**The following is evidence given by Pte A.L. Robinson, N.G.V.R. 240, in Brisbane, April, 1942, after his escape from Rabaul, the Tol massacre, and New Britain.**

**The conclusion was there was no evidence that he deserted.**

**NG420 Private Robinson, A.L., NG Volunteer Rifles, formerly stationed at Rabaul, being duly sworn states:**

I was a civil servant in the NG Administration at Rabaul, and have been in New Guinea since 1926. I joined the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles.

There was a large raid of Japanese planes when a copra ship in the harbour was set on fire. I do not remember the date but I am told it was the 20th January.

About two days later there was another raid when Praed Point Battery was destroyed. That, I think, was the day before the Japanese made a landing in New Guinea,

When the copra ship was set on fire the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles were not mobilised but they were mobilised shortly afterwards, on the afternoon of the 20th.

At the time of the Japanese first landing on a Friday, which, I believe, was the 23rd January, 1942, I was stationed with the NGVR on the beach between Toboi and Vulcan.

I am not quite sure of the status of the NGVR. We were all volunteers and were attested, and were called together in a hurry without any written mobilisation orders that I know of. There was an extreme emergency as a Japanese landing was imminent and everything had to be done in a hurry,

Lieut. Archer of the NGVR was in charge of our party

On the morning of the Japanese landing I was No.2 on a Vickers Gun Section and we intended to open fire on the party of Japanese that was landing in a small vessel, but through some mismanagement all the ammunition for our gun except 3 belts had been taken away so under Lieut. Archer's instructions, the 3 belts of ammunition were used, the gun was put out of action, and we went bush.

For the next 10 days we wandered about in the bush and amongst the hills and had with us some rations we had obtained from Military trucks that we had come across, which had apparently been left for troops to get supplies from as they were going bush.

At the end of this time (10 days) we arrived at Toll Plantation and there first came in contact with the Japanese when they landed on the beach at Toll. There were about 50 in our party, most of whom were armed. There were one or two Tommy Guns and one or two rifles. There was a little ammunition, but not much.

There were about 5 Japanese boats which contained from 30 to 50 men each, or thereabouts.

At that time Lieutenants Grant and Irwin, who were Military Officers (I am not sure whether A.I.F. Or Militia) were in charge of the party.

We had arranged to take up defensive positions to do what we could, but Lieutenants Grand and Irwin conferred and decided it was not good going on further with our plans and they suggested we should “turn it in”, and they gave orders accordingly.

As I was moving off to join the other party, I was taken prisoner by a Japanese Officer and a sentry. I was unarmed as the machine gun which I had been a member of the crew had been thrown away. It was about 0700 hours when I was taken prisoner and I was a prisoner until about 0900 hours on the following day.

I cannot complain of any ill treatment during the first day I was taken prisoner. We were fed in a sort of way and as far as they were able, they did what they could for us.

The following morning the Japanese Officer came and enquired who were the two men waving white flags on the beach while they were landing. I did not know anything of this. He got the men who had waved the flags on the beach and wrote something in Japanese on two strips of white cloth and tucked them in the belt of each of the two men. We were then marched down to Toll Plantation house about half a mile away. When we arrived there a Japanese Officer wanted to know who comprised the party on the beach who were waving the white flags.

Eventually these were narrowed down to 20 and these 20 were separated from the rest of the party.

The first day the Japanese had taken all identification discs from the prisoners but the next day after the separation of the 20 men the identification discs were re-issued. On completion of this the 20 men were marched back in the direction from which we had come. The Japanese then took back the discs they had issued to the remainder of the party. I was with the party that was left.

The troops were then formed up four deep and marched off in lines of 10. Hands were then tied behind each man's back, and the contents of the pockets of all the men were taken away.

During the removal of the papers, etc. and the tying of our hands behind our back I did not see any sigh of cruelty or ill treatment except in one case a Japanese handled one man in rather a rough manner and pushed his knee into this man’s back to get a lever to tie the cords round his wrists.

We were then told to sit down in the shade of the house.

The Japanese sentry in charge of us got a 1 lb. Salmon tin which he filled with water and gave each man a drink, and lit a cigarette and gave each man a couple of puffs.

A short time after that we were formed up into single file with 3 Japanese ahead, then the 10 of us, and 3 more Japanese. All the Japanese had fixed bayonets and some were carrying spades.

Many of the men were roped together but the party I was with fortunately were not tied together.

It looked to me too much like a shooting party and I decided to break away if I could.

We were marched off through the plantation. I tried to lessen the cords but could not.

The path we were following went through shrubs and bushes and had an S bend. I suddenly darted from the line and took cover in the shrubs. I crouched down behind these shrubs and the party passed by and I was not observed.

While we were on the march and before I broke away, we heard an agonised scream from the direction where the NCO's had been put.

While I was making my way round the plantation very carefully and with difficulty because of the creepers and cliffs, I heard about six or seven shots coming from the direction where the party I had left was heading for. I also heard three or four shots from the direction where the NCO's were.

On the afternoon of the third day after I had made my escape, I came into contact with some civilians on the bank of a creek about half a mile from the beach at Toll Plantation. They untied the cords which had all the time been on my wrists behind my back, and provided me with food.

By a remarkable series of instances, I eventually got away from New Britain on board the Burns Philp boat “Lakatoi” and eventually arrived at Cairns.

While I was at the creek with the civilians near Toll Plantation different natives arrived with stories of the killing of our troops by the Japanese.

They said that a lot of our men had been killed by the Japanese and the mounds where they had been buried could be seen.

At one stage I went to a Mission for treatment for my wrists which were badly lacerated and found there, Major Palmer, an Army Medical Officer. He had as one of his patients a soldier who had been bayoneted. I had a conversation with this man but I do not know his name. The following is the gist of what he told me.

A Japanese Officer with a sword cut loose each man in the chain one by one and Japanese soldiers then bayoneted the troops. If a bayoneted man moved after he had been bayoneted, they shot him and finished him off. He lay doggo and eventually got away.

I do not know to my own knowledge of any personnel killed or wounded except a man named Collins who had been shot in the shoulder and hands, and who got away from New Britain and is now in Australia.

The only man whose name I remember in the chain that left Toll Plantation was Jack Barry, of the NGVR.

Amongst the 20 who had been taken away with the two men who had waved the white flag on the beach were the following:

- J. Street, NGVR, Curator of Intestate Estates, at Rabaul.

- A man named Stewart who worked at Burns Philp.

I know that Lieutenants Archer, Grant and Irwin were all taken prisoner but do not know their fate.

The Japanese were told that Grant and Irwin had been on the beach with the party that waved the white flags.

**The evidence was read over to the witness.**

**(Signed) A.L. Robinson**

**Private NGVR.**

The remarkable series of instances mentioned in para 31 above includes being found by Frank Holland, later Lt Frank Holland, M.B.E., father of our Museum Curator John Holland, and being escorted by Frank from the South Coast of New Britain to the North Coast where they embarked on the “Lakatoi”. After making his escape down the North Coast of New Britain Frank Holland was requested by Keith McCarthy, Assistant District Officer, if he would cross the Island to the South Coast and bring back any survivors he found. Holland dis so and returned to the North Coast with nearly 30 survivors. In Frank Holland's book “El Tigre” he describes how Robinson “arrived at my camp, barefooted and in a very exhausted condition as he had lost his boots”.

As Lt. Robinson in 1944 Robinson was awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal for bravery during the US invasion of Los Negros Island, Manus Island, New Guinea.

After the war, Robinson was reported by John Keenan, a former Assistant District Officer, as being killed by a native at Kandrian in West New Britain.