



Moving Half the Mountain (2014)

BBC

Directed by Helen Langridge

It was good to see Alistair Urquart as one of the featured POWs and hear him speak. His book 'The Forgotten Highlander' is a sensational read (see my other book review on Mr Urquart's book). The Gordon is an inspiration and has many tales to tell in his fascinating book; he briefly speaks of the 'Black Hole' and the Korean Guard he faces within the docco. He speaks at length in his book about those times that almost cost him his life.

He talks of not looking forward by more than one day on the railway and really portrays how dire his situation was – surviving that day only was his greatest challenge – days forward were not as good as days gone by. Pick up a copy of his book – it is a great read.

The different statements from the British ExPOWs was compelling to listen to; including one 103 year old doctor who has led a remarkable life.

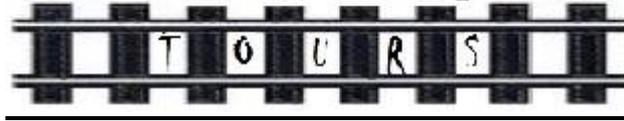
I initially thought it was excellent to see four or so former guards and Engineers interviewed to offer a *potential* balanced view of historic events. Whilst we see and hear of training regimes that are tough and systematically brutal for the Japanese recruits; we see a more 'blind-folded' attitude from these former soldiers on alleged brutality they didn't witness; torture that 'wasn't at their camp' or sickness that was brought on by the POWs. Seems they had forgotten the nasty side of the war when they were in charge.

Listening to the late Jack Chalker was also remarkable particularly his comments about his introduction to Weary Dunlop whilst he was examining a patient. It may have been the last time Mr Chalker was filmed as he died last year after a long remarkable life.

A common theme among the POWs was the interruption of sleep post war and how 'sleeping lightly' during the conflict challenged them for years and in Chalker's case, 10 years of post war light sleeping. He said sleeping lightly enabled the men to move quickly if needed by interrupting guards hell-bent on creating trouble or barging in with little to no notice. Having personal items on hand ready to go at a seconds notice was also high on Mr Chalker's priority list – something he says that kept with him a long time after the war.

Overall a good documentary that tells the historical story from start to finish. Would have been nice to add some Australians, a Dutchman and a 'Coolie' labourer – or maybe a local Thai or Burmese from the era. This would have made this a classic docco. Overall a good job on a tough subject and one that was timely given the age of the interview subjects. Well done to all involved in setting up this docco – there are too few of them made.

Death Railway



To watch the docco – click the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Zh-T8YPmOE>