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Statements by: Lieut. J. W. Ashton, F. W. Davis and
others, re the mutilation of the dead and
cannibalism of Australians in the Wandurra
Area during February 1943.

(ii) Mutilation of dead and Cannibalism.1. Lt. Park.

(1145-6)

Pte. W.J. Fyvie, 2/6 Aust. Inf. Bn., said that he saw one of the officers of his battalion, Lt. Park, shot. He is satisfied that Park was killed instantly. Park was shot in the chest, and about three minutes afterwards spots of blood appeared on the back of his shirt. Park's legs were doubled up, his body was straight, and he was resting on his elbows. He did not move. If he were not dead, Fyvie thinks he would have straightened himself. Fyvie remained near him for about five minutes. Park was killed near Wandumi.

(1122)

On Feb. 15, 1943, Lt. T.W. Ashton of 2/6 Aust. Inf. Bn. was on reconnaissance patrol north of Wandumi Trig in company with Lt. F.W. Davis of 2/1 Aust. Fd. Regt., when he came across the body of Lt. Park under a log, just off the track near a big Japanese camp. Both legs had been severed with something sharp, possibly an axe, and the body had, in that way, been cut into three pieces. One leg was up along Park's side with the toes pointing into the face. It was as though the body had been chopped to pieces and the trunk thrown down and the leg alongside it. The cut that severed his legs opened up his stomach. The calf of the leg had been completely cut out. Ashton's batman, who helped to bury the body, said that the thigh was also missing, but Ashton could not give evidence as to that. Ashton suggests that the Japanese picked Park up where he was shot and carried him nearer their camp, then they mutilated the body, and threw it down alongside the log. Park was dead four or five days when he was picked up.

(1123)

Ashton made a written report (Exhibit 52).

Lt. F.C. Davis gives an account of the finding of Lt. Park's body which accords in all material details with that given by Ashton. Davis fixes the point at which the body was found as being about a mile north of Wandumi Trig.

Both Davis and Ashton refer to weals across Park's back. Ashton says that these gave him the impression that Park had been whipped with cords. Davis refers to the weals as "ridges". There were three or four such ridges, and they could have been caused by slashing with a stick.

(864)

Davis also made a written report (Exhibit 39).

Park's body was also seen by the following witnesses :-

(1143-4)

Pte. G.C. Smart

(1168-9)

Pte. K.H. Dunn and

(1147-8)

Cpl. J.H. Armstrong, all of the 2/6th A.I.B.

The descriptions given by these witnesses are consistent with the account given by Ashton and Davis, although Smart speaks of flesh being removed from the calves and thighs of both legs. Armstrong speaks of only one leg being mutilated. Dunn says that when he saw the body, "It seemed that wild pigs or something had rooted it about - the body was cut in about three pieces". He did not examine it closely. It was pretty "high" at the time.

(1168)

(1266-9)

Pte. S.S. Fellows 2/6 Aust. Inf. Bn. said that he saw the dead body of Lt. Park with both legs severed and lying beside the body, with the feet about the level of the head. Park had been cut with a sword across the front of the body at the stomach and

right through the body. Fellows did not see any indications that flesh had been cut from the body, and, although a piece could have been cut from the leg without his noticing it, his opinion was that nothing had been cut out. Fellows did not study the body closely. Fellows had never before heard any suggestion that Park's body had had flesh cut from it.

(1270A-71)

Pte. L.J. Barnett, 2/6 Aust. Inf. Bn., said that Lt. Park's body had a leg cut off. Barnett did not look at it. It was rather a gruesome sight. Barnett did not see any pieces cut out of the body. He had only a hurried glance. It is possible that he could have missed seeing whether pieces had been cut out of the calves of the legs. He had never before heard any suggestion that pieces had been cut out of Park's legs. He had associated for some time with other men who saw Park's body with the legs removed.

AV

(ii) Mutilation of dead and Cannibalism.

AM

2. Gnr. Davenport.

On the same day as the body of Lt. Park was discovered, Lt. Davis and Lt. Ashton found the body of Gnr. Davenport. Davis said that, when found, Davenport's body was about 30 yards off the track on the right-hand side. He was lying on his back, and had been shot on the left side, just below the heart, and also across the head and through the face. Davis doubts whether either of the head wounds would have caused death, but considered that the wound on the body would. The body was turned over, and it was seen that four deep cuts had been made on the buttocks with

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some sharp instrument, possibly a sword. Davenport had been shot about three or four days earlier. No flesh had been removed from his body. There seemed to have been a Japanese staging camp where Davenport had been (Sec. p. 863).

Ashton saw the body of Davenport. He said that he ordered Davenport's burial "and when they turned him over they found that his buttocks had been slashed with what appeared to be a sword or a slasher, and as he was rolled over these cuts bared the flesh right to the bone."

(1122)

Cpl J.H. Armstrong said that, in company with Lt. Ashton, he came across the body of Gnr Davenport, lying on its back. Davenport had a sword mark on the nose and one on the forehead. Down the back and across the buttocks on each side were big gashes. Davenport had been killed by a shot through the head.

Pte G.C. Smart found the body of Gnr Davenport on about February 12, 1943, (Ashton's contemporaneous report (Exhibit 52) puts the date at 15th February (1943) stripped and slashed about the buttocks. There were three or four slashes on each buttock. The slashes went the full length of each buttock but not past the knee. The flesh was lying open, but witness could not say whether any had been removed.

Davenport had been dead for about five or six days.

AV

AN

(11) Mutilation of dead and Cannibalism.

3. Signalsman Cooper.

Signalsman Cooper was a member of 2/3 Aust. Cav. Commando Squadron. On about Feb 6, 1943, he was killed near the village of Wandusi. The Japanese were advancing at the time, and overran the spot where Cooper was killed. About two days later, the Japanese had been

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driven back, and Cooper's body was recovered. Flesh was missing from the body. There was a conflict of evidence as to what caused the flesh to disappear and the amount of flesh missing.

Lt. J.E. Lewin of 2/3 Aust. Cav. Commando Squadron said that the flesh was blown away by shrapnel, or shot away by machine gun fire, but was not cut off - "Definitely". Lewin was within 25 yards of Cooper when the latter was shot by machine gun fire. Cooper was hit in the head or the throat. Lewin knew exactly where he had been shot. When he saw the body again, he recognised Cooper. Lewin thinks that the Japanese who captured the Wandusi village on the night Cooper was killed must have shot the flesh from his legs with automatic weapons. He said it was not unusual in the campaign to fire on a prostrate body if there was any doubt whether life was extinct. It was two days after Cooper's death that Lewin saw the body. It was fully clothed - wearing green shirt, green trousers and webbing. The boots may have been missing. The Japanese usually took the Australians' boots and left their own. There was no possibility of the Japanese having interfered with the body between the time Lewin ~~saw~~ saw it after Cooper's death and the burial. Lewin said that he had heard rumours that flesh had been cut from Cooper's calves. But he was convinced that the flesh had not been cut; though whether it was removed by dogs, of which the Japanese had some, or grenades, or bullets, he could not say. The flesh could have been gnawed off. It had the appearance of rips.

Lewis said that if he had noticed that flesh had been cut from Cooper's body, he would have made a report.

on it. His sergeants would be expected to do likewise. It was reported to Lewin by Blyth, he thinks, that Cooper had been cut about. (1332) Lewin was taken out, and immediately contradicted the story to (1331) Cooper's officer. Lewin is emphatic that flesh was not cut from the body. He says: "From what I saw, I know it was not cut."

(1331-3) Questioned as to his opinion of Blyth, Munnand Owen, whose evidence conflicted with his own, Lewin said that they were very reliable men, and by no means the types to allow their imaginations to run away with them.

Sgt. Blyth, 2/3 Aust Cav. Commando Sqn, said that he saw Cooper's body after the Japanese had been driven out of Wandumi. There was no flesh on the arms or legs. The flesh had been cut off from top to bottom. This was two days after Cooper's death. Blyth was about five yards ahead of Cooper when the latter was killed. The stomach was just lying there. It did not seem to have any skin on it at all. It was just as if the inside of his stomach was there. Blyth did not pay any particular attention to it. Cooper was not decomposed. The flesh was cut from the bone. "There were no ~~signs~~ animal signs about it." The flesh was not gnawed. The joints of the bones were not separated. The body was not scattered. Blyth did not see Cooper's clothes. He did not have time.

Blyth does not think that the natives could have been responsible. There were no natives in Wandumi. They were all down at Wau carrying for the Australians. There was no flesh left at all. The whole of the calf of both legs was cut away, and above the knees right up to the hips. The forearms were cut away, and only the bone was visible; the muscles and flesh on the upper arms also. Cooper's shirt and trousers and boots

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were gone the second time Blyth saw him. It would not have been possible for a burst or a number of bursts of machine gun fire or mortar fire or shell fire to have removed the flesh in this way. It would have shattered the bones.

Cpl. E.C. Owen, 2/3 Aust Cav. Commando Sq. said that Cooper was cut from the thigh to the ankles and from the forearm to the wrist on both arms. All the flesh was taken off. The biceps was removed. The flesh had been removed by a sharp instrument. It was a

different sort of wound altogether from machine gun fire. It was "like you would bone a beast." He himself had been a butcher in civil life. He said that he saw one dead dog there, but that "the condition of the body of Cooper was not brought about by any action of dogs."

Pte M.R. Heffernan, 2/3 Aust. Cav. Commando Sqn. SAW Cooper's body two days after he was killed. The flesh was "all off his legs and arms which were just bare. It was definitely cut away and I had to look twice to recognise him." The witness said that it would not have been possible for machine gun fire to have removed the flesh from Cooper's legs. It was removed as if it was cut with a knife, right down to the bone. The knees were still intact. "they had dogs with them and we thought it might have been a dog; we looked again and a dog could not do it to him the way it was done" There were no dog tracks near the body. There were no dog marks or signs of gnawing of the rest of the body; nor were there any natives in the area.

They also found two dead Japanese with.

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flesh off their thighs, the flesh gone, and no signs of dogs near them.

There is abundant evidence that the Japanese had dogs in that particular area. Lt. Lewis, Sgt. Blyth, Cpl Owen, Pte Heffernan, and Sgt Munn, all of 2/3 Aust. Cav. Commando Sqn speaks of the Japanese having used dogs, and all saw Japanese dogs - Alsatians.

(1675) Maj. P.L. Tanced of the same squadron says :

"There was one thing - I know they had Alsatian dogs. I have heard them barking but I do not think I actually saw one. I have heard them barking at night, and I know people who have shot them and units have shot them, and I believe that if this business was going on it was going on to feed these dogs a lot. They had to be fed, and the Japs had nothing to eat themselves at that stage. He had run out of rations round there and quite a lot of these dogs were loose. They were running about. They were the normal sized Alsatian and they had to be fed somehow or other..... one Jap party would have one dog with them. I never actually saw them used to any advantage but I believe that if they did come upon a position they could not locate, they would let a dog loose. It was not a question of feeding a lot, but individual dogs. There was nothing else for them to eat in the jungle."

Pte. K.H. Duna of 2.6 Aust. Inf. Bn. saw a Japanese with an Alsatian dog. He shot the Japanese and the dog.

Others who make reference to the use of dogs by
the Japanese are :-

- (1124) Lt. T.W.Ashton.
- (1144) Pte. G.C.Smart.
- (1147) Cpl. J.H.Armstrong.
- (863) Lt. F.C.Davis.

Pte. S.S.Fellows 2/6 Aust. Inf.Bn. said that he had plenty of shots at Alsatian dogs with Japanese, but missed them. It was quite common to see the dead bodies of dogs tied up where they had been left. Fellows had seen it twice. The dogs were big,

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But in such a state of decay that it was not possible to say what breed they were.

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(ii) Mutilation of the dead and Cannibalism.

4. Pte. Smiles.

(1270A)

L.J. Barnett, 2/6 Aust. Inf. Bn., said that on about February 4, 1943, at a place known as Black Cat on the Wandumi trail, Lt. Park, Pte. Smiles, Pte Currie and Gnr Davenport were killed. The Australians had to withdraw on the day they were killed. About seven days later, Barnett was on a patrol and, searching around the area, he discovered Smile's body, which he recognised through the guernsey. When Smiles was shot, he fell forward on his face, and apparently the Japanese stood over him and chopped at him with a sword in about eight places on the back and up the legs. He was shot straight through the heart. There were no pieces cut out of his body. Lt. Parks was further over to the right.

I certify that this is a true copy of the original document which has been sighted by the Court and marked exhibit

Major General,
President.