Finding Nonno

Murchison, Australia. 2 March 1945. Group of Italian prisoners of war (POWs) interned in C Compound, No. 13 POW Group. Photo by Ronald Leslie Stewart. AWM 030231/04
The Search

• Italians looking for their fathers and grandfathers firstly have to overcome the obstacle of language in their search.

• The National Archives of Australia records for prisoners of war, provides valuable information, but the next obstacle is to decipher this information.

• This document ‘Finding Nonno’ provides information to assist researchers to make sense of this information as well as providing links and clues to discover further details.

• A National Archives of Australia document ‘History of Directorate of Prisoners of War and Internees’ is invaluable but it is difficult to read in places (NAA: A7711) Reproduced lists from this document for Prisoner of War & Internment Camps, Prisoner of War Control Hostels and Prisoner of War Control Centres in each state are available for viewing at: italianprisonersofwar.com/2017/08/30/pow-camps-in-australia/

• Additionally, should your Nonno or Papa have been sent to Queensland (Gaythorne) and to one of the 10 PWC Centres or Hostel then I might be able to assist you further. The word Gaythorne or a Q1, Q2, Q6 etc on the card represents an allocation to Queensland.

• I manage a data base for 1521 Italian Prisoners of War who spent time in Queensland and I can help you. Contact me at joannetappy@gmail.com
The official National Archives of Australia contains all records relating to Italian Prisoners of War.

There are two main files available on-line for each Italian POW:

- **MP1103/1** contains the Service and Casualty Form – this form details all movements in Australia.
- **MP1103/2** contains three forms – Report on Prisoner of War (including family details and signature, Property Statement (money on hand and signature) and Report for International Bureaux of Relief and Information.
If you can’t find your relative with a name search

Some of the Problems

- Army clerks sometimes spelt names incorrectly on the forms eg Samuele, Samuelo; Santa, Sante; Di Micco, De Micco;
- Transcribers for National Archives and Australian War Memorial sometimes made mistakes eg Savato instead of Sabato;
- Some Italian prisoners of war were illiterate and so army clerks wrote down names ‘as best’ they could;
- Some Italians have had their names spelt differently on different records eg Daidone, Diadone; Amuri, Amore, Amure;
- Some POWs gave a short name eg Franco instead of Francesco;

Some of the Solutions

- Enter surname only – sometimes first names are typed incorrectly eg Guiseppe instead of Giuseppe, Liugi instead of Luigi;
- If there are too many results – enter name then the words … Italian prisoner;
- Search by date of birth eg 28 August 1914 Italian prisoner, this will only give you one document: MP1103/1, but it will give you the prisoner of war number and assist you to find the second document: MP1103/2;
- Enter first name only if it is an unusual first name eg Egidio, Ugo, Liborio, Umberto. Firmino, Gesuino;
Additionally, for some Italian POWs, they have other files. Copies of these records can be purchased from the NAA.

- A7919 – disciplinary issues eg escape, censorship issues, political views and Australians corresponding with, refusal to sign work agreement for farm work; medical issues eg application for early repatriation based on medical grounds; requests eg to marry an Australian woman.

- A11626 – Military Court proceedings – major discipline issues

- K1174 – for POWs in Western Australia, complete copy of record including Identity Card which details farmers they were placed with

- J3118 – Identity Cards for 200 Queensland Italian POWs

- C131 – Records for Italians repatriated onboard *Chitral* and SS *Katoomba* – medical ships
How to Order Additional Files from NAA

• Click on File eg A367 C 3774
• Go to right hand corner, request a copy.
• Click continue
• Proceed to checkout
• Click No, continue to checkout as a guest
• Follow process and fill in the forms: contact details and make payment
• Wait 30 days… an email will be sent to you with a link to access the documents
• Some files indicate: Not Yet Examined...click on file, request a copy. This file needs to be ‘looked’ at. Once it has been examined, you will be sent an email with details about how to order this file.
Other Helpful Sites

- [http://www.ozatwar.com/ozatwar/abbreviations.htm](http://www.ozatwar.com/ozatwar/abbreviations.htm) Peter Dunn has listed a number of military abbreviations which might be useful in reading the Service Card.
- [trove.nla.gov.au/newspapers/](http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspapers/) Australia’s on-line archived newspapers contain many articles on the Italian POWS in Australia. Some articles are generic but escapes by POWs were sometimes reported.
Museums, Sites and Interpretive Displays

- Peter Dunn Oz At War [http://www.ozatwar.com/pow/pow.htm](http://www.ozatwar.com/pow/pow.htm)

Joanne Tapiolas © Footprints
A Guide to Reading the *Service and Casualty Form*

The following pages give examples of *Service and Casualty Forms*. I have identified key features together with explanations.

Some Australian states kept more comprehensive records than other states including notations about reasons for hospitalisation.

PWCC = Prisoner of War Control Centre and represents the area where the Italians were sent to work on farms eg V12 or Q8

PWC Hostel = Prisoner of War Control Hostel was a barracks compound of several hundred POWs working on a specific project

Q10 Boonah = PWCC in the Boonah district in Queensland

Q6 Hostel = PWC Hostel at Home Hill
The Clues

Look out for the clues on your Nonno’s Prisoner of War forms. These forms are full of vital information. This following information will lead you to other ‘finds’.
**Remo – Italian Ship in Fremantle Harbour at time of declaration of war**

**SEIZED SHIP REMO**

Is the title of a newspaper article from Townsville Bulletin accessed from trove.nla.gov.au

**District** = Australian State where first processed

**PWIM** = Prisoner of War Italian Merchant Seaman

Gio Batta was processed as an internee – P.W.W. 12048 but was reclassified as a prisoner of war to P.W.I.M. 12048

**5 MD** = 5th Military District

Rottnest was initially used for Internes. Italian POWs from the Remo and Romolo were categorised as Internes and then had their status changed to prisoner of war. His first identification number was PWW – Prisoner of War Western Australia (Internee). Internes in Queensland were given the preface PWQ.

V4 Leongatha was a Prisoner of War Control Centre: Without Guard (PWCC) V=Victoria, 4= 4th centre established in Victoria. From the V4 Centre/Office, Gio Batta was sent to work on a farm.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Sailor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other Names</td>
<td>G. Batta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Medical**

- **Zof Interpret** – YES

### Prisoner of War – Service and Casualty Form

- **Identification Number**
- **Nationality**
- **Marital Condition**
- **Address of Next of Kin**
- **Trade or Occupation**
- **Religion**

### Report

- **Date**
- **Place where received**
- **Medical Condition**
- **Discharged to**
- **Transferred to**
- **Date sent**

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Joanne Tapiolas © Footprints
• Murchison, Australia. 4 March 1945. Group of Italian prisoners of war (POWs) interned in D1 Compound, No. 13 POW Group. Back row, left to right: Unidentified; 55958 S. Chiaramonte; Unidentified; 47961 G. Scolaro; 57555 S. Amato; 59876 F. Maggiore. Front row: 45750 G. Giarratano; 12048 G. B. La Vecchia; 12084 G. Asciutto; 46180 V. Mele; 48680 G. Taormina. Note: The number is an assigned POW number.

• Photo by Stewart Ronald LESLIE AWM 030238/04
Cowra, Murchison and Northam were parent camps. While Valentino was sent to Graytown, he remained attached to Murchison (his parent camp).

`7RSD` Bushmead is a bit of a puzzle. There are references to Military installations - Rifle Range, Training Depot and Transport Depot at Bushmead.

Another great reference is trove.nla.gov.au/newspapers/ A search for Bushmead Italian prisoners of war resulted in an article on Bonifacio Barbarossa who escaped from Bushmead Camp.

Valentino Poletti was in the Navy onboard the H.M.S. Giorgio.

Q.M. = Queen Mary

2 M.D. = 2nd Military District

M/E = Middle East

Read the dates from this column

While Valentino was sent to Graytown, he remained attached to Murchison (his parent camp).
H.M.S. Giorgio (San Giorgio)

You can read more about San Giorgio on Wikipedia and in the newspapers of January 1941.

From ‘20,000 Italians Captured at Tobruk’ Daily Advertiser (Wagga Wagga N.S. 1911 – 1954) Saturday 25 January 1941, p. 6 accessible via trove.nla.gov.au

- 700 members of the crew of the crippled cruiser San Giorgio
- The R.A.F., in 10 days of intensive operations, comprising 87 sorties, preceding the fall of Tobruk, lost only three planes. The sorties over Tobruk lasted from dawn to dusk and the condition of the defences, the port, and the cruiser San Giorgio testified to the effectiveness of the raid. Guns from the San Giorgio and other points were silenced before the final attack.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 December 1940</td>
<td>Capture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 March 1945</td>
<td>Movement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'Andes' was the only repatriation ship in 1945. Special circumstance cases returned to Italy earlier than the other Italian POWs.
Sidi Barrani

Once you know the place of capture and date, you can read the newspapers articles of the battle and/or read Wikipedia and historical articles for background information.
Prisoners of War often were sent to local hospitals for treatment rather than military hospitals.

N4 Armidale – Giuseppe was allocated to a Prisoner of War Control Centre at Armidale and then sent to work at a farm in the district. He was then transferred to another farming district and PWCC N14 Young.

There is an additional file for Giuseppe that can be purchased from NAA: SP196/2 For such a severe sentence, additional files should be on record.

Repatriation Ship and Date of Repatriation
You might find newspaper articles on their arrival in Italy or departure from Australia eg Incident on Otranto Fraternisation Causes Trouble from Kalgoorlie Miner 13 January 1947 eg disembarkation at Naples.
K1174 Files – WA Italian POWs

These files exist for Italian Prisoners of War who were in Western Australia.

They provide valuable documents and details.

You have to apply to purchase a copy and a pdf file will be emailed to you. The price is c. A$30.00.

The Identity Card is an invaluable insight into an Italian POWs life and his time in Western Australia.

The details such as height, weight, eye colour, photographs, fingerprints and signature are very personal reminders of your father or grandfather.

Additionally, the name of the registered employer is listed together with the dates of placement. This gives you the farming district where your relative worked and lived. With a google search, you will find out that Mukinbudin is a wheat farming district 300 km NE of Perth.

Another google search and we find an article on Oscar Miell and the concrete flower pots that his POW made. Donato was a bricklayer, so possibly he was the flower pot maker.

An additional document gives an extract from a letter he wrote home about life in Australia: its climate, farming life and quality of life. A very personal document.
Prisoner of War Brothers

Captured on different days, brothers Carmine and Rocco found each other and came to Australia on *Queen Mary* and their PWI numbers indicate they were processed together. Separated for a time, they made their way to Queensland and to Q6 Hostel Home Hill.

Both were in the army, Infantry and A.S.C. (if you can find what the abbreviation means, then you might find more information)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_units_of_the_Italian_Army

Cook Labour Detachment No. 3 was a group of POW who worked at Cook South Australia. They worked on firewood production and maintenance on East West Railway line.

Q6 Home Hill was a Prisoner of War Control Hostel: Q6 PWCH. It was a purpose built complex built to house 255 Italian POWs who worked on Department of Commerce and Agriculture farms.

Hospital Visits indicate ongoing medical issues

PWCC Atherton was a temporary centre set up for a maize harvest. POWs were on loan from Q6 PWCH Home Hill.
Cowra, NSW. 6 February 1944. Group of Italian prisoners of war (POWs) interned at No. 12 POW Group. Back row, left to right: 57474 V. Rosato; 57157 M. D'Avino; 57264 P. Giusto; 57194 E. Di Pietro; 57148 P. D'Adamo; 57406 R. Nuzzo. Front row: 57271 E. Graziosi; 57173 P. De Martino; 45290 C. Galluccio. Note: The number is an assigned POW number. Photograph by Geoffrey McInnes. AWM 030174/18
Visit italianprisonersofwar.com

• This website has general information about Italian prisoners of war in Australia and specific information about the men who went to Queensland.

• The article Further Reading contains information and links for additional information and stories. https://italianprisonersofwar.com/2017/02/21/further-reading/

• The stories are from different perspectives: the Italian prisoners of war, the farmer, the farmer’s wife, the neighbourhood children, the farmer’s children, the Army interpreters, the family of Italian prisoners of war.

• If you would like to share your story about your papa or nonno, I can be contacted at joannetappy@gmail.com

Enjoy your journey

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