

# APA KHABAR

www.malayavolunteersgroup.org.uk

17<sup>TH</sup> EDITION  
JANUARY 2009



## NO TIME TO REST ON OUR LAURELS IN 2009.

### A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL.

Despite the confusion and economic turmoil in the world today, the MVG starts its 5<sup>th</sup> year in good shape financially, and with a growing membership. We have discharged our debt to the National Memorial Arboretum, and we can start 2009 with a clean slate, thanks to the generosity of our members. Following the successful

outcome of our projects in 2008, new and exciting projects are already coming forward for 2009, with plans to renovate and repair memorials in Malacca and K.L. and create new ones in Australia.

First, let us reflect briefly on our successes in 2008. We can look back on several notable "firsts" – our first V-J Day Service in the MVG Garden at the NMA; our first Australian member, **Michael Doncaster**, to march with the MVG at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday; and most important of all, our first international recognition by **His Excellency S.R. Nathan, President of the Republic of Singapore**, who unveiled the Volunteers' Memorial Board at the Changi Museum.

The honour afforded to the Volunteers by the President has been acknowledged in several letters which have been received. Indeed, in a letter from His Excellency himself, he said, "I write to thank you for your letter of 12<sup>th</sup> October and your appreciation for the recognition accorded to the Malayan Volunteer Forces Group at the Changi Museum. I am pleased that this could be made to represent those who have made the supreme sacrifices, directly and indirectly, during the Second World War in our theatre.

I will certainly read your newsletter with interest."

**Penny Rayner** wrote in response to her mother's (**Professor Mary Turnbull**) obituary, "It was lovely to hear that Mum was remembered at the Board unveiling in Singapore recently. I know her connection to Malaya and Singapore meant so much to her and I think her early years there in the 50s and 60s probably held her greatest affection."

In a letter from **Neil Whitaker**, who took his last RBL pilgrimage to Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand recently in November, the following remark was made, "I arranged for our party to assemble at Changi Chapel and Museum at 11a.m. on the 11<sup>th</sup> (November) for the two minutes silence and all the visitors in the museum joined us. Your Memorial Board was attracting a lot of interest – well done."

In October, another "first" was established with the publication of a letter from 12 year old **Alicky Hess** to her great 'Grandpa', **J.B. Dunne SSVF**. In this edition, we include, as a separate section, our "first" School Assignment written by **Sam Pollock** (then aged 13) about his Grandfather, **Walter Pollock** of the **FMSVF**, with a reply from **George Hess'e** of the **FMSVF** and **Force 136**, whose humorous article in the newsletter about his "escape" from Changi must rank as one of the most audacious ever recorded. Well done to Alicky and Sam. It is through the interest and research of our younger generations that we can ensure the work of the MVG, in paying tribute to the bravery of the Volunteers, will be carried on in the years to come.

One of the aims of the MVG is to commemorate all Volunteers both military and civilian, and as such we are pleased to include in the newsletter an article by new member **John Corner** about his father **E.J.H. Corner**, Assistant Director of the Singapore Botanical Gardens. Many views have been expressed about this story, but it clearly demonstrates the unpredictable nature of the Japanese military machine.

We hope there will be more "firsts" to come in 2009, and we thank everyone who has contributed to this newsletter.

### REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY – 9<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2008

Remembrance Sunday 2008 dawned grey and dank with a chilly east wind blowing down Whitehall. The leaves of the London plane trees lay sodden on the ground after torrential rain on Saturday threatened to disrupt the Cenotaph ceremony. However, the rain held off on Remembrance Sunday itself, and the dense crowds kept the chill at bay.

Despite letters from the Royal British Legion warning of changes to the layout of Whitehall, and a reduction in the number of tickets being issued to contingents marching past the Cenotaph, we received our usual quota of 12. Strict new security measures were in place as we arrived in Trafalgar Square at 9 a.m., as instructed, on that cold autumnal day. All civilian onlookers and marchers alike were diverted through Whitehall Place, where we were frisked by security guards and had to walk through airport-style security arches. Even rolled-up umbrellas had to be checked and searched. Eventually we made our way into Whitehall and picked up our new-style marker sheet – no longer the heavy wooden marker board to be held aloft, just a laminated sheet with our column number.

As the minutes ticked by, MVG members started to arrive and by 10.15 we were ready to move forward to our marching position in Column M. By 10.50 a.m. we were lined up in position, and the crowds became quiet. The invited dignitaries quietly and quickly took their places before Her Majesty The Queen stepped out of the Foreign Office promptly at 10.59a.m. The huge crowd of marchers and onlookers fell silent as Big Ben struck 11 o'clock

and the 2 minutes silence commenced. Wreath laying followed the gun salute – Royalty, Politicians and Ambassadors – led by the Queen in simple, dignified homage to those who have laid down their lives for their country. The short service which followed has remained unchanged over the years, bringing with it a sense of stability and continuity in a fast changing world. Let us hope that this tradition will never be changed. Although the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Armistice day was not to fall for another 2 days, nevertheless everyone in Whitehall was aware of the significance of the occasion, and the crowds were the biggest seen in the 4 years since the MVG first marched on Remembrance Sunday.

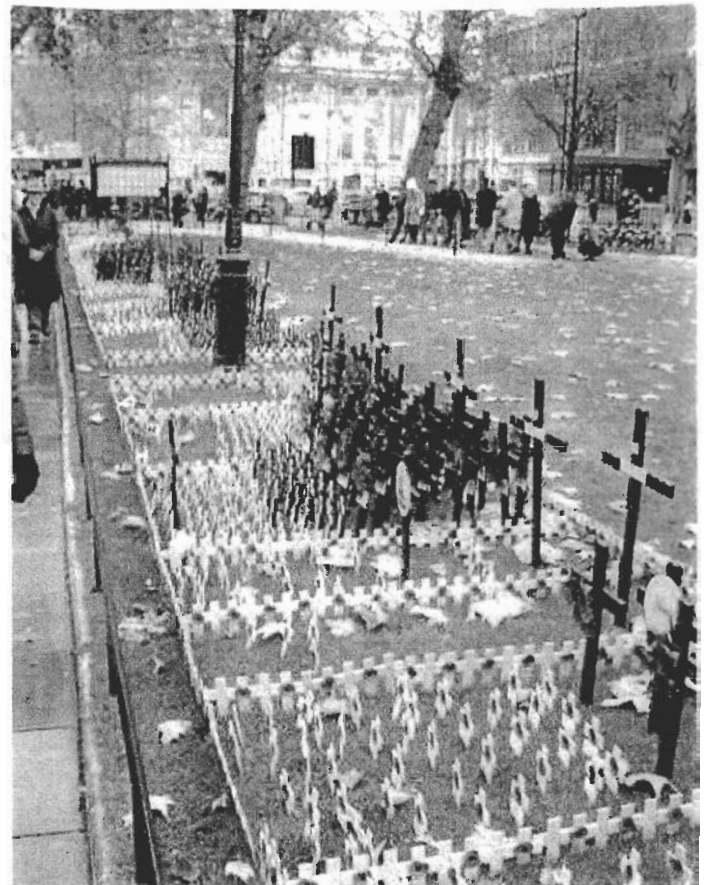
The MVG is fortunate to have a number of dedicated members who wish to commemorate the Volunteers at the Cenotaph every year. This does not mean that others in the Group who wish to take part in the ceremony cannot join us. We feel that it is an honour to be able to take part in this Service of Remembrance each year, and this year, the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of World War 1, it was felt even more keenly.

Regular marchers include Sandy Lincoln, Karen Harney, Mike and Christine Cavender with their family, granddaughter Freya and friend Gwen, and Donald and Rosemary Fell were joined this year by Lt. Michael Doncaster from Australia, looking resplendent in his naval uniform. We were especially delighted that Michael was able to fit the ceremony into a very tight schedule, while over in England on business for the Australian Navy. He found the experience a very rewarding one, and although the BBC, once again, (despite being well briefed as usual), chose not to pick out the MVG, we certainly felt “well in” with the British Military when Michael and the Chief of the British Naval Staff (who was watching the march past from one of the balconies outside the Foreign Office) waved at each other and he gave us the thumbs up! Sadly, Pat Wilson was unable to join us as planned through illness.

Our wreath bore the message which is inscribed on the MVG Memorial Stone in the MVG Garden at Alrewas:-

In memory of  
The Malayan Volunteers  
Both Military and Civilian  
Who served in WW2  
1941 – 1945

The Duke of Wessex took the salute in Horse Guards at the end of the March Past. After the National Anthem, the parade dispersed and we said our goodbyes to Karen and Christine and family, who were unable to join us for lunch this year. Sandy, Donald, Michael and I retraced our steps into Parliament Square and across Westminster Bridge to the “All Bar One” restaurant, where we enjoyed a long and convivial lunch, before visiting the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey on our way back. A cross was placed in the FEPOW Plot on behalf of the Volunteers, and this rounded off a long but very worthwhile day.



## VOLUNTEER MEMORIALS IN MALACCA and KUALA LUMPUR – A NEW PROJECT

### Report by Jonathan Moffatt

We are concerned at the condition and care of two Straits Settlements Volunteer Memorials in Malacca: the World War 2 Memorial on the wall of the Stadthuys, a World Heritage Site, needs cleaning and cordoning off to prevent the alcove it is in being used by vendors including ice cream men. The addition of an information board would also make its significance clearer to visitors. Also the wooden World War 1 Memorial in Christ Church, Malacca, hangs precariously from a nail, its left hand bottom corner broken off. Children often touch the memorial and it is beginning to show considerable wear and tear despite the brass cross at the centre of the memorial being highly polished. The church as a whole is due for repair shortly. We hope to raise awareness of this problem and do something about it over the next year as well as looking at other Volunteer Memorials in Malaysia, in particular those in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, "The Planters' Church", Kuala Lumpur.

At present, we are trying to establish the cost for such restoration work to be undertaken. The success of such a project depends on reliable local contacts. We hope MVG members and others will consider donating to such a project.

### MESSAGE FROM Andrew Hwang in KUALA LUMPUR

At the end of October, Andrew e-mailed to say that he had received an invitation from the British High Commission in KL inviting him and fellow members to participate in the Remembrance Day Service in Kuala Lumpur, followed by breakfast afterwards at the High Commissioner's Residence. Andrew asked if there were any MVG members who were able to attend, and offered to donate a wreath to lay on behalf of the MVG. As well as inviting MVG members, Andrew said he would invite other friends to represent the MVG Garry Prior (ex-RA), Adrian Cooke (ex-Green Howards), George Mackie (ex-Transport) and Major (Rtd) George Smith. Ex-member of the MVG, Ivan Ho also said he would attend. Ivan is still keen to find out more about his father Ho Pan Thong 1/FMSVF.

Although Ho Pan Thong was at the Fall of Singapore, he managed to escape capture by changing into civvies and making his way back to Batu Gajah, Perak, in a train which was full of Japanese soldiers. He spent the war hiding out in the countryside, and died in 1942, from illness. Sadly his family destroyed all evidence of his involvement with the 1/FMSVF and consequently Ho Pan Thong is not mentioned on any memorials in Perak, as no-one was able to vouch for his service record, nor has his family received any compensation or war pension. Ivan Ho has compiled a substantial dossier on his father, but **if anyone can help Ivan find out more about the Perak Battalion, 1/FMSVF and his father, please let Jonathan or Rosemary know.** Andrew also went on to say that the High Commission was interested in working with the MVG to restore and erect memorials to the Volunteers, both in Malacca and KL.

4 brass and bronze WW1 memorials in St. Andrew's Church were looted by the Japanese, and need restoring. Also in Kuala Lumpur, there is no specific memorial for the 2/FMSVF (Selangor Btn.) St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church would be a good place for this, as many of the 2/FMSVF worshipped there, and St. Andrew's wartime pastor, Rev. Alfred Webb was a captain and chaplain in the 2/FMSVF. He went into captivity in Changi and was then sent to Thailand. He survived the war. If there are any 2/FMSVF families who would be interested in establishing a memorial to the men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion FMSVF, please let Jonathan or Rosemary know. **N.B. If anyone is interested in the "Malaysia My Second Home" (MM2H) programme – please contact Andrew, who has details.** We thank Andrew for his help in this project.



**AN EARLY DATE FOR YOUR DIARY  
MVG ANNUAL LONDON LUNCH**

**12.00pm SATURDAY, 3<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2009 at THE RAF CLUB, 128, PICCADILLY, W1J 7PY**

Following the success of the annual reunion lunch in October 2008, it has been decided to have a change of venue for October 2009, and try out the RAF Club in Piccadilly, which should more easily accommodate the higher numbers now attending the reunion. This arrangement, however, is less flexible than hitherto, as early commitments are required by the RAF Club to book the appropriate function room: **hence this very early booking invitation to MVG members and their guests.**

As one of London's most prestigious clubs in the centre of the West End, the RAF Club is a beautifully furnished, listed building overlooking Green Park, at the Hyde Park Corner end of Piccadilly. It is easily accessible by bus, underground (Green Park or Hyde Park Corner) or taxi. The main function rooms are on the first floor, where the long corridor is lined on each side from floor to ceiling with Squadron Badges, both past and present, for those with an interest in Royal Air Force history. Throughout the club, and in particular along the ground floor corridor, there are many fine paintings of aircraft, naturally, and busts of historical aviation personnel. A new stained glass window depicting a scene from WW2 as a pilot is scrambled to his air craft, makes a worthy backdrop to the elegant staircase at the far end of the ground floor corridor. For those who find stairs difficult, there are 2 lifts which can be used. The club is well worth a visit in its own right and MVG members are encouraged to take themselves on a self-guided tour before the reunion.

Plans are already well advanced for 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2009, but the successful outcome of these plans will depend on **YOUR VERY EARLY RESPONSE** to this proposal. Provisional bookings have been made for two of the private function rooms available, but we are obliged to make a commitment to one of these two rooms at an early stage, as they accommodate different numbers, and cannot both be held indefinitely. In the absence of a good response early on, it would be safer to take the smaller room, but the obvious risk is that the bookings are closed to those who might like to commit at a later date, but have not advised the fact.

Obviously we cannot easily judge which room to make a firm booking on without some early indication as to the intended numbers who might attend. Therefore, **please e-mail or write to Hugh Chaplin asap** to advise whether you are definitely coming or not, or whether you might be coming but would prefer to provisionally commit, and confirm at a later date. You will appreciate that a firm **negative** response is also helpful, as these names can be crossed off, although there may be some flexibility on this closer to the time if you change your mind, especially if the response enables us to book the larger function room. If you wish to bring guests, please indicate possible numbers at the time of booking.

There is no financial commitment at this early stage, but all cheques will be required **by 4<sup>th</sup> September** at the latest (see details below).

The smaller 'Hodges Room' will seat up to 30 people, while the larger 'Presidents' Room' can accommodate up to 50. Both rooms have access to a bar for MVG use, before and after the lunch, where drinks may be purchased - the former in the public 'Cowdray Room' overlooking Green Park, and the latter in the 'Victoria Bar' adjacent to the luncheon room, which will be for MVG's exclusive use.

A two-course set lunch is planned, followed by petit fours and coffee. The cost will be a minimum of £25.50 per head, although rates may go up slightly in May 2009 on an annual Club costs' review. The current indicative menu is "Supreme of Chicken Cordon Bleu, filled with Ham & Gruyere Cheese, plus vegetables" followed by fresh fruit salad, coffee and petit fours. This may change when the new menus are decided - details are on the web for those so minded to look. The food is of a very high standard, and there is silver service, so there is an element of a culinary (as well as an historical) experience in this luncheon proposal. There is a vegetarian alternative as well. It is not intended to serve wine with the meal. This can be bought from the bar if required. There will be iced tap water provided.

As with all private clubs today, security will be tight. Groups and Societies using the private function rooms must provide the club with a detailed list of all people attending beforehand to include their contact details. These will be checked off at reception, and some form of ID may be asked for (e.g. driver's licence) and bags may be searched. These can be left at reception on a ticket basis, or in the spacious cloakrooms where overcoats should be left - they are not permitted in the public rooms. There is a Ladies' Powder Room on the first floor next to the Victoria Bar, where things may also be left.

Dress is relatively casual at weekends, so ties are not actually required, but sloppy jeans and trainers are definitely not permitted! Sports Jacket and tie for gents seem an appropriate compromise.

When the time comes for payment, cheques should be made payable to:-

**Mrs. R. Fell Volunteers Bench Fund** and sent to **Millbrook House, Axminster, Devon EX13 5EE** along with a note confirming who is attending and your contact details. These will be retained and brought to the **RAF Club** for inspection if asked for. They will then be shredded. The cheques will be cashed by the **4<sup>th</sup> September 2009**. Post-dated cheques sent earlier would be much appreciated. Once the cheques are cleared, Hugh is then **personally** committed to paying the full costs for the numbers submitted to the Club. Unfortunately, there can be no reimbursement for a non-attendance, but it may be possible to transfer the "ticket" to someone else, if put in writing.

Full details of the menu, cost and the Function Room booked will be given in the July 2009 newsletter, so we need your indicative responses well before then, please.

There will be a speaker (possibly a serving Naval Officer and grandson of an FMSVF Volunteer), and raffle on the day. Please say if you can bring along a prize for the raffle.

If anyone would like to make a presentation, please advise Hugh Chaplin on:-

The Stone House, Main Road, Witney, Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire OX29 5RJ

Tel: 01865 881664/ 07740 797124 E-mail: [hugh.chaplin@gmail.com](mailto:hugh.chaplin@gmail.com)

For more details about the RAF Club - see their website on:-

<http://www.rafclub.org.uk>

**PLEASE LET HUGH CHAPLIN KNOW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND THE LUNCH AND REUNION IN 2009.**

### **VOLUNTEER BADGES FOR THE FEPOW MEMORIAL BUILDING AT THE NMA – ALREWAS, AND THE THAILAND/BURMA RAILWAY CENTRE MUSEUM – KANCHANABURI.**

In the October newsletter, it was reported that Carol Cooper (COFEPOW Chairman) had agreed to allow the MVG to donate 2 Volunteer badges for display on the beam in the FEPOW Memorial Building, where 14 other Regimental Badges are on show. The two which are being donated are the SSVF and the FMSVF badges. These have now arrived, but we thought it would be appropriate to have a presentation ceremony, with as many MVG members present as possible.

The date chosen for the presentation is **MONDAY 4<sup>th</sup> MAY – the May Day Bank Holiday. PLEASE LET JONATHAN or ROSEMARY KNOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO COME.** We are planning to book a "classroom" for a half day session and have a workshop/browsing of source material with a second hand book stall. However, it would not be worth booking this unless there are enough MVG members wishing to attend. If the Bank Holiday presents a problem, and you would prefer another day, please let us know. It would also give members a chance to visit the Archival Section of the FEPOW Building, where Jonathan has provided a substantial folder about the Volunteers for reference.

The provisional timetable for the day is:-

1. 12p.m. - Meet at the FEPOW Memorial Building for the Presentation of the Badges, and Archival Visit.
2. 1p.m. - Lunch – picnic or booked sandwiches from the Restaurant in the Arboretum. [Please say which]
3. 2-4 p.m. - Workshop/secondhand bookstall.

As well as presenting the badges, we feel that this is a good time to approach Carol Cooper again, and ask whether it would be possible to include some information about the Malayan Volunteers in the FEPOW Building.

Two other Volunteer Badges have been ordered for the Thailand/Burma Railway Centre Museum, to add to the three badges on the teak plaque made for the MVG by Rod Beattie. These are the Kedah and Kelantan badges. We are reluctant to send these by post – apart from the expense – and very much hope that they can be delivered by hand by an MVG member travelling to Thailand in 2009, with plans to visit Rod's Museum. **PLEASE LET JONATHAN or ROSEMARY KNOW IF YOU CAN HELP.**

### **SOME WEBSITES TO VISIT**

<http://www.gulfnews.com/friday/People/10213440.html>

This is the story of MVG member Sir Roger Moon, from his early life in Kenya as a coffee planter, through his time at the Liverpool stock exchange, which introduced him to Dunlop, and his subsequent employment as a rubber planter on a Dunlop Plantation. In December 1941, along with other young men in Malaya of all races, he was conscripted into the Volunteer Forces. He became a member of the Johore Volunteer Engineers, and as such became a Prisoner of War when Singapore fell to the Japanese. He was taken first to Changi, but ended up working on the Burma/Siam Railway, where he says, "I contracted malaria 17 times, jaundice, dysentery and beriberi."

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradise\\_Road](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradise_Road)

One of the consultants for the film, "Paradise Road" – the story of one of the POW camps in Sumatra which started a "vocal orchestra" – was Edith Cynthia Rose Leembruggen (also known as Betty), cousin of MVG members George Hess'e and Becca Kenneison. She was only 14 when she was imprisoned by the Japanese in a female POW camp, after the ship (the Vyner Brooke) on which she was evacuated from Singapore, was sunk. In the camp she became very close to Australian nurse Vivien Bullwinkel, lone survivor of the Japanese massacre on the beach. Edie died, aged nearly 81, on 2/10/ 2008.

<http://www.jbdunne.co.za> - a life well lived.

Anyone visiting this website will find a very well set up and user-friendly site. Written by J.B. Dunne's granddaughter, MVG member Stephanie Hess, it is an account of his life, with his family, in Singapore during the heady pre-war days when life was wonderful, but with war clouds gathering, the story of his capture and subsequent life as a POW unfolds with great drama. The story of his POW years is based on letters he wrote to his wife in the form of a diary, which Stephanie has put together as a book called "Dear Hon". This is a very fine piece of research by Stephanie.

## **E.J.H.CORNER – Assistant Director of the Singapore Botanical Gardens, 1929 – 1942.**

**In correspondence with John Corner.**

Following **David Wingate's** excellent article about the 'Tanjong Pinang' and the fate of his grandmother **Penelope Landon**, in the October 2008 edition of 'Apa Khabar', the MVG contacted **John Corner** about the reference to his late father **E.J.H. Corner**. By strange coincidence, John is also researching his father's life and is the process of publishing a book about him. This is John's reply to the MVG:-

"What a coincidence – I have visited Thyra Godber and her sister June at their cottages in Somerset in June 2007. Also, I have a "running e-mail dialogue" with David Wingate, who has helped my project enormously, I haven't met Jen Howe – was it she who 'presented' at the Powys Castle Antiques Roadshow? The true story of Penelope Landon's jewellery which she left hidden in a dug-out in the gardens of my parent's house at 30, Cluny Road, is both fascinating and so very sad.

In my book, I have a chapter devoted to this, with pictures of Jim and Pen Landon provided by David. In the suitcase, to which I refer below, there was a picture of father with a lady by a jungle clearing/stream, and it took me two years to discover she was Penelope Landon. David's story of Pen is compelling reading. I hope my story, especially the bit that led up to her evacuation, might be equally so, including the finding of her jewellery after the British returned!

My story is, perhaps, a little different, but then perhaps not.

My late father was Assistant Director of the Straits Settlements Botanical Gardens, Singapore from 1929 - 1942, and he remained in Singapore during the Occupation, working with the Japanese scientists who soon arrived to 'take-over' the Gardens, Raffles Museum etc. His story he tells in his 1981 published book, "The Marquis – a tale of Syonan to." This had only one printing and is very difficult to find now.

His marriage to my late mother, Sheila K. Corner (nee Bailey), an American, in 1939, became doomed and ended in bitter failure in the London Divorce Courts in March 1952. There were three children of that marriage, me being the eldest born in Singapore in January 1941, Christine who died soon after my father in early 1997, and Lindsay, still living and just 60.

I walked out of home in 1960 and never saw my father again. Little did I realize that my job as businessman and owner of Astley International, which involved doing business with the Pacific Rim Countries including Japan, would sometimes bring me geographically close to my father. I have discovered that I was in Japan, at least once, at the same time as my father – in the early 1980's. Looking back, it's so sad that we were unable to talk about that, he from a scientific view point and me from the business one. The reasons are all explained in 'The Book'.

When my father's house was being cleared by a cousin, he found a suitcase with a message that it be given to me "wherever he may be". It reached me in 1998 and remained unopened until we came here (Australia) in late 2004, where our daughter lives with her 3 young! I finally opened it in June 2006, and the contents inspired me to research my father's life and to write about it for our 2 children who, sadly, never knew their paternal grandfather, and for their children. My son lives near Winchester in the U.K. and has 3 children. I completed that writing in late March this year (2008) and presented the book to both my children at a special dinner, here in Melbourne, to celebrate my daughter's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday.

During my researches, I exchanged information with people from all over the world and was prevailed upon to consider having the book published. I long considered this and eventually decided to 'have a go'.

The published book will differ from the family book in that I shall leave out the very personal things and lay it out differently. I am well advanced with the book and hope to finish it by the end of the year.....or so!

The family story was 287 pages long, but the re-written book MSS so far has reached 380+ pages, with a lot of new material, and I am waiting for more. Goodness knows if a publisher will be interested, but I want to publish it in Singapore – for obvious reasons. I have three interested parties waiting to see the MSS.

Many from war-torn Singapore thought my father a collaborator, as they did the Director of Fisheries, William Birtwistle my godfather, and even Eric Holttum, the Director of the Gardens. I set out to prove that accusation right or wrong – no grey areas. I believe I have achieved that and am certain he was as far from collaborating as one could be. There is one thing which really surprises me that, apparently, my father made no effort to exonerate himself from all accusations until he wrote "The Marquis – a tale of Syonan to", and published in 1981. Why, I constantly wonder. Some tell me it was his vanity. He couldn't find a British publisher for that book, there still being strong feeling about his part in the Singapore war years. Eventually, I understand, Heinemann Asia took it on, although I believe it was vanity publishing and he may have had to put up money in advance for costs. His story is fascinating (I think) and he was a difficult man as well as a charmer.

*On learning that the Changi Museum publishes books, John added:-*

I hadn't realized that the Museum publishes books, and I have written to Razeen to enquire. I did visit the Museum in late May 2007, meeting Simon Goh (then Manager) and his assistant, both of whom had been very helpful in my researches. It was Simon who introduced me to Tim Wilson, one son of Bishop Wilson, and I visited Tim on that trip to England in June 2007. Bishop Wilson had been instrumental in giving vital evidence in Singapore, in around September 1945, which absolutely exonerated my father, William Birtwistle and Eric Holttum from any suspicion of collaboration. That 'court', presided over by Col. Gilbert Archer, appears not to have had much or any publicity. The late Sir Gilbert Archer became the Director of the Auckland Museum and recently we visited the Museum and searched his records but could find no reference to 'that trial' even by oblique reference! **I wonder if any members of MVG know anything?** Tim Wilson has also looked through his late fathers papers with the same result.

## A MAN OF PASSION MISUNDERSTOOD

February 2007: Edred John Henry Corner - from John K. Corner to Rosemary Fell at MVG, dated 1.12.2008

Many stories have been born out of those dark days of Singapore's history that was the Japanese Occupation. Death and torture was everywhere, and it became a struggle for the men and women of those times merely to survive, to keep on a gentle string what little of their lives they still had left.

Corner was born in London in 1906. His interest in Botany began at Rugby School and developed at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. This was before he was appointed as the Assistant Director of the Gardens Department of the Straits Settlements in 1929. Corner was an expert who achieved many academic medals and scientific recognition including the Darwin Medal in 1960. He also became well known for his skill of using *Berok* monkeys to help him obtain plant specimens that were too high in the canopy to collect. He remained a prominent figure in his field of science. Corner was drafted as a member of the Singapore Volunteer Force. However, he was unable to fight after receiving a serious bite from one of his monkeys.

On the verge of Singapore's fall to the Japanese, the British Governor of Singapore, Sir Shenton Thomas, scribbled a note addressed to the new Japanese commander, recommending that Corner, along with Professor Eric Holttum (Director of the Botanical Gardens) and William Birtwistle (Director of Fisheries), should be allowed to continue their work in the gardens to preserve the island's plant-life. Birtwistle was conversant in the Japanese language after visiting Japan several years before Singapore's fall. Being familiar with the Japanese culture, he was well-respected by the Japanese. It was due to this that he was selected by Sir Shenton Thomas to preserve the Botanical Gardens along with Corner and Holttum.

The Japanese Emperor Hirohito, being an orchid enthusiast himself, gave direct orders to allow these men to continue their work with the Japanese. Also, Corner strongly believed that when it came to science, any prejudice against any scientist of a different nationality or race, was unjustified. He believed that scientists had to be judged for their scientific work and research. Hence, upon the fall of Singapore, the men followed orders and continued their scientific work in the Botanical Gardens and were labelled as 'enemy aliens' by the Japanese and like other 'enemy aliens' they were required to wear a red star.

With the assistance of Professor Hidezo Tanakadate and Marquis Tokugawa, the men had successfully protected thousands of scientific specimens and hundreds of collections from the museums and libraries during a time chaotic with looting and destruction. Their close working relationship with the Japanese, however, resulted in many calling them collaborators with the enemy. This was despite the fact that Corner himself had even organized food rations and supplies during the trying time of the Japanese Occupation. Many did not know that Corner had been smuggling food into the prison camps for them.

The three men were, however, commended in the November 1945 General Report to the British Colonial Office:-

*"The action of these officers in remaining at their scientific posts despite the adverse view of this which inevitably arose amongst those who were interned, has had results of the utmost value and scientific importance, and is to be highly commended".*

**Source: British National Archives Ref. No. CO 273/675/6**



Professor Edred John Henry (E.J.H.) Corner (1906 - 1996) with his family. He was not a military man, but a botanist. In sepia-toned photographs, he is exactly what you would expect him to be: bespectacled, mild-looking and keen-eyed. Pictured here with his wife, Sheila, and son, John, in their garden.



E.J.H. Corner and William Birtwistle wearing their red stars as "enemy aliens".

His controversial image continued after the end of the war and long after he had left Singapore in November 1945. Following his departure, he became Principal Field Scientific Officer for Latin America for UNESCO from 1947 to late 1948, before returning to Cambridge and becoming Professor of Tropical Botany. He continued to lecture at Cambridge until 1973, when he retired as Emeritus Professor.

In 1981, Professor Corner charted his war-time experiences in the book, "The Marquis: a Tale of Syonan to". In this book, he mentioned a note from Sir Shenton Thomas that had given him approval to help and preserve the Botanic Gardens and Raffles Museum. According to him, however, this note was lost in a fire in Sendai, Japan, which only kept matters ambiguous. The book was shied away from by British publishers, and was only published by Heinemann (Asia). Professor Corner's other works include several scientific books and papers, as well as the scientific obituary of the Emperor Hirohito written for the Royal Society.

It was only in 2000 that evidence was found that the destroyed note had been published in a Japanese newspaper in 1942, the *Asahi Shimbun* by Professor Tanakadate.

Corner was a man of high principle who devoted his life to Botany. In his writings he changed the face of much that had gone before and the evidence is now overwhelming that he never collaborated with the Japanese but rather he gave sufficient co-operation to ensure the safety of all the vital scientific records. As an enemy alien he was also able to help many prisoners, but entirely anonymously, and at great risk to himself. He was a self-effacing man who shunned that kind of recognition. His scientific work was everything to him.



E.J.H. Corner with his bride Sheila Bailey on their wedding day in 1939.



The house at 90, Cluny Road where the author lived in Singapore. The house is still there, unchanged.

To date, opinions of Professor Corner remain divided. Some maintain their distrustful image of him despite evidence of his innocence, while others, notably students, remember him fondly for his teaching and the stories he had to tell and they see him as a hero who held his own and was true to himself. Corner's colonial bungalow on Cluny Road, now within the Singapore Botanical Gardens, has been converted into a restaurant and is fondly remembered as the 'E.J.H. Corner House'.

Professor Corner had unfortunately passed away before he got the chance to clear his name. He died in 1996 at the age of 90. He married twice in his lifetime, and is succeeded by a son and daughter.

*Drafted by volunteer writer Lyana Shah.*

*The Changi Museum extends their appreciation to his son John Kavanagh Corner, for sharing the story of his father, Professor Corner, and donating articles and photographs of him to the museum.*

*John K. Corner can be reached at [astley22@bigpond.net.au](mailto:astley22@bigpond.net.au) for further information and the full 1945 General Report.*



**“WELL I DIDN'T LIKE THE FOOD.”**  
**WHY GUNNER 18435 of the FMSVF LIGHT BATTERY WALKED OUT OF CHANGI.**  
**BY GEORGE HESS'E**

**How this all came about.**

At the Changi Museum presentation ceremony on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2008, Rosemary Fell made me promise that I would give her an article on my “escape” from Changi for her brilliant newsletter, which I do enjoy reading. However, to date, I have not read a single lighthearted manuscript. War is not funny, but there are pockets of humour, though they be few and far between the horrors we all endured and suffered, caused by man's inhumanity.

Before I tell you why I left Changi Jail, I will tell you how. I simply left - and here I do not use the word escape, which seems to have romantic connotations of heroism, of which there was none. I used an opportunity in the confusion to walk out and get paid by His Imperial Majesty, The Emperor of Nippon. I must remember, one of these days, as an honourable and respectable British soldier, who was Mentioned in Dispatches, to return the 50 cents which I was given for a day's work I never did, before hell freezes over.

I did not join the FMSVF Light Battery for any reasons of loyalty to King and Country – nothing of that kind ever entered my mind. It was that I thought I would look great in uniform. I knew how great Errol Flynn looked in uniform. Little did I know that the uniform I was given was probably the most unglamorous thing I could ever get in to. I was coming on 18 and stood 6ft. 2ins. in my socks, as skinny as a rake and weighing all of 120 pounds. Lampposts were bigger than me. Kitted out I must have been a frightening sight even to the toughest Jap soldier. But my one advantage was that I could run, and had boundless energy and stamina. Here was I, involved in something I knew nothing about, WAR. But I was soon going to find out the hard way as all soldiers do. Clothing Issue was:-

One bush hat with an extra tall crown, used with one side folded up, which made me look lopsided.

One red and blue forage cap that was about three sizes too big, which covered my right eye and went all the way to the nape of my scrawny neck.

Three khaki shirts with the choice of two sizes – if the shoulders fitted, the cuffs ended at my elbows, or if the sleeve length was right, I could share the shirt with another person inside.

Three pairs of trousers which were likewise too short or too long with a 36 inch waist into which a 14 inch waist had to fit. I chose the longer length, in the hope that some genius of a tailor could alter them. (Story to be told later.)

I was also given some shorts, and a broad brown leather belt that fitted me like a corset – almost a straitjacket. Thick grey woollen socks, puttees, and a pair of boots which were so heavy that any sea diver would have been pleased to own them.

I was also allocated a 303 rifle, number 1006, probably made pre 1914, which looked as though it would fall to pieces if I shook it.

Thus equipped, Gunner 18435 was all set to fight one of the mightiest and most ruthless armies in the world at that time.

I took my uniform to the local Indian tailor, and when I told him that I wanted it altered to fit me, the tailor laughed. After I threatened to kill him, he suggested that I trade in my army issue, and for the princely sum of \$30 he would make me a set in the same material to fit. I agreed, and went back home to borrow the \$30 from my mother, as I only earned \$15 a month as an apprentice. I did not go to my dad for a loan as he would have killed me, since he never believed that he could have fathered a child as stupid as me.

Now came the great day – my first Parade Day in uniform. Like a decorated scarecrow, I arrived at the Battery Office to report. There was a look of amazement, then laughter, with remarks like, “Malaya's last hope”, and “Saviour of the FMSVF Volunteers”. One chap even said that, “The Virgin Mary would cry if she saw you.” I slapped him so hard that he glorified me by saying “Christ, what the hell was that for?” He soon found out that amongst my other good qualities, I had a violent temper, and he still talks from the side of his mouth. The laugh was on them when I was awarded the Mention in Dispatches, several years later – for what I still do not know, nor do I care.

Thus equipped, Gunner 18435 of the FMSVF Light Battery went to war from the 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941 to the 15<sup>th</sup> February 1942. I will not repeat the movements of the Battery, as they have been documented by Ian Stitt (*Ed. See Apa Khabar No.9 Jan. 2007*) and Llewellyn Davidson, or the part I played as the youngest and most insignificant gunner ever to be a member of the FMSVF Light Battery, only to be told on the 15<sup>th</sup> February that we had surrendered.

Every member of the Battery and, indeed, the entire British Army must have been and was shocked. Surrender was something we never expected. Yes, we had retreated to Singapore, but we all hoped for the counter attack that would drive back those little “yellow bastards – the sons of heaven” who always smelt of dry fish.

We accepted our defeat, packed our bags and marched off to Changi and internment where thousands of good men died of diseases in humiliating conditions, while those same men would have gladly given their lives fighting for the rights and freedom of others.

**WHY I LEFT CHANGI JAIL - I did not like the food (the service was even worse!)**

The truth was there was no food. For two days I nibbled on dried biscuit with bits of corned beef that were almost walking out of the tin, which I shared with Ronnie Seimund and Willy Darbyshire. I was the only coloured man in a prison built for 500 prisoners, which was now trying to accommodate 4,999 and me.

Not once, but several times in the three days I was there, I was asked what I was doing in Changi when I could have stayed out, mingled with the local population and been lost amongst them. What indeed!

I have to go back to the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 1942. It was about 6.30p.m. and the surrender had been signed. The continuous gunfire was dying down to an occasional shot here and there. There was this deadly silence at times, not a bird nor an insect nor even a dog bark could be heard. It was a terrifying silence.

I sat down under a tree on the edge of the Monk's Hill School playground, and as I looked north into the night glow, my thoughts drifted to my family in Kuala Lumpur, 250 miles away as the crow flies. I tried to think of what my father, mother and three sisters could be doing. I felt a strong sense of guilt at having left them. Did I do the right thing by joining up, or was it wrong that I had left them. I consoled myself with the thought that as a fully grown man I might have been an embarrassment to them. I knew that my family had been evacuated to an estate bungalow together with the Attwell and de Kretser families who had all girls. With these thoughts in my mind, I must have fallen asleep.

I woke up at about 11.00 or 12.00 o'clock feeling cold, damp, hungry and thirsty. I decided to go back into the school where I had a gas cape which I had used as a blanket to keep off the dew at nights. I had a bottle of water, some dry biscuits and half a tin of corned beef, which was already two days old.

As I made my way along, trying to be quiet in those heavy army boots in the still of the night, I heard a voice call out to me by my surname "Hess'e" which I straight away recognized as a superior because everybody else called me "George". It was Lt. Avery our Transport Officer, a man who seemed to dislike me for an unknown reason, but then I was an arrogant, cocky youngster who now had a chip on my shoulder. I came from a wealthy family and thought I knew everything. Yet, that night, his voice seemed to have a fatherly tone. I replied and went towards him in the dark. He drew up a stool and asked me to sit down.

Let me explain here that in 1942, I was 120 pounds in weight and 6ft 2 ins. in my army boots, but I was wiry and strong, and very determined. Over the years I have put on another 100 pounds and I have mellowed with age. In conversation with Lt. Avery, he asked what my plans were, and I truthfully answered that I had none. He assured me that the Japan was a party to the Geneva Convention Treaty, and that he felt we would be well treated as POWs, and it would only be a few months before the British came back to Singapore as it was too important to lose. I believed him and now felt much better. Little did he know!!

With that reassuring thought in my mind, I left him and curled up fully dressed in my gas cape and went to sleep. I woke up at about 6.00a.m. to another mouthful of water and a biscuit. I washed my face with a damp towel and was ready to do what I was told, which was to start packing what food was available together with our kitbags into a truck, and await orders, which did not come all day.

The following day a grey Ford V8 Sedan with a flag flying arrived, carrying a little Jap officer with a large sword. After a conference with our officers he left. We were then assembled and told to get ready to march to Changi as British Soldiers.

We marched and arrived tired and sweating, to be greeted by a mass of other soldiers trying to get in. It was total confusion and eventually at about 10.00p.m. we went into Changi to nothing. Changi seemed to be bursting at the seams, nobody knew what was going on. Here, even I do not remember what went on, except that the three of us, Ronnie, Willy and I were together.

On the second evening, I saw a group of Indian labourers gather by the main gate at about 5.00p.m., and, as a group, they were taken out to a waiting truck. When they gathered together on the third day, I told Willy (Ronnie was not there) that I was going out with the labourers. I could not take Willy as he had blondish hair and blue eyes. I said goodbye to him, wrapped my "T" shirt around my head like a turban and joined the group. I was so sunburned that I was darker than some of the Indian labourers. It was not until I got outside the Jail building that I saw the mass of troops camped outside, and could not believe that such a large number of troops had surrendered. My only thought at that moment was to get away. I got on the truck and we were driven to Bras Basar Road near the Cathy Cinema. As we got off, we were each given 50 cents, a day's wages then, for which we bowed and walked away. I did not wait in case the Jap discovered he was 50 cents short for paying an extra man. That night, the 20<sup>th</sup> February 1942 was supposed to be my first night of freedom as a civilian, but it turned out to be the worst night I had ever experienced. I was alone, it was dark, and nobody and nothing was moving on the streets of Singapore. I was hot and sweaty and smelt of sweat. I was hungry and thirsty and it was cold. My thoughts went back to the days in Kuala Lumpur, when things were warm and cosy. I must have fallen asleep against a pillar on the five-foot path. ***The rest is another story to be told another day.***

After the war, I learned that Ronnie Seimund was drowned at sea as a POW while being transported to Japan. Willy Darbyshire was buried alive a few months before the war ended when the grave he was digging collapsed on him. May they Rest in Peace.

The Official Report on Ronald Claude Seimund reads:-

Gunner Ronald Claude Seimund, born Kuala Lumpur, Malaya 1922. POW. Singapore to Thailand 12.10.42 (D Battalion) Overseas 4.9.44 Lost at sea while being transported to Japan on the Rokuyu Maru 12.9.44.

There is no record of Gunner 12232 William A. Darbyshire's death except word of mouth of a witness who reported he died in internment on 17.12.44.

## **GEORGE HESS'E and his DANISH CONNECTION.**

In correspondence with George after the Presentation of the Volunteers' Memorial Board in Singapore, it transpired that he belongs to another organization called the EAC Club (East Asiatic Company) in Copenhagen, Denmark. The club, which sends out a newsletter entitled "Nyt fra OK Klubben" (News from O.K. Club"), had heard from George that he had attended the Presentation in Singapore. A friend of George, Ole Mohrsen, was interested to read about the ceremony and passed the information to the editor of the newsletter, Erik Eriksen.

The following is a translation of the article in the EAC Club's newsletter:-

"A special ceremony took place in the Changi Museum, Singapore, on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2008 on the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the surrender of the Japanese in 1945. In the presence of 16 members of the Malayan Volunteers Group and other guests, the President of the Republic of Singapore, H.E. S.R. Nathan, unveiled a Memorial Board presented by the Malayan Volunteers Group. When Singapore fell in February 1942, the war veterans present at the ceremony were all interned in the Changi Prison, near which the museum has been built. At the ceremony a former POW Mr. Peter Rhodes, ex British artillery, presented his book, "To Japan To Lay A Ghost". Mr. Rhodes was at the time of war transferred from Changi Prison to Japan, where he spent the remainder of the war in the Japanese coal mines.

George joined at a young age the British defence of Malaya and Singapore as a volunteer and took part in engagements with the enemy down through Malaya in December 1941/February 1942, when the Malayan Volunteers Group joined the British military in the defence of Singapore. When Singapore fell in February 1942, the POWs were interned in the Changi Prison under wretched conditions. Some were later sent up to the Burma railway, others to the Japanese coal mines. George succeeded, during a moment of confusion at the prison, to escape and was during the remainder of the war a member of the underground movement in Malaya.

George, who is now 85, was pleased to meet again with old POW friends, but found it depressing to revisit the places of so many unpleasant memories".

**(For more information about the EAC Club see their website on:- <http://www.eacclub.dk> )**

## **ESCAPE TO SUMATRA.**

**By Marsha Anson (nee Kavanagh)**

In 1938 my parents Margaret (known as Vicki) and Patrick Kavanagh moved from Edinburgh to Penang where my father was employed by the Goodyear Tyre & Rubber Company. His office was located in the Borneo Motors Building directly opposite the E & O Hotel in Georgetown (where I spent the first year of my life after the war) as the Borneo Company were agents for Goodyear.

In June 1938, my father joined the FMSVF – 3<sup>rd</sup> Negri Sembilan. It appears from records that he was initially with the Penang Volunteers. After a few years in Penang, my parents moved to Seremban on a rubber plantation for a short time prior to the war. My father served with his unit in Port Swettenham from 6<sup>th</sup> December 1941 to 10<sup>th</sup> January 1942.

At the end of January 1942, my mother was evacuated on the "Duchess of Bedford" bound for Liverpool via Colombo and South Africa and my father remained in Singapore with his unit before the surrender, and went to Blakan Mati on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1942 as a machine gun unit to relieve the Manchester Regiment. He remained there until the morning of 16<sup>th</sup> February 1942 when 19 of them left in a sampan for Sumatra. Amongst the party was an old friend, Don MacKenzie of Guthries.

I was able to obtain the following information taken from his Liberation Questionnaire:-

'Two of the party were Captain Ritchie R.A. and Lieut. Neale R.A.O.C. who were in charge. They arrived at Tembilahan on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1942, Rengat on 25<sup>th</sup> February and Padang on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1942. Col. Warren was in charge in Padang organizing the evacuation of personnel. My father stayed under him in Padang until 15<sup>th</sup> March and then four of them (my father and 3 civilians) namely Duthie of Singapore Harbour Board (died in April 1945 at Bankinan), Priester of the Asiatic Petroleum Co. and Blom a gold miner from Bencoolen, left Padang and went into the jungle. With money obtained from the Goodyear Agents in Padang whom he represented in peacetime, together with a number of Korintje coolies, food and rifles, they set out to make the trip. The idea was to beat the Japanese to Sibolga and there obtain a boat and provisions and make for India. One of the coolies who had been sent into Kempung village to buy rice failed to return, and it was apparent that he had given away their position for on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1942 a party of native army police pounced on them and took them to Sakouda and handed them over to the Japanese who took them to Padang.

My father was held in various camps. He was in Padang for a few days before being moved to Gloegoer on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1942 where he remained until 25<sup>th</sup> June 1944. He was then shipped out on 25<sup>th</sup> June from Sumatra (destination unknown). However, the 4000 ton K.P.M. steamer he was on was torpedoed off the Asahan River, Malacca Straits on 26<sup>th</sup> June. There were 6 vessels in convoy. After 3 hours in the water he and others were picked up out of the water and taken to Singapore in the remaining vessels.

He was in Singapore for one month. I have no knowledge as to which camp he was in there. However, he was moved to Pakan Baroe in Sumatra on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1944 where he remained until September 1945 when he was liberated.

After repatriation to the U.K. my parents returned to Penang in early 1947 with Goodyear where both myself and my brother were born. We moved to Singapore in 1949/1950 and my parents remained there until 1958 when they were transferred to Calcutta. They spent most of their life being transferred around the world with Goodyear – their final transfer being to New Zealand.

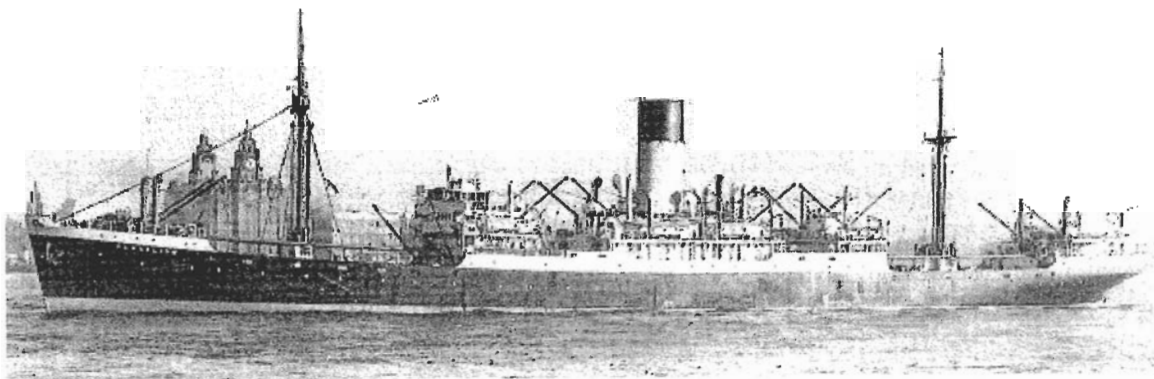
My father was awarded a Mention in Despatches for his services 1942-1945 and died in January 1991. My mother is now 91.

## **THE DEUCALION – Report by Capt. John Bax of the Blue Funnel Line.**

The following is a brief account of the action of just some of the Blue Funnel Boys who, among many others as civilians, did what they had to do in both The Far East and around the world in a time of need when the words, "We never give up", meant so much.

**Remember September 3<sup>rd</sup> is Merchant Navy Day around the world, when we remember our shipmates who never made it home and whose only grave is the sea.**

### **S.S. DEUCALION IN PEACETIME**



#### **AWARDS**

**Captain Ramsey Brown DSC. Lloyds War Medal**  
**Captain P.J.Pyecraft DSC. OBE. & Commendation in London Gazette**  
**J.S.Gregson Midshipman Albert Medal, Lloyds War Medal**

**W.McCaughey Bosun DSM**  
**N.W.Owen Carpenter DSM**  
**MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES**

**J.S.Ogilvie First Officer**  
**J.M.Price Fourth Officer**  
**P.R.Meade AB**

**P.P.Bracewell Midshipman**

Built in 1930 by Hawthorn Leslie & Co. at Newcastle with a tonnage of 7740grt, a length of 460ft, a beam of 59ft 4ins and a service speed of 14 knots, Deucalion was a sister ship of the Agamemnon, built for the Ocean Steam Ship Co. She was the third ship in Company history to carry the name.

Deucalion arrived in Singapore on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1942 from Australia (there is some doubt about where exactly she came from, but it is said to be Australia). She just appeared.

Due to almost non stop attack from Japanese aircraft and many crew casualties, she embarked many men, women and children from small boats found to be drifting and being subjected to machine gun strafing. No attempt was made to get alongside, due to bombing, fire at the docks and also the many vessels already there. She then made course for Tanjong Priok where again she took aboard approx 480 personnel of the RAF, RNZAF and RAAF, together with many British civilians, including women and children who had previously escaped from Singapore. Deucalion was by this time completely full, and with a reduced active crew.

She sailed on 22<sup>nd</sup> February from Tanjong Priok, and by 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1942 was in Fremantle. 14 of her crew were lost in the evacuation operation at both Singapore and Tanjong Priok.

Sailing from Australia, having landed her casualties and evacuees, finding replacement crew members she headed for South Africa and England.

After seeing action in the Far East, and taking part in the massive evacuation from Singapore and Java, she went on to see further action, and met her end on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1942 while taking part in "Operation Pedestal". This was the famous Malta convoy in which vital supplies were transported into the island. Deucalion was the leading freighter in the port column and the target of a German bomber which dropped a 4 bomb stick almost on top of her, seriously disabling her. Unable to keep up with the convoy, she was later torpedoed and sunk by depth charges.

## INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Former MVG member **Bentley Giles Choi** from Johore Bahru writes:-

"Thank you for your patience. I have donated the amount of twenty ringgit on behalf of the Malayan Volunteers Group to a Hindu Temple building fund. This temple was granted a piece of land in 1902 by the Sultan of Johore for protection given to the Sultan at that time."

The donation was in lieu of Bentley Giles' subscription for the year 2008-2009, and was paid to the **Arulmigusri Rajakaliamman Temple** in Jalan Tebrau, Johore Bahru. We thank him for his donation on our behalf.

**Susan Rutherford** writes:-

"I thought you would be interested in the enclosed photocopy of one of the letters sent to my mother post war. On our return journey (*from her visit to England and Europe*), we had a stop over in Singapore and, of course, visited the Changi Museum. It was very good to see the newly installed insignia of the Malayan Volunteers Brigades and some mention of the ceremony placed nearby which included a photo in which *MVG members* featured. We spoke to the Curator Robin Blackburn and told him about my father's writing case which had been buried at Changi POW camp during the Japanese occupation and which was retrieved at the end of the war by one of my father's friends. Robin showed a great interest in this, and as a result just a few days ago, I sent the writing case off to the Museum and a copy of the letter explaining the circumstances of its retrieval. Now that this is done any doubts about donating it have been resolved and I know this was the right place for it to be. My brother will be back in England in England just before Christmas and I am hoping that if we communicate we can organize getting a plaque in memory of my father placed at Alrewas."

### THE AMAZING STORY OF LT J.T. AVERY'S WRITING CASE.

Letter sent to Susan's mother from Frank Cooke, and dated 11/11/45

"I'm sending you this writing case of Jim's. I scarcely know how to begin to say how deeply I feel for you in your great loss, as no words of mine can adequately express my sympathy. It is Remembrance Day and, at eleven o'clock, I will be with you in thinking of Jim.

There is so much to remember for, in our long association, we have shared many happy experiences. I remember our weekly tennis duels (which Jim generally won), our annual shooting match for \$1 (only once won by me) and the Gunner's Cup which he was the first to win. Then, in the mess afterwards, it was passed round from lip to lip – a **loving** cup indeed, because Jim was easily the most popular **man in the Battery**.

Those were **happy days** – a fool's paradise perhaps – but days when we **worked hard** and played hard together, and, when the long-threatened **storm** finally broke, it found us all ready to do our duty and play **our part**, whatever the outcome, and with the odds against us. **The battery** put up a splendid show. A rearguard action is said to be the most ticklish operation of war, demanding as it does perfect timing and teamwork. As transport officer, Jim did a fine job by careful planning and close attention to detail, and, as a result, our many movements were carried out without a hitch. Thus the Battery was intact and still fighting at the finish when the unexpected order to 'Cease Fire' was received.

In subsequent internment, he was an example to us all. He and I were the first to get down to a job of gardening while others looked on and thus we kept active and cheerful while many others moped in idleness. At all times, his first thought was for the men, and he, in return, was loved and respected by them all. I myself have cause to remember his gentle kindness when I was ill, and when the Battery went away and left me behind I felt very lonely without him – my best friend.

And now I come to the main point in sending you this letter and case. When Jim left to go North, he was only allowed to take what he could carry. I saw him holding the writing case and trying to make up his mind about it. Finally he turned to me, "Do you mind keeping this for me. I can't take it with me. You see it was the last present my wife gave me, and I should hate to lose it". I took it from him, then he added, "Of course, if you are moved you will have to leave it behind but hang on to it as long as you can, won't you?" I told him if I had to dispose of it I would bury it somewhere so that it could be recovered..... and now here it is. I am glad and proud to be able to do this for him".



## OBTUARIES

### EDITH CYNTHIA ROSE LEEMBRUGGEN (nee KENNEISON) 26/11/27 to 2/10/08

The extraordinary life of Edie Kenneison (also known as Betty) is outlined in the following Eulogy. We extend our very sincere sympathies to her family for their loss, two of whom (George Hess'e and Becca Kenneison) are members of the MVG.

"Edie was born at Batu Caves, Kuala Lumpur, in what was then British Malaya, where her grandfather ran a quarry and prefabricated building business, which still operates to this day. This concern ran as a family business with her grandfather as the founder/owner and his sons filling lesser roles. The family homes were lined up on site and all was provided for them. A club accommodated the social life of the top echelon of the company. Holidays were spent in the Cameron Highlands where tigers and other wild life were common. Some family members even travelled to India and Ceylon. The various ethnic strata of the then British Malaya filled roles which were at the time traditionally held by them. There was a *kampong* for the Malay workers set up close by. Towering close to the business were the hills in which the actual Batu Caves were situated. One cave particularly was deemed to have deep religious significance for the Hindu population and Edie's grandfather had a very long set of stairs built so it was more easily accessible.

Although an outwardly trouble-free existence with servants meeting all needs including looking after the children, it was not without its harrowing moments. At such times Edie was guarded by her beloved elder brother, Ronald, or they would hide together in a cupboard until danger was past. At the age of five Edie was placed in a convent and left there alone, returning for occasional visits to her beloved granddad and mother. She would often hide within a grandfather clock at the convent until the nuns discovered her special place....

Her war years are now fairly well known because of interviews she has given and snippets of these appearing in television programmes. She was a consultant for the film "Paradise Road" (in the 1990s) which was set in the POW camps of the Japanese in Sumatra during World War 2. This film was based on the story of the development of a special "vocal orchestra" choir in which the voices took on the roles of various instruments. "Paradise Road" referred to the trip in camp most of them took towards Paradise once they had died.

Edie was ready to tell her experiences to interviewers in early 2007 when the opportunity arose twice. Anyone who has seen these interviews cannot help but have been affected by the heart wrenching way in which she told her story of those years.

These interviews are held in ABC archives and also at the War memorial in Canberra. These and other shorter interviews from earlier years, quite a lot of press clippings, as well as books in which she is mentioned, she held in her own personal archives.

The person to whom she was closest in those years was Vivian Bullwinkel whose story is very well known, and who knew her as "Little Bet". Why Bet? As a "little" she heard her grandfather calling the ducks to feed them by saying "Dee, Dee, Dee" which to her sounded like "Edie, Edie, Edie". She immediately swapped names with her "Betty Boop" doll and told no-one, simply refusing to answer to Edie. It took a considerable time for her mother to get to the bottom of it.

These war years left a mark. Every year, even in recent times, there would be a build up of emotions as the dates of the bombing and sinking of her escape vessel neared. As the anniversaries of these events of that terrible February drew close, she would begin to relive it. Her calendars each year were marked as such – 'Feb 12 Left Singapore 1942; Feb 13 Ship shelled 9.00pm. Granddad drowned'. Then there was the reliving of when the POWs were found in 1945 by a group led by the remarkable South African, Gideon Francois Jacobs – 'Jakes' - whom she was able to track down in the early 1990s and thank personally for finding her. Edie formed a very close friendship with him and his wife Peggy. Jakes passed away some years ago and his wife just a few months back. **[His book, "Prelude to the Monsoon", tells the story. ISBN 0 7041 0074 6]** Even after the war things were not easy. Edie was unable at first to recognize her own mother when she came looking for her. She tried to find her elder brother Ronald, only to discover that he had suffered an horrific death at the hands of the Japanese in Borneo at the age of 18, having put up his age to join the services just before the fall of Singapore.

Arrangements were made for Edie and her much younger sister to be sent to a convent as live-in students. When they arrived she was told there was a bed for only one of them. She left her sister there and decided to door knock in the hope she would find someone to take her in. After a long search she found a family who did this for her and she resumed her studies after a gap of years.

She had a thirst for knowledge having had no formal high school education. She became a teacher, a school principal and a lecturer in a teachers' college in Malaya. She was sent to the USA and Britain on scholarships, even receiving the high honour of being a Fulbright Scholar in the US. During a posting as a young school principal "up country" in Malaya, she found herself in the midst of the Communist Emergency there, but was fortunately given immunity by the rebels".

Edie came to Australia about 1960 and applied to join the WA Education Department. Sadly her qualifications and teaching experience were not recognized in WA, but she was eventually given a post in a primary school, and later in a School for the Deaf. After her marriage broke up, she took a post on Christmas Island in the early 1970s, where she was able to resume her special relationship with the Malay community as a fluent Malay speaker. Eventually she obtained a Principalship in Karratha, followed by posts in Melville and Calista, where she sometimes "took on" the authorities over issues she did not agree with. Edie retired in the mid 1980s and travelled the world. As well as her various souvenirs, she became a collector of "sayings" as she called them. She dropped these sayings into letters and in conversations – such as '*it's not our role in life to see through people but rather to see people through*', and, '*only the tall grass gets blown by the wind*'.

In recent months, her health took a turn for the worse. She would joke with the various medical professionals who treated her, saying, "I think I have swallowed the whole book of human diseases".

This was a remarkable woman; one who lived life to the full, about whom one could truly say, "*If life hands you a lemon, then make lemonade*" – and life certainly handed Edie plenty. But, as she might have put it, "*Out of the mud, the lovely lotus blooms*".

## WINSTON MATHEWS.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> November, the MVG received the sad news of the death of Winston on the 12<sup>th</sup> November, aged 93. We would like to offer our very sincere sympathies to his widow, daughter and grandchildren in Perth, Western Australia, and to his sister Iris Milne who lives in Yeovil.

As one of our few Volunteer Veteran members, Winston kept in touch through a phone link via his computer. The phone would ring, and there would be a longish pause and a few pips and squeaks and then a soft voice with a slight Australian accent would say, "Is that Rosemary". It would be the prelude to a delightful conversation, ranging over many topics, but sadly it is a year ago since I last received his call. At that time he was full of hope that his new regime on a special diet, including tea made from lemon grass, would help in his fight against cancer. He also gave me the recipe for his sister's "Sugee Cake" – one of the richest and most delicious recipes ever read or tasted.

At the outbreak of war, Winston was a Corporal in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion SSVF in charge of rations for the Battalion. He was imprisoned with the other Volunteers at the Fall of Singapore in Changi. In May 1943, he was sent to Thailand with "F" Force to work on the Burma-Siam Railway. In Winston's own words, "There were 1700 of us, a mixture of Volunteers, British soldiers from the Manchester Regiment, Australians, Indians and Dutch. When we arrived, we had to walk 120-130 miles to the borders of Thailand and Burma, where we were put to work on constructing the Railway. The conditions were terrible, and out of the 1700 work force, only 112 of us were still alive in December 1942". This was the dreaded camp at Songkurai, which was hit by the full force of the Japanese determination to complete the rail line whatever the cost in human life through overwork, starvation, disease and cruelty.

In his latter years, Winston suffered from impaired eyesight, so much so that he could no longer read texts in papers, magazines or type written articles. Through the Association for the Blind, Winston bought a ZOOMTEXT with the associated software so that he could read off his monitor. He was one of the first members to request that the MVG put the newsletter online so that he could read it at leisure on his monitor. As Winston succinctly explained, his vision impairment was due to his ill treatment on the Railway, "Alas those beastly Japs have caught up with me". He also went on to say, "During the war, I was paid 50c. per day as a private. The rate was \$1.05. Is anyone able to give me a reason for this difference? I was mobilized on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1941. A few years after release as a POW, someone behind a military desk in Singapore sent me a letter stating I was overpaid as a POW, and requesting I part with \$750. Why won't the British Government provide me with benefits to cover injuries and illnesses as a result of my service as a soldier and POW? Are the Volunteers classified otherwise? I have been refused assistance for over 50 years. What qualification must a Volunteer have?" **What indeed.**

Winston's sister **Iris Milne** lives in Yeovil, Somerset. She is 90, and lives on her own, but near her daughter. She has 3 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.

When her marriage broke down, she worked as an Executive Secretary in Hong Kong, but was persuaded by her daughter to retire to England. Her husband **B. Ronald Milne** was a member of the Volunteer Air Force and captured in Java. Her brother-in-law **Robert Cordeiro** was in the SSVF.

Iris was sent to the Convent School attached to the Roman Catholic Church in Victoria Street (now turned into a restaurant called Chjimes). When Singapore fell, many of the convent children with their families sheltered in the Church and Convent from the Japs. They lived in the classrooms for about 3 weeks. The Japanese tried to turn them out so that their own troops could be billeted there, but the Roman Catholic Bishop de Valle intervened on their behalf and they were allowed to stay. Later in the occupation, Iris went back to the family home in Serangoon Road. At this time food was in very short supply for the local Singaporeans, and Iris would have to leave the house at 2 or 3 in the morning in order to cycle to the market to queue for food. She said that the Japs would often follow her to find out where she was going. She also said that the local people would leave flasks and jugs of tea and coffee and other drinks for the POWs, who were sent out on work parties in Singapore, hidden in hedges. Later in the war, Iris was forced to work as a secretary for the Japanese.

When the war ended, Iris had a **TABLECLOTH** on which various people signed their names, including the **Mountbattens**. Iris has embroidered these signatures on the cloth, although some are still waiting to be finished! She is uncertain what to do with this piece of historical memorabilia, and would like to have suggestions, if her family are not interested in keeping it.

**[ Editor: Perhaps it should be donated to the Changi Museum? ]**

## BOOKS

**"No Mercy from the Japanese"**. By John Wyatt with Cecil Lowry. Published by Pen and Sword Military books. ISBN 184-415-853-5 Price £19.99 from your local bookshop. A survivor's account of the Burma Railway and the Hellships 1942- 1945. During the Malayan Campaign John Wyatt's regiment lost two-thirds of its men. More than 300 patients and staff at the Alexandra Hospital, Singapore, were slaughtered by the Japanese – he must be one of the very few survivors still alive today. 26% of British soldiers slaving on the Burma Railway died. More than 50 men out of around 600 died on the *Asaka Maru*, which was torpedoed, and the *Hakasan Maru*, the grim second 'Hell Ship' that took on survivors. Many more POWs did not manage to survive the winter of 1944-45, the coldest in Japan since records began. Yet John survived all these traumatic events, and the courage, dignity endurance and resilience of men like him never ceases to amaze.

**"Growing Remembrance". The Story of the National Memorial Arboretum.** By David Childs with a Foreword by HRH The Prince of Wales. Published by Pen and Sword Military books. ISBN 184-415-779-2 Price £19.99 from bookshops. The story of the inspiration for, and the establishment and evolution of the National Memorial Arboretum is a fascinating one

No-one is better qualified to tell it than the author who conceived the idea and established the site. Planting began in 1997, supported by scores of organizations and individuals both serving in the Armed Forces and retired. In October 2007, HM The Queen confirmed the importance of the Arboretum when she opened the Armed Forces Memorial to commemorate all service personnel lost on active service since the end of the Second World War. The success of the National Memorial Arboretum is borne out by the growing number of plots and the steady increase in visitor numbers.

**"The Angel of Changi, and other short stories"**. By Goh Sin Tub. Published by Angsana Books. ISBN 981 3056 90-8  
This is a collection of 65 short stories. The first, called "The Angel of Changi", is about Singapore war heroine, **Mrs. Mary Seah**, who managed to take fruit and vegetables into one of the Australian camps at Sennett Road, despite the constant danger to herself. After the war, she faded into obscurity, and it was not until Australia Day 1996 that she was awarded the highest Order of Australia by the Australian Government.

#### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

##### **MONDAY – 4<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2009 (May Bank Holiday)**

##### **Presentation of the Volunteer Badges at the FEPOW Memorial Building – NMA at Alrewas.**

See the report on page 5 of the newsletter. The planned schedule for the afternoon is as follows:-

12pm - Meet at the FEPOW Memorial Building for the Presentation of badges and Archival Visit

1pm - Lunch – picnic or booked sandwiches

2-4pm - Workshop/Secondhand bookstall in the Visitor Centre.

**PLEASE let Jonathan or Rosemary if you would like to come – and bring some books for sale.**

##### **SATURDAY – 15<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2009**

##### **V-J DAY SERVICE at the NMA**

Following the success of our first MVG Service last year, we plan to arrange a similar service in 2009. The format will also have a similar timetable:-

12pm - Meet in the MVG Memorial Garden for the Service – about 20 minutes

1pm - Picnic lunch in the grounds of the Arboretum – weather permitting – or under the cover of the arches. In 2008, onward everyone brought something for the picnic and we had a wonderful spread, followed by convivial conversation.

**PLEASE PUT THIS DATE DOWN NOW. WE ARE NOT ASKING FOR NUMBERS YET, UNLESS YOU KNOW YOU WILL BE COMING. It would be encouraging to have a good number on this little marked, yet highly significant day for FEPOWs and Volunteers alike.**

##### **SATURDAY – 4<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2009**

##### **ANNUAL LONDON LUNCH – 12pm at the RAF CLUB, PICCADILLY.**

See the details on page 4. **PLEASE LET HUGH CHAPLIN KNOW ASAP IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND, TOGETHER WITH THE NUMBERS OF GUESTS YOU WISH TO BRING.** Numbers are need now so that a Function Room of appropriate size can be booked to accommodate everyone. Further details will be given later in the year.

##### **SUNDAY – 8<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2009**

##### **REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY – SERVICE AT THE CENOTAPH, WHITEHALL.**

Details will be given later in the year.

#### **MVG SUBSCRIPTIONS 2009- 2010**

The annual subscriptions will remain at **£15 PER HOUSEHOLD** for this year. Although the subscriptions are not due until April 2009, it would be appreciated if you would let me have them in good time. Cheques 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 "selangor"**.

The newsletters will be e-mailed to all overseas members, unless members request printed copies to be sent to them.

#### **CONTACTS**

**JONATHAN MOFFATT.** For research on British Malaysians/Volunteer Forces/Argyll & Royal Marines.

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**SANDY LINCOLN.** For contacts with other Volunteers and Volunteer Children.

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**HUGH CHAPLIN.** For the MVG London Lunch.

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Tel: 01865 881664 / 07740 797124

**ROSEMARY FELL.** Editor of "Apa Khabar" /Membership Secretary/Subscriptions/Donations.

Millbrook House, Axminster, Devon EX13 5EE E-mail: [dinraf-millbrook@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:dinraf-millbrook@tiscali.co.uk) Tel: 01297 33045



## **SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT: A MESSAGE FROM SAM POLLOCK**

(Sam is John Pollock's son, and grandson of Lt. Walter Pollock, FMSVF [Intelligence Corps])

### **INTRODUCTION.**

Hi my name is Sam Pollock (14). I am the son of John Pollock whom (*some of*) you met in Singapore. I thought you might be interested in an assignment that I did for school. The topic was 'novel study' and the book I chose to do was *The Jungle is Neutral* by Spencer Chapman.

I tried to tie Spencer Chapman's experiences with my grandfather's experiences during his fighting in the war as well as my grandfather's experiences as a POW of the Japanese in Thailand. I found it interesting to do the assignment for school. The reaction I got from the teacher was very positive (I got an A for the assignment). She said she wanted to copy it so she could show it to others as a good example.

The attachments make up the assignment that I did for school, which include:-

- a map plotting my grandfather's retreat down the Malayan Peninsula
- ten things I have learnt about life from reading the novel
- my favourite passage from the novel
- finding out similarities from *The Jungle is Neutral* and what I have discovered about my grandfather.

We were in Thailand too recently taking a tour with Rod Beattie from the Thai Burma Railway Centre finding out about where my grandfather was along the Railway.

I hope you enjoy reading the attachments.

### **TEN THINGS I HAVE LEARNT FROM THE NOVEL.**

1. Know who to trust in your life.
2. Be aware of others.
3. Know your strengths.
4. Know your weaknesses.
5. Know the team's strengths.
6. Know the team's weaknesses.
7. Respect other people and their property.
8. Have your mind set on your goals.
9. Know the importance of friendship.
10. Live life and enjoy it while it lasts.

### **MY FAVOURITE PASSAGE FROM THE NOVEL.**

The following passage has been taken out of Spencer Chapman's book *The Jungle is Neutral*. The page number is 407. It relates to the times after the war when he was trying to settle back into a normal lifestyle. "*Certainly for many months I woke up every morning shortly before dawn and used to get up and go for a walk or a run, as I could not bear to lie in bed. And if there were any loud noises in the night, such as a car backfiring, before I was even awake I would be out of bed fumbling for my bundle of possessions ready to rush away into the jungle.*"

I chose this passage because I thought it was sad. The men who fought and experienced such horrifying times did not find it easy to come home and start a new, happy life. Loud noises would scare them. They would think it was the enemy firing at them and when these noises happened they immediately thought back to the times when they were fighting in the Malayan jungle.

I think it's just distressing that for many of these men who came back from the war it was hard to adjust to day to day life. I wonder if they got any help or counselling from the army to help them with their time in the war and if they lost any friends or family.

### **SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE JUNGLE IS NEUTRAL AND MY GRANDFATHER'S EXPERIENCES.**

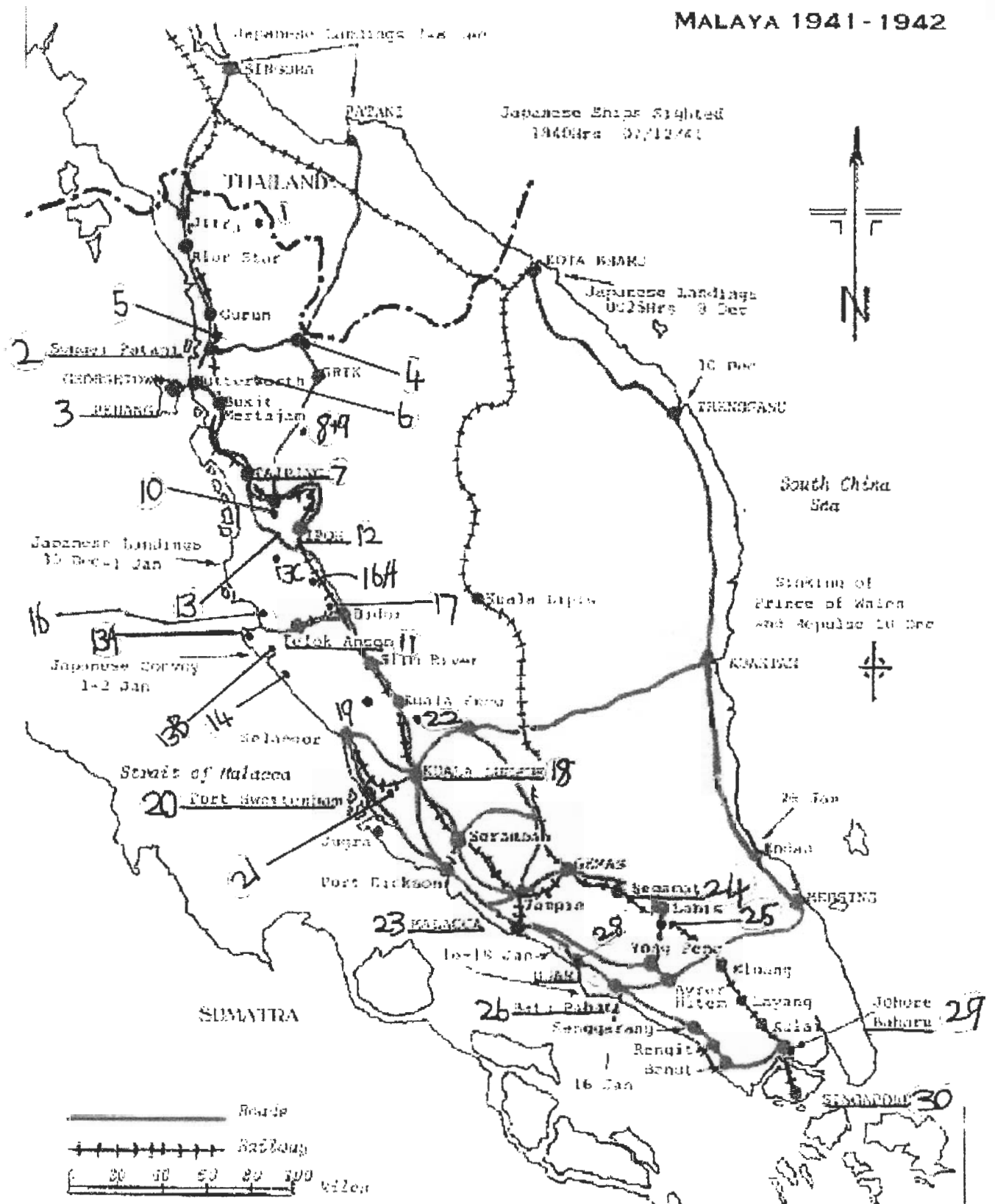
On page 19 of the book *The Jungle is Neutral* the Malayan Independent Company was quoted by Spencer Chapman.

"*Although a company of the Argylls and the Malayan Independent Company fought a most gallant, delaying action down the Grik road, the 11<sup>th</sup> Division had to fall back and were now defending a line along the Perak river.*"

My grandfather, Walter Pollock, was a member of this Independent Company which fought in the Malayan Campaign against the Imperial Japanese Army in 1942.

My grandfather kept a diary during his retreat down the Malayan Peninsula. This diary describes his experiences during the six weeks he fought before being captured by the Japanese in Singapore.

# MALAYA 1941-1942



[http://www.cofepow.org.uk/pages/armedforces\\_m\\_campaign.html](http://www.cofepow.org.uk/pages/armedforces_m_campaign.html)

His diary entry of 19<sup>th</sup> December 1941 ties up with what Spencer Chapman quoted above:  
*"to Sumpitan 0830. enemy in large numbers enemy pushed back through village. Ammo ran out had to withdraw. 22 men lost"*.

Spencer Chapman was fighting and hiding for 3 and a half years while my grandfather only fought for 6 weeks before being captured by the Japanese. His experiences and traits as a soldier as well as a prisoner of war would have been similar to Spencer Chapman's.

Whilst Spencer Chapman was fighting in the jungle he got frustrated that he could only travel a small distance. If he did encounter an enemy, he would be in trouble because he wouldn't have the strength to fight them. Spencer and my grandfather would have understood the importance of teamwork and knowing your own strengths and weaknesses, the importance of the team's strengths and weaknesses and knowing who to trust, this would go hand in hand while my grandfather spent the rest of the war as a POW (prisoner of war) in the Japanese POW camps that he went to.

Walter and Spencer would have a frustration navigating the terrain of Malaya because it had thick jungle coverage. This means there are lots of hazards and dangers including poisonous animals like Malayan Pit Vipers, spiders and mosquitoes. These are the most common diseases: malaria, typhoid and extreme diarrhoea.

Spencer Chapman describes the extremes of the weather in the Malayan jungle. During the days it would be very hot and humid. During the nights it would be wet and cold, thus making the tracks very wet and muddy in the morning. I believe the men would be fatigued from the sleepless night before from the wet weather, mosquitoes, not knowing where the enemy was and the fear of the unknown.

Spencer Chapman fought in the jungle for most of the war. He was captured by the Japanese and while in transit to a camp he escaped from them by using a sharpened bamboo stick to cut a hole in the back of the tent. Walter Pollock's retreat down the Malayan peninsula lasted only six weeks. He was captured in Singapore on the 21/1/42 and spent all the war in a number of prison camps.

Walter was the purchaser for the canteen in the camps because he could speak the Thai and Malayan languages. A family member relayed a story, told by my grandfather, which was that when he was out to get the food supplies the Japanese told him to walk with his head down so the locals could see the humiliation of the British. One time he looked up, one of the guards saw this and swung his rifle butt at Walter knocking some of his teeth out. At the time he wouldn't have been able to retaliate against the Japanese guards, however he would have been very resilient within himself to keep going on. Spencer Chapman would also have been resilient to have lasted so long during his time in the jungle and his time during the war.

I have found the research on my grandfather very interesting. I have found out a lot about my grandfather and Spencer Chapman. They had to use the same traits to survive the jungle and for my grandfather to survive the prisoner of war camps and the harshness and cruelty of the Japanese. All in all, Spencer Chapman, Walter Pollock, the grandfather that I never knew, and many thousands of other men will be remembered as loving fathers and grandfathers, gallant soldiers and gentlemen.

#### **GEORGE HESS'E - A MEMBER OF FORCE 136 - REPLIES TO SAM POLLOCK'S ASSIGNMENT**

You have paid the greatest tribute to a hero of mine, Frederick Spencer Chapman. I can well understand you trying to tie your grandfather's exploits to those of Spencer Chapman. They were indeed brave men who gave their lives for their country. Even though I never met your grandfather, he is to you what Spencer Chapman is to me.

I served under Major Ian MacDonald in a very different role. My duties comprised liaison work, and for security reasons, we never ever socialised, nor did we use rank or surnames. For our own safety very little was known of camps, duties or the locations of other members of the force (Force 136). It was only after the surrender that I met and became Ian MacDonald's personal driver and bodyguard, and later, while he headed a "Coconut and Rubber Estate Rehabilitation Team," that we became real friends. He was a fearless and a tough Scotsman.

As a liaison officer, I lived a double life, taking great care that one life did not mix with the other. I was solely responsible to Ian MacDonald, collecting data and movements, planning escape routes and acting as the 'go-between' the Indian troops who were members of the Indian Independent Army under Chandra Bose and Force 136. The reason why the Indians joined the IIA is another story.

How and why I joined Force 136 is again another story. However!!

Let me make a few comments to statements made in your assignments:-

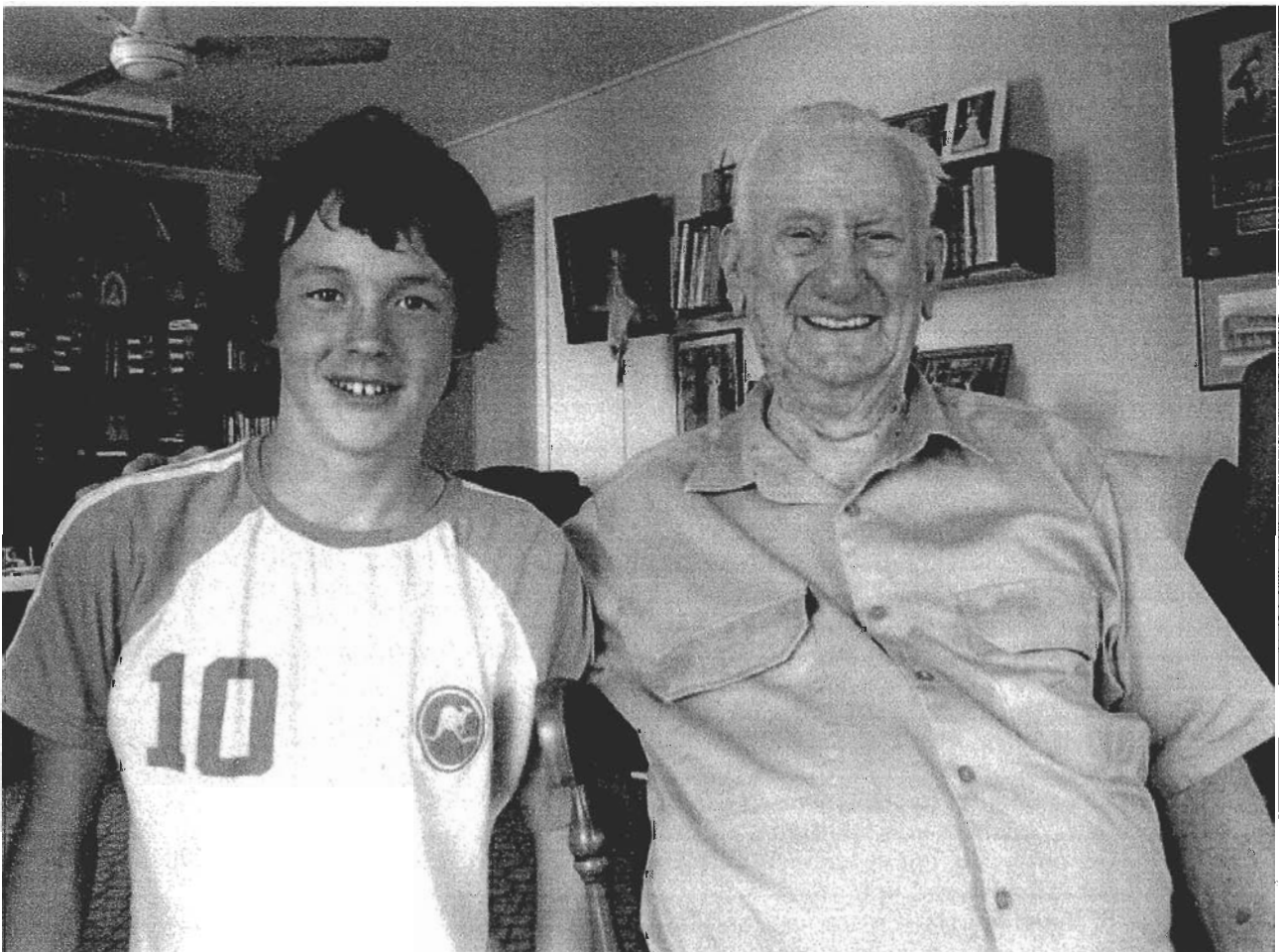
1. In the paragraph where you mention your grandfather keeping a diary – that is something I never did and was advised not to do, again for security reasons. (I wish I had as 60 years on, events, dates and locations seem to get rather mixed up!)
2. You talk of travelling short distances, and fatigue. As you will well know, having been to Thailand, one does not walk in the jungle with head held up, but rather observe where each foot is placed, and even more, to be alert in case of walking into an ambush.

3. In the 3 years I spent travelling the jungle paths as a soldier, and another 3 years as a civilian forestry officer, I never did encounter a snake or a wild animal – leeches and mosquitoes yes, but fortunately everything else either heard or saw me before I saw them and got out of my way.
4. Humidity was one of the worst things in a jungle environment, but walking around in a sweat soaked shirt is an everyday affair. Sweat soaked shirts do not smell, it is only when they dry that they smell and become dangerous.
5. In Jungle Warfare one learns a jungle craft very soon:-
  - (a) One does not smoke, as cigarette smoke is foreign in jungle air, nor does one light fires.
  - (b) One does not use scented soap or toothpaste as it is a sure give away even miles downstream.
  - (c) One learns the smell of the human from that of an animal. (Japanese soldiers always smelt of dried fish).
  - (d) One learns very quickly to differentiate normal jungle noises from those that are not. Sometimes even a whisper can carry downwind for some distance. The click of a rifle bolt differs from the noise of a breaking twig; or a bird call from chopping wood; or the smell of gun oil from cooking oil. And so it goes on and on.
  - (e) Did you know that cold steel has a taste which is unmistakable?

My worst enemy was my own brain playing tricks on me. For nearly a year after the war ended, I could not sleep at nights. I was an only son in the family, and could only sleep during the day, while other members or the servants were awake. There was no treatment in those days. Even to this day my hatred for the Japanese is as intense as it was then. The trip to Singapore where I met your Dad has stirred up a lot of those long forgotten memories.

People like your grandfather, Freddy Spencer Chapman and Ian MacDonald died that you and I could live as free men.

**Sam Pollock with John Holman  
2<sup>nd</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Regiment, who knew Walter Pollock in Tarsau and  
Nakhon Pathom Camps.**



**MALAYAN VOLUNTEERS GROUP 2008 – 2009**  
**NEW MEMBERS OCTOBER 2008 – JANUARY 2009**

**CHASEN, Heather.**

29, Park Crescent Mews West, London W1G 7EP  
Tel: 020 7637 0909  
Awaiting details.

**CORNER, John K.**

22, Myriong Avenue, Vermont South, Victoria 3133, Australia.  
Tel: 613 9802 1091 E-mail: [astley22@bigpond.net.au](mailto:astley22@bigpond.net.au)  
Son of E.J.H. **CORNER**. Assistant Director of The Singapore Botanical Gardens. Ordered to work in the Gardens under the Japanese as an “enemy alien”, 1942 – 1945.

**CROSSLEY, Dr. Louise.**

**Evacuated on the “Empress of Japan”**

114, Nelson Road, Mount Nelson, Tasmania 7007, Australia.  
Tel: +61 (0)3 6225 0652 Mobile: +61 (0)4 2841 6385 E-mail: [crossleylm@gmail.com](mailto:crossleylm@gmail.com)  
Daughter of Edward John **SHRUBSHALL**. Sgt. 5253 FMSVF. FORESTS Dept. Mal;aya 1924 as Assistant Conservator of Forests FMS. By 1940 Senior Director of Forestry SS & FMS. POW. Retired to Knowle St. Giles, Somerset  
Self: Evacuated with mother and born in Johannesburg in June 1942.

**FORMAN, Joan.**

**Evacuated on the “Felix Roussel”**

5/52, Alexandra Road, East Fremantle 6158, Western Australia.  
Tel: +61 89339 1782 E-mail: [forjoan4@bigpond.com](mailto:forjoan4@bigpond.com)  
Daughter of an engineer at the Naval Base, a civilian employee evacuated before the Japanese occupation.  
Self: Evacuated with mother on the ‘Felix Roussel’ on 8/2/42.  
My step-father was on the Burma Railway. My great grandfather was interned in Changi and Sime Road. My uncles and aunts were sent to Bahau (Eurasians). Another uncle was in the Civil Defence Force (Eurasian) I am researching family history. We are 5<sup>th</sup> generation Eurasian.

**HICKEY, Alison.**

125, Young Street, Cremone 2090, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.  
Tel: 0299098180 E-mail: [alihi@optusnet.com.au](mailto:alihi@optusnet.com.au)  
Daughter of Duncan Skinner **McDONALD**. L/Cpl 822 JVE. POW sent to Fukuoka, Japan 15.5.43 – 8.45. 1936 to Malaya as Assistant Planter, Sedenak Estate/Yuil Cata Estate, Sedenak, Johore. Then Tebrau Estate. Returned to Sedenak Estate as Manager in 1947 Retired to Australia in 1960s and died 22.12.1996  
Self: Born in Johore Bahru in 1949 during the Emergency. Protected by Ghurka soldiers and guards.

**HODGE, Eleanor.**

16, The Rookery, Kidlington, Oxfordshire OX5 1AW  
Tel: 01865 377900 E-mail: [hodge\\_eleanor@hotmail.com](mailto:hodge_eleanor@hotmail.com)  
Granddaughter of Revd. Geoffrey Scott **MOWAT**. 4/SSVF

**KENNEISON, Rebecca.**

11, South Street, Manningtree, Essex CO11 1BB  
Tel: 01206 395154 E-mail: [becca@kenneison.com](mailto:becca@kenneison.com)  
My eldest cousin. **Ronnie Kenneison**, SSVF - a Volunteer with the Singapore Signals - died on the Railway in October 1944. I believe 2 of my uncles, **Donald and Anthony (‘Bonnie’) Kenneison**, were with the Volunteers (SSVF) and interned in Changi. Another uncle, **Charlie Kenneison**, was a W/O with the RAF and was killed on Java following an escape. 3 other members of the family also died: my grandfather, **Ernest Kenneison**, in the sinking of the ‘Giang Bee’ (13/02/42), and my father’s uncle and aunt, **Patrick Whatmore** and his wife, in the massacre of 60 mostly Eurasian civilians at Ulu Tiram (13/14 March 1942). My grandmother and a cousin were interned on Sumatra; many members of the extended family escaped to safety.

**LINDNER, Gerald.**

Powys House, Church street, Ruyton-XI-Towns, Shrewsbury SY4 1JH

Tel: 01939 260666 E-mail: [g.lindner@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:g.lindner@ukonline.co.uk)

Nephew of Roger **WILLMOT**, Civilian Internee. Trade Commissioner. Interned in Changi Gaol with Bishop Wilson, among others. Roger's wife and daughter, Angela, evacuated to Australia and then on to the U.K. Angela passed on her father's archives to Singapore Archives. She now lives in the south of France.

Self: Worked in Singapore post-war ('69-'72) and lived in a former colonial government house at 31K, Pepys Road, (Formerly the residence of the Head of the Monopolies & prevention Dept. in colonial days), Singapore. It is now a Museum "Reflections at Bukit Chandu" – a WW2 Interpretative Centre, commemorating the battle of Pasir Panjang ridge fought by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Btns of the Malay Regiment – probably the final battle before the surrender.

**MACDUFF, Brenda.****Evacuated on the "Kuala"**

1064A, Beach Road, Torbay, Auckland, New Zealand.

Tel: 09 4739518 E-mail via: [mncpether@xtra.co.nz](mailto:mncpether@xtra.co.nz)

Widow of Ken **MACDUFF** Armoured Cars Division FMSVF. A lawyer with Gibb & Co., Ipoh. POW on the Burma Railway.

Brenda arrived in Penang in 1940 as a member of the Colonial Nursing Service, ending up in Singapore at the Alexandra Hospital. Evacuated on the "S.S Kuala" on 13/2/42 & survived the bombing and sinking at Pom Pong Island. Taken by small fishing boat (later the famous commando raid boat the 'Krait' ) by Capt. Bill Reynolds to Sumatra. Nursed the wounded on the escape line to Padang, but was too late to be evacuated herself. Taken prisoner and interned in Bankinang Camp, north of Padang. Reunited with Ken post war.

**NIBLOCK, Trish.****Evacuated on the "Orion"**

52/2, Spylan Bank Road, Edinburgh EH13 0JE, Scotland.

Tel: 0131 441 4481 E-mail: [trish\\_niblock@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:trish_niblock@yahoo.co.uk)

Niece of Douglas **MORTLOCK**, Major in the Volunteers – not known where a POW – and Kathleen **MORTLOCK**, a civilian internee in Lungwha, Shanghai.

**TRENCH, Susan.****Evacuated on the "Empress of Japan"**

Bassetts, Coggins Mill Lane, Mayfield, East Sussex TN20

Tel: 01435 837183 E-mail: [susantrench@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:susantrench@yahoo.co.uk)

Daughter of Lewis **DAY** – Surgeon and Civilian Internee in Changi and Sime Road.

My father worked for the Colonial Service in Singapore and was an ear, nose and throat surgeon.

Self: I was born in Johore Bahru and my mother and I (aged about 3 weeks) were driven down to the docks, which were on fire, by my father in an ambulance, and put on the "Empress of Japan". We only made it to South Africa as my mother had a septic caesarean and was confined to the hold of the ship and the Captain refused to take her any further as she may have died. We spent the next 4 years in South Africa & returned to England when my father was finally released after 3 ½ years internment by the Japanese. At 6ft. 2ins. He only weighed 6 ½ stone and was never a well man again. I was 4 years old when I first saw my father.

**AMENDMENTS to the 2008-2009 LIST of MEMBERS.**

**Please note and add the following information to the current list of members.**

**DUNNETT, June (nee Grindlay)****Evacuated on the "Orion"**

10, Kirkton Park, Daviot, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire AB51 0HW, Scotland.

Tel: 01467 671284 E-mail: [june.dunnett@tesco.net](mailto:june.dunnett@tesco.net)

Daughter of Walter S. **GRINDLAY**, mining engineer with Pacific Tin Corporation from 1926 to 1949. Civilian Internee in Changi Jail and Sime Road.

Self: Born in Kuala Lumpur in 1938 and evacuated with my mother to Sydney via Singapore in January 1942 on the "Orion".