



A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL MVG MEMBERS

It is time, once again, to reflect on a busy year, and to look forward to fresh challenges ahead.

With the growing recognition and raised profile of the National Memorial Arboretum countrywide,

especially following the opening of the new Armed Forces Memorial by HM The Queen in October 2007, it is, without doubt, the right place for the MVG Memorial Garden. Its position at the end of the Far East Bank may not be the most prominent, but it looks across the Arboretum towards the new National Memorial, and in time will become a shady and peaceful place to sit and reflect. On 15th August 2007 – VJ Day – when it was dedicated, it was anything but a place for tranquil contemplation! It was cold, grey, wet and windy. The atrocious weather conditions meant that several members were held up on their journeys to the ceremony, and unable to arrive in time for the dedication or at all. However, a good day was had by all who attended.

It was a remarkable achievement to raise the money for the Memorial Garden in such a short space of time. We are very grateful to everyone who contributed so generously to the funds to make the Garden a reality. We are also indebted to the National Memorial Arboretum for allowing us to pay off the "donation" for the plot in instalments. Let us not forget that we still owe the NMA £1,500. Perhaps we should endeavour to repay this in 2008 before we embark on other projects.

New members continue to join us, and we now have 3 members from Malaysia as well as others from Australia, Canada and the U.K. New member, John Bax, from Canada, also has connections with the NMA. He was involved with raising money for the Bidadari Bronze Plaque in Singapore, as a memorial to those who were buried in the Bidadari Christian Cemetery, but were removed when the cemetery was taken for building land by the Singapore Authorities. With the surplus funds, 4 trees with brass plaques were planted at the NMA. These can be found below the MVG Garden on the other side of the avenue leading to the Garden.

Our thanks go to Jonathan for his invaluable and tireless research work on behalf of our members, and to his son, Peter, for his help with the website, which has been maintained to a very high standard. It has encouraged many enquiries about the Malayan Volunteers, but unfortunately not all contacts have translated into new members.

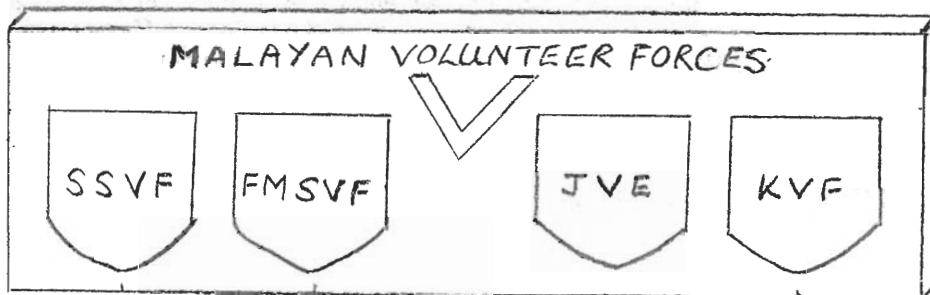
We would also like to thank Sandy for organizing a splendid Lunch, once again. As always, it was a wonderful reunion - old friendships renewed and new ones forged. With over 30 present, we may have to look for larger premises this year!

Projects for 2008 include the presentation of the Changi Museum Memorial Board, and the maintenance of the Memorial Garden. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the various functions during the year. There is the exciting Researching FEPOW History Conference at the NMA, at the end of May; the V-J Day Service in the Memorial Garden, NMA, in August; the presentation of the Memorial Board to the Changi Museum in Singapore in September; the Annual Lunch in London in October; and finally the Remembrance Day Service in Whitehall in November. We already have a group of regulars who come to this event every year. Perhaps it is the convivial lunch session after the march which is the attraction! Who knows, but why don't you come and join us?

THE CHANGI MUSEUM MEMORIAL BOARD.

We regret to report that, despite frequent communication with Changi Museum, we have still not been given the go-ahead to proceed with the proposed Memorial Board.

Following the Annual Lunch in London at the end of September 2007, when the decision was taken to accept Mr. Jeyathurai's suggestion for a horizontal board instead of our proposed shield-shaped one, we wrote to say that we agreed with his wishes. New plans were drawn up and a tracing of the design was sent to the Manager, Mr. Simon Goh. It is now proposed to have the words "Malayan Volunteer Forces" carved into the teak board at the top, with a centrally carved "V" below, in the middle of the board. On either side of the "V" will be the badges, as shown in the drawing. The edges of the board will be bevelled, to give a good finish to the board.



There will be very little difference in the cost of the new design, compared with the shield – it will be about £400. The money for the Badges has been kindly donated by members, and we thank them very much. The Badges have been ordered, received and paid for. We used the same firm, C.H. Munday, who made the Badges for the Plaque in the Thailand Burma Railway Centre Museum in Kanchanaburi. Some of you who have visited this museum may have seen the Plaque. The Badges are of a very high quality, and we were lucky to get them at a discounted price.

Mr. Jeyathurai has also suggested that the presentation ceremony should be on **Friday, 12th September 2008, at the Changi Museum, Singapore**. It was on this date in 1945 that the Japanese officially signed their surrender in Singapore. The Museum wishes to market the event, and hopes to invite a Minister to attend the Presentation, plus the relevant High Commissions and Embassies. We very much hope that as many MVG Members as possible will be able to attend this important event. More details will be given as and when the arrangements have been finalized.

Members attending the Researching FEPOW History Conference at the NMA in May will be able to meet Mr. Jeyathurai, who is giving a talk about the Changi Museum.

Please let Rosemary Fell know if you have any comments to make about the proposed Memorial Board.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY – 11TH NOVEMBER 2007.

Remembrance Sunday in 2007 fell on Armistice Day itself – the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. The task of arranging the Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, followed by the march past of ex-service men and women, is enormous, and can be truly appreciated only by those who have taken part in the ceremony. The event is organized by the Royal British Legion, and is run with military precision, as befits such an occasion. Application for the allocation of tickets to the ceremony was made way back in June, although the tickets and instructions did not arrive until October. Once again, the MVG was allocated 12 tickets only.

It's an early start for those of us who attend the Service. A marker board, which indicates to other members where we are to meet in Whitehall, has to be collected from Horse Guards by 9a.m., and all marchers are requested to be in place by 10a.m. Our numbers were slightly reduced on the day due to illness, but there were 9 of us representing the Malayan Volunteers Group at the Cenotaph. At number 5, we were near the front of the Civilian Column M, and we thought that we would have a good chance, this time, of being seen marching, not far behind the Bevan Boys with their white miners' helmets, before the BBC finished its broadcast. Unfortunately, this was not to be.

The weather forecast gave us a few anxious moments on Saturday evening, when a wet start to the day was predicted. However, apart from a slight drizzle early on, the weather was fine for the Service and March Past, and the sun shone briefly shortly before the start of the ceremony.

At 2 minutes to 11a.m. the huge crowd of onlookers and marchers alike fell silent as HM The Queen stepped out of the Foreign Office doors. Only the leaves of the London plane trees could be heard, as they fluttered down to the ground on that cold November day. The television coverage cannot catch the atmosphere created by a vast sea of absolutely silent faces. It is an unforgettable experience. We were able to watch The Queen lay her wreath, followed by other members of the Royal Family, including Prince William for the first time, and then the Politicians and Ambassadors, on a giant TV screen to the left of where we were standing. The simple service which followed, which is the same every year, only serves to enhance the quiet dignity and significance of the occasion. The ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan constantly remind us that Remembrance Sunday has lost none of its relevance today, and there seemed to be more people than ever lining the streets and watching the ceremony. The reaction of the crowds to the marchers is also extraordinary, and very inspiring as they clap each and every contingent passing them.

The MVG poppy wreath was handed in as the 9 of us marched past the Cenotaph itself. It bore the same inscription as in previous years:-

**In Memory of
The Malayan Volunteers
Both Military and Civilian
Who served in WW2
1941-1945**

The salute at the end of the march past in Horse Guards was taken this time by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. Standing to attention and saluting for over an hour would tax a much younger man, and we felt that the Duke, at the age of 86, carried out this onerous task with great aplomb, patience and fortitude. Marching, as we did, in Column M, we were near the end of the parade, and we did not have long to wait after reaching Horse Guards before the playing of the National Anthem and the dispersal of the marchers.

We said our goodbyes to Christine Edwards, her friend and husband Mike, who had to get home, and to new member Robert Baird, who was marching for the first time. The remaining 5 – Patricia Wilson, Karen Harney, Ian Stitt, Donald and Rosemary Fell – enjoyed a long and chatty lunch at the "All Bar One" restaurant near the London Eye. It was a pleasant way to end a long, but very worthwhile and rewarding day. Christine and Karen have already "signed up" for 2008 – so if you would like to join us, you will have to be quick!

WEBSITES TO VISIT.

<http://www.viweb.freehosting.net/Warmen.htm> The War Memorial at the Victoria Institution K.L. by Chung Chee Min.

DR. P.M.KIRKWOOD.

By John Hedley.

Extract from a book by Walter Gibson called "The Boat".

"Patrick Murdock Kirkwood is a highlander from Forres, Morayshire. He stands about six feet three or four inches and when I met him first he wore a most striking black beard. He was slim and gaunt at the time and his voice was surprisingly low and quiet. His splendid work as one of the camp doctors, for which he was later decorated, surprised no one who knew him, but what seemed so amazing was that a person of his physique could be so gentle with his patients. He had a deep understanding of his fellow men and a great love of animals.

Kirkwood was most meticulous in learning the history of any case he treated and, consequently, very careful in his diagnosis. At the time of the surrender of Singapore he was stationed on the island of Blakan Mati just across the harbour from Singapore itself. He got away in a launch after some narrow escapes from bombing attacks by the Japanese and managed to take with him an excellently equipped medical outfit. During his journey to Sumatra he carried out an amputation on a wounded soldier by the light of a hurricane lamp. I later met this very soldier in a camp in Sumatra when Kirkwood and a German surgeon named Messing carried out a further operation to trim up the ragged edges of bone in order that an artificial limb could be fitted."

I cannot disagree with any of the above. I would add only that his work in the Dabo Hospital on Singkap Island in the Lingga Archipelago was also to his own high standards. The launch that had brought him to Dabo was "The Florence Nightingale". When he considered his work at the hospital finished he used this boat to get himself and some of his nurses and staff to the mainland of Sumatra. He and others managed to get to Padang on the west coast but unfortunately too late to be rescued by ship, the last having left Padang a week or so earlier.

I first met Kirkwood in Padang, for I too missed the last ship, and we were captured on 17th March 1942 and put into the local prison. In the May the Japs took a party of 500 men, 300 Dutch and 200 British, up north to be shipped to Burma from the port of Belawan Medan. This group of British, known as the Aphorp Battalion, worked on the northern end of the Burma-Siam railway. The rest of us were to follow a month later. We were taken by lorries to Belawan, but the ships that were to carry us on to Burma didn't arrive, presumably sunk by allied shipping. After a week in Belawan we were moved to an old Dutch transit camp near Medan. Glugor, the new camp, was made up of about eight 'hongs' or barrack rooms and held about 200 men each. Captain Kirkwood served as M.D. to all the British, Australian and New Zealand troops. We were at Glugor till March 1944 doing many outside jobs on a daily basis. In March 1944 a team of 500 (300 Dutch and 200 British) were required for a road building project in Northern Atjeh. The British force was made up of 42 Army, 42 Navy, 42 RAF and 42 Australian and New Zealanders with an H.Q. of 32, Kirkwood was Medical Officer. The road was completed and finished in October with a punishing day and night march of approximately 85 miles back to Kotajani. Casualties on the march were treated by Dr. Kirkwood in spite of considerable pressure from the Japanese – the men thought we were going back to Glugor but not a bit of it. Lance Corporal Russel gave his bamboo mug to Kirkwood in token of services rendered.

Whilst at Atjeh he asked the Japanese Commander Lt. Miura for medicines for the camp, Miura's reply was to suggest Kirkwood write to London asking them to stop sending submarines to the Malacca Straits then they might do something!

On October 26th 1944 we moved to Petai via Sibolga and Fort de Kock and on 1st November by train to Muaro. We were then transported by lorry to Camp 14 to build a small gauge railway from coalmines at Sapoer Lingar, Camp 14, and a long siding to join the main Pekan Bahru to Muaro railway. A large bridge over a ravine had to be built for the small gauge rail. This was finished about the 28th December '44 and the side line to the main line connected during February. Camp 14 then transferred to various camps to work on the Pekan Bahru – Muaro main line.

Kirkwood had added dentistry to his medical skills having to use ordinary pliers as his extraction tool. He also used mouth to mouth resuscitation in an attempt to revive dying men and for many of us it was the first time we had seen this being administered. He did have a habit of masticating his meagre rations at least thirty times a mouthful which was most irritating to watch!

Although Kirkwood himself was suffering from both dysentery and malaria he still continued to carry out his duties to the camp but latterly, due to sickness he and Russel were posted to Camp 2, the base camp for the northern part of the Sumatran railway, on June 26th 1945, both very tired and sick men. He survived in Sumatra until the Japanese capitulation on August 15th 1945 but it wasn't until the 15th September that he reached Singapore and real freedom.

After a break to recuperate he resumed work in Oxford at the Radcliff Hospital. He married Laura Evelyn Bland in 1948 and died in February 1993.

Before the war, having qualified as a doctor, Kirkwood served a season as an M.O. to the Danish Whaling Fleet in the South Atlantic – a toughening up process which, no doubt, held him in good stead in his future life.

[**Editor:- John Hedley** writes in response to a query from **Michael Pether** about Dr. Kirkwood in June 2007 (A.K. 11) If anyone else knows anything about him, please contact Michael on mncpether@xtra.co.nz]

Audrey McCormick adds some details about Dr. Kirkwood:-

Dr. Kirkwood was Medical Officer on Blakang Mati Island. He had been working in the South Atlantic with the Danes as a whaling officer. His father was an Indian Army Medical Corps. Patrick was described as "a big bearded man, with hands like plates of meat which nonetheless were incredibly gentle. An excellent doctor". (*John Hedley*). Dr. Kirkwood left B. Mati on

13th February with two padres [Hartley Beattie and Joe Lombardie] on his launch, and two wounded Volunteers to deliver to a Singapore hospital. One – Bill Dickson – died on admission, but the other survived and duly went into Changi. Soon after, with the B. Mati dressing station now flattened, he was ordered to leave Singapore with several wounded, still plus the two padres, on the RAMC launch the *Florence Nightingale*, capable of holding 20, on the 15th February. They were to head for the escape route across Sumatra.

They reached Dabo on Singkep Island (one of the larger islands of the group) some days later. It was in one of the areas where so many refugee ships were being sunk. He found a native hospital full of wounded, which he immediately took over. Patients were arriving with gangrenous wounds needing attention and were thankful to find “a real doctor” working there.

The women helping him at Dabo were nurses and civilian survivors from sunken vessels such as the *Kuala*, *Redang*, *Vyner Brooke*, *Trang* – all Straits Steamship HMS vessels, plus the naval gunboat *Grasshopper*. The nurses included Q.As like John Hedley’s future wife Naomi Davies from Abergavenny; and others like Brenda MacBryde of Saffron Walden; Sarah Beaton of Nairn (nee Service); Lydia Hartley of Clackmannan, Scotland; Lydia McLean (who became Mrs. Harvey-Bennet, whose husband became Senior Chaplain); Mrs. “Woody”(?) Fieldbrick, and others. They all had nothing but praise for Kirkwood’s work at Dabo. The Dutch Controller on the island gave them every help, and they remained until 3rd March, before going on again to Sumatra. But by then they had lost every chance to get away themselves. Undoubtedly their presence in captivity on Sumatra contributed to others remaining alive until the end.

GWILYM OWEN’S ACCOUNT OF HIS ESCAPE ON 14TH FEBRUARY 1942, ON THE TIEN KWANG.

This account was sent in by his son Gareth Owen, who writes:-

My father, Gwilym Owen, was a soils analyst, having taken a higher degree at University College North Wales in Agriculture, and on 7 June 1935 left London aboard the *Kaiser-I-Hind* to take up a job with Guthrie’s on their rubber estate in Seremban. On 5 January 1939 he was appointed to the staff of the Rubber Research Institute (RRI) in K.L., returned to Wales in 1940 to marry my mother and returned with her aboard the *Deucalion* in September 1940. (Interesting footnote – the other passenger on this boat was Graham Hough, then a teacher at Raffles College. Hough later became Professor of English at Cambridge and a noted author of books on Jane Austin, George Eliot and Romantic poets etc. I met him at Cambridge in 1968 and reminded him of the voyage. He died in 1990.)

In December 1941, the three of us joined the rush to Singapore in the face of the invading Japanese army. My mother and myself were evacuated on the *Duchess of Bedford* at the end of January 1942 and my father tried to escape to Sumatra on the *Tien Kwang* on Friday 13 February along with many others including his close colleagues. As we know, the *Tien Kwang* was bombed and badly damaged in the Straits of Malacca on Saturday 14 February and one of my father’s colleagues, R.Napper, lost his life while swimming to the nearby island of Pom Pom. After the war, Napper’s family contacted my father to request details of the bombing which my father witnessed and he duly sent off his account dated 3 April 1946. The account then disappeared but was found 58 years later at the bottom of a neglected tin trunk and a copy was sent to me. It might now be of historical interest to posterity so I reproduce it below, slightly edited.

Both ships were anchored close together near an uninhabited island in the Lingga Archipelago on the morning of February 14th 1942. On board the *Kuala* were women and children together with some men, the total number of passengers and crew estimated at about 500. Mrs. Napper was a passenger on this ship. On board the *Tien Kwang* were men only, members of the armed forces and civilians, the total number estimated to be about 300. Mr. Napper and the writer were passengers on this ship. The Japanese bombers came over and dropped a salvo of bombs. The *Tien Kwang* was not touched then but the *Kuala* received a direct hit and was set on fire immediately. It is known that many people were killed on board..... I distinctly remember seeing hundreds of people jumping over the side of the ship but we were not sufficiently close to recognize individuals with the naked eye. When this happened, we received orders to abandon ship. I did not go overboard immediately as I realized that I could never reach the island. I can’t swim and I did not have a lifebelt. I remember looking over the side after a short interval and seeing Messrs Napper, Page and Sharp amongst hundreds of others swimming towards the island. Just at that moment the Japanese bombers came over again and I rushed down to the bowels of the ship. The *Tien Kwang* was hit but apparently no serious damage was done and at least the ship was not sinking. I shall not attempt to describe what I saw when I came to the side of the ship again but suffice it to say that it was evident that most of the bombs dropped by the Japanese bombers when they came over a second time must have fallen in the water between the ship and the island and the result can be imagined. Those who were still swimming were too far away to be recognized and I did not see Napper, Page or Sharp.

I jumped overboard when a raft was dropped into the water from the top deck. I clung to this (along with others) and we were swept away by a very strong current which flowed parallel with the island and despite our efforts we failed to reach this particular island. (We were picked up by natives in a rowing boat about 8 hours later).

Soon after I jumped into the water the planes came over a third time and more bombs were dropped. I got the impression then, as did many others, that the enemy machine-gunned the people in the water but there seems to be some doubt about this. (..) When the immediate danger was over, I looked back and saw that the *Tien Kwang* was still afloat but there was no sign of the *Kuala*.

(Messrs Page and Sharp were my father’s colleagues at the RRI. They all survived the war and returned to the RRI in 1946.)

The bombing of the *Kuala* is described in detail by Commander H.V. Creer in the *Naval Historical Review*, September 1979.

MOVEMENTS OF THE 4/SSVF – THE MALACCA VOUNTEER FORCE

5th December 1941 – 15th February 1942.

5th-6th December 1941 – Entrained overnight for Singapore. Billeted in St. Patrick’s School on the beach, and detailed to counter-attack any Japanese attack from the sea, from Singlap Drain to Labrador.

Later moved into coolie lines at Jalan Eunus at the end of Geylang Road – 1 ½ miles from the sea.

30th-31st January 1942 – parties including the Eurasian Company sent to wire the north coast of Singapore, & suffered from

heavy Jap bombardment.

8th February 1942 – Conference called to indicate the final perimeter defence line for the town of Singapore. 4/SSVF were to hold from Singlap Drain to McPherson Road, but later orders called for the Battalion to take up a position astride the main Johore Road on Adam Road and Farrer Road about 7 miles from the centre of Singapore – as follows:-

“C” Co (Malay) ---- Adam Road (company had a very bad time maintaining this position)

“B” Co (Chinese) - Cluny Hill (also suffered bad mortar shelling; Capt. Cho Siow Lim + 3 men killed)

“D” Co (Eurasian) – Khean Hock Road (in reserve)

Battalion H.Q. ----- Lane off Khean Hock Road.

Q.M. Stores ----- moved to beach.

Wednesday 11th February 1942 (probably) battalion withdrew into final positions, as follows:-

“B” Chinese Company – remained on Cluny Hill

“C” Malay Company – in reserve at Bukit Wayang Satu

“D” Eurasian Company – junction of Malcolm Road and Whitley Road

H.Q. Company – Malcolm Road

Battalion H.Q. – Malcolm Road

13th-14th February 1942 – the Battle of Bukit Timah raged.

CAPTAIN DANIEL TODMAN'S STORY ABOUT THE EVENTS OF 14TH-15TH FEBRUARY 1942

as told to his wife Peggy Todman after the war.

(By kind permission of his daughter Penny Dembrey)

Captain Todman was a member of the Malacca Volunteer Force. He was one of the Officers in charge of “B” Company 4/SSVF – the Chinese Company.

On Friday, 13th February 1942, the Chinese Co. of the 4th Battalion SSVF was stationed on Cluny Hill, Singapore, in the vicinity of the Shell houses. There was very bad shelling by mortar fire all day, and several Chinese boys were killed. I had broken a mirror that day, but evidently this did not bring me bad luck. We had been in this position for several days, cut off from the other Volunteers and had to fend for ourselves. Luckily, the Shell Houses were all well stocked, so this was not a problem. The Aussies were on one side, and an Indian Regiment, I think, on the other.

According to L.V. Taylor (2nd in command of the 4th Battalion), the Volunteers were the last lot to go on fighting, and I would agree with him. From time to time Regular Officers from an Indian Regiment joined our company, but later pulled back leaving us on our own again.

On the night of the 13th, I heard a rustling nearby, and thinking it was the Japs, I went out to investigate, with my heart in my mouth. Luckily for all the company, it was only a herd of cattle.

Over the next 2 days, the shelling was very bad, and on the 14th February a message was passed to me to say that Singapore had surrendered and that we were to put up a white flag, stay where we were and await further instructions. This is what we did. Shortly afterwards, a very angry Aussie appeared and in forthright language asked why we were flying a white flag. I answered that I was obeying orders. He then instructed me to take it down and to accompany him to Gordon Bennett's H.Q. By the time we arrived at some destination which I did not recognize, Gordon Bennett had escaped with a group of his officers. [He later got to Australia, but I did not know this at the time.] I waited around for ages, expecting to be shot at any moment, but no-one seemed to know what was going on. After some time, as no-one was bothering about me any more, I hurried back to my boys. In the meantime, they had been bombed, and several had been killed, because our white flags had been seen by a Japanese spotter plane. I found Arthur Goode and Donald Cameron and the remaining Chinese boys in a reasonable state, and there we stayed together. We were eventually found by Bob Darby, another 4/SSVF Officer, but we very much felt that we had been abandoned on Cluny Hill.

Orders then came through, but I'm not sure how, that we were to assemble on the University Ground, give up our weapons and everything we had. The Chinese Company was then taken away from the assembled troops. It was not until after the war that I discovered what happened to them. They were all marched down to the sea where they were made to dig a huge pit and were then shot. [The Massacre on Bedok Hill.] Fortunately, one man was not killed, and although wounded in the legs, he managed to make his way back to Malacca. [This man was Chan Cheng Yean, whose remarkable story was reported in the Straits Times after the war.]

The rest of the assembled thousands of men were kept on the University Ground all day and night with Japanese machine guns pointing at us. We were expecting to be mown down at any moment, and with nothing to eat or drink in that heat, things were in a dreadful state. While all this was going on, poor old Percival was surrendering to the Japs at the Ford factory, and Singapore was burning.

Eventually we were all marched off to Changi and settled down to life as a POW in camp. Almost the first day in camp, one of the Aussies we had entertained and played tennis with in Malacca, turned up to see if I was alright, and managed to give me a few things and a razor. Later, we were housed with the other 4/SSVF Officers. Arthur Goode, Donald Cameron and I shared a kind of “scullery” together downstairs. Donald Cameron turned out to be a good cook using anything we could find, and he managed to make a sort of porridge with the rice.

Footnote from Peggy Todman: Dan would never talk about his life in camp, and it was ages after the war when he told me this much. Various other bits came out from time to time.

EXTRACTS FROM CHAN CHENG YEAN'S STORY – reported in the STRAITS TIMES.

During the Japanese attack on Singapore the 4th Battalion of the SSVF, Malacca, especially "B" Chinese Company and "D" Eurasian Company were detailed to guard duties at Volunteer Headquarters, Fort Canning and some important military points. On the 11th February, 1942, the men who were left to guard the camp areas were sent to the battle line at Bukit Timah Road. Capt. Todman was the Officer commanding the "B" Chinese Company. Through orders from him we took our fighting positions at Cluny Hill.

On the evening of the second day at about 8 o'clock our positions were heavily shelled by the enemy. They were fired from howitzers and trench mortars. During the shelling L/C Wee Jim Swee and Pte. Low Geok Fah were killed. News that these two volunteers were killed was confirmed by Capt. Cho Siow Lim.

At 10.30 p.m. on the same night Capt. Todman and Pte. David Lee came and told us that Capt. Cho Siow Lim was killed by a direct hit from a mortar shell; after that on the same night Pte. Gan Kim Wah was also killed.

Then we had orders to withdraw and take up new positions where we stayed till the surrender.

On 16th February 1942, we Chinese Volunteers met again on a road at Bukit Timah when we were taken as prisoners of war along with British and Australian soldiers. We identified the Japs to be M.Ps through their arm bands.

First we were taken to Raffles College and then to Farrer Park. On the open field at Raffles College the R.A.S.C. supplied us with rations. Here we stayed until the 28th February 1942; all the time we were made to do all sorts of work and in return we only received kicks, slaps and cold water and no food was given to us.

On 22nd February the Indian soldiers at Farrer Park were taken away somewhere. The remaining Malay Regulars, Volunteers and their officers were interned together with us in this same building but in separate rooms.

Two days later, Mr. Kam Beng Tay (disguised as a Malay) came along with other Malays to report themselves, together with two Malay officers of different units. Besides them there were many Eurasians who had been caught by the Japs.

On 28th February, 1942, at about 9 a.m. we, the 27 Chinese, along with other Malays and Eurasians were ordered to pack our things and move away from Farrer Park. We trudged along on foot till we finally reached Tanjong Katong Road, where we were taken to a Chinese school used as a Red Cross hospital where we stayed till evening.

The Japs released all the Malays but detained the Malay officers, among whom were 3 from the Malay Regiment, Port Dickson, and two from "C" Malay Company, together with Eurasians from every unit.

At 5 p.m. we were taken along with the Malay officers and the Eurasians to an opposite house. Then we were asked to follow the Jap sentry to another place where the Japs examined us and took our belongings.

Then with our hands tied behind our backs we were taken in lorries to Changi Road where we were asked to climb up a hill...

There followed a detailed and horrifying account of what happened to them – shot in groups by the Japanese. [The Bedok Hill Massacre.] Chan Cheng Yeian survived because his body was covered by another man, and when the trench was examined, he feigned death. In a second hail of bullets he was hit on his left knee, but remained still. The Japs covered the trench with a plank of wood, and Chan Cheng Yeian remained there for nearly an hour before he dared to climb out. Having made sure that none of the other men was alive, he made his escape to a nearby rubber estate. He was given help by an old couple in a local village, and later returned to Singapore town where he was given refuge by a lady. On 18th March 1942 he returned to Malacca, where he live "incognito" protected by his compatriots and friends through out the occupation.

CAPTAIN CHO SIOW LIM – "B" Company 4/SSVF

New MVG member, Andrew Hwang of K.L. a relative of Cho Siow Lim, writes:-

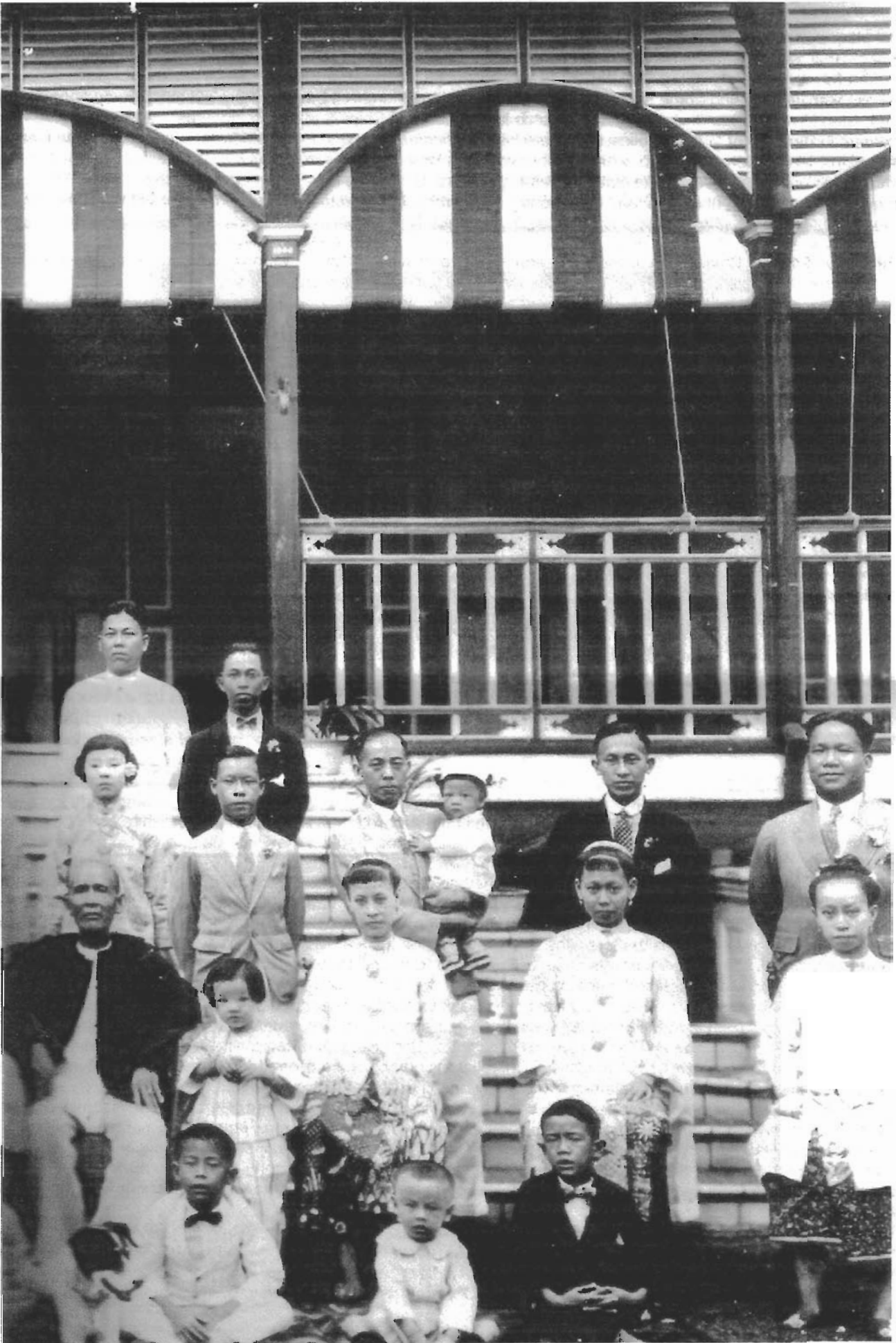
"I had a long chat with my mum yesterday. Of course she had no idea where was Capt. Cho's final position, but she remembers that before the war ended they had learned that Capt. Cho was killed from one Captain Ali Maidin who was Capt. Cho's best friend. **[Both Capts. Cho and Ali bin Maidin are in the 1938 photo of the Malacca Volunteer Corps in A.K. No.9.]**

Capt. Ali (as he was usually called) visited Mrs. Cho every month after the war without fail, to see how she was coping. Capt. Cho had been a millionaire before the war (Manager of Bukit Katil Rubber Estate, Malacca) but his family lost all their bonds and their money in banks to the Japanese and much of their property was in bad repair by 1945. My mum remembers Capt. Ali well. He was tall for a Malay – as tall as an Englishman and he always smoked a pipe and had British mannerisms. The 1938 photo depicts him as rather stout but my mum said after the war he was very slim and remained that way for the rest of his life. He always accompanied Mrs. Cho to lay a wreath at the Malacca War Memorial every Remembrance Day until he was no longer able to do so. **[The names of both Capt. Cho and CQMS Tan are recorded on the 4/SSVF War Memorial in Malacca.]**

As for CQMS Tan, my mum said my grandfather made many enquiries about his youngest brother after the war and it took a long time before he found out from 2 POW escapees that on 28th February 1942, they and Tan attempted an escape from the camp but Tan alone did not make it. My mum said she could not remember the camp's name. I tried a few names from Singapore and she recognized Farrer Park **[as mentioned in Chan Cheng Yeian's account]**. She said she had thought it quite odd that every year until his death in 1960, her father would not attend the Remembrance Day ceremony in Malacca but travelled to Singapore to the war memorial there. And he also always laid a wreath at Farrer Park. Perhaps he had learnt about where his brother had been killed.

I attach a section of a large family photograph owned by my mum. This section has Capt. Cho and CQMS Tan in it. Another copy of the same photo had been on display in the Singapore Museum some years ago. The photo was taken in the mid-1920s and the young CQMS Tan Kim Tee is standing on the right at the back in a bow tie and black jacket. Capt. Cho is standing in front, behind his wife, Tan Siok Tee, my grand-aunt. The elderly man seated on the left in Chinese attire was my mum's grand-uncle, a Mr. Tay – she cannot remember his full name.

ALHAMBRA



BIDADARI BRONZE PLAQUE

A memorial plaque was unveiled in Singapore on 17th May 2005, at the Bidadari Garden off Mount Vernon Road, dedicated to the memory of British merchant seamen and merchant seamen of all nations, civilians and others buried at the former Bidadari cemetery. The former cemetery dated back to 1907 and was closed for burial in 1972.

Amongst those who were buried at the Bidadari Cemetery were many Merchant Seaman from old shipping companies like the Blue Funnel, Glen Lines, Straits Steamship, Royal Dutch InterOcean, CP Ships and British India that traded through Singapore. Ex-Servicemen, Federation of Malaya Police, who were killed during service, and many others who perished in the Changi internment camps during World War Two, were also buried at the Bidadari Cemetery.

The ceremony was organized through the National Heritage Board, Singapore by a group of ex-Merchant Navy Officers (including member John Bax), and, as already mentioned, the surplus funds were used to plant 4 trees at the NMA, Alrewas.



Tree planted in the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas in Staffordshire.



THE LONG ROAD HOME

By Stephanie Hess

My grandfather, **Joseph Benedict Dunne**, was born in Dublin on April 16th 1907. His childhood years were spent in a city bubbling with unrest, and in old age he still remembered clearly the dramatic events surrounding the Easter Rising of 1916. The city of his youth was scarred with the signs of civil strife and revolution – the gaping holes left by bombed-out buildings were a reminder of a lost rebellion, and his descriptions of scenes of violence in the streets brought it all very much to life.

As one of nine children he learned early on to appreciate the value of a steady income and he worked hard to contribute to the family kitty. He was devoted to his widowed mother, Anne, and was looked to for guidance and support by his siblings. In 1928, in his 21st year, two events changed the course of my grandfather's life – he was offered the opportunity to carve a career in the East with Gestetner, Ltd., and he met and fell in love with a pretty young teacher with a love of travel and a sense of adventure. After a few heady encounters, J.B. Dunne and Eilish Beglin said their good-byes, and embarked upon a four year long-distance courtship conducted through the post!

Those first years in Singapore must have been exciting times for my grandfather. From a social point of view there was no end to the fun. Membership of the Singapore Swimming Club and the Tanglin Club provided an instant group of people to mix with. He joined the Royal Singapore Yacht Club and participated in **countless rowing events**, a **passion** of his already ignited from his days as a member of the Dublin Rowing Club.

Work was satisfying and exciting. Gestetner had branches in Malaya, Siam, Java, the Philippines and Hong Kong, all of which were visited regularly by the young J.B. Dunne. The world of the East, with all its magic and allure, was weaving its spell with each passing day.

Shortly after his arrival in Singapore my grandfather joined the Singapore Volunteers. In 1929 he was a member of the Scottish Company, and based on photos taken at the time I can see he wore the kilt with pride! The Volunteers, more than any other group, were to impact my grandfather's life, and until the end of his days he remembered his fellow Volunteers with great affection.

By 1932, having created a solid base in Singapore, J.B. Dunne was ready to marry his sweetheart who was patiently waiting in Dublin. For the first time in nearly four years he returned to the country of his birth to claim his bride. They married in October and six weeks later sailed toward their new life together.

The thirties were busy years for the Dunne family. In 1933 Joe and Eilish welcomed the birth of their daughter Eithne. Her arrival opened up a whole new world to the young couple – there was the social dynamic of the Kiddies Pool at the Swimming Club, birthday parties and children's teas became a regular feature in life, and as Eithne became a little older dancing classes and amateur dramatics occupied much time and energy. All this was fitted in to the very active adult social scene of dinner dances, film premieres, regattas and parties of endless and varying themes. By the time my father Dermot was born in 1938 the Dunes were firmly established in the happy, hectic merry-go-round of 'the good life'.

But there were rumblings from afar. Europe was plunged into war at the end of 1939, and the already frenetic pace of life for many in Singapore picked up a notch as fund-raisers and entertainments for the troops were added to the normal round of "do's". My grandmother's scrapbook of cuttings offers a glimpse into that whirlwind of activity dedicated to the War Effort, but in a curious way the spotlight seems to focus largely on who was seen where, and most importantly, what they were wearing when they were there!

And then it all came to an end. December 8th 1941 was a rude awakening. The air attack by the Japanese showed that Fortress Singapore was not impregnable, and on December 23rd J.B. Dunne secured passage for his family on a steamer bound for Sydney. He waved his dear ones off at the dockside, not knowing when they would meet again.

The following six weeks for my grandfather were a blur of sorting out his office, packing up personal treasures left by Eilish and the children, keeping the office ticking over, and fulfilling his Volunteer duties at Alexandra Barracks. Nightly air-raids interrupted his sleep and he spent frustrating hours moving between the house and air-raid shelter in the garden. For the second time in his life he found himself in a city of destruction and death, but unlike his childhood experience where he could only watch the events unfolding around him, this time he was able to take an active part in the fight to protect the city that had brought him so much happiness.

But the fight was in vain. On February 15th Singapore surrendered **unconditionally**. Weary in body and in heart, my grandfather turned in his rifle and joined the thousands already on the long march to Changi. Private J.B. Dunne became Prisoner 3037 and moved into a time of his life that he would refer to later on as his 'hidden years'.

During the first months of captivity my grandfather witnessed the deaths of a few of his friends. He was convinced that despair had contributed largely to their demise. Determined to 'see it through', the knowledge that his wife and children were safe in Sydney gave him strength and hope in times when he would be sorely tried.

For fifteen months my grandfather moved between various camps in Singapore. He felled trees, collected bricks, cut grass, baled hay, built huts, unearthed tree stumps, hauled carts, and did anything else required by the Imperial Japanese Army. The hard work and long hours were easier for him to bear than the lack of food. At least the days went by quickly when he was busy. But hunger was a constant companion, and as the months went by he found himself experiencing the distressing side effects of a diet consisting mainly of rice and boiled hibiscus leaves. His hearing and **sight began** to go and after a year of life at Changi he was admitted to the darkened Eye Ward of the Camp Hospital where he **remained** for nearly two months in a state of semi-blindness. Rice polishings were added to his meagre diet in an attempt to **combat** further deterioration.

But there were bright spots in camp life. Concerts provided a welcome **distraction** from the reality of daily life as a POW, and religious services offered comfort where nothing else did. My grandfather **found himself** reconnected with a Faith that he had lost somewhere along the way during the glittering years in Singapore. The **promise** of a letter or the longed-for delivery of a Red Cross parcel also helped to focus thoughts in a positive way.

In May of 1943 J.B. Dunne's name appeared on a list. He was one of nine hundred prisoners crammed in to the hold of the *Wales Maru*. They set sail the morning of the 16th and after three weeks of unimaginable filth and privation, torpedo attack and temperature extreme, they landed at Moji, Japan. Three days by train, by ferry and by foot ended at Hakodate Main Camp on the northernmost island of Hokkaido. Prisoner 3037 was given a new number which would be his identity for more than two years to come – 1087.

My grandfather began the next phase of survival as a worker at Asano Cement. The POWs travelled daily to and fro across the bay by ferry to reach the factory where they toiled in an atmosphere of fine cement dust that settled in their lungs. After a few months a new Camp was built 200 yards from the factory doors. About a hundred prisoners settled in to their new home in October of '43, just as the bitter winds of winter began to blow. Of the 36 Volunteers who had sailed together from Singapore only six remained together in this new camp.

The half-built huts provided poor shelter. The icy atmosphere within the walls carried off three men in those first weeks at Kamiiso Camp, augmenting the already high levels of anxiety about health and comfort. Snow fell between cracks in the roof and walls directly on to the sleeping spaces of the prisoners, and the water in the fire-buckets froze at night. In this new land of earth tremors and glacial chill my grandfather longed for those far away days in sunny Singapore – even Changi seemed like a distant dream.

The food situation was bad. The addition of fifty more prisoners to the "Cemento" camp meant a dip in rations. The occasional Red Cross parcel, usually shared, made life a little brighter, but the hunger was always there, gnawing away at their vitals. Mail was allowed, and this opportunity to communicate with the outside world, even though limited to 50 or 100 words per card, was a source of great hope. But it was a lucky draw – some prisoners received boxes of letters, while others, my grandfather included, received only a handful. In nearly four years only four letters of 25 words each made it through from my grandmother.

In June of 1944 my grandfather suffered a nasty accident in which he nearly lost his leg. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise. He was sent off to the Main Camp Hospital for care and remained there for two months. The foot was slow to heal and upon his return to Kamiiso, much to his delight, he was put on permanent camp work and joined the gardening squad. Having been an enthusiastic gardener pre-war, this was a most welcome change.

A second winter descended upon the camp. Once again the world became a place of snow and ice but this time the prisoners were prepared. As the months progressed rumour of Victory in Europe began to take a firm hold in the hearts of all who listened, and hopes were high that it would be 'any day now'.

And then the bombshell fell – the prisoners were to pack everything; food stores, kit, furniture, even the nails from the walls, in preparation for a big move inland. Nobody knew what to make of it. In June of 1945 the 152 souls who had lived so closely with each other for the last two years were split into two groups and sent to separate camps. My grandfather's group went to Nisi-Asibetu, an isolated place high in the mountains where the air soon cleared away the ashen pallor of the "Cemento boys". In this new camp of over 500 prisoners my grandfather continued as a gardener. He eyed each sprout with eagerness, calculating the time from sowing to harvest, impatient for the vitamin source to grow. The food situation was even worse than before – morning and evening meals were "stews" of mulberry or dandelion leaves, lunch was a bowl of rice with a teaspoon of fish flakes. Obsessed with food, the prisoners tormented each other with fantasies of scrumptious feasts and created menus of their favourite foods.

On August 15th the guards were observed weeping after a radio broadcast. It could only mean one thing! The previous weeks had been punctuated with air-raid alerts and wild rumours, my grandfather hardly dared to hope. But it was true – the war was over. The camp burst into activity in preparation for liberation. New uniforms were issued by the Japanese, kit bags were packed and repacked. Long hoarded treasures were sold or traded, trips were made to the local village in search of food and a constant bustle hummed through the camp. On August 26th four American planes appeared in the skies. They dropped 12 kitbags filled with supplies and as they fell to the ground many of the prisoners wept tears of joy. They were going home!

A month would pass before J.B. Dunne, no longer 1087, would march through the camp gates toward freedom. Impatient to be off, he readied himself for the journey ahead. Amongst the precious items that he packed was a little bundle of notebooks and scraps of paper. It was a letter. Started in Singapore in 1942, the letter to Eilish became a chronicle of my grandfather's years of captivity, and in those pages he recorded a story of longing, faith, sadness, courage, love, and incredibly, humour.

On September 12th 1945, after three long years and eight months as a prisoner of the Japanese, my grandfather started on the long road home. On foot and by train the liberated POWs made their way to Hakodate. They boarded HMS *Barfleur* and headed south to Yokohama. From there the USS *Monitor* sailed to Manila, carrying my grandfather one step closer to his family. But he had to wait. There was confusion over what to do with the Volunteers. The majority wanted to return to Singapore and the East, but it looked as if most would be sent to the U.K. Eventually it was decided that he could continue on to Australia because his family was there. On October 2nd HMS *Formidable* sailed from Manila with its cargo of emaciated men and eleven days later drew in to Sydney Harbour. My grandfather had fulfilled his promise – he had survived his ordeal to return to those he held dearest in all the world.

Those first years following the war were a time of readjustment. My father, at the age of eight, had no recollection of the man who had suddenly appeared in the household. Eithne was no longer the little girl that my grandfather remembered, and he and my grandmother had to start all over again in every way. The war had stripped them of their house, their possessions and four years of their lives, but they were together again, which was more than many could claim.

After a period of recuperation, various operations and other medical treatments it was time to pick up where he left off. By 1946 Gestetner had reopened the office in Singapore and like so many who remembered those magical days before the war, the Dunnes returned to the place that they felt was home. But nothing was the same. Too many of the old faces were gone forever and it became clear that the Singapore they remembered was truly only a memory.

Once again my grandparents made a new start. They said goodbye to the East and all that they had lived over the last two decades. My grandfather founded his own company in Dublin and the Dunne family settled in the lovely Irish seaside town of Greystones in County Wicklow. It had been a long journey getting there, but they were home.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE.

Michael Pether writes from New Zealand:-

"Many thanks for forwarding me the story of Dr. Kirkwood – he really was someone to admire under adversity. [See P. 3] I have recently visited Singapore and the nearby Indonesian island of Pulau Bintan as a holiday, but also mixed in a very interesting time on visiting and searching out places and information on the Malayan Volunteers.

Whilst I was there, I stayed on and spent some time exploring Blakan Mati (now, of course, Sentosa) during which time I found that there are on the seaward side of Sentosa island (at least) four of the concrete pillboxes that, during the three weeks leading up to the surrender of Singapore, were manned by a mix of Selangor Btn., Perak Btn., and no doubt other Malayan Volunteers. These men had been sent to Blakan Mati on 24th January 1942 to relieve the Manchester Regt. who were sent up to Seletar to prepare for the defence against the Japanese on that front. The pillboxes that I found (a few feet into the jungle off the cycle track) were in fact Vickers Machine Gun Posts Nos. 9, 10, 11 and 12 according to a map in the diary of the late 2nd Lt. Charles Thornton, Selangor Btn. who commanded a platoon of some 50 European Volunteers during this period (posts Nos. 7 and 8 must now lie under the foundations of the Shangri-La Rasa Hotel development on Sentosa). The pillboxes are in excellent condition but must have been extremely cramped and hot for the men who manned them day and night through heavy bombing and aerial machine gunning. Some of these Volunteers did escape in small boats to Sumatra after the Surrender, some were lost during the escape and others became POWs. I understand that there must have been several hundred FMSVF and other Volunteers on Blakan Mati at that time and I estimate that there must have been almost 30 of these machine gun posts. In Singapore, across the road from the main entrance to Raffles Hotel (on the seaward side), is an old building that has been used by the Singapore Army during the last 50 years and on its façade there is the original name "SSVF 1931" – it was the original HQ of the SSVF. If anyone wants to take a photo they will have to be quick.

Whilst visiting Changi Museum (which is very good if anyone has not yet visited it) I showed the Manager a piece of original NZ Newsreel that I had found in our Archives in this country and had put onto DVD – it is very good quality film (and excellent, clear sound) taken by a NZ Film Unit cameraman who was sent with the first Dakota aircraft in September 1945, as soon as the Japanese surrendered, to record the men coming out of the POW and internee camps in Singapore, the DEI (including the big camp for women and children at Tidjeng) and men leaving Bangkok for Singapore. There is original footage of Changi, Sime Road and Kranji camps whilst the men were still in there as POWs and internees and includes film of some Malayan Volunteers. The Changi Museum is now discussing with the NZ Archives the possibility of obtaining a copy of the (about 9 minutes) film to become a permanent exhibition in Changi Museum. It is well worth viewing because moving film has a way of conveying the conditions that a still photo can never achieve."

George Hess'e writes from Australia:-

I am circulating the plan of the Garden Plot and location of the Bamboo Shrub amongst some of the children of the members of the Eurasian "C" Company of the 1st and 2nd Infantry Battalions of the FMSVF in the hope that they will contribute towards the MVG Funds.

The British Army in all their wisdom decided just before the Japanese Invasion to disband all ethnic units in the FMSVF, Chinese, Indian and Eurasians. A few re-enlisted in Signals, Armoured Cars, Railway and Medical Volunteer Units.

Quite a few came to the Light battery and were promptly put into the Transport Section. I did not know all of them as I had joined the Light Battery directly. However, I am at present trying to compile a list of these men, several of them migrated to Australia, U.K. and Canada. I am in contact with some of them in Perth.

Let's hope!

Margaret Shaw from England writes:-

"It was very kind of you to send me all the details about your Malayan Volunteers Group. I hope I am eligible – my father was not in the Volunteers. He was a doctor in Singapore – of course he was in the RAMC in the 14-18 War - and he was mentioned in the June 2007 Edition of Apa Khabar by Anne Potter who wrote that her mother was looked after in the Military Hospital by a Professor English!! In my travels round the world after I was married it was surprising the number of people who knew him! My mother left Singapore on the Felix Roussel and eventually landed in Bombay where she was met by a friend's sister, who

NEW AUSTRALIAN MEMORIAL DEDICATED IN MALAYSIA



was also a doctor in Singapore, and eventually arrived in Melbourne where my brother (at Geelong Grammar), and myself, at St. Margarets in Berwick in the Gippsland Hills, were at school. We had been left there early in 1941 by our parents. We spent the war there returning to England after the war. I am afraid I have not been back to Singapore since January 1941 so I have lost touch with Singapore. All my memories as a small child are of Singapore, though, as we came back to England to school in 1934(?). I have happy memories of Miss Griff Jones school started at the Tanglin Club. I remember my "education" started there – being taken by the Scyce and our nanny by car. We had a wonderful old nanny "Nursie". My mother did not approve of Amahs – she said the children were too spoilt!! So we were brought up in the old fashioned way. She stayed with my parents when we returned to England. Then she married but kept in touch with us until she died!

Susan Whitely who is our contact is married to an old friend of my brother – Tom English. My brother, also a doctor, died several years ago. We spent the war in a small place called Barwon Head, near Geelong with my mother. There was a small community of us – several from Hong Kong, Shanghai and China as well as Singapore. My father came down to Australia after the war and then we returned to England.

Merilyn Hywel-Jones from London writes:-

My father George Booker was a planter with Dunlops – as was Juliet Blomfield's father, Essex Blomfield. My mother Miriam escaped on the 'Narkunda' on the 15th January 1942. At Perth she changed onto the 'Orion' for Melbourne. I was born in 1942 in New South Wales. My father left Singapore in 1945 on the 'Oranje' and we all went back to Malaya in 1946, to the Dunlop Estate at Bahau in Negri Sembilan.

I will be leaving London in November (2007) and, with my sister, will be visiting all the bungalows and estates we lived at, and Malacca where I was at school. Then from Singapore we will go by train to Thailand, and along the Burma Railway, together with a cousin whose father was also a POW.

Mary Turnbull (Raynor) from Oxford writes:-

Re: Roberta Ward's request for information about her great uncle, Joe Speelman, posted on the MVG website Enquiries Section.

Joe Speelman was Manager of the Griffin Inn on Ampang Road in Kuala Lumpur in December 1952/early 1953, when I lodged there for a few weeks on arriving in Malaya and waiting to be allocated a permanent government quarter. There was a Mrs. Speelman, I seem to remember – maybe called Thelma? – and the two of them managed the inn together. Apart from him being a small man, my recall of Joe himself is rather vague, and the photo on the web must have been taken in much younger days. But I have very vivid and fond memories of the Griffin Inn, which in Joe's day was the liveliest place of entertainment in K.L. – which itself was a very lively town during the Emergency. There was dinner and dancing every evening, and on Saturday nights the Griffin Inn was a real R & R centre for army, police, rubber planters etc. who came in from the dangers of the country to enjoy themselves. It was also quite cosmopolitan (unlike most of the clubs in those days) and a favourite haunt of some of the fun-loving Malay elite – particularly on race days, because the inn stood at the entrance to the race course and shared the car park. Even in its heyday the Griffin Inn was a rickety building – wooden, two-storey, no air-conditioning of course. The ground floor was completely open to the garden on three sides, comprising a bar, restaurant, dance floor, verandah. There would have been a kitchen and servants' quarters at the back. Upstairs there were four or five guest rooms – large but spartan. The Speelmans had one, there were one or two short-term lodgers like me, and the occasional enterprising visitor avoiding the boredom of a conventional hotel. David Marshall, then a Singapore lawyer, stayed there whenever he had a case in the KL court. Later Marshall became Singapore's first Chief Minister, but at the time he was celebrated for his first big legal victory in the Watts-Carter case. Marshall had also been a Volunteer and was sent to Japan – Hokkaido – to work in the coal mines, and was there at the end of the war.

Also in permanent residence was a strange and temperamental Hungarian musician – a pianist I think – called Dodo Marfinger, or something like that. He had been part of the Raffles Hotel Orchestra with Joe Speelman before the war, and he was responsible for the music at the Griffin. He was not interned during the occupation, because the Japanese considered Hungarians to be friendly aliens. The old timers used to say that he had been helpful and sent things to Joe in prison camp, but it's difficult to see how, because the Japanese didn't encourage contact between prisoners and civilians outside. I'm afraid I can't be of much direct help. I didn't know Joe well, I don't know how long he had been at the Griffin and we had no contact after I left. I think Joe moved to the Selangor Club soon after, and although I was a member of that club I didn't have any dealings with him there. Later – probably not much later – the Griffin was pulled down and disappeared without trace under the concrete of an enlarged race course car park. I got the impression Joe wasn't very happy at the Griffin – I don't know who owned it, but there always seemed to be some crisis or argument going on in the background. Life there was always a bit haphazard, but that was part of its charm. I'm sure Roberta Ward will find lots of people who knew Joe because just about everyone who was living in KL knew the Griffin Inn – and she'll probably find everyone will remember it as a ray of sunshine in those very grim early years of the Emergency. Coming straight from the dreariness of Britain, where there was still rationing in 1952, I thought the Griffin Inn was heaven.

Anthony Cooper from Kent writes:-

When you next update the list of members please will you note that Richard Middleton-Smith is my stepfather and that my father was a POW who is buried in Kancharaburi. My sister and I were evacuated on the "Duchess of Bedford" (as I note were several members).

I am also the Hon. Sec. of The British Malaysian Society, if any of your members are interested in Malaysia today. (Of course, most of our members have lived in Malaysia at some time, some many years ago.)

BOOKS.

"CAPTAIN JACK – Surveyor and Engineer." The Autobiography of John Mackie [Bateson Publishing Ltd., New Zealand 2007.] Softback, 444 pages with maps and photos. ISBN 9582 486 64-3. Price NZ \$60 plus NZ \$35 postage
Ordering details:- Bateson Publishing Limited, PO Box 2002, Wellington, New Zealand.

The name of **John Mackie** is well known to members of the **Malayan Volunteers Group** as a veteran of the **Federated Malay States Volunteer Force**, a New Zealander member of our organization and a regular contributor to our "Apa Khabar" newsletter. At the age of 97, John has at last seen the publication of his most interesting and **substantial memoirs** much of which relate to his time in Malaya and his experiences as a **Far East Prisoner of War** in Singapore and Borneo. He provides us with a detailed, fascinating and often humorous record of his life supported with excellent photos from his private collection. Of Scottish descent, John grew up in Dunedin, New Zealand and attended Otago Boys High School and the Otago School of Mines which provided so many of the surveyors, prospectors and mining engineers for Malaya. Many of these men and their stories are mentioned in the book. In 1935 John arrived in Malaya as a field engineer prospecting for a private mining company. Very soon he switched to the Colonial Service as an Inspector of Mines. As a young man he enjoyed the social life of Colonial Kuala Lumpur but his strong empathy with the Chinese people in Malaya led to enduring friendships, particularly with the Chong family.

John joined the ranks of the FMSVF and soon became a commissioned officer. When the Japanese invaded Malaya he was serving with the Perak Battalion. A chapter of the book is dedicated to his experiences in the **Battle of Kampar** in late December 1941 when two platoons of the FMSVF, including his, fought alongside the **British Battalion** [1st Leicesters/2nd East Surreys]. Following the surrender at Singapore he was a prisoner of war in **Changi POW Camp** before being sent in April 1943 with E Force to **Batu Lintang Camp**, Kuching, Borneo. The death rate among POWs sent here was some 30% including a party sent to Labuan none of whom survived. John's description of **Batu Lintang** is the most detailed published account I have seen and covers several chapters of the book.

John returned briefly to Malaya but a health issue related to his mistreatment in captivity, a family issue and the political uncertainties of the time resulted in his return to New Zealand where he pursued a teaching career in **land and mine surveying**, from 1963 at the University of Otago.

Altogether, this book is a fascinating read containing a refreshing amount of previously unpublished material. It is recommended to anyone with an interest in British Malaya, the Malayan Volunteers, the Malayan Campaign and the FEPOWs.

Reviewed by **Jonathan Moffatt**, co-author of "Moon over Malaya".

The publisher, Julian Bateson writes:-

"The launch in Christchurch went well and John Mackie signed about 100 copies. The story of his work and imprisonment in Malaya is a great read so I imagine members of the Malayan Volunteers Group will be keen to read the book. The price including postage to the UK is NZ \$60 plus NZ \$35 which in old money comes to about 30 quid, a bargain! If people want to order copies they can do so using the form and sending it by fax. Alternately you can post a cheque on a UK bank for the right amount, or send an e-mail. However I do not recommend credit card details with an e-mail as the world is not a safe place."

RESEARCH WEBSITES TO VISIT.

Jonathan Moffatt has e-mailed the following websites to MVG members, which may be of interest to those of you doing research. They may be of interest to others without their own computers:-

Times Digital allows you to search the Times Newspapers 1795 - 1985. It can be used free by becoming an online member of Bedfordshire Library. It takes only a few minutes to register. UK only?

The Guardian/Observer archive 1821 – 1975 has also been digitalized – not as substantial but quite a lot relating to Malaya. This charges you though you can register and get 24 hours free use at pass.

archive.guardian.co.uk/Default/Skins/DigitalArchive/Client.asp?
Skin=DigitalArchive&enter=true&AppName=2&AW=1194542839793

Then there is Ancestors on Board, accessible through the Society of Genealogists website at:-

<http://www.uk250.co.uk/frame/6985/the-society-of-genealogists.html>

At the moment it contains searchable ships passenger lists outgoing from the UK up to 1939. You can get basic information, name, age and year for passengers to Singapore and Penang but need to pay to check which ship and precise dates. MVG member **John Brown** informs us that the British Newspaper Library in Hendon, North London has copies of "The Planter Magazine" from 1920.

Re: Photo of GLODOK CAMP in Java. [A.K. No: 12.]

On 14/11/07 the obituary of **Air Commodore Eric William (Ricky) Wright** appeared in the Telegraph. He was not a Volunteer, but regular RAF, (Flight Commander of 232 Squadron, & later promoted to Sqn. Ldr.) captured in Java and sent to the native jail of **Boei Glodok**. He may have been one of the men in this photograph – several can be seen wearing RAF caps.

Does anyone have any comments?

Captain Jack

Surveyor and engineer

The autobiography of John Mackie OBE

Over 400 pages and 100 illustrations \$60



John Mackie, known to many as Captain Jack, has written an outstanding autobiography.

John Mackie was one of a group of experienced lecturers who used their wisdom to educate students in the ways of the world. He was known as Captain Jack due to his military bearing, but his sense of humour gave him the ability to relate easily to students.

John Mackie's experience in geology and then as an Inspector of Mines in Malaya was followed by his wartime experience and three terrible years in the infamous Changi and

Batu Lintang prison camps.

When he returned to New Zealand his main task in the 1950s was teaching land and mine surveying in Otago. Continuing his interest in surveying he obtained support to begin teaching

surveyors at Otago in 1963, which became the four-year degree course in 1974. The National School of Surveying is a tribute to the vision and hard work of John Mackie and his early staff, and his successors in the Chair of Surveying.

I have been very fortunate in having a host of helpful friends. The reader will meet some of them in the pages. Sadly most have passed on, but I remember them all with fondness and gratitude.

Many honours have been bestowed upon me in the course of my life and now, in my old age I am fortunate to be able to look back with a great deal of satisfaction.

A very small number of copies of an early version of the book called *One for The Tiger* were produced in 2002. It is a measure of the man that at the age of 97 he can produce a revised version this book for a wider audience, thanks to the assistance of the NZIS who recognise the importance of recording this story.

This is an outstanding story of an amazing man, and it is fortunate that his excellent memory and careful filing of information over the years has enabled the production of this autobiography.

Return this form by fax or post to NZIS National Office, PO Box 831, Wellington, fax 04 471 1907.

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_____ copies of *Captain Jack* \$60.00 plus \$5.00 postage and packing in New Zealand.
Overseas postage Australia \$20, UK \$35 per book.

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PO Box 831
Wellington**

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OBITUARIES

LOUISE MOWAT

It is with great sadness we report the death of Louise Mowat, in her 92nd year, on 13th December 2007. We send our heartfelt sympathies to her husband, Geoffrey, her daughter, Alison, and to all her family. The funeral was held at St. Mary's Church in Fairford, Gloucestershire, on 19th December 2007, where Geoffrey and Louise had spent their last few years.

Geoffrey and Louise Mowat were married in Oxford on 6th July 1940. They sailed to a new life together in Malaya shortly afterwards, where Geoffrey had a job with the Colonial Administrative Service – the Malayan Civil Service. On arrival in Singapore, they were sent to the only posting where married quarters were available – the District Office, Alor Gajah, Malacca. It turned out to be an unforgettable 12 months honeymoon for Geoffrey and Louise, until, in November 1941, the threat of a Japanese invasion became imminent. On 3rd December, Geoffrey, who had joined the 4th Battalion SSVF (the Malacca Volunteers), was mobilized and on the night of 5th/6th December he was sent down to Singapore with the rest of the Battalion. After an anxious 3 weeks, Louise left Alor Gajah for Singapore on Christmas Eve.

At a fortuitous meeting with an ex-Oxford friend, Ann Phillips, on Christmas morning, on the steps of St. Andrew's Cathedral, Louise confided in her friend that she was looking for a job. It was then Ann told her that stenographers were needed at General Headquarters at Sime Road, where she herself was working. This was the turning point in Louise's war time service, which would see her evacuated first to Java on "The Anking", then to Australia and finally to Manila in the Philippines.

By now, General Wavell was Commander-in-Chief Far East, and he decided to concentrate all the allied representatives in the Netherlands East Indies at Lembang near Bandung on the island of Java. This allied headquarters was given the acronym of ABDACOM (American, British, Dutch and Australian Command). Louise was to join this organization, but within 6 weeks of arriving in Java, Louise found herself and fellow stenographer friend, Beryl Stevenson, fleeing from the enemy once again. At Tjilatjap on the west coast of Java, they were picked up by a "Shell" flying boat and landed at Broome in Western Australia, complete with typewriter and all their 'barang'.

On orders from her boss in Java – American Air Force General Brett – Louise and her friend Beryl were sent to Melbourne, where they were taken on as confidential secretaries. Following General MacArthur's escape from Bataan and his arrival in Australia in March 1942, the Headquarters was moved to Sydney, and then, after 6 months, to Brisbane. By this time, Louise was confidential secretary to General Marshall, Deputy Chief of Staff under MacArthur.

In mid-1944, after seeking and getting approval from General MacArthur himself, Louise was gazetted as Lieutenant in the WAC and was flown to Hollandia – capital of Dutch New Guinea in the N.E.I. After a brief stay there, under canvas, it was on to Tacloban on Leyte Island in the Philippines, and finally to Manila itself. For her war-time service, Louise was awarded the ribbon of the Legion of Merit and the Philippine Medal.

Geoffrey and Louise were eventually reunited on 11th October 1945, in Sydney, Australia.



EDWIN KEARSLEY



Golden Wedding, 7th July 1990

We send our deepest sympathy to Barbara, on hearing about the death of her husband Edwin, Editor of the Shropshire Far East Prisoner of War and Internees Association Newsletter. It was through the pages of his newsletter that a request for money was made in December 2003, to purchase a bench, dedicated to the Volunteers, which would be placed in the FEPOW plot in the National Memorial Arboretum. Sufficient money was raised to buy 2 benches and a stone tablet, and the MVG was established. Several of our members also belong to the Shropshire FEPOWs, and we shall always be grateful to Edwin for his help and kindness. He gave us the publicity we needed at the right time.

We have, since that time, exchanged newsletters regularly, and we received the last one in the summer of 2007, in which the notification of the Annual V-J Day Remembrance Service at the NMA was given. Several of us who were at the morning dedication of the MVG Memorial Garden on that day, attended this service, which was organized by Edwin and taken by the Revd. Tony Wood. We have much to thank him for, and he will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

31st MAY – 1st JUNE 2008

RESEARCHING FEPOW HISTORY GROUP

2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AT THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM, ALREWAS.
The focus will be FEPOW and Civilian Internment in SINGAPORE, MALAYA & HONG KONG 1942-1945

Keynote Speakers:-

Mr. Jeyathurai – Director of the Changi Museum, Singapore on:-
“The Fall of Malaya & Singapore. How Singapore commemorates World War Two.”
Tony Banham – Founder of the Hong Kong War Diary website on:-
“The Battle for Hong Kong, FEPOWs, Civilian Internees and the Hellships.”

Guest Lecturers:-

Peter Francis – Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Dr. Nigel Stanley – Medical Aspects relating to FEPOW and Civilian Internees.
David Tett – FEPOW Mail and Postal History
Sears Eldridge – FEPOW Entertainments.

Special Guests:-

Rod Beattie – Director of the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre
Roderick Suddaby – Imperial War Museum
Roger Mansell – Director of the Center for FEPOW Research, USA
Fred Seiker – FEPOW

We hope to be joined by 12 FEPOW Guests including some Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders and Gordon Highlanders.

Cost & Booking

£100 per delegate for the 2 days (deposit £40 pp now, balance Feb 2008.) Registration form:- www.researchingfepowhistory.org.uk
or contact Meg Parkes on e-mail:- mm.parkes@talktalk.net or write to:- Kranji, 34, Queens Road, Hoylake, Wirral CH47 2AJ
or log onto Meg Parkes article in the Times of 29th December 2007 about **FEPOW Pantomime & the RFH Conference**:-
http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/court_and_social/article3104618.ece

RESERVE YOUR PLACE NOW!

12th SEPTEMBER 2008

Presentation of the Memorial Board to the Changi Museum in Singapore.

Details of this presentation will be given as soon as they have been finalized. We hope that as many of you as possible will come to this important event. It's a good excuse to visit Singapore for a holiday!

MVG SUBSCRIPTIONS 2008 – 2009

Once again the thorny problem of the annual subscriptions rears its ugly head! In consultation, we have reluctantly decided that we need to increase the subscription to **£15 per household**, for the year April 2008 – April 2009. Postage costs are going up again, and although we now send most of our newsletters to overseas members by e-mail, nevertheless postage is an increasing burden, and we also have to pay for the newsletters to be photocopied.

I think most of you would agree that our annual subscription is very reasonable. The Group is run on a shoestring and on the good will of Jonathan, Sandy and (dare I mention it) the writer of these words!

The reason for asking members to pay their subscriptions in April, through the pages of the newsletter, is to try to keep down the costs and to save the necessity of having to write to everyone. I do hope this will meet with your approval.

Please may I, therefore, remind you that subscriptions for 2008 - 2009 are due in **APRIL 2008** and cheques for **£15 per household** should be made payable to:-

Mrs. R. Fell, Volunteers Bench Fund

Receipts for the subscriptions will not be sent, unless requested, but donations will be acknowledged.

N.B. The newsletters are posted on our website, where they can be read and printed out using the password “taiping”.

CONTACTS

JONATHAN MOFFATT. For research on British Malaysians/Volunteer Forces/Argyll & Royal Marines.
49, Coombe Drive, Binley Woods, Coventry CV3 2QU. E-mail: JonathanMoffatt@aol.com Tel: 02476 545013

SANDY LINCOLN. For the MVG Lunch and contacts with other Volunteers/Volunteer Children.
19, Burke Street, Harrogate, Yorkshire HG1 4NR. E-mail: anlulinc@googlegmail.com Tel: 01423 500351 **NEW E-MAIL**

ROSEMARY FELL. Editor of “Apa Khabar”/Membership Secretary/Subscriptions/Donations.
Millbrook House, Axminster, Devon EX13 5EE. E-mail: dinraf-millbrook@tiscali.co.uk Tel: 01297 33045

Carolina Arrigada of the British Malaysian Society has notified us of this new book by Peter and Waveney Jenkins. It will be of interest to anyone who knows about Malaysia, the plantation industry, or tropical architecture. "The Planter's Bungalow" covers the development of the plantation bungalow from the early 19th century through to WW2. It includes the memories of many retired and present planters both in the UK and Malaysia.
Printed in Singapore, the book was available from early December 2007.

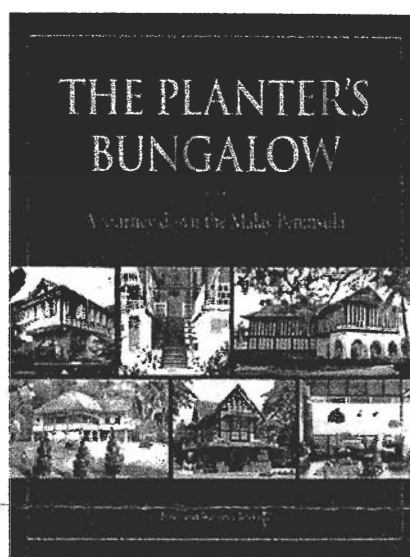
THE PLANTER'S BUNGALOW

A Journey Down the Malay Peninsula

Peter and Waveney Jenkins

ORDER FORM

The Planter's Bungalow celebrates the traditional plantation manager's bungalow. It documents the development of its architectural styles over the last 200 years and, in doing so, captures the spirit of the plantation industry, one of the foundations of Malaysia's wealth. This book draws on the memories of planters over the course of two centuries. Through diaries, letters, interviews with key personnel and numerous archival and contemporary photographs, the authors paint a vivid picture of the lives and homes of a pioneering generation whose contributions to the country's development have been very considerable.



Please mail _____ copies of **The Planter's Bungalow** to

Mr /Mrs /Ms : _____

@ Address : _____

@ the special price for Malaysia **RM 130 per copy** (including postage charges)

or the special price for Britain **£ 25 per copy** (including postage charges)

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Malaysia

MALAYAN VOLUNTEERS GROUP 2007-2008
NEW MEMBERS OCTOBER 2007-JANUARY 2008

BAIRD, Robert.

Awaiting details.

BARCROFT, Daphne.

Awaiting details.

CHOI, Bentley Giles.

Awaiting details.

CHUNG, Chee Min.

Awaiting details.

HAY, John.

c/o Sally Pursell, Spindrift, Westbourne Terrace, Saltash, Cornwall PL12 6BX
Son of **Andrew William HAY**, Captain 1/SSVF to RA. POW Singapore to Thailand. Camp Interpreter Nakorn Pathom. Died in captivity 21.10 44 Nakorn Pathom. According to M.J. Hayward his funeral was the longest for any POW. Pre-war in MCS, and particularly associated with the Chinese Community – District Judge Straits Settlements/Superintendent of Prisons 1936. Protector of Chinese Labour 1937
Mother **Joan (nee Brett)** evacuated to Melbourne in 1940 with children Alison, John and Sally.

HWANG, Andrew.

Awaiting details.

PURSSELL, Sally.

Spindrift, Westbourne Terrace, Saltash, Cornwall PL12 6BX.

Tel: E-mail: spursell@metronet.co.uk

See details above for John HAY.

SHAW, Margaret.

Culmore, 3, Park Place, Milford-on-Sea, Lymington, Hants SO41 0QP.

Daughter of **Professor ENGLISH** – Gynaecologist in Singapore. RAMC WW1.

Mother evacuated on the “Felix Roussel” to Bombay, then travelled to Melbourne, Australia where, since 1941, brother Tom and myself had been at school in Berwick in the Gippsland Hills.

WILSON, Patricia.

Malham, Hawkesfold Lane, Fernhurst, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 3TW.

Tel: 01428 653268

Daughter of **Robert Donald STEWART, FMSVF**. He was always known as Donald.