Although she was only two at the time, it was interesting to listen to what she had to say and what she remembered. This experience opened our eyes to the fact that although there was a war going on people just continued their lives as normal as this was what they had to do to support themselves and their families.

In summary we have made tremendous progress as well as expanding our knowledge about WW2 in small towns such as Cowra and how it affected its townspeople. Through this knowledge we are able to promote peace within our community and others that will hopefully mean there will be no more tragedies similar to WW2 in the future.
