



Bill Toon
1920 - 2007

Bill Toon was born in England in 1920 and migrated to Australia with his family at a young age. Bill had an unsettled childhood and left home and school in 1933 to start work as a messenger boy. He enlisted in the army in 1940 and during the Second World War saw action on the Malay Peninsula. He was taken prisoner and, after a period in Changi prison, was transported to work on the infamous Thai-Burma Railway.

Bill and his family moved to Narre Warren in 1950 and with the help and advice of wartime friend, Cleg Jones, he started in retailing. Toon's Fabrics was a prominent business throughout its thirty-two years in Dandenong. Through it, and because of his service background, Bill became involved with many community organisations including Jaycees, the Dandenong Chamber of Commerce, the RSL, Legacy, the Dandenong Hospital and the Freemasonry movement. His dedication to all has been tireless. However, two of his commitments hold special significance for Bill.

During the war, Bill learnt to play hockey. He loves the game and in 1956 became the driving force behind the formation of the Dandenong Hockey Club. He contributed actively to every aspect of its development, and through it has been a positive influence on the lives of countless young people. Within the wider community, Bill is well known and respected for his contribution to the Hellfire Pass Memorial on the Thai-Burma Railway. This historic site is now a lasting memorial to the 12,000 PoWs and Asian labourers who are buried along its route, and to those who survived.

Bill's early upbringing and wartime experiences presented him with enormous challenges, which many lesser individuals would have found insurmountable. However, Bill overcame them to lead a life from which countless others have benefited.