Traces of memory: Australian-Japanese reconciliation in a post-war Cowra landscape

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Abstract
This paper explores whether one nation’s approach to remembering a tragic wartime event can sit comfortably alongside that of its former enemy. The discussion examines a single wartime event of a mass breakout of Japanese prisoners of war from a camp near Cowra in New South Wales (NSW) in August 1944. Written after the 70th anniversary commemorations of the event, this paper examines what role the fabric of the co-located Australian and Japanese war cemeteries and the No. 12 Prisoner of War Compound at Cowra have played in developing a positive post-war relationship between former warring nations. This paper also examines how the Breakout fits into the dominant war memory narrative that is so much a part of Australia’s national identity.

Introduction
Australia’s war dead are commemorated in the extensive network of cemeteries and memorials established by the Imperial (later Commonwealth) War Graves Commission (CWGC) after World War I, and through memorials across Australian towns and cities that are the focus of annual commemorative activities—many of which hosted significant anniversary commemorations in 2014 and 2015. The small rural town of Cowra NSW is the location of one such CWGC cemetery, holding the graves of twenty-seven Australian servicemen. Four of the Australian servicemen died in the ‘Cowra Breakout’ (the Breakout), a mass escape of Japanese prisoners of war in August 1944 from the No. 12 Prisoner of War (POW) Compound. Immediately adjacent to the Australian War Cemetery is the Cowra Japanese War Cemetery, with the graves of five hundred and twenty three Japanese nationals, many of whom died in the Breakout. It is the only official war cemetery outside of Japan, and is not only a site of pilgrimage but a physical representation of ‘the difficulties of coming to terms with the past, personal and national’ (Kobayashi & Ziino 2009). In what Carr-Gregg (1978) refers to as the most massive escape in British military history, the Breakout stands as arguably one of the largest military prison breaks in history, and is considered the only land engagement on the Australian mainland during the Asia-Pacific War.

On a cold August morning in 1944, hundreds of Japanese prisoners attempted to escape from the prison compound at Cowra, rushing the fences and gates and armed with baseball bats, makeshift knives, and blankets to throw over the barbed wire. Scholarship on the Breakout has largely focused on providing detailed narrative descriptions of the event itself, using archival material and survivor interviews (Gordon 1978, 1994; Carr-Gregg 1978; Apthorpe 2008; Bullard 2006), or first and second-hand accounts from both sides of the conflict (Asada 1970; Moriki 1984; McKenzie 2004; Leemon 2010). There has also been a concerted focus on conveying an appreciation of the cross-cultural misunderstandings that led to the Breakout.
The Breakout had negligible military impact during the Asia-Pacific War as it was far removed from the theatre of war and had minimal strategic value for the Japanese cause. Wartime military censorship meant that little information was released at the time of the event, as there was a legitimate fear of reprisals on Allied prisoners of war held by the Japanese (Towle 2000). The obvious and immediate threat resulted from the public safety risk to the community by the escaped prisoners.

The two war cemeteries, located side-by-side, and the associated pilgrimage route have played a significant role in the development from a wartime relationship of enmity to one of reconciliation. This cross-cultural relationship originated in the practical necessities of how to deal with that most basic of wartime issues: management and disposal of war dead. The physical landscape and the role it has played in the commemoration and reconciliation process in the postwar period has received little scholarly attention. Likewise, a contextual understanding of where Cowra fits into national war memory narratives, both in Australia and in Japan, deserves further investigation and is the subject of this paper. This paper focuses primarily on the relationship between Japan and Australia, but by necessity more broadly addresses Allied participation in the Asia-Pacific War.

The Asia-Pacific War and the Cowra Breakout

Thousands of POWs from the war in Europe and Asia were transferred to Australia during World War II, with many from the campaigns in North Africa. Japanese POWs were initially aircrew captured in far northern Australia, then later significant numbers of ground troops who had been fighting in the jungles of New Guinea or other Pacific islands. There were twenty-eight main POW camps in Australia during World War II, some of which were purpose built, such as the No. 12 Prisoner of War Compound at Cowra, with others being re-purposed army facilities, such as at Yanco, Marrinup, and Tatura.

Prisoner treatment was regulated under the international legal framework of The Hague Convention Rules of Land Warfare, and the Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva 1929. Japan was a signatory to the Geneva Convention but did not formally ratify it (Carr-Gregg 1978). The reality was that few Japanese military personnel knew of the
Geneva Convention, and ordinary soldiers would have had little practical understanding of it. The Senjinkun (the Imperial Japanese Army’s Field Service Code, which forbade surrender) rendered the Japanese POW deeply ashamed of being captured (Japanese Field Service Code 1941; Towle 2000: 81) and as a result, many gave false names when they were captured. Even now, confusion remains over the identity of some of those buried in the Cowra Japanese War Cemetery (Asada 1970: 50). The rules and spirit of the Geneva Convention were generally adhered to at the No. 12 Prisoner of War Compound, partly due to a fear of reprisals on Allied prisoners. This not only applied to the day-to-day treatment of prisoners but also to the interment of deceased prisoners following the Breakout.

With the onset of the Asia-Pacific War and the prospect of an influx of mainly Italian prisoners captured in North Africa, Cowra was selected as a site for a POW camp, due to its proximity to an established military camp nearby (Apthorpe 2008). Guarded by the 22nd Garrison Battalion and initially intended only for Italian prisoners, the No. 12 Prisoner of War Compound accommodated over eleven hundred Japanese prisoners at the time of the Breakout; the camp also housed Indonesian, Formosan and Korean internees. The Italian POWs were regularly sent out to work on farms in the district, which the Japanese prisoners viewed as a contribution to the Allied war effort and refused to participate in (Bullard 2006; Carr-Gregg 1978). In response to intelligence of a possible mass escape, and to try and diffuse the tensions that were escalating, camp authorities at No. 12 gave notice that all Japanese below the rank of lance corporal would be transferred to Hay Prisoner of War Camp several hundred kilometres away (Gordon 1978; Carr-Gregg 1978; Towle et al. 2000). The announcement precipitated the mass escape in the early hours of a cold August morning in 1944 where over 200 Japanese prisoners died and over 100 were injured in the ensuing melee, mainly by gunshot wound and suicide. Four Australian soldiers of the 22nd Australian Garrison Battalion were also killed: Privates Hardy, Jones, and Shepherd at the camp itself, and one officer, Lieutenant Doncaster, during the search for escaped prisoners the following day, (somewhat unbelievably) on patrol unarmed. Hardy and Jones, who died manning a machine gun in a guardtower, were posthumously awarded the George Cross in the early 1950s (London Gazette 1950).

The Breakout was contentiously not recognised as an official ‘theatre of war’ and there was uncertainty as to whether the soldiers were considered to be on active duty (Apthorpe 2008), demonstrating how that this event sits outside of the dominant Australian war narrative. Beaumont (2013) and Twomey (2013) have explored the ways in which Australia’s war narrative has more recently incorporated the Asia-Pacific POW experience and they are in contrast to the previously dominant masculine ANZAC-focused theme (Garton 1998; Inglis 1998; Allen 2015).

It took nine days after the Breakout to recover all of the Japanese prisoners, living and deceased, from the surrounding area. The surviving prisoners were moved to camps at Hay or Murchison in Victoria and were eventually repatriated to Japan at the conclusion of hostilities. Many Japanese families had been informed that their loved ones had been killed in action, and some had held funerals, as for a soldier to be recorded as killed in action afforded their family great honour (Bullard 2006). In the days following the Breakout, the deceased prisoners were buried in a corner of the Cowra civil cemetery under the supervision of the War Graves Service (Gordon 1994: 238-239; Leemon 2010: 68-77). The burials followed the Geneva Convention,
and the approach was consistent with the military funerals afforded the Japanese midget submariners in Sydney two years prior (Leemon 2010; Allen 2015). The funeral was recorded by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and transmitted by radio to Japan.

When the last shot is fired

The end of the twentieth century has seen a populist rise in battlefield tourism (Lennon & Foley 2004), with Australians visiting places such as the Gallipoli peninsula in Turkey, the site of the ill-fated 1915 Allied military engagement. Australian tourists today are welcomed despite visiting what was once an enemy territory. The nature of the Japanese pilgrimage to honour war dead in Australia is more complicated, not only due to Australia being a former enemy territory, but also due to negative post-war Australian attitudes to Japanese nationals as a result of the ill treatment of Australian and other Allied POW during Asia-Pacific War (Kobayashi & Ziino 2009).

During wartime, the remains of military personnel were repatriated, discarded, or buried at or near the location where they fell (Winter 1995; Leemon 2010; Inglis 1998; Trefalt 2015). The chaotic nature of war meant that the identification and recovery of remains was difficult. In the past, casualties were buried en masse (Curl 1980); this changed to individual burials with the American Civil War and was the approach initiated by the CGWC, despite the vast numbers of casualties. Over nine hundred Allied cemeteries in northern France and Belgium were established following World War I, yet nearly half of all casualties in these locations were not recoverable, recorded only on ‘Memorials to the Missing’. In the Asia-Pacific War, many participants from both sides of the conflict remain unaccounted for, in locations such as Papua New Guinea, Palau, and the Marshall Islands. The CWGC generally does not advocate the repatriation of remains, though this was revised with the onset of the Vietnam War, with families given the option of repatriation or burial at the closest CWGC cemetery.

The Cowra Australian war cemetery is within the civilian cemetery, prominently located on the street boundary. In 1946, the local Returned Services League decided to care for the Australian graves, which had previously been left to community groups to tend on behalf of the local council (Bullard 2006). This eventually led to them also caring for the Japanese graves that were adjacent. The Australian cemetery consists of identical white headstones set within a landscaped area surrounded by a series of low walls, consistent with the CWGC principles of equality and uniformity. The visual starkness common to the style of CWGC cemeteries provides a consistent aesthetic presentation that promotes solace and reflection, in contrast to the horror that usually preceded their establishment.

Described by Kobayashi and Ziino (2009: 99-100) as a ‘site of shared pain’, the Cowra Japanese war cemetery is the only officially recognised Japanese war cemetery outside of Japan. In 1947, the Japanese government made attempts to repatriate the remains of both prisoners and civilian internees, but Australian authorities deferred any decision on this until peace treaty negotiations had been concluded. The Japanese government then requested that the war cemetery remain in-situ, ultimately due to the impossibility of conclusively identifying all remains due to false identities (Kobayashi & Ziino 2009). Described by Inglis (1998) as ‘a corner of the valley of the Lachlan which is forever Japan’, it was officially inaugurated as an extraterritorial Japanese war cemetery in 1964, with a new formal

Figure 3: Cowra Japanese War Cemetery. (photo by the author)
entry and ceremonial centrepiece designed by Japanese architect Shigeru Yura. Both cemeteries are located on NSW Crown land, and are managed by local government on behalf of the Office of Australian War Graves.

The war cemeteries are a physical embodiment of the postwar climate of racial enmity slowly receding into a relationship of trade and economic prosperity. However, even by the 1960s, when the idea of a permanent cemetery at Cowra was first put forward, there was debate in the popular press about the appropriateness of a local cemetery for people still perceived as the enemy. Rechniewski (2012: 51) presents the argument ‘that the material presence of the graves… was a reminder of the Japanese as victims and not simply perpetrators of violence’, a view that some Australians found unpalatable.

**Military mortuary approaches**

War commemoration in Australia includes memorials in most cities and regional towns. These war memorials are usually in monumental form complemented by honours rolls and located at nearby schools, hospitals, or rail societies. The Australian War Memorial at Canberra, opened in 1941, is dedicated to Australia’s national war history and is the focus of ‘state-sponsored commemorative activity’ (Twomey 2013). However, Cowra’s war memory sites do not comfortably fit the mould of a ‘sacred site of nationalist myth’ (Hutchinson & Herborn 2012), such as the Australian War Memorial, or the ANZAC Memorial in Sydney’s Hyde Park. Though far removed from the tangibility of the battle site, the Canberra and Sydney war memorials serve the higher national purpose for collective mourning and the representation of official narratives, such as the masculine ANZAC theme and more recently, that of the stoic Allied POW (Garton 1998; Inglis 1998; Twomey 2013; Allen 2015).

There is no natural equivalent in Japan to Australia’s network of war memorials and cemeteries. The focus for the commemoration of war dead in Japan is Yasukuni Shrine, which lists names in excess of two and half million citizens who died as a result of war, the majority of whom died in the Asia-Pacific War. Founded during the Meiji Era, Yasukuni was originally dedicated to the souls lost fighting in the name of the Emperor in the Boshin War in 1869. It is contentious to include the names of convicted war criminals. Coming from a long tradition of veneration of the dead, the central idea is the intention to deify all war dead, listing the almost two and half million war dead at Yasukuni as divinities. The deification is limited to those who died defending the nation and while this includes Japan’s occupied territories, Yasukuni’s Yūshūkan narrative notably does not include Japanese POWs or prisoners of other nations (Yasukuni Shrine 2009; Seraphim 2006; Allen 2015). In contrast to the Australian War Memorial as a nationally-funded and nationally-run institution that also publishes the official histories of Australian military participation, Yasukuni’s Yūshūkan is privately funded and directly associated with a Shinto Shrine.

For Japanese war dead, rather than burial at an official war cemetery as was expected for Allied personnel, Japanese military remains would typically have been returned for interment within the patrilineal family grave. Funerals were conducted across the nation, and at Yasukuni, rituals were held for the casualties of war, intended to uphold the family’s honour rather than mourn their loss (Towle et al. 2000). While Yasukuni retains the names of those killed in war but no human remains, nearby Chidorigafuchi Cemetery is the designated repository for the remains of unidentified military personnel. In contrast to Allied military mortuary practice, Japanese government agencies or public bodies were initially prohibited from being involved in the funerals of the war dead in the postwar period (Woodard 1972).

**Heritage management**

There is a growing body of literature on POW camps during World War II that is focused on the political and military aspects of wartime incarceration (Towle et al. 2000) and on the archaeological evidence or the material culture of internment (Myers & Moshenka 2013; Mytum & Carr 2013). Yet there is relatively little in this scholarly field to contextualise the Cowra Breakout,
which sits uneasily between that of a site of incarceration and a site of a military engagement. The Cowra Breakout is isolated in having few direct equivalents or reference points in world history and sitting outside of Australia’s officially sanctioned war memory.

Known as the Cowra POW camp site, the No. 12 Prisoner of War Compound is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register, and its identified heritage significance is due to its demonstration of the POW experience in Australia during World War II, the military evidence of the Breakout itself, and for cultural and spiritual significance in relation to the loss of lives of Japanese military personnel (NSW State Heritage Register #00619). The Cowra site does not have a formal museum presence and historic items related to the Breakout are maintained in storage or are on limited display locally.

The site of the No. 12 Prisoner of War Compound was divided by bi-directional 700 metre long thoroughfares named Broadway (north-south) and No Man’s Land (east west), with four separate seventeen acre camps, each designed to hold one thousand prisoners. For what was a large site, little remains now to indicate its size or purpose. Fence lines no longer exist and sewer and water pipes, for example, were reportedly removed and sent to Woomera Rocket Range (Cowra Guardian 1954). The dodecagon spatial arrangement of the camp, which would have been striking in plan layout and visible from the surrounding hills, has long been unreadable in the landscape. There has been limited opportunity for visitors to understand how vast and busy this place was, the impact of its temporary and highly intensive use having largely been lost. Camp buildings were intended to be transient, and what remains in-situ are mostly the services and concrete footings of several huts. Similarly, appreciating the visceral chaos and horror of when the camp was under attack on the night of the Breakout is difficult to imagine. It is that very emptiness that may afford visitors the space to reflect. Recent landscape plantings along the boundary lines will assist to demarcate the former compound as they mature, and the camp limits will begin to emerge more clearly for the visiting public. The plantings have also been supported by well-researched interpretive signage that was installed around the site for the 70th anniversary.

‘Authenticity’ is measurable by the consistency with the historical period to which significance is associated. But what of locations such as Cowra, where extant remains are few and the significance is associated more robustly with archival records and a broad spatial inhabitance that is no longer visible? It is not only important to ensure authenticity in fabric or archaeological
remnants, but also through authentic experiences and the recognition that authenticity can be experiential (Pocock 2006: 5-6). Archaeological evidence of the No. 12 Prisoner of War Compound was nearly lost in the immediate postwar period when there were moves to rezone the footprint of the camp for temporary housing (Cowra Guardian 1946). Thankfully the housing did not eventuate and the compound remains as a site where visitors may consider what it might have been like when it housed POWs during World War II. During the 70th anniversary commemorations, the anniversary of the Breakout’s commencement was marked by two blank gunshots at 2.00 am in the cold morning air. This ephemeral inhabiting of the site, with crowds and activity in the empty landscape, felt as though it was in concert with the intensive human activity that had occupied it during the war years.

There are few places in Australia where wartime events occurred territorially so commemoration is generally divorced from the authenticity of place. As most of the Asia-Pacific War took place outside of Australia, Hamilton (2015:51) posits that the commemorative process lacks the ‘symbolic investment of being where battles actually happened’. Sites that have an authentic connection to the local landscape assume a greater importance in collective memory.

Difficult sites, uncomfortable realities

At war memorial sites, visitors may not necessarily accept the narrative that is officially presented, but will inevitably combine this with their own interpretations. This is particularly relevant at Cowra, where culture and language barriers would have inevitably left Japanese visitors to draw their own conclusions in the early days of visitation. In contrast to the modest scale and impact of the Breakout story, some sites of the Asia-Pacific War are writ so large in transnational consciousness that commemorative processes have not been able to achieve emotional closure even many years after the event. Pearl Harbour is one such site (Lennon & Foley 2000). Linenthal writes that even for the fiftieth anniversary of Pearl Harbour in 1991, it was considered too controversial for American and Japanese school children to offer floral tributes together (Linenthal & Rose 2011). This suggests that the type of ‘memory’ generated that is particular to war dead, is dependent on the war’s outcome: the victor, the vanquished, or the occupied.

War remembrance, and the contentiousness of being both an aggressor and a victim, has been a key theme in postwar Japanese social politics (Seraphim 2006). This has evolved since the 1980s, with a grassroots re-focus on Hiroshima survivor memories, an increasing focus on the fabric of memory, such as peace museums and material objects and a trend towards the democratisation of memories, which is consistent with the community uptake and popularising of personal memories across the world (Han 2012). In contrast to Australia’s evolving national war narrative, Japan’s rejection of war in favour of pacifism has resulted in the suppression of what Trefalt (2015: 277) paraphrases as the ‘celebration of the sacrifice of the soldier’s lives’. The conflicted nature of being both an aggressor, the defeated, and the sole victim of nuclear attack has resulted in a stifling of Japan’s ability to mourn its war dead. Cowra, as an extraterritorial location that now has an established and enduring reputation as a place that commemorates both sides’ sacrifice in conflict, offers a neutral location to mourn. There is implicit acknowledgement at Cowra that there is respect for the sacrifice that the Japanese soldiers made on their country’s behalf by the very fact that Cowra’s Japanese graves sit within a designated war cemetery.

A replica guardtower was constructed at the site of the No. 12 Prisoner of War Compound in 2007. In a site so expansive, the siting of a single tower in a location that does not indicate any of the original tower locations nor decisively show the boundaries of the camp layout, is potentially disorienting. The intention of the replica is to commemorate the service of the Australian guards at the camp (Apthorpe 2008). And while it plays a role in locating the site both literally and figuratively, this structure in an otherwise empty rural landscape risks confusing intent with outcome. The tower is newly constructed in the style of the original that has an association with war and vigilance, and it is potentially at odds with Cowra’s postwar narrative that has been predicated on peace and reconciliation. In recognising the service and
significant contribution of one party, it potentially alienates other visitors, of any nationality, for whom symbols of war may sit uncomfortably.

The recent chance discovery of the identity of a Japanese national buried at the Cowra Japanese War Cemetery, whose family had been informed that he had been killed in action in New Guinea, threw into relief the cultural and political nature of the Breakout (Pieris 2014). Unusually, the deceased soldier had provided his real name upon capture and was thus able to be identified 70 years later, resulting in his family seeking to have his remains repatriated. Following diplomatic negotiations, the remains were exhumed for partial repatriation to the family grave in Japan, with some remains re-interred in Cowra (Sinclair 2015).

Aspects of reconciliation

Cowra’s reconciliation narrative has developed from divergent viewpoints, but has resulted in the common ground of shared loss and a shared past, upon which subsequent postwar relationships have been built. With the shared understanding that the cemetery is a space designated to represent collective loss (Mant & Lovell 2002: 24), commemorative activities take place at both war cemeteries, following a sequential route beginning at the Australian cemetery and progressing to the Japanese cemetery. Wreaths are laid by representatives of both nations, at both cemeteries with diplomatic representation at key anniversaries. The Cowra war cemeteries were not established at the site of No. 12 Prisoner of War Compound, they are located a short distance away, adjacent to the Cowra civil cemetery. This separate location promotes the idea of a progressive pilgrimage, formal on selected commemorative days and informal for general visitation.

The No. 12 Prisoner of War Compound site and the war cemeteries have been gradually supplemented by new memorials, to the four Australians killed and to Italian prisoners. In the 1990s, Cowra was selected as the site of Australia’s chapter of the United Nations Peace Bell which is made of melted coins from United Nations member countries. Cultural buildings such as the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre have also been established, with a connecting landscape overlay recently re-imagined as the ‘Cowra Peace Precinct’. The precinct uses Sakura Avenue to form a broad landscape connection between the Japanese Garden, the former camp site, and the cemeteries.

There are also regular community initiatives, such as: the International Festival of the Lachlan Valley with Japan as the inaugural invited nation (established 1964); a student exchange programme between Seikei High School in Tokyo and Cowra High School (established 1970); a biennial choir tour by Tokyo Agricultural University (established 1977); and the Cherry Blossom Festival—Sakura Matsuri (AJRP 2003). The many and varied initiatives are notable for their longevity, and while memorial diplomacy has been an important factor, it is the bottom-up diplomacy of individuals across the transnational community that Rechniewski (2012) posits as being the critical factor. The installation of the UN Peace Bell has validated the town’s peace and reconciliation narrative, with peace now integral to the local tourism marketing. Former Prime Minister of Australia, Paul Keating described that the people of Cowra had chosen ‘to pursue reconciliation and healing’ (Kobayashi & Ziino 2009: 111). Use of the word ‘reconciliation’ has more recently come into use, reflected in the views of local government and community representatives in the Cowra-Japan conversations (AJRP 2003; Apthorpe 2008).
In her discussion of intergeneration inheritance, Hirsch (2008) raises the notion of ‘guardianship’ of the ‘hinge generation’, who have inherited powerful and often distressing experiences through memory rather than through experience. While Hirsch’s focus is on the Holocaust, and there were undeniably fewer inheritors of Cowra’s traumatic memory, the Cowra story holds particular significance as it reveals an evolving transnational and cross-cultural relationship. The 70th anniversary of the Breakout in 2014 marked a watershed moment, as it was potentially the last significant anniversary with many survivors present. The extensive calendar of commemorative events received national and international media coverage, as well as keen community participation, evidence of the community’s desire to continue intergenerational participation, despite knowing that the town’s identity is inextricably linked with this tragic event. Regular commemorative events are an important part of the ongoing reconciliation process, and ‘are most powerful when linked to sites of significance’ (Herborn 2014). Continuing civic leadership and the staging of formal events at the cemeteries and associated commemorative sites of the Breakout, will allow the gravitas of these spaces to continue to convey reverence for the commemorative process and the event itself.

Conclusion

The No. 12 Prisoner of War Compound site and the Australian and Japanese war cemeteries at Cowra exist outside of Australia’s dominant war narrative. At these related sites, the focus for commemorations resides in the lives lost in the only land engagement on Australian home soil, which is also outside of the typical Japanese war narrative where historically there has been little recognition of Japanese POWs. In addition, the Cowra Japanese war cemetery is exceptional in being the only officially recognised extraterritorial Japanese war cemetery, with the presence of the Japanese human remains at Cowra being the foundation for postwar diplomatic relations.

By offering an alternate view of wartime engagement, this paper contends that the contribution that the Breakout story makes is in presenting an alternative war memory to Australia’s national paradigm, which departs from the masculine ANZAC theme or the stoicism of Allied prisoners of war. As one of a few territorial sites of Australia’s engagement in conflict during the Asia-Pacific War, it has an authenticity of place that is matched by few others in mainland Australia. The Breakout story is one of the Australian home-front and of the uncomfortable realities that cross-cultural engagement can generate, both during war and after hostilities have concluded.

Fitting the Cowra story more broadly into the Japanese war memory narrative is potentially more problematic. The Cowra Breakout story is one of many tragic events of the Asia-Pacific War, which carries the pain of loss and the shame of capture. With many military personnel still unaccounted for, but with increasing national interest in locating and returning those remains home, the extraterritorial location of the Cowra Japanese War Cemetery will arguably become even more vital in demonstrating how postwar reconciliation has been achieved. The cultural inheritance of the Breakout lies in the tangible fabric of the war cemeteries and the POW Compound site, the intangible testimony of the event itself, and the subsequent transnational relationships built in the post-war period as a result.

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