



The Death Railway **(The Original 1947 Warmenhoven Report)**

By LTCOL K.A. Warmenhoven

LTCOL Warmenhoven was the Commander of the Railway from 1945 to 1947. He took command himself after Japanese capitulation in August 1945. Prior to the war, the Dutch LTCOL was a Railway Administrator so he was well positioned to take over command of the line.

A book with great detail on 'high level' facts and figures published by the Thai-Burma Railway Centre. This is different to most books on the Death Railway – generally we read about an individual who was forced to work in a region with several camps in his experience. This book is more about the operational aspects of the running of the line and deals with the entire stretch of the railway.

Great details about locomotives, wagons and how those different locos were utilized in distinct parts of the line; where they originated from and many of the problems associated with their use.

Also, discussion on train scheduling and how that operated complete with 'special' trains, Kampong Trucks and how trains could pass on single track railways. Sidings were used to allow for train cargo to be loaded and unloaded; hidings were used to hide trains in the jungle, so the passing Allied Air Power could not see, identify and bomb them.

"The damage done to a train by bombing was not half as disastrous as the machine-gunning. 'Near Misses' do not do very much to either locomotive or stock, but especially a locomotive may be ruined easily by machine-gunning. After the use of their bombs the planes used to come very low and the machine gunners just could not fail to hit the target."

"The Japanese could not afford to lose loco's and stock and valuable loads in that way and decided to leave the trains in the special constructed hiding sidings by day and move them only in the night. This system of course was very costly for the use of stock as it delayed the traffic considerably. It did more to decrease the capacity of the line than the bombing of bridges etc." (LTCOL Warmenhoven, 1947:68).

This book was translated into English from its Dutch writings; at times the translation can be painful in terms of sentence structure and some pages are not paragraphed well.

For Railway enthusiasts and historians this is a fantastic book – it gives so much information of the operation of the railway during war time and two years post war.

I have taken many notes from the book to be used on tour – a fantastic resource.

