

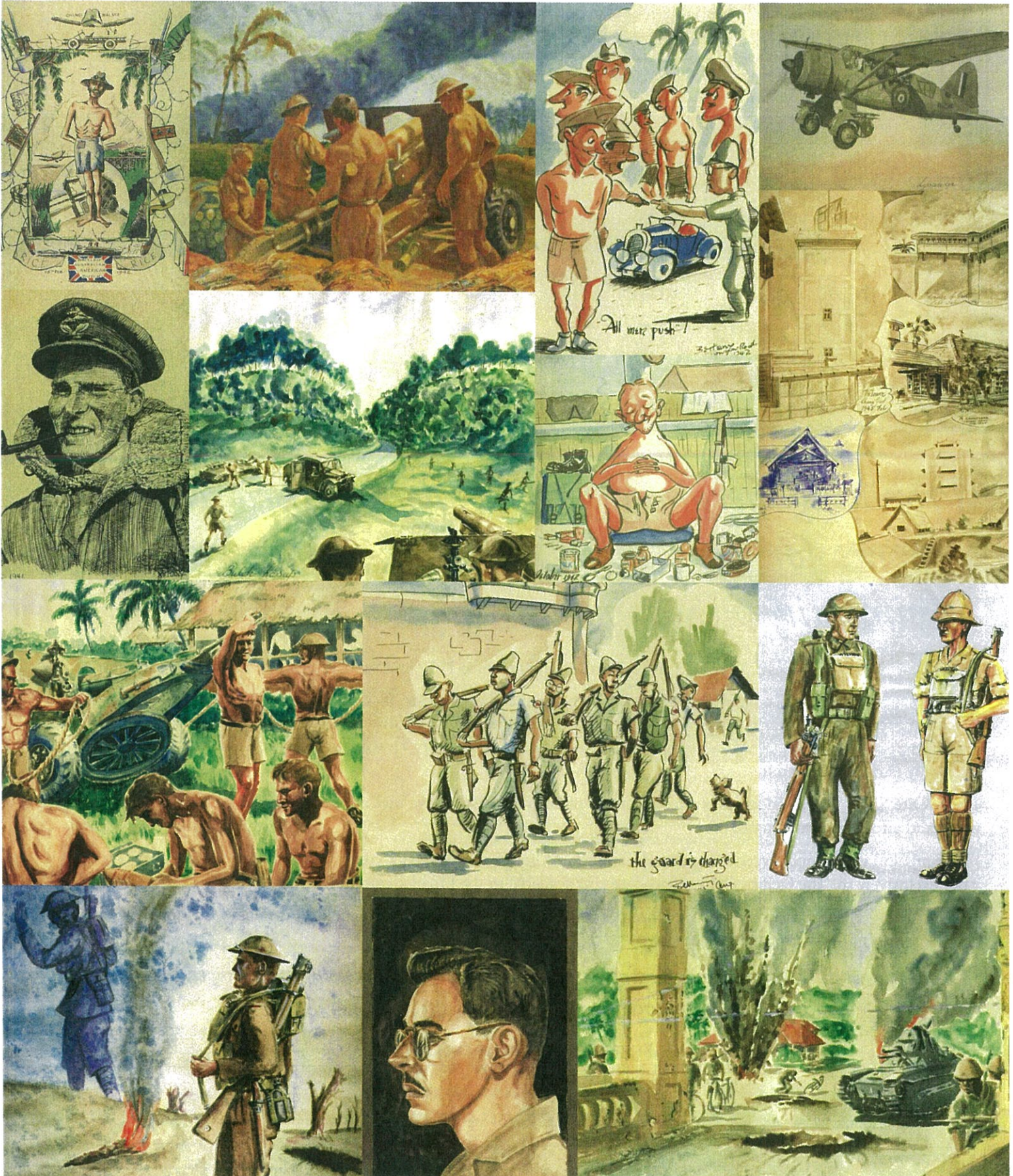
VOLUME 77 | OCTOBER 2014

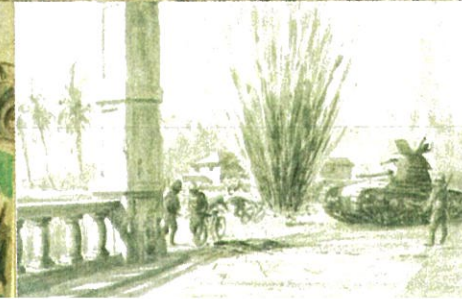
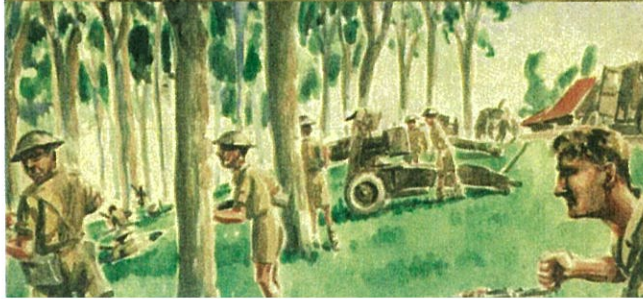
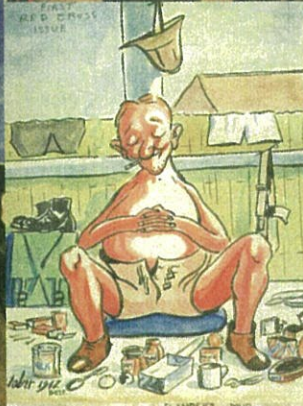
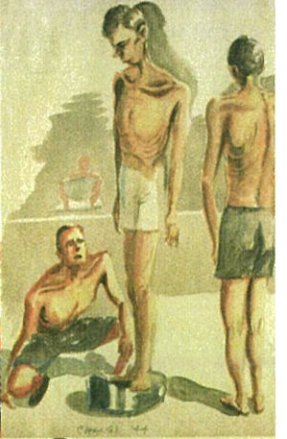
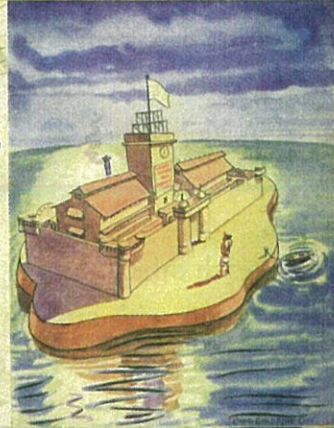
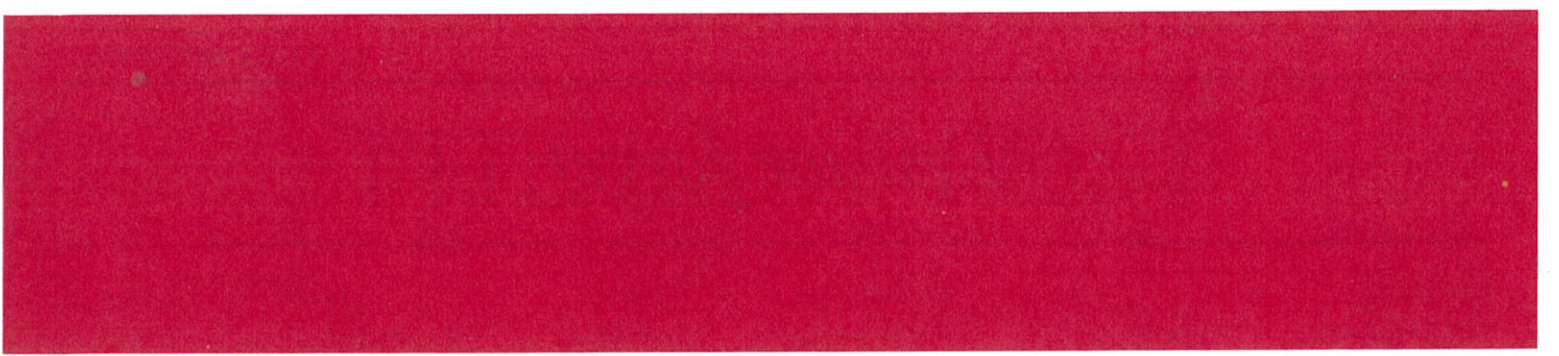


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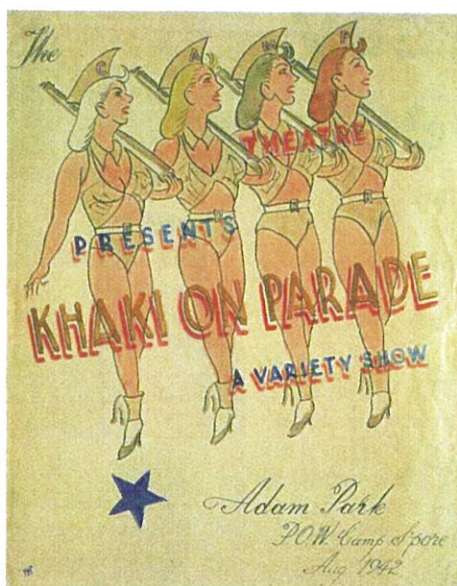
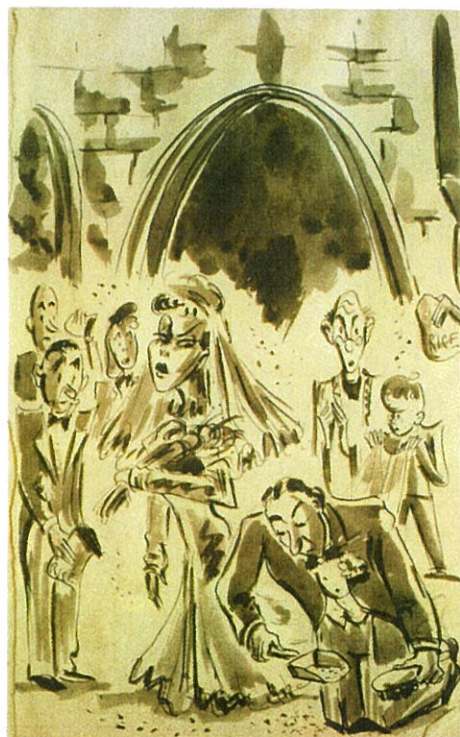
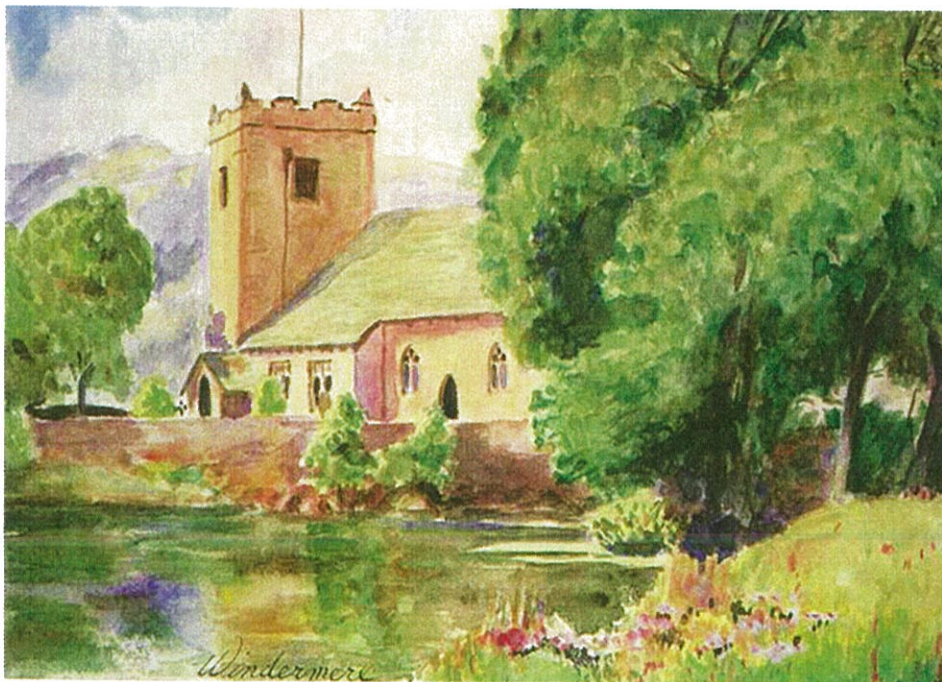






Changi art for our online gallery

Amid the deprivation of Changi prison camp, Lance Bombadier artist Des Bettany helped to build morale with his cartoons. Now, his artwork appears on the RSL Virtual Memorial – in a spectacular demonstration of what this online archive can achieve.



Images captured in the online gallery (from top): Des Bettany himself, drawn by fellow POW artist Ronald Searle; Bettany's nostalgic recollection in Changi-made paint of a Windermere church; (bottom left) predicting that old lags' habits die hard, the cartoonist visualises a released prisoner of war scooping up grains of wedding ceremony rice; and, his poster for the morale-building 'Khaki on Parade' show

His son Keith, of Bellevue Heights, has given us access to the Bettany collection: more than 350 drawings and paintings that depict life as a prisoner of war and how those prisoners dreamt of freedom. There are pointed cartoons that mock the Japanese and Korean guards, soulful illustrations of malnourishment and physical debility, and romantic scenes of happier recollection and imagination.

L/Bdr Bettany, from Burnley in Lancashire, enlisted in the Royal Artillery, was evacuated from Dunkirk, fought in the Malaya campaign, and after the fall of Singapore spent more than three years in captivity.

"Des painted to keep his sanity – that's what he told us," says son Keith.

With no proper materials to hand, he had to make his own: creating a paintbrush out of human hair and a bamboo cane, mixing coloured soil with rice water to create paint. Scraps of paper (even from lavatory rolls) were salvaged by work parties so that his gallery could grow.

After emigrating in 1958, and by now a qualified art teacher, Des Bettany eventually became vice-principal of the South Australian School of Art.

He was a prolific painter, always exploring new subjects. As a result, the wartime collection was – for years – hidden in a wardrobe at his home. After he died, at the age of 81 in 2000, his family discovered this extraordinary storehouse of creativity in captivity.

It is brought to full view, today, through their generous donation to the RSL Virtual War Memorial.

The complete Des Bettany collection can be seen at www.changipowart.com