



APA KHABAR

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15TH EDITION
JULY 2008

NOT JUST A GROUP, MORE OF A FAMILY.

The growing global family, which the Malayan Volunteers Group is fast becoming, was clearly illustrated at the "Researching FEPOW History" Conference, attended by 16 members. Held at the National Memorial Arboretum from 31st May to the 1st

June 2008, the group included 3 Veterans and 2 overseas members – Jen Howe from Canada and Stephanie Hess from South Africa. It was lovely to see so many members at the Conference, and to meet our overseas members, thus forging new friendships through our common links with the Volunteers.

Once again, the Conference produced an absorbing 2 days. We were enthralled by a series of talks given by historians and researchers at the top of their fields. It was a humbling experience and privilege to listen to them. Topics ranged from the military aspects of the fall of Hong Kong and Singapore to the lighter moments of civilian and FEPOW concert parties. We heard about the postal history of the war-torn Far East. How letters and cards were sent to and from the men in the various POW camps throughout the region. An equally absorbing talk was given on the history of the Commonwealth War Graves, featuring the ones in the Far East from Kanchanaburi to Kandy, Kranji and beyond. Veteran MVG member, Fred Seiker, gave a most moving account of his experiences working on the Burma/Siam Railway. Dr. Nigel Stanley demonstrated, by means of photographs and diagrams, how some of the deficiency diseases, from which the FEPOWs suffered, did have a funny side to them, despite their seriousness. A full report of the Conference is included with this newsletter.

It is with great sadness that we report the deaths of several of our members or their families within the pages of the newsletter. Notably, we are sad to tell you of the death of Revd, Canon Geoffrey Mowat, who, nearly 3 years ago this August dedicated the Memorial Stone in the National Memorial Arboretum.

MVG MEMORIAL GARDEN

The week-end of the Researching FEPOW Conference saw the return of the 2 plaques, made for us by NMBVA member Maurice Humphrey, to the paved seating area of the Memorial Garden. The plaques had been removed in April so that they could be mounted on grey Cornish granite tablets to match the Memorial Stone. They have been placed one on each side of the Stone to form a matching trio, with the Memorial Stone standing 2 inches above the plaques. This gives the seating area of the Garden a finished look about it, and creates a good focal point.

We are indebted to Maurice for his gift of these plaques, and we send him our sincere sympathies on the death of his wife, Jenny, in May this year.



The Garden itself is beginning to look more established. The Birch trees are growing well and, in time, will form a shady canopy over the seating area. Two of the trees have their dedication plaques in place, and it is planned for 2 more to be added this year. Unfortunately, the bamboo bushes are taking longer to start growing successfully, but the Grounds Manager, Paul Kennedy, feels that there is no need to replace them at present.

CHANGI MEMORIAL BOARD - SINGAPORE

The Changi Memorial Board is ready and awaiting transport to Singapore in the next few weeks via the RAF. It was displayed at the Researching FEPOW Conference at Alrewas for the first time, and gained unanimous approval by all MVG members and, indeed, by Jeya himself, Director of the Changi Museum. The board is made of teak. It is 95 cms long, 30 cms wide and weighs about 9 kilos. The badges have been arranged from an aesthetic aspect, rather than in order of seniority. Thus, the coloured SSVF and Kedah badges are at the ends of the board, the gold coloured Kelantan badge is in the middle, and the silver FMSVF and JVE badges are between them.

As already announced, the presentation of the board is taking place on the 12th September at the Museum in Singapore. To date, 14 members of the MVG have indicated that they plan to attend the presentation and reception. **If anyone else would like to be there, please let Rosemary Fell know as soon as possible. It is not too late to come.**

Details of the event will be forwarded to those attending as soon as they have been finalized.



AN EVENING WITH FRED SEIKER

The following report was sent in by Bob Jenkins, a member of St. Peter's Baptist Church in Worcester where Fred and Liz Seiker live:-

On Wednesday 14th November 2007, an appreciative audience heard the deeply moving talk "The Thai-Burma Railway and Beyond" given by WW 11 Veteran Fred Seiker. The St. Peter's Baptist Church, kindly provided the new 'state of the art' Church auditorium and staff completely free of charge for a very successful evening. Many thanks to you all.

Those attending shared a most unforgettable evening with Fred and watched the extremely graphic award-winning documentary "The True Story of the Bridge on the River Kwai". Quite a few tear filled eyes were in evidence, especially when the Last Post was played.

Fred is a ninety-two year old survivor of the forgotten legions of those who suffered such diabolical treatment and were indescribably tortured at the hands of the Imperial Japanese Army in World War 11. Fred lives with us at St. Peter's with his wife Liz and we are proud to have him in our community.

Fred paid a touching tribute to those who did not survive and to those who now lie buried in the cemeteries of Thailand and Burma. Fred also paid tribute to the thousands of prisoners with no known graves, who were just left where they fell when they died from disease and starvation. Bizarrely Fred and his comrades were often forced to throw the bodies of their dead comrades on to huge bonfires just to get rid of them.

Bob Jenkins' Poem to Fred.

*The Bamboo rustles softly, remembering days gone by,
Where brave men stripped of dignity, suffered hell to die.
In pain, fatigue, biting hunger; thirst that scorched throats sore,
Disease, relentless heat and insect bites; beatings by the score.*

*The Bamboo rustles softly, remembering rusty tracks,
Where prisoners with broken hearts and aching blistered backs,
Had rifle butts and bayonet points to drive them blindly on,
To build the Burma railroad 'neath the flag of the "Rising Sun".*

*The Bamboo rustles softly, remembering days gone by,
They feel no sorrow and shed no tears, for bamboo cannot cry.
For those who lost the will to live and drew their final breath,
So bravely, in this nightmare hell; the railway of death.*

*The years have gone and we forget, those who went this way,
Man does not remember them and they have no special day.
But when the Bamboo rustles softly and the evening shadows fall,
Peace descends upon their railway, where the jungle Gibbons call.....*

Note by the editor.

It was in October 1997 at the Victory Services Club when I first met Fred and Liz Seiker. Fred had come to give his talk to the 'Kwai Railway Memorial Group'. I was in the audience, and, to this day, I can remember the total and utter silence which greeted Fred's talk. It was spellbinding and we were all moved to tears by his story.

This is a photograph of that memorable day



SOME WEBSITES TO VISIT

<http://www.pembroke.net/2007/09/charles-lettst.html> Charles Letts website. Singapore resident & veteran 1/SSVF

<http://news.scotsman.com/obituaries/Lt-Col-William-Innes-3936436.jp> Obituary of Gordon Highlander FEPOW

http://www.btrma.org.au/articles/Burma_Railway_Hellships_&_Coal_Mines.htm Neil MacPherson's memoirs

<http://www.researchingfepowhistory.org.uk/news/stories/news18may2008.html> Gordon Smith's memoirs

HOW I LEARNED HOW THE PEOPLE OF BORNEO SAVED AMERICAN AIRMEN IN WW 11. By Judith M. Heimann

One afternoon in September 1992, I was sitting in a cubicle in the Australian National War Memorial Library in Canberra looking through the wartime papers of an extraordinary Englishman, Tom Harrisson, who had organized and led an Australian guerrilla operation behind enemy lines in north-central Borneo. I was writing a biography of Harrisson at the time (which eventually emerged as *The Most Offending Soul Alive: Tom Harrisson and His Remarkable Life*, published in 1999 by the University of Hawaii Press and later by Aurum Press in London).

My late husband John and I had known Harrisson for the last ten years of his life, beginning in 1966, when John was American Consul for East Malaysia and Brunei and we were living with our children in a charming Chinese house virtually next door to Harrisson's. Harrisson was heading for retirement, having spent the previous twenty years as curator of the Sarawak Museum and Sarawak Government Ethnographer and before and during those twenty years he had done many astonishing things. These were in fields as varied as public opinion pioneering in Britain, major palaeontological discoveries in Borneo and important contributions to ornithology and animal conservation in various parts of the world; he had also produced interesting anthropological footnotes about the peoples of Britain, Borneo and the South Pacific.

It took me years after his death to track down some of Harrisson's accomplishments, but if you met him, the first words out of his mouth would have been to boast that he had been "the first white man to jump into Borneo" during World War 11. Unlike many of his historic achievements, this time the boast was not quite true, unless you think of "jump" as something he *chose* to do, as opposed to the two plane-loads of Yank airmen who ended up in Borneo because their planes had been destroyed by Japanese firepower over Brunei Bay in late 1944 and early 1945, respectively, a few months ahead of Harrisson's jump. Harrisson had landed far inland in Borneo in late March 1945 at the head of a small but seasoned group of Australian and New Zealand special operatives whose mission was to provide intelligence ahead of Allied landings on Brunei Bay scheduled for early June.

Aside from being his neighbour, one of the chief reasons why I got to know Harrisson well enough to think I should try to write a book about him was that I could decipher his handwriting. In 1966 and 1967 he and his then wife Barbara were trying to get their most important scientific legacy, the discovery of what was then the oldest (40,000 BC) fossil of modern man (*homo sapiens sapiens*) fully documented and tested, as well as tidying up a bunch of Neolithic discoveries they had made in the Niah Caves and the delta of Santubong.

That meant that they were often away from Kuching, where the next issue of the *Sarawak Museum Journal* was in the process of being produced. Turning Harrisson's notes into prose worthy of publication involved, among other things, making sense of his appalling handwriting and it was discovered that I was good at it. A lifetime of deciphering my own hen scratchings had prepared me well for this modest task. School-age children and a house that was superbly run by a "black and white" Cantonese amah gave me free time that needed filling. So from 1966 to 1968 while we lived in Kuching, I helped the Sarawak Museum with Harrisson's notes.

And a quarter century later, there I was, by then a retired diplomat myself, in a Canberra archive, once again pouring over Harrisson's infamously illegible scrawl. I was leafing through his notes and daily diaries of 1945 events in Borneo, when I came across a letter written in beautifully rounded letters, big and fully formed, that could have come out of a 1940s American penmanship book.

The letter was dated April 3, 1945 and began:

"Dear Sir,

We have received word that there are seven of you that landed in Borneo for the purpose of organizing the natives in warfare against the Japs. There are seven of us from a U.S. Army B-24 which was shot down November 16 and two from a Navy B-24 shot down January 13...." It went on to say that they were staying with a man from the Celebes (Sulawesi) who had been made District Officer by the Dutch and left in place by the Japanese. "Under his supervision the natives here have killed all Japs that have come into this area. They are anxious to carry their warfare down the river ... and want you to come to Long Berang to help them." He explained that the natives needed modern weapons and that some of the Yanks needed medical aid "and naturally we would like to get out of here as soon as possible."

It was signed by its author, Philip Corrin, 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Air Forces; the signature, rank and serial number of eight other airmen followed.

Utterly intrigued by this story, I determined that it would be the subject of my next book. It took me ten years on three continents to find the surviving airmen (eleven in all) and/or their next of kin. (Five were still alive when I located them.) And then, in 2003, I was able to go to East Kalimantan to interview a dozen surviving ex-headhunters who had helped the airmen and/or the ex-headhunters' next of kin.

My book, *The Airmen and the Headhunters* (NY: Harcourt 2007 and due out as a Houghton Mifflin Harcourt paperback in October 2008), explores how and why the native people of interior Borneo (mostly Lun Dayeh, formerly known as Southern Murut and close cousins of Sarawak's Kelabit), who had no overwhelming reason for preferring the Allies to the Japanese and who had learned that they could by-and-large sit out this war, had decided to risk their lives and that of their longhouse villages, to help these strange young fugitives. Not only did these upland people risk their lives, they shared their food, provided shelter, made clothes (loincloths) and even built a split bamboo runway for the airmen, so that the Yanks could survive in – and eventually escape from – Borneo.

As I uncovered the story, I found it offered a cheering set of examples of man's humanity and generosity to man. Aside from the Lun Dayeh, there were others who, though they also had nothing to gain and a lot to lose, were ready to help the airmen: some Christianized outer islanders, some Chinese traders, some Iban warriors, a bunch of Australian special operatives and some amazingly brave Aussie Auster pilots. Indeed, almost everybody involved in the story was a hero (except the Japanese) and the people of Borneo were heroic for the longest period of all – seven months of courting danger.

It seemed to me then, as it does now, to be a story that *had* to be told, so that others could know about and honour the achievements of little known people in a distant land.

DECEMBER 1941 – 31ST JANUARY 1942
By KAY MELROSE – as told to her sister Phyl Morton.
The events which lead to her departure from Singapore
On the "SS Empress of Japan".
(by kind permission of her niece Jill Gibson)

KERILLA ESTATE, KELANTAN

During the night of the 7th – 8th December 1941, Kay and 'Gracie' (*nickname given to her husband, John Halliday Melrose after an excellent rendition of Gracie Fields!*) were continually disturbed by Kim the dog barking. Guns could be heard in the distance and aeroplanes droned overhead. Early in the morning the radio was turned on to get the news and it was announced that the Japanese were making their way through the jungle. Almost immediately, a Malayan messenger from the British Advisor arrived and they were told that the women must be prepared to leave immediately and all the men were to report for Volunteer Duty.

They had discussed earlier what might happen in the emergency. Kay hurriedly packed and 'Gracie', realizing he was unable to do it himself, asked the chief assistant, King, to shoot the dog. Kay left Kota Bahru, along with Mrs. Gregory (*wife of the Manager of Kerilla Estate*) and Viti Phillips (*wife of Reg Phillips a New Zealander*) on 8th December.

They arrived at the station where casualties were already being brought in and put on the train. After spending one night at a hospital they reached Bobby's (.....) house in Ipoh. She was a friend of Kay. Frank, her husband, was a Forestry Officer and a member of the Flying Volunteer reserve. They had two children, a small boy of 2 ½ years and a month old baby. They left fairly hurriedly, had a meal at Batu Gajah, were treated kindly by an elderly lady, passed over Fraser's Hill on Cameron Highlands to Kuala Lumpur to the Majestic Hotel. Kay and 'Gracie' had stayed here before and she was now extremely well treated being given a bed and food without payment.

Originally it was intended to stay here to see if the situation improved and there could be any possibility of returning. So it was arranged that they should be billeted locally and give voluntary help where needed. Shortly after arriving at the house where she was to stay Kay was asked by the young woman if she were Mrs. Melrose and was told without sympathy that "Your husband has been killed". This was on the 11th December 1941. Viti told Kay that she thought it would be her best plan to move south and to join Win (*Kay's sister, Win Gibson*) in Johore. She left later by train and whilst waiting on the station was treated very kindly by some Eurasian girls, who also found a bed for her (where she unfortunately caught a skin infection) and also talked to a Ghurka soldier who had been fighting at Alor Star and had become detached from his group and was travelling further south to contact others of his unit.

She was hoping he might have further information of what was happening up country. Gibby (*Mr. "Chee" Gibson*) and Win met Kay shortly before her birthday, 17th December, at Kluang station. Returning by car to the Bungalow (*Pamol Oil Palm Estate, Kluang*), Kay remembers Win's tenderness and comfort.

KLUANG, JOHORE

During the following days in Johore, the Australians and New Zealanders stationed at the Air Base came for drinks and gave their up-to-date news. Christmas Day was spent at home (*Pamol Oil Palm Estate*), with a few friends and after the meal they went as usual to the lounge upstairs, now 'blacked out', to hear the news. In place of the usual British announcement, there was a crash of "Land of Hope and Glory" and the high staccato tones of a Japanese announcer from Radio Station Penang. He denounced the stupidity of the British, spoke of the invincibility of the Japanese and gave the news that Hong Kong had fallen. After this "Land of Hope and Glory" was always used before telling of further Japanese advances and victories. Both Win and Kay find the tune unbearable and Peter, (*Win's son*) told us that Win often left the room on hearing it after returning to England. Kay always covers her ears.

Kay decided to go to Johore Hospital to see if she could be of any help. She became a VAO and was billeted in Johore Bahru from where she travelled each day by rickshaw to the hospital. Here there were many patients from varying parts of Malaya. Three badly hurt airmen had been brought from Kelantan, one boy who had been shot through the thigh Kay remembered well because it was the first dressing she did and he talked about Preston NE football club (*Kay was born in Bolton*). Another said he was from Mousehole in Cornwall which she had passed through on a summer holiday in England. There were also survivors from the battleships Prince of Wales and Repulse including Surgeon Lt. Richardson whom Kay met later in Ceylon where he gave her letters to post.

Sometime later on a visit to Singapore to do some hurried shopping she met Donald Pratt (*brother of the actor Boris Karloff*) a planter, in the Adelphi Hotel. He had been seeing off his wife Mary and thinking that Kay looked tired and not well he persuaded her to return to Kluang with him. After staying there overnight she returned to Win.

By now, according to the Australian and New Zealand Air Force pilots, the Japanese were only a few miles away and Gibby was advised to move Win and Jill (*their daughter*) and so with Kay and a few of their possessions they went to Rengam and with others went in convoy to Singapore. (Some silver was put down a well and later recovered she thinks).

SINGAPORE

Here they contacted Dolly (*Corbett*) at Tanglin, a suburb of Singapore. Soldiers were already billeted downstairs, so at first they all shared a room with Jill on the veranda with her amah. The following day Kay was provided with a put-u-up bed in the box room.

It was during this time that Kay returned, early in January to Johore Bahru, possibly to explain to the hospital staff that she would not be returning as she was remaining with Win and family. Here she met Mr. Gregory and was returning with him to Singapore to go to the Fullerton Buildings across the Causeway when suddenly the sirens went and as the retreating troops would have to return this way they were afraid that it might be a target for attack. Strangely, at the time, they were the only two people there and somehow managed, despite their fear, to run across. The bombs were dropped mainly on the dock area.

Whilst in Singapore, she also met Mrs. Gregory who told her that Reg (*Phillips*) Viti's husband, had returned up country and that nothing further had been heard of him. During this time, Win, 'Chee' and Kay spent some of their time shopping and visits were made to the Bank of Hong Kong to try and sort out money difficulties. There were frequent air raids. During one of these Win was ill whilst taking shelter. She was pregnant, expecting Peter (*her younger son*) and felt very sick. Another occasion Kay booked a room for a rest at the Adelphi Hotel where she again met some of the Australian and New Zealand Air Force pilots who had been frequent visitors at Gibby's bungalow. There was a blackout because of the raids but somehow although sirens were sounding, a meal was prepared and as there were now no waiters, the airmen took over their duties. During a further raid, whilst lying down in the road for protection, a strong smell of ammonia was noticed and at first was thought to be poison gas. They later realized that the Cold Storage Depot had been hit and were relieved that things were not as bad as they had feared.

LEAVING SINGAPORE

By mid January 1942, Win, Jill, and Kay were ready to leave on the "SS Empress of Japan". Bombs were dropped on the docks as the women and children were getting on board. They lay down on the grass verges, where they felt safer than going to the small dug-out shelters nearby. The side of the ship was let down and all in the first part of the queue went on board, Win, 'Chee', Jill and Kay together. Kay took Jill, leaving Win and 'Chee' to have a short time alone.

As they left, the docks could be seen blazing as they were heading towards Java, two or three days out from Singapore they had the first air raid. All had to go below deck, a gunner on board brought down one plane. On going below, Jill became hysterical, the life jacket worried her, so Win and Kay decided that in any further attacks they would stay in their cabin. This, at the time, was shared with two other women and a girl. One meal was provided each day and for this they queued, each with a tin plate. A destroyer was with them for three days and then returned towards Singapore and was later sunk. The Empress of Japan in which they were evacuated landed soldiers at Singapore before the women and children embarked. They were late captured and taken to prison camp.

They heard later over the radio, or were informed that the Japanese announced that the boat in which they had left had been bombed and sunk.

Mrs. Gregory and Bobby (.....) left for Australia. Their ship was sunk and both landed in Sumatra. Many were machine gunned on the beach. (*This was shown in the TV serial TENKO*). Mrs. Gregory died in prison camp. Bobby, her son Michael aged 2 ½ and the baby of about 1 month also died. Donald Pratt also died here.

CEYLON

The stay here seemed to be one of the happier times of their return. To cheer themselves up, Win, Kay and Jill decided to lunch at the Galle Face Hotel. They met up with Lt. Richardson whom they had previously seen at the hospital in Johore. He paid for their meal and when Win took Jill back, Kay remained behind. During their conversation he asked if she would take some letters with her and post them on her return to Britain. One was to his mother, another to Major Sharpe in Kenya about a re-posting and one to the parents of Alwyn who was a Captain in the Marines on the Prince of Wales and whom Lt. Richardson had met in Singapore.

After leaving Ceylon nothing of importance happened and they eventually reached South Africa, where Win and Jill were to wait for a passage to Australia and Kay to return home to England. About two weeks were spent in Capetown and Durban and Kay eventually left again on the Empress of Japan. About three hundred women and children were transferred to a sister ship and in their place, roughly the same number of naval ratings came aboard. This proved some light relief. Clothing and other goods had been provided for the refugees, some of which could be readily used. Children's clothes and baby wear were appreciated but other garments, such as out of date women's hats and underwear proved hilarious. As the ratings paraded in some of these, many on board relaxed and laughed for the first time since leaving. The children were amused and taken care of by many of the crew.

About a week or so before reaching England an alarm was given and all on board were warned to remain fully clothed with a bag packed. The battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau were thought to be nearby. The irony of this was that Kay, Win and 'Chee' had travelled in these as luxury ships in peace time before they had been converted for war.

Kay arrived with Dolly (*Corbett*) in Liverpool in March. They had a meal at the Adelphi Hotel whilst waiting to get a phone call through to Bolton. She remembers the first impact of rationing, on ordering rhubarb tart, which was the sourest she had ever tasted!

LATER

On returning home, Kay posted the letters given to her by Surgeon Lt. Richardson. An advert appeared later in the Bolton Evening News asking if the person who had posted the letters would contact them. An arrangement was made and Kay met Capt. Alwyn's father over a meal at the Pack Horse Hotel in Bolton where she gave him as much information as she knew. In a radio programme much later, about 1980, about the sinking of the Repulse and the Prince of Wales, Capt. Alwyn was reported as a survivor.

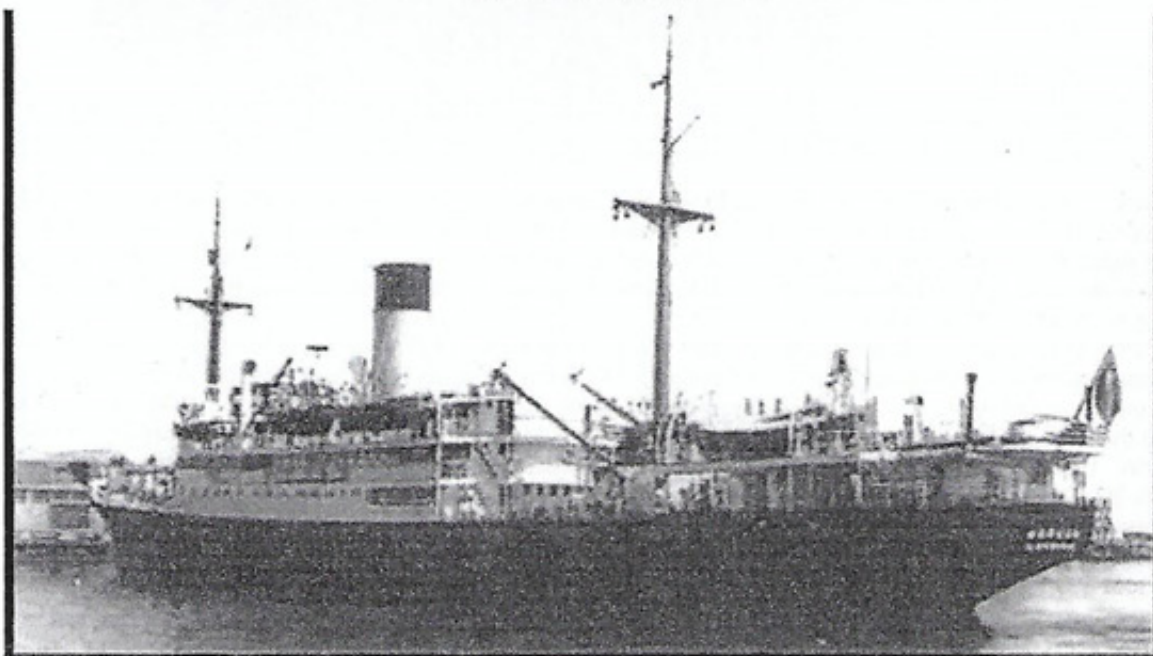
Mr. Gregory, who was formerly a journalist, has written a detailed account, a copy of which Kay has kept. He helped in the ARP Service and was later in the Alexandra Hospital. He was sleeping one day, when he was wakened by a Japanese soldier prodding him with a bayonet and was given a cigarette.

We saw him much later, whilst on holiday in Switzerland. He had re-married and we passed him as he was going up one of the rail-cars, as we were travelling down.

In the book "Tanamera" which Kay and I have read together, there are several accounts which coincide.

EVACUATION SHIPS

GORGON Blue Funnel Line



Built: 1933 by Caledon S.B. & E., Dundee

Tonnage: 3,533g, 2,120n

Engine: Single Screw, 2S 6 Cylinder Burmeister Wain, Copenhagen, 580 N.H.P., 12 Knots

Gorgon and her sister Charon were built for the Singapore-West Australia service. Gorgon was initially owned jointly by Ocean S.S. and West Australian S.N., Co., (Bethell, Gwynn & Co). When the latter's only ship Minderoo was sunk in 1935, West Australia pulled out of the trade and sold their share of the Gorgon to Ocean S.S. in 1936. In January of 1942 she sailed from Melbourne bound for Singapore in Convoy MS 1 and on arrival was continuously bombed by Japanese aircraft. By the 11th of February her Master realized that it was pointless to continue discharging her cargo and so after taking 358 passengers and refugees aboard he sailed for Australia.

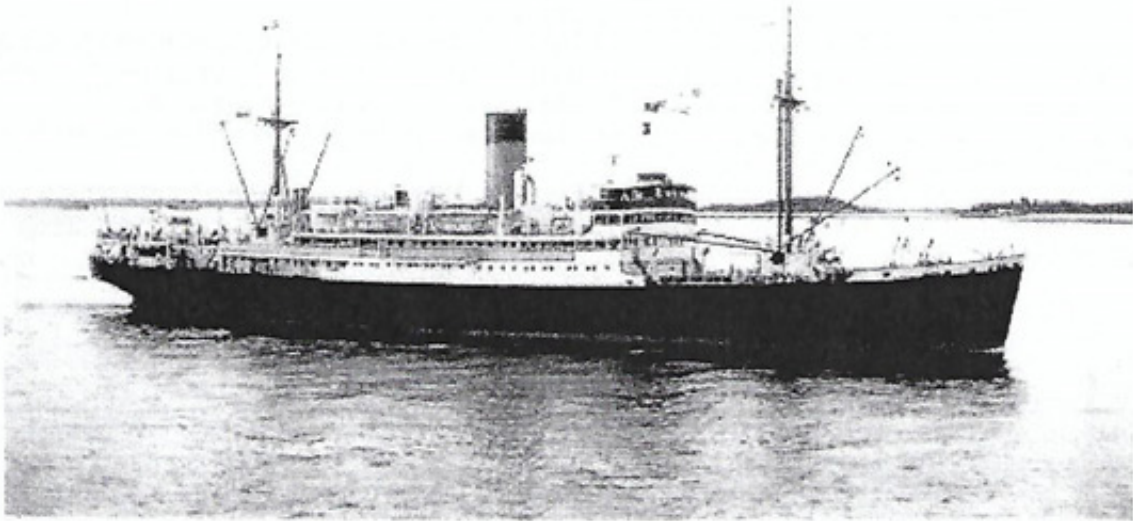
She was attacked by high level Japanese bombers on the 12th February on six occasions, and was hit three times, two of which caused serious fires, one adjacent to the ammunition store. Fortunately, both blazes were brought under control. The third bomb, however, failed to detonate and had embedded itself in bags of flour in one of the holds. Showing great bravery Chief Officer J. Bruce with the assistance of two soldiers gingerly carried the bomb out onto the deck and dropped it over the side. Again it failed to explode.

After the Australians' successful defence of Port Moresby, the Allies went on the offensive and in one action landed troops at Milne Bay, New Guinea on the 4th of April 1943. Gorgon took part in this action. Again, Gorgon was bombed by Japanese aircraft. Six of her crew were killed and much of the ship was set on fire, so much so that she had to be towed to Brisbane for repairs. However the crew were delighted to report that they had shot down two enemy aircraft.

After the war, Gorgon returned to her normal service before making her final sailing from Fremantle on the 21st July 1964. She arrived in Hong Kong for breaking in August of the same year.

Compiled by Capt. John Bax with photo and information from unknown author.

CHARON
Blue Funnel Line.



Charon was built in 1936 by Caledonian Ship Building & Engineering Co. at Dundee with a tonnage of 3703grt, a length of 336ft, a beam of 51ft 2in and a service speed of 12 knots. Sister of the Gorgon, she was built for the Ocean Steam Ship Co. and West Australian Steam Navigation Co.'s joint operation between Singapore and Western Australian ports. Charon took part in the evacuation of Singapore and transported many people to Fremantle and safety. She is thought to have left Singapore on or about 8th January 1942.

Charon suffered enemy bombing damage at least twice: in February 1942 during the Singapore evacuation and in April 1943 at Milne Bay, during the Allied landings there, but with her partner vessel Charon survived the war.

She was only ordered when the Australian Steam Ship Navigation Co. lost the Minderoo in 1935. In 1936 she became fully owned by the Ocean Steam Ship Co. when the West Australian Steam Navigation Co. pulled out of the trade due to fierce competition. During 1943 she played a very important wartime role when she kept the Australian base at Milne Bay supplied. She made 30 round trips between Sydney and New Guinea without any damage whatsoever. This class of ship had specially strengthened bottoms which enabled them to call at ports where they were required to settle on the mud at low tide. She was sold to Malayan Shipbreakers Ltd., of Singapore in 1964 for demolition, but before she actually faced the torch in August 1965 she was sold several times, at one time being renamed Seng Kong No.1.

Compiled by Capt. John Bax with photo from the Fred Parkinson collection and information from unknown sources.

ANZAC DAY – 25th April 2008

Sent by George Hess'e -

The Final Inspection



They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them
Lest We Forget

The Soldier stood and faced his God,
 Which must always come to pass.
 He hoped his shoes were shining,
 Just as brightly as his brass.
 "Step forward now, you Soldier,
 How shall I deal with you?
 Have you always turned the other cheek?
 To My Church have you been true?"
 The Soldier squared his shoulders and said,
 "No, my Lord, I ain't.
 Because those of us who carry guns,
 Can't always be a saint.
 I've had to work most Sundays,

And at times my talk was tough.
 And sometimes I've been violent,
 Because the world is awfully rough.
 But, I never took a dollar,
 That wasn't mine to keep...
 Though I worked a lot of overtime,
 When the bills got just too steep.
 And I never passed a cry for help,
 Though at times I shook with fear.
 And sometimes, God, forgive me,
 I've wept unmanly tears.
 I know I don't deserve a place,
 Among the people here.
 They never wanted me around,
 Except to calm their fears.
 If you've a place for me here, Lord,
 It needn't be so grand.
 I never expected or had too much,
 But if you don't, I'll understand.
 There was a silence all around the throne,
 Where the Saints had often trod.
 As the Soldier waited quietly,
 For the judgment of his God.
 "Step forward now, you Soldier,
 You've borne your burdens well.
 Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets,
 You've done your time in Hell."

—Author Unknown—

WRECK OF HMS EXETER FOUND

A report in the 'Daily Telegraph' on 18th May gives the position of the final resting place of the cruiser which was sunk on 1st March 1942 during a battle with nine Japanese warships. Together with HMS Encounter which was sunk in the same action, the Exeter has been found by deep sea explorers in Indonesian waters at a depth of about 200ft, 90 miles north of Bawean Island, and 60 miles from the sinking position given by her Captain in a book written after the war. Following the part played by HMS Exeter in hunting down the 'Graf Spee' in the epic Battle of the River Plate, she was given an extensive refit and sent out to the Far East. On February 27th 1942 she was badly damaged in the Battle of the Java Sea, the largest surface engagement since Jutland in the First World War. While heading to a friendly port for repairs, HMS Exeter was intercepted by the larger Japanese Fleet, and during the engagement known as the Second Battle of Java, she was damaged to such an extent that she was scuttled by her crew. 50 men were killed during the battle and 650 were made prisoners of war. Of these men, 152 died in Japanese POW camps. The two British ships were located by a team of American and Australian explorers last year, but only recently have their identities been confirmed. The Ministry of Defence is working with the Indonesian authorities to protect the sites. The wreck of the American destroyer 'Pope', which was also escorting Exeter with HMS Encounter, has yet to be found. 88 year old Able Seaman Fred Aindow, who was in charge of a gun turret when Exeter was sunk, said, "We were firing until the last moment. I think we were the last to stop. Then it was over the side and I hung on to an oar for an hour until I was picked up. The next three years were sheer hell".

THE UNPUBLISHED DIARIES OF EDWARD CHAPLIN – available for Researchers.

By kind permission of his son, Hugh Chaplin, the diaries of Edward (Ted) Chaplin may now be read on the MVG Website, using the password "Guthries". If anyone would like further assistance, please contact Hugh on:-

hugh.chaplin@gmail.com

or

Tel: 01865 881664 or 07740 797124

Edward Chaplin

Born Calcutta, India 5th January 1917. Died Crowborough, East Sussex 16.2.1998

Ted Chaplin arrived in Singapore in September 1938, where he was employed by Guthrie & Company. He joined the Singapore Royal Artillery (Volunteers) in September 1938 (Gunner).

Volunteer No.: 13052

"Changi" POW no.: 4/2415, 3255, 4326

Imperial War Museum 1940 Directory: Overland 12/10/1942 ("D" Battalion)

1940: Private, No. 6 Section, "L.A." 6 Plat. "B" Company

"D" Battalion was sent from River Valley Road and Havelock Road camps in Singapore to Thailand on 12.10.42 (arrived Ban Pong 16.10.42)

Repatriated on H.M.Hospital Ship "Karoa"

His account was written in four parts to send to his mother after his release. It was written mainly in pencil on both sides of Australian Red Cross Society airmail paper, on board HMHS "Karoa", from Singapore to Sydney, Australia

Part 1: written 2.11.45; posted Fremantle:

Fall of Singapore - departure from Singapore (October 1942)

Part 2: written 10.11.45; posted Melbourne or Albany:

Departure from River Valley Road (12.10.42) – Tamuan (April 1945)

Part 3: typewritten in Australia, December 1945

Departure from Tamuan (28.4.45) - Japanese surrender and evacuation (Sept. 1945)

Part 4: typewritten in Australia, ~December 1945:

Singapore September/October 1945

Sailed from Sydney for England on the "Ranjitata" (NZ Shipping Co./P.&O) 2nd February 1946

List of camps

15.2.42	Capitulation of Singapore at 8.00 p.m.	
18.2.42	Arrived Changi Camp, Singapore	
14.5.42	Marched River Valley Road Camp, Singapore	building godowns; docks
12.10.42	Left Singapore by train	
16.10.42	Arrived Ban Pong, Thailand	
18.10.42	Marched from Ban Pong	
19.10.42	March to Kanchanaburi	
20.10.42	Rested	
21.10.42	Marched	
22.10.42	Rested Raja	
23.10.42	Marched to Tandong	
24.10.42	Marched to Tarso	
27.10.42	?Barge to Wampo Camp	railway track and bridges
15.5.43	Train to Tarso	
17.5.43	Marched to South Tonchan Camp	
23.5.43	Marched to Bridge Camp	
???	To Tonchan Central Camp	
27.6.43	Barge to Kanu River Camp	
28.6.43	Arrived Kanu River Camp	
28.6.43	March to Kanu 2 (top camp)	"Speedo". Rock drilling & blasting
???	Hintock River Camp	
???	Tonchan Central Camp (rest for a few days)	
???	Bridges Camp (~2 wks)	Bridges
???	Tonchan Central Camp (a few days)	
???	Hintock River Camp	
25.8.43	To Kinsyo Camp [Kinsayok]	Ballasting & clearing up rebuild camp; build railway station
2.12.43	Kinsyo Hospital	
13.1.44	To Tarso Base Hospital [Tarsao/Tarsoa]	
13.4.44	Departed Tarso	
14.4.44	Train to Nakom Patom Hospital [Nakhon Pathom]	
13.1.45	Lorry & barge to Tamuan Camp [Tamuang]	
17.1.45	Tamuan Hospital	
28.4.45	Train to Bangkok camp (godowns)(1 wk)	
5.5.45	Truck to Lokburi (?Lopburi) Camp	repair runway
6.5.45	Train to Takuri Camp [?Takali/?Sraburi]	aerodrome; (well-digging)
16.8.45	Heard about the end of the War	
23.9.45	Train to Bangkok	
1.10.45	Air to Singapore	
Oct/Nov	HMHS 'Karoa' to Australia	

OBITUARIES

Reverend Canon GEOFFREY SCOTT MOWAT 1917 – 2008

We send our heartfelt condolences to Geoffrey's family, and in particular to Alison his daughter, on the news of his death on 21st May 2008. We remember Geoffrey with great and special affection. No-one who attended the dedication of the MVG Memorial Stone in the Arboretum nearly three years ago, will ever forget the blessing given with the Cross which Geoffrey had made as a Far East Prisoner of War. It had a profound effect on us all.

Geof Mowat died, peacefully, in his sleep, at 5.am. on 21st May 2008 at Hunters Lodge, Cirencester. His son Michael was by his bed, and his other children had all visited him during his last day with us.



Geof in 2006 in Fairford, recording an interview about his book "The Rainbow Through the Rain" for the Wilts and Glos Standard. Copies of the book are available from Alison Brierley, his daughter.

One of the last of the pre-1942 Malayan Civil Service; Geoffry Mowat served in the Malacca Battalion of the Straits Settlements Volunteers and was one of the few to escape from Japanese captivity, be recaptured and live to tell the tale. Geoffrey Scott Mowat was born on June 4th, 1917 in Kybald Twitchen, Kybald Street, Oxford in a humble cottage that was once a pub, complete with 'bumble-puppy alley' in a small back garden. His father, a historian, was Don at Corpus Christi and later Professor of History at Bristol University; his mother was an undergraduate of Newnham, Cambridge.

Geoffrey attended the Dragon School, Oxford, then known as Lynams, then Clifton College, Bristol. In 1936 he went to study at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. In July 1940 he married Classics scholar Louise Ethel Homewood and set out for Malaya with her to begin his service as a Malayan Civil Service Cadet. It was at this time unheard of for MCS Cadets to marry before their first home leave.

Geoffrey's first appointment was as District Officer Alor Gajah. On arrival there he enlisted in the Malayan Volunteer Forces and was an NCO in the 4th Battalion SSVF, a mixed race battalion of civilian volunteers. A POW at Singapore, he marched to Changi Camp on February 17th 1942 and shortly afterwards, together with a fellow Volunteer R.A. Elliott, escaped from Changi and got across the Straits to Johore where, after 6 weeks on the run, he was badly beaten by local Malays and given away to the Japanese. Unaware that they had escaped from Singapore, the Japanese took them to Pudu Gaol, Kuala Lumpur which was full of British and Australian POWs captured on the Malayan mainland.

Meanwhile Louise, a stenographer at GHQ Singapore, had been evacuated to Java then to Sydney, Australia where she worked on General MacArthur's US Army staff.

In October 1942, Geoff was returned to Singapore with 'a POW film party' used as extras in the Japanese film of the Fall of Malaya. In May 1943 he was sent with the notorious H Force to Thailand to complete the building of the Burma Railway. Many died including Elliott in another escape attempt. Geoff worked as a medical orderly at Hintok River Camp where many of his patients died for want of basic drugs and medicines.

In an extract from his book, "Volunteer!", Paul Gibbs Pancheri writes:-

"We had a ward orderly, Geoff Mowat, a young officer in the MCS (in India called 'the Heaven Born') and if there was ever a saint fit for the Kingdom of Heaven, it was he. The very sick had to use bed pans but of course no such luxuries existed. We made them out of bamboo, by sawing off a section, so the piece was closed at each end and there was a slot in the top to accept the 'offering'. An ordinary bed pan is difficult to use but our home-made ones were the devil to use without making a mess. But Geoff never turned a hair. He would clean up his patient, take the used bamboo bed pan to the latrine, and if the rain was not adequate to clean it out quickly, he would urinate into it to get rid of the contents, then plough his way back through the mud to his charges. He never seemed to tire, and his cheerful example did much to encourage the rest."

He was returned with other survivors to Singapore in December 1943. Liberated in September 1945 he was repatriated on Highland Chieftain.

He returned to MCS post war as Assistant Secretary, Malayan Union Secretariat, District Officer, Butterworth then Senior Lands Officer, Negri Sembilan. He left Malaya in 1957, the year of Malayan Independence [Merdeka], and became an Anglican clergyman. His terrible experiences, particularly on the Death Railway at Hintok had reinforced, not undermined his faith and a later experience was to bring him face to face with the question of forgiveness: in the course of his work in the MCS Secretariat, he dealt with a query about Japanese war graves. With his heart beating fast, he took a deep breath before speaking to the Japanese official in a normal manner. In his own words, "I had taken the first step along the road towards forgiveness, which is the baseline of the Christian faith".

His Christian ministry covered thirty years including more than ten years spent as a mission partner with the Church Mission Society and the Inter Continental Church Society. He was a priest in Singapore, Penang and Kuala Lumpur from 1976 to 1985, and a Canon of St. Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur. A further 6 months as a priest in Cairo followed with other shorter locums in France and duties as a priest-in-charge at St. Mary Magdalene, Combe Down, Bath. He retired to Fairford, Glos. In 1996 and wrote his memoirs, "The Rainbow through the Rain".

He was a gentle but determined man, always enlivened by the joy of music (he was an accomplished Cellist) and the beauty of creation.

Geoffrey died on May 21st 2008 aged 91. He is predeceased by Louise and leaves two sons and two daughters.

GEORGE PATTERSON

The MVG is sad to announce the death of George Patterson, aged 87, who, as a Malayan Administrator was also described as one of 'the heaven born'. As a Volunteer he became ADC to General Percival just before the fall of Singapore.

Escaping from Trengganu when the Japanese invaded Malaya, with a party of Europeans and Malays, George Patterson made his way to Singapore where he joined an anti-aircraft unit before becoming an RAF liaison officer and being posted to Army headquarters. On February 15th he attended morning Communion before driving Percival, under a white flag, to surrender to General Yamashita. In Changi he shared a married officer's quarters with Percival, 7 brigadiers, 1 colonel, a sergeant cook and a batman. Later he was sent to Formosa and finally to Mukden in Manchuria.

After the war, he became private secretary to Malcolm MacDonald the Governor-General who was involved with Merdeka. He was also involved with the Emergency and was District Officer in Koto Tingi where he ran a rehabilitation centre teaching trades to captured Communists.

His book, "A Spoonful of Rice with Salt", was published in 1993. It is based on a diary and letters sent home which his wife produced when he expressed regret at not having kept a diary. He had blotted all knowledge of the diary from his memory.

AVM TOM HOWELL

The death of AVM Howell was announced on 21st May 2008. Tom Howell arrived in Singapore to join the armaments staff at RAF Seletar in October 1941. The unit tried to prepare as many aircraft as possible to fight the Japanese, but on 29th January 1942, 90 Jap bombers destroyed the airfield and 4 days later the unit started to evacuate to Java. Escaping capture, he remained at large, but disease and fear for the safety of his native helpers compelled him to surrender to the Japanese. He was put to work on building an airstrip on Banka Island. Late in 1943 he was transferred to Changi where he spent the rest of the war.

PETER GIBSON

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Peter Gibson, late of the Loyal Regiment, North Lancashire, after a long and courageous fight with cancer. We send our sincere sympathies and good wishes to his family and especially to his wife, Lucia and son William. Peter was the son of William Gibson, JDC and Civilian internee.

Peter's sister, Jill Gibson, whose aunt's account of their escape from Singapore in 1942, with Peter as yet unborn, can be found on pages 5, 6 and 7, has sent this moving account of Peter's determination to overcome his illness:-

"Peter was a very courageous man and fought his cancer for 15 years during which time he was a **Prostate Help Association (PHA)** contact for newly diagnosed prostate cancer sufferers and endeavoured to give them advice, comfort and hope. He always insisted on being told the truth by his Consultants and they respected this. He went into hospital on 12th April to sort out an infection, and for two blood transfusions, and came out on 18th April. It was then that he was told that he only had days, possibly weeks to live. We, his family, were also informed but as Pete had bounced back from numerous setbacks in the past, we rather hoped he would again. In spite of such dooming news he came out of hospital that day in high spirits and endeavoured to carry on his life as normal and to the best of his ability. He was by now very weak, and unfortunately he had a nasty fall on 21st April, hitting his head on the ceramic floor tiles of the conservatory. Both the doctor and paramedic who attended him were convinced that he hadn't fractured any bones, and his head was patched up whilst he continued to crack jokes with the paramedic and us until he retired to bed that evening. The next day he seemed weaker but his sense of humour was still very strong. However, during the course of the day he seemed to drift off into a deep sleep and died in the early hours of the following morning.

A Thanksgiving Service for his life was held on Saturday 17th May and was attended by over 100 friends, and so he had a great 'send off'.

JOHN WARDEN

Ros Henry has written with the sad news of the death of John Warden, on 5th April, and we wish to send our condolences to his family. Son of William (Ken) Warden of the SSVF and Armoured Cars Division, John was one of the founder members of the MVG, attending many of the functions and lunches. We shall miss him.

John was at Tanglin School in the Cameron Highlands before the war, and spent the war with his mother and family in India. His father was sent to the Railway, but survived. Post war, John went to school at Christ's Hospital, read Chemistry at Oxford

and worked in Africa and Canada.

The funeral, which Ros attended, was held in Islip at his village church, which dates back to Edward the Confessor. Afterwards there was a small gathering of family and friends from his Oxford days at his house nearby. Ros gave his daughter a card expressing our sympathies.

"Woody" WOODMAN

John Hedley writes:-

Ref: Apa Khabar 14th Edition p.14. I'm afraid I made the cardinal mistake in assuming that "Woody" was no longer with us. I was very wrong. I should have said ill. However, Woody did pass away peacefully on 18th March of this year at the good old age of 100. Our deepest sympathy must go to her bereaved daughter.

To my knowledge she had been in a wheelchair for 15 – 20 years, but did manage to get around with her little dog following along happily. Woody is the last of the group of Q.As who were POWs in Sumatra and one of the group that Naomi knew so well.

JEAN DICKENS

Our sincere sympathies go to Veteran FMSVF and MVG member Charles Dickens, whose dear wife of 63 years sadly died in March. They were married in 1945, and as Charles wrote, "Jean was only 85 and I never expected to out-live her".

EILEEN NORAH MIDDLETON-SMITH

Sad news also came from Veteran SSVF and MVG member Richard Middleton-Smith, to whom we send our heartfelt condolences. His dear wife of 62 years died on 26th April at the age of 94. Richard felt that he was unable to continue his membership, but we are pleased to report that his step-son, member Anthony Cooper, has managed to persuade him otherwise.

BOOKS

"THE INTERNMENT OF WESTERN CIVILIANS UNDER THE JAPANESE 1941 – 1945. A Patchwork of Internment."

By Bernice Archer. Published by Hong Kong Press. ISBN 978-962-209-910-4

This is a comparative study of the experiences of the Western civilians interned by the Japanese in mixed family camps and sexually segregated camps in the Far East. It combines a wide variety of conventional and unconventional source material. It also covers wider issues such as the role of women in war, gender and war, children and war, colonial culture, oral history and war and memory.

"AMBUSHED UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS. The Making of an American Marine Officer and his Ensuing Saga of Courage and Survival"

By Capt. George W. Duffy. Available through Amazon Books – <http://www.amazon.co.uk> and other online book sellers.

This book relates George Duffy's two spartan years in the *Nantucket*, a 3-masted sail training vessel for future U.S. merchant marine officers, the next rewarding year in the *American Leader*, and over three years as prisoner in two German warships, and ten Japanese labour camps scattered over the southeast Asian islands of Java, Singapore and Sumatra.

"SISTERS IN ARMS: British Nurses Tell Their Story". By Nicola Tyrer. Published by Weidenfeld & Nicholson. Available from Telegraph Books for £18 plus £1.25 p&p.

Military nurses who came under Japanese attack in the Far East during the Second World War endured bombing, shipwreck, torture and imprisonment – and many were brutally executed. This book relates two remarkable tales of survival.

"THE CHANGI STORY". By Captain David Nelson. Pbk 240 pages. Excellent reference book on Changi POW Camp & the movement of POWs across South East Asia. The author was the famous 'Changi Archivist' of the Bureau of Records & Investigation. £11.00 + £2.00 package & postage from Jonathan Moffatt – cheques payable to him. See address under 'contacts'.

"STRANGER IN THE HOUSE. Women's Stories of Men Returning from the Second World War". By Julie Summers.

Published by Simon & Schuster. ISBN 978-0-74329-552-9. £18.99. Available September 2008.

From 1945, more than 4 million British servicemen were demobbed and sent home after the most destructive war in history. These men, damaged by fighting, imprisonment or simply separation from their loved ones, returned to a Britain that had changed in their absence. Over a hundred women were interviewed for this book – all on the receiving end of demobilisation. Many of the tales are moving, some are desperately sad, others are full of humour but all of them reflect a lifetime's experience of the fall-out from the Second World War.

"THE BURMA RAILWAY, HELLSHIPS & COALMINES". By Neil MacPherson. Pbk. 272 pages. £ 16.20 + £2.50 p & p. See details on the website (p.3). This book includes many original photos and, beautifully reproduced in colour, an autograph book of Sendai Camp 24 POWs.

"WAR MEMORIES: A MEDICAL STUDENT IN MALAYA & THAILAND". By Gordon Smith. (2A & SH)
See details on the website (p. 3)

"THE AIRMEN AND THE HEADHUNTERS". By Judith M. Heimann. Published in New York by Harcourt in 2007. Due out in paperback in October 2008, published by Houghton Mifflin and Harcourt. See Judith's article (P.4) for details.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

FRIDAY AUGUST 15TH 2008 – V-J DAY AT THE NMA, ALREWAS.

Those of us who have, for the last few years, attended the Shropshire FEPOW's Service on V-J Day at the Arboretum, feel that we would like to continue our remembrance of the Volunteers on 15th August, and mark the anniversary of V-J Day, even though the Shropshire FEPOW Association has been disbanded. As there are no other services or meetings on 15th August which we could join, to mark the occasion, it means that the MVG must arrange its own service or commemoration event. One way would be to book the Chapel and a Padre and hold our own service. However, this would need to be paid for, and the idea of holding an entirely different form of remembrance was put forward.

We plan to gather at the MVG Memorial Garden, say a few prayers and/or have some readings, and lay a poppy wreath in memory of the Volunteers. It has also been suggested that we **meet at 12p.m.** in the area outside the Visitor Centre for a picnic lunch, and then walk down to the Garden at 2 p.m. for the readings and laying of the wreath.

Please let Rosemary Fell know if you wish to come asap.

I would also like to know:-

- 1. If you would like to say a prayer or bring a reading.**
- 2. If you would be prepared to bring something for the picnic e.g. Quiche, salad or strawberries which we could all share.**

FRIDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER – PRESENTATION OF THE CHANGI MEMORIAL BOARD IN SINGAPORE.

We are still waiting for the final plans for the Presentation Ceremony at the Changi Museum in September. However, the timetable of events is likely to be as follows:-

- 1. Assemble at the Changi Museum at about 4.00 – 4.30p.m.**
- 2. Presentation Ceremony at 5p.m.**
- 3. Reception follows the Presentation at the Museum.**

As soon as the final arrangements have been received, all those attending the ceremony will be notified.

If you would still like to attend and have not let Rosemary Fell know, it is still not too late to come, and you would be very welcome.

SATURDAY 4TH OCTOBER – ANNUAL LONDON LUNCH.

The annual lunch will take place at **The Super Star Restaurant, 17, Lisle Street, London, at 12 noon.** A set Chinese lunch of 3 courses has been arranged for 1p.m. with tea served afterwards. There will be a bar where drinks may be purchased separately, they are not included with the meal. We have been promised the top room again – this time, we hope, to ourselves – and we don't have to leave until 5p.m. This should give us plenty of time to meet everyone and exchange news. The Guest Speaker this year is MVG member David Dobbs, son of William (Bill) Dobbs of the SSVF. His talk will be about his father's experiences as a POW, based on the diary he kept in the prison camps.

The cost this year is £20.00 per person. Cheques should be made payable to:-

Mrs. S.M.W. Lincoln

19, Burke Street, Harrogate, Yorkshire HG1 4NR.

Please let Sandy know **BY THE END OF JULY** if you wish to attend the lunch, and send your cheque with your booking, together with any dietary requirements. If we are unable to let the restaurant know numbers in good time, they may not be able to let us have the top room to ourselves. This was the situation last year, and is why we were pushed into one end of the room when we thought we had booked the whole room.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY – 9TH NOVEMBER 2008.

We have been advised by the Royal British Legion that Westminster City Council is undertaking a "streetscape project" in the Whitehall area, which will dramatically reduce the road width in Whitehall. Normally there are 7 columns across the road, for

the March Past on Remembrance Sunday, but this may have to be reduced to 5 columns. The RBL representatives are meeting the Westminster officials in July in Whitehall to walk the route and sort out the amount of space available. As we are only allocated 12 tickets, I don't think our numbers will be affected by this development, but the layout of the columns may be altered this year. Several members have already asked for tickets for this event, and if you think you would like to attend, please let Rosemary Fell know so that your names can be added to the list. Further details will be given in the October newsletter.

Those of us who march find it a very rewarding experience, and several of us enjoy a leisurely lunch together at the "All Bar One" near the London Eye, afterwards.

MVG SUBSCRIPTIONS 2008 – 2009

There are still several overdue subscriptions which have not been paid. **PLEASE** would you let me have them now, or let me know if you do not wish to continue your membership.

Thank you very much for all the kind donations which you have sent with your subscriptions. I hope I have written to thank you all individually, but please accept my apologies if I have overlooked anyone.

MVG MEMBERS' LIST 2008 – 2009

An up-to-date list of members is included with this newsletter. Please check for errors and let me know if you wish to add to or delete any of the information given. Evacuation ships have been added where known. It would be very helpful if you were able to fill in more details, because Jonathan is adding a complete list of all evacuees to the website, together with the evacuation ships. This is a marathon task, but we hope to have the lists complete soon, plus information about the ships which were used to evacuate the women and children and other civilians from Singapore.

FEPOW MEMORIAL BUILDING – NMA, ALREWAS.

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, Jonathan has prepared a folder of information about the Volunteers, which will be added to the archival section of the FEPOW building in August, in time for its opening on 17th August.

If you have any information which you think would be of value or interest, please let Jonathan know.

MVG MEMBERS ENJOY SOME INFORMAL MOMENTS AT THE RFH CONFERENCE – AT THE ARBORETUM.



CONTACTS

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