

APA KHABAR

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A WARM WELCOME TO MVG AUSTRALIA

The MVG is delighted to announce the setting up of closer links with our Australian Members by forming a sub-group of MVG called MVG Australia. With a growing membership, and the current difficulties of sending subscriptions in sterling, **John Pollock** has kindly agreed to act as Group Secretary, to deal with these matters. As well as collecting together the yearly subs, **John** is overseeing MVG plans to present a Memorial to the Malaysian Volunteers in Australia, which we hope will be placed in

the Australian War Memorial (AWM) in Canberra. It was also felt that members may wish to organize their own meetings or get-togethers in Perth, for example, where several members live. We wish MVG Australia every success, and a growing membership.

Certain changes are needed for MVG Australia to become recognized. Under the Australian Companies Act, as a non-profit making organization, it needs to become "Incorporated with a Constitution". It will still come under the umbrella of the MVG in the UK, but this situation has prompted the MVG to consider putting the Group on a more formal footing. Therefore, we propose to set up a UK Committee, formulate a Constitution and seek Charitable Status during the coming year. Further details will be given in the next newsletter.

The MVG would also like to express its heartfelt sorrow at the devastating loss of life and property during the February bush fires which raged across parts of Victoria, coming dangerously close to the homes of 3 of our members, **Susan Rutherford**, **John Corner** and **John Pollock**. These fires, together with drought in other parts of Australia and floods in Queensland, have presented Australia with a very difficult start to 2009. **John Corner** recorded the following entry in his diary on Saturday 7th February when the heat and tragic loss of life and property were at their highest, "Melbourne hit 46.4 C – the highest ever recorded..... There are bush fires all around the city and homes are being lost.....the biggest (fire front) is to the east of us around Bunyip in Gippsland. The front is 22Ks".

And on Sunday 8th February, he wrote, ".....The Fire Fighters are magnificent, all Volunteers. Many continued at "their" fire even knowing their own home was lost. It's all very humbling and it's not over by a long way".

On a lighter note, we also welcome "The Schoolship Kids", many of whom now live in Australia. These were the children whose parents lived and worked in Singapore and Malaya in pre- and post-war days, and who travelled to and from Australia for schooling. They returned home to Singapore and beyond for the long Christmas holidays, sailing on the Blue Funnel Ships, the "Centaur" (pre-war), the "Gorgon" and the "Charon" (pre-and post-war) from Fremantle. 7 known MVG members belong to this unique band of school children – **Jen Howe**, **Merilyn Hywel-Jones**, and new members **Elizabeth Bunney**, **Liz Higgins**, **Trish Niblock** and **Jan Goddard**. Maybe there are more of you out there? A book about these children (and what they got up to on board!) is mentioned under the "Book Section" on P.23.

As well as a long list of other linked organizations on the MVG website, two others have been added. Firstly, the EAC (East Asiatic Company) Club in Denmark, through **Ole Mohrsen** (a friend of **George Hess'e** – see A.K. 17 P.11), several of whose members were in Malaya and Singapore at the time of the Japanese occupation. More recently, through new member **Elizabeth Moggie**, we have links with Badan Warisan Malaysia (The Heritage of Malaysia Trust). **Liz** is one of the Honorary Council Members, and her article on the Changi Presentation last September was printed in their Jan/Feb newsletter '*buletin warisan*'. Her article is included as a separate section in this newsletter, and we thank BWM for graciously allowing the MVG to reproduce it.

Apart from the Malacca and St Andrew's Church WW 1 and 2 War Memorials, several other Volunteer Memorials have been suggested as worthy of and in need of restoration in Malaysia. The MVG needs to decide on which one to pursue first and we are hoping that we can be advised by the Badan Warisan Malaysia, through **Andrew Hwang** and **Liz Moggie**, both of whom are members. It is planned to present the suggested projects in the July newsletter.

Finally, a happy event took place in the UK on 7th February 2009. **Ann** and **John Evans** celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary. They were married at St. Mary's Church, Kuala Lumpur in 1959. We send them our warmest congratulations.

PRESENTATION OF VOLUNTEER BADGES TO THE FEPOW MEMORIAL BUILDING – NMA on Monday 4th May 2009

Arrangements have been made with the Arboretum and Carol Cooper for the MVG to present the SSVF and FMSVF badges to the FEPOW Building. There will be a short ceremony in the building beside the beam where other regimental badges are on display, during which Keith Andrews has kindly agreed to accept the MVG badges on behalf of the FEPOW Memorial Building. Bearing in mind that it is a Bank Holiday, and there may be several visitors in the Building, we may have to amend the following plans to accommodate other people.

The arrangements for the day are as follows:-

1. 12pm – meet at the MVG Memorial Garden
2. Proceed to the FEPOW Building and collect under the beam.

3. Jonathan will make a short handover speech and present the Badges to Keith.
4. Tour of the upstairs Archival Section of the Building.
5. 1pm – picnic lunch outside, weather permitting, or under the cloisters.

At present there are very few members wishing to attend this ceremony, and we have not proceeded with booking a room for a workshop/secondhand book stall.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO COME, PLEASE LET JONATHAN OR ROSEMARY KNOW ASAP. It is always good to meet members and have a chance to visit the MVG Garden. The Arboretum is a very interesting place to visit as well, with the new Armed Forces Memorial and many other plots to see. A new guide to the Arboretum will be out in April, and a land train is in operation to take visitors round the 150 acre site.

On a disappointing note, the MVG request for an information board in the FEPOW Memorial Building about the role of the Malayan Volunteers, in the Malayan Campaign and as POWs, has been refused by both the COFEPOW Trustees and the former Chief Executive of the NMA, Sir Henry Every, who, in 2005, was given the role of overseeing the construction of the FEPOW Building. His reply to Carol Cooper was succinct:-

"The principles we have tried to follow are: Not to CLUTTER with too much stuff. Not to open flood gates with others also wanting representation. The Malayan Volunteer Force sounds as though it comes into this category".

[Editor; Perhaps some of you may wish to comment on this statement.]

MVG ANNUAL LUNCH and REUNION – Saturday 3rd October 2009 at the RAF Club, Piccadilly.

Hugh Chaplin reports that, to date, he has received bookings for over 40 members and friends (including provisional ones) and therefore he has chosen the Ballroom in the RAF Club as the venue for the Lunch. This has its own bar, and will give plenty of room for circulation before and after the meal. There are options for the seating arrangements, either at round tables of 10, or at long tables with 10 each side.

The RAF Club has agreed the cost of the lunch at £26.50 per person for 2 courses including coffee and petit fours afterwards. Those who would prefer a vegetarian option are reminded that they should let Hugh know when booking. [See 'Diary Dates' for booking details – last page]

The MVG has arranged to have an outside speaker this year, and we are very fortunate to have the services of Piers Storie-Pugh, whom some of you may have met on Royal British Legion Pilgrimages. He will be speaking on Malaya and the Cemeteries there.

For those of you who do not know him, his credentials are very impressive. He has had two careers in his life, the Army and the War Graves. He commanded the 6th/7th Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and his last military appointment was Deputy Commander 2nd Infantry Brigade in the rank of Full Colonel.

He established Remembrance Travel as an arm of the Royal British Legion and was Head of it until December 2008. He has made 5 films, of which 3 have been about the war in Burma, which is his specialist subject.

He was appointed an MBE in 1988, was ADC to HM The Queen from 1996-2000 and is currently a Deputy Lieutenant for Greater London.

We are delighted that Piers has agreed to speak and I know it will be a very interesting and informative talk. We look forward to welcoming him to the Annual Lunch.

1941: AN OLD BOY IN THE F.M.S. VOLUNTEERS – by Hussein bin Hassan (Pahang). Malay College Magazine 1950.

Time seems to fly. Five years have passed since the capitulation of the Japanese. It is just like a dream when I look back into as far back as 1st December, 1941. I held the rank of Lance Sergeant in "C" Company 4th (Pahang) Battalion F.M.S. Volunteer Force. I was attached with the District Office, Bentong, and on the 2nd December, the members of the F.M.S.V.F. at Bentong were ordered to be mobilized and move to Raub, the Headquarters of the 4th (Pahang) Battalion. As soon as we received the Order, we began to ask one another what was going to happen. I openly told my friends that the Japanese had made preparations to invade Malaya.

As the orders were issued so suddenly we had no time to send our families to our kampongs but left them behind and told them to go home by themselves.

When all units assembled at Raub and were allotted accommodation, we were given steel helmets, gas masks and field dressings. To our surprise during the first three days we were made to fill the magazine of Lewis guns and belts of machine guns with live ammunition, and to prime grenades. These made our hearts beat beyond normal, not from fear but from thinking what would happen if the Japanese were to overrun Malaya. After three days of hard work, the Pahang Battalions began to leave the Camp by units to go to the north i.e. Pahang and Kelantan boundary. The "C" Company of the Battalion i.e. my Company, was detailed as a Reserve Company and remained at Raub with the Administrative Unit. On the 7th December, 1941 at about midnight, the Company was told to stand by and be ready to move to a certain destination. At 3a.m. I heard the news from the Company Commander that the Japanese Army had landed in Kelantan, had wiped out the beach defence at Sabak, and were advancing to capture the Pengkalan Chempa Aerodrome. When I related this news to some of the N.C.O.s and men, I was surprised to see that none of them showed signs of fear but all of them said,

“Baharu-lah kita merasa berjuang di-medan Peperangan, Mati di-tangan Tuhan”. (Now we feel that we are at war, we put our trust in God)

At 7a.m. “C” Company was ordered to proceed to Jerantut to be attached to a certain Brigade of the Indian Army. Our first day here was to dig trenches and construct obstacles. During our stay here we were detailed to guard the Jerantut Ferry. After four days I had a severe attack of malaria and was admitted into the hospital there and later sent to Kuala Lipis Military Hospital. Three days later all sick soldiers including myself were sent down to Singapore. In Singapore we were admitted into the Singapore General Hospital, where we were treated as War casualties. After three weeks in Singapore we were instructed to rejoin our Unit somewhere in Kelantan. At that time it was known as “Mac Force” and was commanded by Lieut. Col. J.O. MacKeller. On our way our train was raided by the Japanese Air Force at Padang Tungku, where we began to suffer the horror of war. For the first time in my life I heard bombs explode, about 100 yards away from my shelter. The Japanese had caused damage to one of the Coaches and it had to be left behind. We proceeded to Kelantan in the afternoon and met ‘Mac Force’ at a place called Bertam. ‘Mac Force’ consisted of remnants of the Indian Army who had fought at Kota Bahru, ‘W’ Company of the Malaya Regiment, and the 4th (Pahang) Battalion. It is worthwhile to mention that many old Collegians were in the Force and most of them still remembered the words of Mr. C. Bazell, the former headmaster of the College, “Belum Mati Lagi-mati sekali sahaja”. Major D.B.J.Ambler, also of the former staff of the MCKK was also attached to the Force. He used to smile and talk to us whenever he met us in Kelantan. He had had his head clean-shaven ‘berchukor’. I believed he was just about to adopt the Japanese Officers’ hairstyles.

During our moves in Ulu Kelantan we had no opportunity of meeting the Jap fighting forces, but managed to see some Spies captured by the Indian Army. We were moved from one place to another and at one time we marched on the railway lines towards the South for a distance of 12 miles, as the train which was supposed to fetch us, collided with the advanced party train. As we retreated southward, all bridges were blown up by a special demolition party. The biggest bridge we demolished was the Clementi Bridge across the Sungai Bertam and Bukit Betong Bridge. We camped at Bukit Betong for a night, the next evening we proceeded to the South and the next morning we found ourselves at Bahau and encamped at Ladang Gadis Labourers Lines. When we were at Bahau, we learnt that the Japanese had made rapid advances, and also we heard of the grim battle at Slim River. Our main task here was to destroy all bicycles, as the Japanese were making use of all available bicycles for their rapid advances. After a few days at Bahau, we were given the option to go home or to follow the Force right up to the South i.e. to Singapore. This option was given, I understand, because the morale of the Force was deteriorating. We were assured by certain officers that a counter-attack would be made on the enemy, so we decided to go home first. On about 13th January, 1942, we set out on foot to go back to our Kampongs. On the way we met some of the Japanese Army. They wanted to arrest us, but through false explanations we were released and allowed to proceed on our way.

After the fall of Singapore and during the days of Japanese occupation, the taste of tapioca is a sorrowful memory. I was longing for the victory of the British. The time did come when the Union Jack was hoisted, signalling the end of a barbarous rule, and once again I met my former master and officer, Lt. Col. Ambler, who came back to Malaya with the re-occupation Forces. In conclusion, I would like to remind my readers that I am writing this short account in order to remind them of the usefulness of the Malay College Cadet Corps, in which I began to learn about Military training, and which lead me later to the F.M.S. Volunteer Force and to the war front.

THE KING’S MESSENGER – by AUDREY McCORMICK

The above is the title of pre-war King’s School Magazine, Singapore..... The magazine carried no address, but I believe I found the School building, in Singapore, on a recent visit – and thrilled to bits to find it still in existence, even with an unfriendly red postbox on its closed gates, announcing no callers desired! The house is at No: 1, Goodwood Hill, and I have handed the magazine in to the Singapore Archive. A number of MVG members will figure amongst its photographs – particularly the Midsummer Night’s Dream production of Shakespeare, in full costume, in the garden, organized by the very popular art teacher Mrs. Dorothy Squires from Shanghai – whose family are still represented in Singapore as architects today (which profession was her husband George’s: they had three teenage daughters).

The school existed for two years. Its staff list was composed of graduates. It was tough and competitive, (I found it a bit of a strain, in fact, as one of the mistresses was unfortunately both sarcastic and ambitious...but eased off later). It was probably intended to offer an alternative to that awful parting for Far East families, who were leaving young children in boarding schools in the UK, for the sake of “a good education”.....even although Australian schools by then, had become competitive in this field, and children there could then get home to Singapore for holidays (although how half didn’t drown from their antics around the exterior portions of the ship concerned – usually the “Gorgon” I believe – beats me – and the crew, too, apparently).

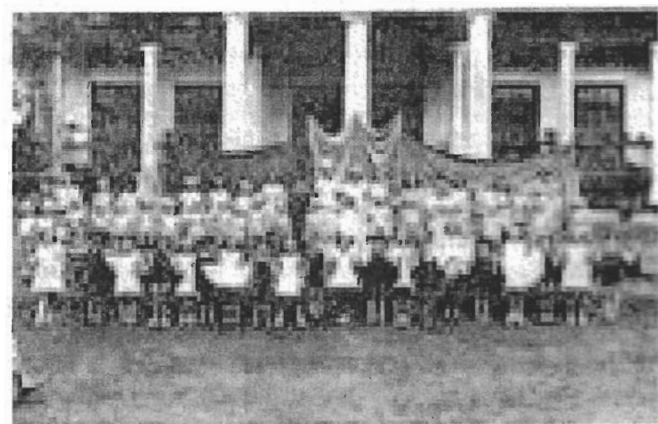
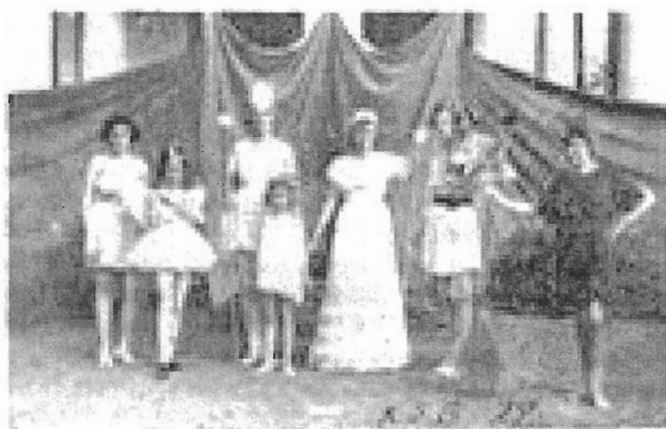
I recall that at nine years, I was getting French, Geometry, Trigonometry and Algebra amongst the usual other subjects – and in competitive mode. We were awarded star ratings each week I recall – and crowded round to see what we got each time. The Principal was a Dr. D. Honeywell, a pleasant man, and although there is no formal notification that I know of – I understand he did escape successfully. Whether he was married (to one of the senior women teachers) – who were all called “Miss....” – no-one I know is quite certain.

It was by dint of driving around the area the chauffeur suggested, which still contained old mansion houses, that

we found Goodwood Hill, and went in to look at every house frontage....No:1 being the last. And just when I had given up hope – there it was, the last one we looked at, with the same slim pillars, long frontage, and a short steep slope of lawn in front of it (with the entry porch behind it), leading to a larger flat surface (where we started the gardening plots for our war contribution). The unfriendly postbox, alas, gave us no further information than its “keep out” signal. Trees too, now lined the drive in....hence the poor quality of the photograph grabbed from the entrance, so unwillingly given. The house still looks a little small in my memory of it! But then I was still a bit small too, I suppose. It was the only house there where its top verandah layout looked so similar (also unusual). I did wonder if it could have suffered some partial damage in the fighting, to be a little smaller....it fronted down onto Scott Road. I know my brother said he had found my old school “in Scott Road”...or “from” Scott Road when he was based in Singapore with the RAF during the Malayan guerilla war.....but its address was not Scott Road as such, but nearby. It did not say on the gate who was now responsible for it.....there may be some former pupils (and MVG members) who may be better able to recall it. But it certainly hit me as being the place.

[Editor: Dr Honeywell was evacuated on the “Kuala” but survived and was taken to Sumatra. He was evacuated from Padang, Sumatra on 1st March 1942 on HMAS “Hobart”, arriving in Colombo on 5th March 1942.

Information taken from a letter written to the Naval Board, Melbourne by the Captain of HMAS “Hobart”]



Malaya War Nurses' Dinner

YOUR SONS ARE NOT ENGLISH

By Becca Kenneison

Sometimes you know that other people just don't see the world the way that you do. I had this feeling very strongly one morning in my mid-teens, back in the midwinter of the Cold War: the early 1980s. A local CND activist had just finished comprehensively terrifying several hundred teenagers in a school assembly. He'd explained about Mutually Assured Destruction, and he made it real for us by reference to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to the human suffering and the human cost. Everyone around me was suitably horrified, and I sat there cross-legged on the hard floor thinking, "But if they hadn't dropped those bombs, my grandmother might have died...and so might my cousin...and two more of my uncles...and who knows who else?" I had grown up on stories of what the Japanese forces had done. They had sunk a ship full of refugees and killed my grandfather, executed my uncle because he had had the temerity to escape, and starved my eldest cousin and worked him to death.

I wanted to explain this to everyone around me, to explain that there just might have been a justification for Fat Boy and Little Boy, beyond sheer spite and (as the CND man had implied) experimentation, but it was made pretty clear to me that I was being a weirdo and harking back into long-gone history, and so I shut up. And they all got CND badges, and I didn't. I *couldn't*, because the case that had been presented to us hadn't been intellectually honest: I was too angry to take a step back and consider the argument on its own merits. The CND man's version hadn't covered both sides of the story, and I am sure there are a lot of people around now who know one side of those events, and not the other: I didn't get much of World War 11 in school, and not a dickie-bird about the Malayan Campaign and the Fall of Singapore. It's human nature not to dwell on our own defeats. I found out about it mostly on my own.

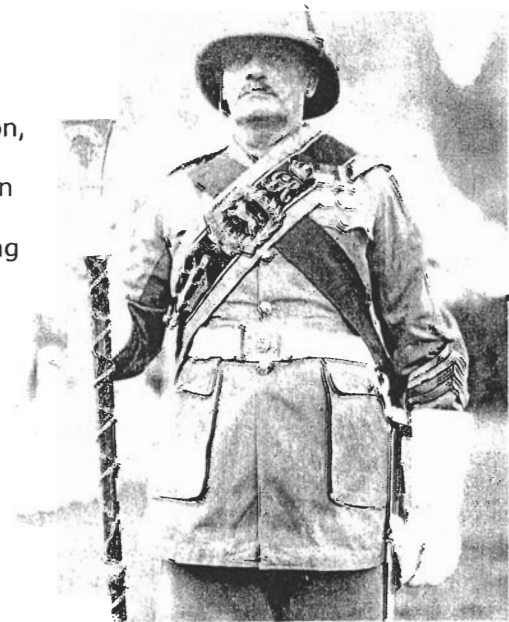
My mother's English family was plain sailing. My father, and my father's background, were quite a different matter. I found my father very difficult to deal with, but it wasn't until he died that I began to wonder if I could work out why. I took what he told me, and followed up leads and clues and contacts, and gradually, with the help of a lot of people, pieced together what happened to his family before and during and after the war.

Almost the first thing I found when I started looking was that my Grandmother wasn't, as my father had always claimed, a European, but a Ceylon Burgher. In other words, my father's family wasn't entirely white. That's important, it has a bearing, even though his father Ernest Kenneison, was an Englishman, a squaddie who went 'out East' with the army and made his life there. His first wife was an Anglo-Indian whom he married in Madras, and they had several sons, three of whom (Donald, Bonnie and Charlie) survived to adulthood. From India, Ernest went to Malaya, settling in Selangor, where he became the MD of his own company at Batu Caves, a quarrying, cement and building firm: in great hope for the future, he called it Kenneison Bros. Having been a band-sergeant in the army, he was heavily involved in the development of the band of the FMSVF, but it doesn't seem to have distracted him from his business, which prospered and grew, with branches in Segamat, Cameron Highlands and Tanjong Rambutan.

After the death of his first wife, he married my grandmother, a light-skinned Ceylon Burgher named Violet Whatmore in 1925. They had two more sons: my father, who was always Reggie to his family, and his younger brother Maurice. By the time these two boys were born, their eldest half-brother, Donald, was already married and in production: this is how I came to have cousins born forty years before me. Donald's eldest child, Ronnie, was born a few months before my father in 1926, whereas my father was forty before I appeared on the scene.

In 1938, my father and his brother, both light-skinned, brown-haired and blue-eyed, were sent away to school in England: my grandmother was apparently determined that they were going to be proper English gentlemen, with a proper English education.

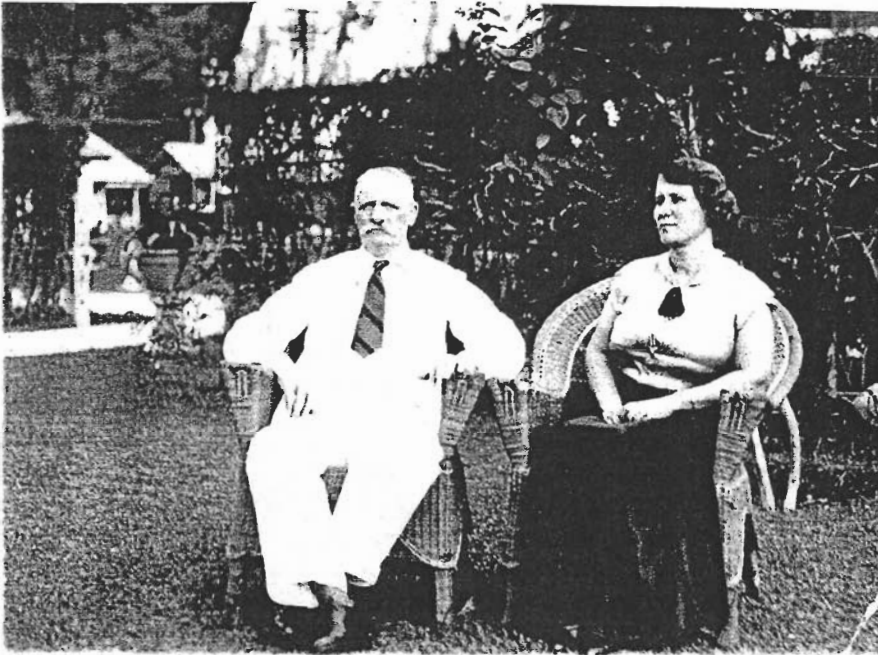
Perhaps at this point, I should summarize the family: even members of it can get confused by the way in which the births of cousins span decades. Violet came from a large family, and two of her older sisters, Freda and Ethel, were also in Malaya. Freda and her husband, Harris Frank, also lived in the Kenneison Bros compound at Batu Caves. They had a family of ten, the eldest of whom, Phyllis (born c1905), was married to Bertie Mayo, the company secretary - so they lived at the compound too, with their own children. Ethel and her husband Max Attwell lived in Kuala Lumpur with their four daughters. By the late 1930s, all three of Ernest's sons with his first wife had married: Donald, a father of four, had already divorced; Bonnie had



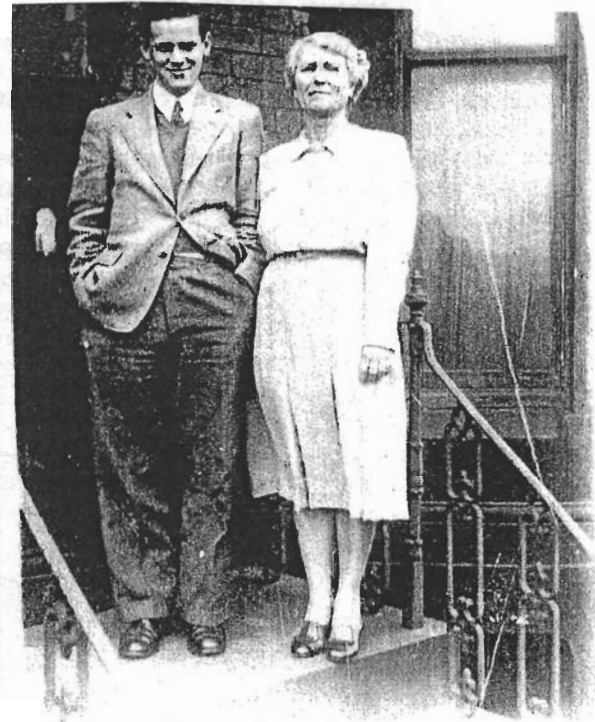
1877 - 1942

Ernest James Kenneison

married his step-mother's niece, Esme Frank, one of Freda and Harris's daughters. To complete the picture, not long after Reggie and Maurice went to the UK, Violet's younger brother Patrick and his wife Tilly came to live at Batu Caves as well. In those last few years before the storm of World War 11 descended on the Far East, Phyllis Mayo had her seventh child; her sister Esme Kenneison had her fourth. Thus when the storm did come, the oldest member of the family at Batu Caves was Ernest, who was sixty-four; the youngest was Esme's baby girl, born late in 1941.



1930s
Ernest and Violet at Batu Caves



Reggie + Violet, Leeds, c1950

As we all know, in December 1941 the Japanese invaded at Kota Bahru and started their conquest of Malaya. Shortly before Christmas, my grandfather received a phone call. He was told that British civilians were being advised to leave KL; there were two trains leaving that evening, one at 6p.m. and one at 8p.m. and that he and his wife had places on the 8p.m. train. 'Be on it', he was told, 'or we will not be responsible for getting you out of Malaya'. My grandfather said, 'But what about my sons?'

The voice at the other end of the phone had clear ideas about this. 'Your sons are not English,' it said. 'You must tell no-one what is happening, we can't have panic. Leave instructions for scorched earth to be carried out, and get that train.'

Ex-soldier my grandfather might have been, but he wasn't one for the yet-to-be-invented Nuremburg Defence. He went from house to house, warning his insufficiently-British relations to make their escape. Many of them had good reason to be afraid of the Japanese: Violet and her siblings had had a British father; some of the men were in the Volunteers. My grandfather left the keys with Bertie Mayo and the younger men of the family stayed back to carry out scorched earth – they used dynamite from the quarry; in company cars and lorries the women and children headed south, first to Segamat, where the men joined them, and on to Johore Bahru. Ethel and her family, however, opted to an estate bungalow outside KL. I'm not clear when my grandparents separated from the main party: according to my father, his brother Bonnie drove them south. Charlie wasn't with them, as he was a W/O with the RAF, and **nor was young Ronnie**, who had upped his age from fifteen and signed on with the Singapore Fortress **Signals**. **Somewhere** along the route, Patrick and his wife decided they didn't want to continue to Singapore: **with a number of** other Eurasians, they sought safety in the estate bungalow at Ulu Tiram, ten miles or so **outside Johore Bahru**. Once in Johore Bahru, the remaining members of the party wondered where to stay. **They ended up camping** out for a week or two in the Sultan's abandoned palace, the one later used by Yamashita **to oversee the** invasion of Singapore. They crossed the causeway into the battered city in the middle of **January**. White Britons could obtain free passage: the non-white members of this family had to **buy their own**. Phyllis's eldest daughter, Win, remembers the date they left: it was the 28th January, the day before her fifteenth birthday. Her birthday itself they spent under bombardment as their ship made its way north up the Malayan coast, but they reached safety.

Everyone who had stayed in the Sultan's palace made it to either Ceylon or India.

No-one is sure why my grandparents, and Ronnie's sister Betty*, left Singapore so late: they sailed on 12th February, on the H.M.S. Giang Bee. She was sunk the following day: Betty lost her grip on my grandfather's

hand in the crush and panic on the deck, and she and my grandmother were both thrown into the sea and pulled into the same lifeboat. They came ashore on Sumatra and were interned for the rest of the war. It wasn't until August 1943 that my grandmother was able to write to her two sons at school in England to let them know that she was alive but that their father was probably dead.

Charlie was taken on Java, along with many members of the RAF. Late in April, four men, in two groups, escaped. One pair claimed they were just going into the nearest town to buy some beer; Charlie and his mate could hardly claim the same, as they had with them some food, a compass and some bedding. All four men were recaptured in short order and brought back to the camp at Malang. They were beaten in front of all the other POWs and, a few days later, they were put in front of a firing squad, again in full view of the other inmates of the camp. Even after two rounds of firing, it was clear that not all the condemned men were dead, and the gunso went from man to fallen man and shot each one in the head.

Fifteen-year-old Ronnie had been taken prisoner at the Fall of Singapore; he was sent with E Force to Borneo, where he was in the party of 149 men sent to Labuan to build an airfield: there were no survivors, so we have only the Japanese records for his date and cause of death.

Once the war was over, most members of the family made their way back to KL, though my grandmother came to the UK to be with her sons. Those who returned to Batu Caves found their houses looted and empty; they rolled up their sleeves and started to put Kenneison Brothers back on its feet, and their lives back together.

Geoffrey Frank, one of Freda's sons, had joined Force 136 in Ceylon. He came back to Malaya a captain, but a few months after the Japanese surrender he was killed when a truck reversed over him. His death seems all the more bitter when you consider what the family had already endured – and what came next.

Although Ethel and her family had been found safe and well, having survived the Japanese occupation, there was no sign of Patrick and his wife Tilly. The family eventually found out what had happened at Ulu Tiram: more than sixty people, mostly Eurasians, had been massacred by the Japanese. They had been buried by the labourers on the estate; the mandore reported the massacre once the war was over. Freda attended the exhumation of the dead, to identify her younger brother and her sister-in-law. **(See following report)**

I know the war wouldn't have been as bad for my father's family if they hadn't been Eurasian: there wouldn't have been so many members of the family in Malaya, and they wouldn't have been left to fend for themselves. My father's extended family lost six people as a consequence of the war, and not one of them was killed in combat: five of them died in what can only be called atrocities. By all accounts, my father was never an easy customer and, even though he was out of the thick of it, the events of the war did him no good at all. He lived out his life riven by a combination of survivor guilt and denial (of who he was, and of why the things that happened had been visited on his family in particular). He was the angriest person I have ever known. My relationship with him lurched from barely adequate to truly awful, and all those atrocities, and the casual racism that left his family in the firing line, that expected them to serve the Empire but not be saved by it, are at least partly to blame.

Having put this jigsaw together, where do I go next? What do I do with what I know? I understand things so much better now: I make more sense: I know how I came to be here. I understand that my relationship with my father was rotten, but that wasn't my fault – and perhaps it wasn't entirely his, either. I have my relatives back: the only pity of it is that most of them are in Australia.

Even so, I find my family background hard to explain to people who know nothing about the Far East: massacres just don't fit easily into day-to-day conversation, least of all when they are part of such an under-exposed episode of history. Most people have no idea, no clue, of the depth and extent of what went on. If they know about Changi and the Burma Railway and saw *Tenko* on the telly, they're doing well. They won't have heard of the *Sook Ching* or the *romusha*, and they could watch events in Bosnia on the evening news without thinking, that could happen to me. I had at least one dust-up with a colleague at work about Bosnia, because when I saw the half-starved men behind the wire I didn't see Auschwitz: I saw my cousin as a FEPOW: it was *personal*. I explained something of this to her, and went home fuming at her ignorance and complacency and wrote a fifty quid cheque to the Red Cross.

And that perhaps is the point of all this: I look at my children and feel a huge sense of responsibility, not just to ~~them~~, but to the family's war dead. If we let them be forgotten, we ensure that they died for nothing: we ~~make~~ it quite certain that nothing will be learned from what happened to them. Bosnias happen over and over again: more unmarked mass graves, more nightmares, more military spokesmen who have the nerve to ask us to keep massacres 'in perspective'. If you can see yourself on the side of the massacred, or amongst the survivors trying to find their own amongst the exhumed, your perspective will be unshakeable: you will wonder what the hell is wrong with the world that this sort of thing just goes on happening again and again and again. I want my kids to understand this: the massacred aren't just numbers, but people whose lives mattered just as much to them as our lives matter to us, that they didn't come out of a void but from families and communities who will be haunted by their deaths for decades into the future. I want them to know too that survivors – and inheritors – have a choice, to anger and revenge, or to forgiveness and some

sort of resolution. Forgiveness, as I know from my own dealings with individual Japanese, is easier said than done. The ones I've known have always been years too young to have been implicated, and have never had good enough English for me to ask them what they know, how they feel, if they think their nation has faced up to its past. And I, needless to say, have no intention of learning any more Japanese than I know already, from reading God knows how many memoirs of the camps. Yazume? Yazume nei.

I'm still putting the details of the story together, and one day I'll write up everything I know about my father's family's war, complete with references and footnotes, so that when my children are older they can read it, refer to the evidence if they care to, and know why their mother thinks the way she does about matters of race, and warfare. I want them to be aware of the forces that shaped my side of the family, and of the particular place of the Burghers and Eurasians in pre-war Malaya: the history of minorities is often instructive, if somewhat depressing.

As much as anything else, I want them to know what my grandfather did, to appreciate his independence of thought, his moral and physical courage, and to accept that if they want to have pride in being descended from such a man, then they need to act accordingly.

(With thanks to various of my relations (Win Devlin, Peter Mayo, and Ray Kenneison), a relation-of-relations (George Hess'e), Len Abbs of COFEPOW, Rosemary Fell and Jonathan Moffatt of MVG)

[* Betty (Edith) Kenneison's obituary was recorded in the 17th Edition of A.K. on P.14]

JOHORE MASSACRE: EYE-WITNESS STORY of the MASS EXHUMATION **Report from the Sunday Times (Singapore) 13/01/1946 [Sent by the late Ian Aviet]**

After lying four years in their jungle graves, the remains of 12 Eurasian families massacred by the Japanese in Ulu Tiram Estate, Johore, are soon to be exhumed and given proper burial, probably in Johore Bahru town. Meanwhile, investigations are being pursued regarding this and other Japanese crimes against civilians in Johore during the weeks following the Japanese entry into the State, with the possibility that some, at least, of those may be brought to trial.

In all, more than 60 people are in the Ulu Tiram Estate graves, including members of such well known Johore families such as Bartletts, Van Schoonbeck, Lappen, Whatmore*, Aeria, Neubronner, Hannay, Marshall, and Lowe. The victims ranged from 60-year old Mrs. Lappen to Mrs. Ethel Marshall's baby.

When the final burial services are performed, special provisions will have to be made for Hindu, Buddhist, and Mohammedan rites, for the Eurasians were killed with their Chinese amahs, Javanese gardeners and several Indian friends who had visited their houses only the previous evening to stay overnight.

A gang of labourers was detailed recently, when the estate resumed operations, to clean up the blukar hidden graves. In charge was an Indian mandore, the only remaining labourer on the estate, who, in March 1942, found and buried the bayoneted men, women and children.

SOUGHT SHELTER

Krishna Nair, the 47-year old mandore vividly remembers the circumstances. The Eurasians had come to the estate to find shelter from the fighting they expected to take place in Johore Bahru.

They brought large quantities of goods and food and lived in the bungalow. The first Japanese who arrived to occupy the estate seemed to be on very friendly terms with the Eurasians but on the evening prior to the tragedy, March 13th 1942, two Japanese M.Ps went to the bungalow and later left with two members of the small community, since believed to be Cecil Hannay and G. Lowe.

Nair received first information of the tragedy next morning when Japanese came to the estate and ordered a dozen labourers to follow them.

"We were taken to a bungalow," Nair told a Sunday Times representative, "and there we saw Japanese sitting around. They were cleaning their bayonets and swords with pieces of clothing. The whole house was strewn about with clothing and boxes. Some of the Japs were drinking whisky and there were several broken bottles around. All the time we were wondering what had happened to the people of the house. We were certain that they had been killed. We could see that the Japs were wiping blood from their knives, but we could not see the bodies anywhere. After about half an hour one of the men with me told me quietly, 'Look carefully behind you. There is a boy walking near those trees. I think he is one of those from the house.' I turned and saw one Eurasian boy, hiding and walking, bending and one hand pressed to the stomach. Later, after we had carried boxes and things for the Japanese which they looted from the house, we looked for this boy. We found him lying near a ditch. He had knife wounds in his stomach and back. He could not talk. We gave him some water. After drinking, he died. We buried him on the spot. I did not come out of my house for two days. On the third day, I went out to search for the bungalow people. I was puzzled as to where the Japanese had left them. I found the spot after seeing some blood-stained clothes. I called some friends to help me bury the bodies. While we were doing the work we found one Javanese boy still alive. He had terrible wounds and died in a few minutes. Among the dead, I also found one of my own relations, a young boy who lived on a different part of the estate and was taken by the Japanese, perhaps, to show the way to the bungalow. Not one of the bodies had bullet wounds. All had been either beheaded or had limbs cut off or had been bayoneted. [*Whatmore - Patrick & Tilly, Becca Kenneison's ½ great uncle & aunt]

THE LANDONS and the BLUE of ELAINE

By John Corner

After my father died a suitcase was found in his study on which was a note that it be given to me 'wherever he may be'. A cousin found it and made sure it reached me; the story of this is told in my book that I have almost finished and hope to publish in due course, '**I am part of all that I have met**'.

The content of that suitcase inspired me to research his life and to write about it. I call it 'Pandora's Box'. Here is the story of the Landons, from the Corner side, and which complements that written by David Wingate for a recent issue of Apa Khabar. [Ed: A.K.16 Oct 2008]
My parents and the Landons were friends in those pre-war days.

Jim and Penelope Landon; the Singapore Story.

In 'Pandora's Box' there was a picture of Prof. Corner in the Malayan jungle with a European lady by a dug-out canoe. The date will be between 1930 and late 1938; likely 1936. I sent it to many who are helping me, such as the Worthington daughters, Dr. E. Barton Worthington being perhaps my father's closest and lifelong friend, David Hill, son of Dr. Robin Hill, and others, but no-one recognised her.

I moved on, but couldn't get that picture out of my mind.

Later in my researches, I came across a letter, sent to me by Wendy How, my father's last housekeeper, written to my father by Thyra Godber, on the 16th November 1995, just 10 months before he died. She is telling my father that she had just finished reading '*The Marquis*' which was lent to her by Llewellyn Davidson, who "*was with the R.R.I. in KL, and whom you may remember*", she says.

Thyra goes on to say, "*I am the elder daughter of Penelope and Jim Landon. You and your wife [my mother] gave them refuge in your house in Singapore [30, Cluny Road] after they had had to leave Cluny Estate, Slim River. I believe my mother had helped you in a small way with your book "Wayside Trees of Malaya". In one of the illustrations she is seen standing beside a jungle giant [tree].*

I am writing to say how much I enjoyed reading 'The Marquis'. It gave me a new insight into those years of occupation, where you were able to play a positive role in preserving so much of value to us all.

Thank you for having recorded those years and also the friendships you made. My father died in 1947, following an operation. I think he never reconciled himself with my mother's death, following the years of internment when he lived in hopes. Did you meet him again in Singapore, after his – and your – release?"

I have no record of a reply.

In other papers I have, father records that in 1929 he sailed for Singapore from Birkenhead on the S.S. Antenor. As is usual, on board ship, places at the dining table were pre-determined and he found himself sitting next to a lady called Mrs. Penelope Landon, who was returning from leave in England to join her husband in Malaya. She clearly loved Malaya, as did father, and a friendship formed. She called him Galahad and he called her his Elaine. This kind of 'naming' of a friend was typical of the time.

On reading the documents, I see that father visited the Landons later on at their estate, Cluny Estate, in Perak, on the Slim River. He describes Penelope as '*petite and fair*'.

When the Japanese landed in Malaya, and quickly swept down the Malay Peninsula, Rubber Planters, Europeans and all on the side of the Allies had to leave their properties and jobs and make their way south and eventually to Singapore with only what they could carry. The Landons came to our house in Cluny Road, Singapore, and in '*The Marquis. A tale of Syonan-to*', my father's story of the Occupation years published in 1981, he writes that there were two other Planters staying but he mentioned no names.

In correspondence with David Wingate, the grandson of Penelope, he tells me that the only references he can find, in some of Penelope's old letters, are of Mike Ash, Dr. Reid and Susie Napper, "*who all dropped by the afternoon and evening of February 8th 1942 and together with Jim and Pen and John Godber they had a good old party but everyone had to get home by 9pm due to the curfew*". [Jonathan Moffatt has records of all 3]

This was just a week before Singapore fell; mother and I had already left, departing on December 31st 1941 on the SS Orion, and were in Australia.

Penelope had an opportunity to escape Singapore, on February 13th 1942, on a small ship eventually bound for Australia, just two days before the Surrender! She didn't want to take her jewellery, in case it became lost, and left it with Jim who thought, as many did, that if Singapore should fall it would not be long before the British re-took it! Jim decided to stay knowing that they had had to leave most of their belongings at their estate (rubber). It was agreed that the jewellery and other things would be hidden under a flag-stone in the shelter that father had had dug in the Cluny Road garden and which was provisioned in case of attack! Singapore fell – the story is well told in so many books – Jim Landon was interned and father's story told in '*The Marquis*', with additions here.

In September 1945 the war in the East ended and Singapore was 'returned' to the British and father returned to his house. The jewellery and other things hidden were still there and undisturbed!

Jim was released and stayed in Singapore to search for news of Penelope. Her ship had been sunk and

Penelope lost without trace. Jim visited father, who was back in the Gardens, to tell him the news. He was so angry because of the loss of his wife and that he had heard from internees that Corner, with others, had collaborated with the Japanese. This, I think, was the first time that father heard the awful rumours and which were only partly dispelled at the subsequent trial, over which the New Zealander, Col. Archer, presided and Bishop Wilson gave evidence. I say partly because, although he was absolutely cleared at this 'court', the news didn't get out and many POWs and others remained furious and took that anger back to England where it lasted for many years. Jim never recovered from his internment and the loss of Pen and he died in 1947, as the quote from Thyra's letter above says.

After discovering this story I realised that the photo in 'Pandora's Box' might just be Penelope Landon. The lady in this photo is 'small and petite', as the reader soon will see. I sent it to Thyra and to her sister June's son, David Wingate. Thyra very kindly sent me a copy of a letter Pen had written to her son Jack on July 7th 1936, from the Malayan jungle whilst on a collecting trip with father, and which I mentioned earlier. [Jack was with RAF Bomber Command in Belgium, serving as a Navigator.]

The lady in the photo is Penelope Landon.

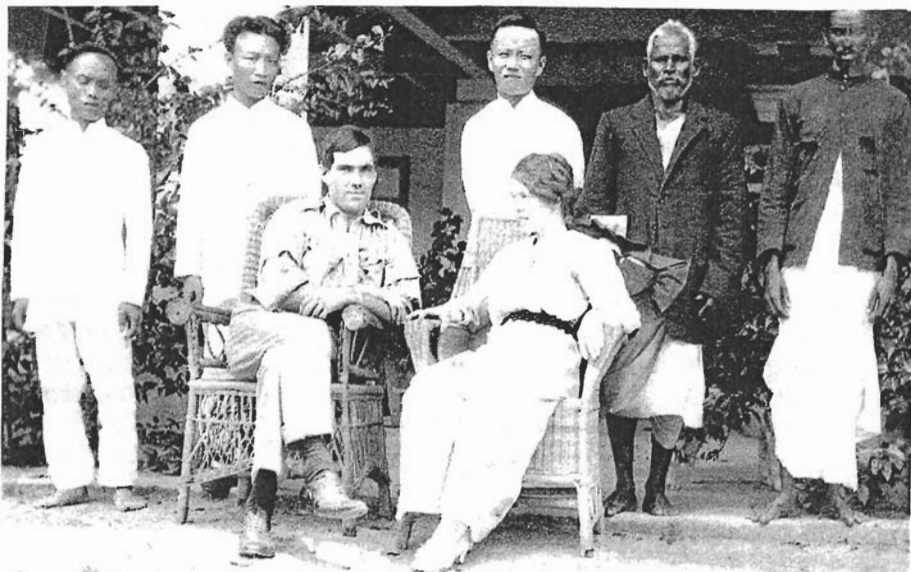
Let me quote a little from this letter, and for which I am so grateful to Thyra, "We left about 8.30 as he [Father] wanted to photograph a tree [the 'jungle giant' referred to in Thyra's letter] along the road, and the best time is between 8 & 9. We waited a bit for the sun to clear & then he took it with me beneath to give an idea of height. Then he said if I could make a good sketch he would use it as a frontispiece to the book".

Father took all his photographs with an expensive Leica that some many years later he offered to give to me – but never did. He also did all his own exposing and ordered materials from England because in those days the quality was best.

This 7 page letter from Pen to Jack is fascinating and I treasure it here on file. I feel very honoured to have been trusted with a copy. Did father ever use that sketch, which is 'roughed' in the letter, as a frontispiece? I have 3 sets of the two-volume "Wayside Trees of Malaya", but not a first edition. These are rare now and expensive. Thyra told me in June 2007 that her granddaughter had taken the Jewellery to an Antiques Road Show at Powys Castle and that it and the story had been featured! We saw it in April 2008 while our son Andy was visiting us in Australia for daughter Katie's 40th - we had been looking out for the edition and fortunately the Show is regularly repeated here, usually a few years behind - we could hardly believe that it was transmitted here during Andy's short visit – what a coincidence, one of so many I have experienced in my researches for the book!

Belinda and I looked for that 'shelter' when we visited 'EJH Corner House' in the Botanical gardens of Singapore in May '07. It was no longer there, but the position we believe we identified.

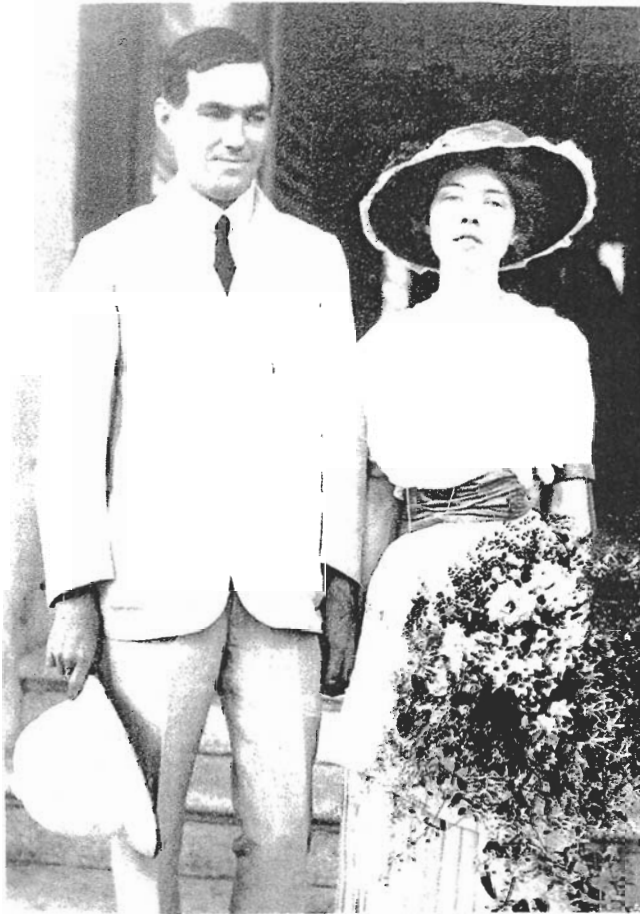
Father wrote of Malaya, towards the end of the story –
"That war wrecked a paradise on earth. Whenever I view a distant forest, there gleams the blue of Elaine".



What a beguiling comment – what could it mean? I have discovered and will relate.

Above is the picture of Pen Landon that was in 'Pandora's Box' and which took me so long to identify. It shows Father, in the only picture I have of him with his hat at a rakish angle!

Left shows Jim and Pen at their house near Slim River, with their servants, in pre-war days, probably the early 1930s.



Left shows Jim and Pen Landon on their wedding day.

I am indebted to David Wingate for the pictures and for the approval, from him, Thyra Godber and June Wingate, to include them in this writing. I remember so well my visit to Thyra and June in that lovely Somerset village in June 2007. Their welcome was as warm as the day and we talked long over lunch.

David Wingate wrote an absorbing account of Penelope's last days in the October 2008 edition of 'Apa Khabar' the journal of the Malayan Volunteers Group. She left Singapore on the vessel 'Kuala' which was sunk at Pompong Island on February 14th 1942; she swam to the island and helped to tend the wounded with the late Brigadier Dame Margot Turner. They then evacuated on the 'Tandjong Pinang' which was sunk around 17th February 1942 in the Banka Strait and Penelope Landon was not found.

Dame Margot Turner's story is vividly told in 'The Will to Live' written by Brig. The Rt. Hon. Sir John Smyth, Bt., V.C., M.C.

The likenesses show that the photograph in 'Pandora's Box' is Penelope Landon. With grateful thanks to 'Pandora's Box', and after much searching of the contents, and reading, I found the following 'writing', which meant little, as did so much of the content, when I first discovered it. When, so much later, I discovered the name of the lady by the river in Malaya, and pieced together the story, the meaning of 'The Blue of Elaine' dawned. I will quote it

verbatim, as written by Professor EJH Corner, and which rested so long in 'Pandora'. This was indeed a puzzle.

THE BLUE OF ELAINE.

Here is a puzzle.

It took place over four years and involved two sea-voyages. With air-travel, the strange contrast that I noticed between temperate and tropical vegetation should be obvious, yet, others had not remarked on it. Perhaps it requires the simplicity of the novice after a long stay in the tropics. As the ends of the puzzle entwine so I must unravel them!

The Blue Funnel liner S.S. Antenor, on which I went east in 1929, made a non-stop voyage from Port Suez to Penang. There were ten days of heaving seas, flying foam, monsoon skies and deck-games, which annoyed me. All around was novel and I, the young explorer! Times of sunrise and sunset, the rate at which the sun sank into the ocean, the skimming schools of flying fish, spouts and flukes of inquisitive whales, phosphorescence, and all the rattles and groans and sighs from the bowels of the ship as up went the stern with plunging bow intrigued me but not the other passengers. As we passed the south coast of Ceylon the fragrance of cinnamon and clove was wafted aboard. Little birds and exotic butterflies settled on rigging and rails. I spied my first coconut palms and wondered what other plants and fungi grew beneath them.

Impatience increased as the days to the land of Raffles and Wallace grew fewer. On the last morning, three specks on the horizon loomed into my field-glasses, as if black rocks rising sharply from the sea; they changed into Chinese Junks with dark brown sails off the north tip of Sumatra. Next day, at 8am, the clock tower of Georgetown harbour chimed, as it still does, regardless of the war which swept past.

With the morning to spare, I was whisked off the ship by the curator of the Waterfall Gardens of Penang, Mr. G.A. Best. We drove along shady avenues of lofty trees, all unfamiliar, behind which gleamed the sea-green and sky-blue Chinese mansions. We walked through the Waterfall Gardens, tucked into the forested hillside, but now no longer the gem I knew. We ascended Penang Hill by the toothed rail. I looked down on the crowns of the coconut palms, waving as if giant cabbages, and I marvelled at the ropes of figs, dangling from the trunks of small trees that overhung the cuttings – the common 'ficus hispida' as I came to know so well. I gazed up in astonishment at the epiphytic ferns and orchids on my first walk into the tropical forest. Here's a 'Boletus', I cried, with the same joy as that lad on Dartmoor; it became my first tropical fungus collection and was the North American 'Boletus ballouii' as I discovered forty years later.

Next afternoon, the ship turned east from the Malacca Straits and passed between the alluring tree-clad islands which closed on the western approach to Singapore. We berthed at Keppel Harbour at 3.30pm, the Director of the Botanic Gardens, R.E. Holtum, took charge of me and we drove off in the back of his open car.

Pre-war Eastern Approaches to Singapore.



the vigour of the wild. For several days I wondered at the contrast but a bout of whooping cough, contracted during the voyage, conveyed me into the General Hospital [1929 – and where I (JKC) was born in 1941] where I was nearly asphyxiated nightly for three weeks, and I forgot that first impression.

A year later, (1930), on local leave, I drove up the Malay Peninsula to stay with the Landons at Sungei Bil Rubber Estate in lower Perak. Mrs. Landon had been a fellow traveller on the Antenor and one of the few who understood why I was going to Singapore. She was an amateur artist in water colour and delighted in the Malayan landscape. To effect the distance of forested mountains, she added, in European style, a tint of blue which puzzled me because I could never detect it in reality. In sunshine or after showers, that forest was sombre green, merging to olive or brownish, and the distance merely faded it. In the early morning it had a golden tint; in the evening it could be rosette; at midday it glittered uncomfortably with reflected light from the shiny leaves. Nevertheless, there were a few plants conspicuous from their bluish cast. Foremost were the great seraya-trees (*Shorea curtisii*) whose bluish grey crowns could be seen in the forest-canopy from surrounding ridges and hill-tops like an immense army invading up the valley. There was the common little tree of open places which we called the Blue Mahang (*Macaranga javanica*) from the blue tint of its leaves; its tissues were curiously dry and those leaves, rubbed between finger and thumb, turned to green powder. Here was the introduced Bermuda grass (*Cynodon*), which in fresh dew, gave a blue cast to lawns and putting greens. Paddy fields with the rice in full growth have the lushest green especially when backed by the sombre forest. In hideous contrast, the harsh yellow green of the Lalang grass (*Imperata*) invades waste ground. A splash of red soil, however, in the foreground of the picture relieves its poverty.

Photograph of the Malayan Jungle taken from a ridge.



Homeward bound after four years (1933), now impatient to meet again all that I had left, I planned to catch the Paris express at midnight and so on to Calais for the channel crossing as soon as the ship docked at Marseilles; it was night and I saw only the illumination of the city. I woke, as had been my custom, with the break of day. The train was hurtling along, as only French trains did in those days. I looked out of the window, turned **back** and looked again, for I could not believe **my** eyes. We were racing through **countryside** whose fields, hedges, **orchards, willows** and poplars were blue – **a pale blue** with scarcely a hint of green. **As the sun rose**, so their colour increased. **From Dover to London**, the landscape was blue. **As I walked round our garden in Beaconsfield [Stratton End]**, I kept saying 'the trees are blue!'

I stared intently at an oak that I had planted, turning my head all ways, and still its leaves were blue. A few days later, I went to stay with Barton and Stella Worthington at Madingley near Cambridge. Still plagued with early rising, I walked the countryside about 4 am, on a sparkling June morning. I came upon a field of chicory. The bright blue flowers faced the sun in a sheet of colour, and the hedges were green. The grass was green. The elms were green. By that freak encounter, contrast had been restored. The blue landscape had vanished, save from the mind's eye. **'Whenever I see a tropical jungle, there gleams the blue of Elaine'.**

IN CORRESPONDENCE WITH SIR ROGER MOON Bt.

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

Sir Roger's long and varied career makes very interesting reading for anyone who has taken the opportunity to read the article posted on the above website, and listed in the 17th edition of "Apa Khabar" on page 5.

In correspondence with Sir Roger, following his receipt of the January newsletter, a hitherto little known fact has emerged concerning the "status" of the Volunteers. It is just another example of the way in which the British Government has exploited men who were loyal and devoted servants of the Crown, and then discarded them when it has no further use for them. One can only compare it, but perhaps to a lesser degree, with the callous way in which successive British Governments have treated the Gurkhas.

Sir Roger's Far East story begins with his arrival in Malaya in June 1939, where he joined the Dunlop Plantations. When the war started, many of the planters wanted to return to England to join up, including Sir Roger. However, the Government in Malaya issued an edict forbidding those in so-called "essential business" from leaving the country – much to their collective fury. Having been a member of the Kenya Defence Force during his years as a coffee planter in that country, (which supplied large numbers of men for the King's African Rifles) Sir Roger became a Volunteer in the Segamat Section of the JVE. The JVE was not, however, to his liking, although as an employee of Dunlop he was expected to join. Instead, he would have preferred joining the SSVAF (Straits Settlements Volunteer Air Force) or RAF, and so, apart from attending all Parades and Camps with the JVE, (they trained for one day a week for 36 weeks of the year) Sir Roger never actually signed up in peace time.

As Sir Roger said, "I was in Johore, because Dunlop had an estate there. The Johore Volunteer Engineers were there, and after being at that plantation for a year, you had to join them more or less..... In December 1941, when the Japanese invasion was on, I was conscripted to be a Volunteer!" - and so he signed up as a member of the Johore Volunteer Engineers – swearing on the Bible to "serve King and Country".

His story continues, "I was attached to the 8th Australian Division which was positioned in Malaya, but once the war started, we were quartered down at Johore Bahru. It is within walking distance of Singapore, and we prepared bridges for demolition mines in case the Japanese came down there".

At this time, he contracted malaria and was hospitalised in Johore Bahru until fit again, only to be pitched straight back into the thick of the action. "On the night of 7th February, 1942, we were called into action because the Japanese were landing at Kranji and we spent about a day there. The officer in command turned out to be my future wife's uncle. He was commanding the 23rd Infantry Brigade. "At the end of 7 days, it was the end of our hopes of success in Singapore," explained Sir Roger. He continued, "Then on February 15th 1942, the surrender took place. The next day we had to march out to Changi. It was pretty awful, dead bodies lying all over the place. And that was the start of our captivity".

As a 'called-up' Volunteer, Sir Roger, along with all the other Volunteers who had been captured and sent to Changi, endured the deprivations and torments of being a Prisoner of War of the Japanese. Starting with the 'Selarang Incident' in which the POWs were rounded up and herded into one Barrack block, where they were held without food or water for 4 days, until they signed parole cards promising not to escape, they experienced a foretaste of what was to come. "I signed my name as Edgar Wallace (the popular thriller writer of the period)", says Sir Roger. "Then we were taken to some working camps in Singapore. My first was a quarry where I was supposed to load trucks with rubble".

In October 1942, Sir Roger was sent to Thailand, where his troubles were to become even more acute. Lacking clothing (by this time he had nothing to wear except a G-string), and working in temperatures of 135 degrees from dawn to dusk with only a 5 minute break, malaria struck again. Despite missing roll-call, he was required to go out for a day's work. In all, malaria was to attack him 17 times during his time as a POW. But worse was to follow with bouts of jaundice, dysentery and beri-beri – a deficiency disease which caused gross swelling of the limbs and stomach, and made walking very difficult. At Hintock he was caught up with the outbreak of cholera which killed some of his friends.

Once the Railway was completed, Sir Roger found himself cutting wood for the rest of the war, for the engines which hauled the trains along the track which had been built at such appalling cost to human life. Sent first to Rangoon, and then to England to recuperate from his wartime travails, Sir Roger returned to Malaya in 1946.

As a **CONSCRIPTED VOLUNTEER**, under **MALAYA COMMAND**, where the **JVE** was attached to the **8th Division** of the **Australian Imperial Forces**, and having endured life as a **FEPOW**, imagine Sir Roger's surprise to learn that in 1946 the British Government handed over **ALL** care for Volunteers, such as Medical Care and Pensions to the Malay Government. "And what did the Malay Government do?", he says, "They claimed all Volunteers were civilians. And the Johore Government? I have a letter from a Government Officer in that State asking, 'What is a War Pension?' ". **A disgusting and shameful action indeed, as Sir Roger points out.**

Is this why former MVG member Winston Mathews of the SSVF was unable to get any help with the health problems he suffered in later life, and why he was even asked for the return of money paid to him as a POW? [Sir Roger says that his rate of pay was SS\$ 1.00 per day i.e. 2s. 4d. in English money, but can never recall ever being paid].

Is this why the Malayan Volunteers have been dismissed and ignored as irrelevant and of no importance for so many years by various FEPOW organisations and British Military alike? The answer is they don't know anything about the Malayan Volunteers – nor do they want to know – nor do they care.

Is the British Government worried that they would be footing an enormous pension bill for the few remaining local Volunteers still living in Malaysia and Singapore, as well as those Volunteers living in other parts of the world? It's not even a question of 'not being British enough' – it's a question of downright injustice, and it should be put right now. 67 years on, it's still not too late to rectify matters.

IF ANYONE HAS ANY VIEWS ON THIS MATTER, PLEASE LET THE EDITOR KNOW.

THE EVACUATION OF PENANG – 16TH DECEMBER 1941

An Eye-Witness Account (2 days after we left. B.)

By kind permission of Charles Noon.

We were driven from our homes in the early days of Malaya's invasion, with nothing more than what we could carry, this including a 48 hours' supply of food. A small straits-steamship took us on the first stage of our wanderings.

The boat was packed with the last contingent of professional men and women, doctors, lawyers, civil servants and hospital sisters who had stayed behind in the vain hope of holding on somehow. It was noon on December 16th when we were told to be ready to start at 4p.m. in the afternoon.

As I looked for the last time at the "HILL", shimmering in the blue haze of heat, at the well-beloved "LINKS", where we had spent so many happy hours, at the ordered calm of it all, I felt for a moment as though the sudden change couldn't be true, but 4p.m. found us all at the meeting place, holding on to our few treasures and what clothes we could carry.

A few instructions and then was started something we had never experienced before in the East, the long hot weary trek to the docks on foot, for all the cars had been rendered useless at our meeting place.

We met a few natives on the way, who stared open-mouthed at the sight of European women trudging along, dragging or carrying suitcases and bundles in the blazing tropical afternoon heat. We reached the docks at about 5.30p.m. to find the last of the troops and ammunition being embarked. Very soon, the long grey ship slid silently out of the harbour, to be replaced by our jaunty little boat manned by sailors of the sunken "Prince of Wales".

We were glad when the sudden tropical darkness fell, and covered our movements of getting away. Everywhere men with heavy hearts and grim grey faces were quickly helping the women to get aboard.

By 8p.m. the anchor was slipped and we started off on the 480 miles to Singapore, about 600 in a boat that usually carried about 50.

Uneasily, we settled down on any small deck space we could find in the inky blackness of the boat. Many of us were too weary and distraught to sleep, for at any moment we might strike a floating mine or come under a hail of gunfire from enemy ships. But nothing happened until 4a.m. when a shattering explosion nearly heaved our little boat out of the water and a sailor with a humorous face appeared through a hole in the floor to say they were merely blowing up a ferry boat before the enemy could use it. Strange too, how the man of the moment usually turns up to fill a difficult situation. The manager of the Penang Swiss Café volunteered to take over the catering and feed us with what food we had managed to get away.

It was rather pathetic to see well known and honoured men queued up and awaiting their turn with an empty bully beef tin for the small ration of tea carefully measured from an old kerosene tin.

But this was war, and grim it was! Although some of the younger sisters looked on it as an adventure, one couldn't help admiring the way they set about making even that hot and overcrowded boat clean and tidy.

For about 50 hours we chugged along, keeping as close to the coast as practicable and watching for enemy aircraft, but nothing was seen and we arrived at the Singapore docks in darkness. A long drive through hot and silent streets brought us to the last stage of our journey South; a big school with rows of iron bedsteads that was to be home for some of us for the next 2 months, until worse things befell us.

FAREWELL TO MALAYA – 13TH FEBRUARY 1942

Much will be written about the last few days of Singapore's ordeal. But with the sinking of the "Empress of Asia" and our hoped-for reinforcements, a sense of doom and frustration settled down over the "Lion City". Men and women of all classes and all nationalities left their homes and gathered in the last square mile of Britain's stronghold.

By night the screaming of shells was hideous but day brought the added terror of dive-bombing. In the intervals of dressing wounds, we watched the planes swoop and dive; a roar of flame and we knew that another oil tank had gone.

By Friday February 13th, many were told to leave the city and that a boat would be ready to take us somewhere to safety. We collected in the Docks and were waiting to board the small boats which would take us out to the ship anchored in the 'road' when someone shouted "look out, here they come!" and enemy planes dived and loosed their bombs on hundreds of women and children standing unprotected on an open wharf. We dropped to the ground, but many were killed or injured. Improvised stretchers were quickly made and we got our dead and dying out to the ship.

Another shout and more bombs were dropped around the vessel, but no-one was hit. As darkness swiftly fell we put out to sea; the injured were attended to, and the burial service read over the dead.

By this time we were hungry and the night was cold. We could see the town ringed by fire and smoke and we had been compelled to leave our luggage on the wharf. A few slept fitfully on the deck, but the hold was packed with wounded who needed constant attention.

Next morning, as the ship's cook was preparing a meal, a reconnaissance plane flew overhead and we knew that an attack was imminent. There was a fearful wait; soon we heard the drone of planes and 9 bombers, which quickly made an end of the "KUALA".

For a short time afterwards life took on the form of a fantastic nightmare. Amid the havoc and confusion we had the choice of a blazing ship or a shark ridden sea. Most of us took to the water, since the only 2 small boats were packed with children, and amateur rowers strove to get them out of the way of falling bombs.

Fortunately we were only about 100 yards from an island, which we found to be uninhabited and waterless. Alas! – many dead and dying lay on the rocks when we got there. The enemy knew these islands and deliberately bombed them as the people struggled to reach safety. Out of about 1,000 people 600 reached the island of Pompong; others may have been carried by the current to other islands we never knew.

The engineers who had escaped bored for and found a spring of water. When darkness fell, some of the crew risked their lives and went back to another vessel which had been accompanying us and procured food, clothing and medical stores. This ship had been packed with troops and ammunition, bound for Java, but the Japs failed to hit it, although they came back several times during the afternoon, and finally the crew sank it to prevent further disaster from exploding T.N.T., if it should be hit. During the night of February 14th many died and had to be put into the sea.

On Sunday February 15th a stock was taken and a base hospital was formed; stretchers were made of branches of trees and men's shirts.

One man was put in charge of the meagre water supply and women doctors and sisters detailed to look after the patients. Others took charge of the stores and dealt out small portions of bully beef and ships biscuits, but there was a constant anxiety, and we were allowed only a small quantity in an empty tin twice a day.

At some point in history this island must have been the result of volcanic eruption. The dirty black lava and lack of grass made the place seem sinister and desolate and we had great difficulty in making any sort of a resting place among the jungle of roots and tendrils.

On Sunday night, just as we were trying to settle down, we heard the swish of oars and the eerie silence was broken by a voice asking whether there was anyone on the island.

There was indeed! – and 200 women and children and 8 badly wounded men were soon packed into the “Tanjong Pinang”.

In his exuberance at the surrender of Singapore, the Japs made the fatal mistake of broadcasting his fiendish activities in “Dive Bomb Alley”. Men in Singapore heard this broadcast with alarm and fury. They thought, at least, that their wives and children had got away before the Surrender.

In spite of the Jap's vigilance, many fishing boats were removed from Singapore harbour that night, manned by Europeans and Chinese. They scoured the sea around for survivors and on Wednesday February 18th I was lucky enough to be one of the rescued. We set sail in an ex-Japanese fishing boat, with a European navigator and a Chinese crew, 80 of us, some slightly injured and 7 stretcher patients. We hadn't gone far when 27 planes came droning out of the clouds, but they had bigger work to do that day, and later we heard that Palembang had been bombed.

For 16 hours we sat cramped and stiff in this small boat. The sick had to be attended to, and the Chinese went on cooking their rice, as tho' war was merely an unpleasant interlude.

At last we reached a small village on the east coast of Sumatra. The Dutch Controller allowed some of us to sleep on the floor of his house that night and next morning we moved 100 miles up the Indragiri River in the Government House boat.

Here we got our stretcher patients into hospital for the night, and we ourselves slept on the floors of evacuated houses, but next morning we found that even the Javanese were fleeing inland carrying their furniture on their backs, so we thought it would be a good idea if we moved inland too. For 5 days we lived a sketchy sort of life in an empty house on a rubber estate, a Dutch lady supplying us with rice, native vegetables and duck eggs.

In the whole 3 weeks we spent in Sumatra, we never saw a duck, yet there were always plenty of duck eggs.

All this time, efforts were being made to get conveyances to take us across Sumatra, but petrol was scarce and there were many wounded to be moved. At last a fleet of mosquito buses and ambulances arrived, and our convoy started off over the mountainous country, but the travelling was too much for badly injured patients and so, in a small hospital set in the cup of the hills, we left them to the kindly Dutch people and an English Doctor.

Finally, we arrived in Padang on the west coast of Sumatra, and spent 5 days in a convent. The food and the rest were good, but the news from the Dutch wireless disquieting. How were we to get away from this Western port, which hadn't yet fallen, but was constantly being bombed, with the Japs only 80 kilometres away?

The nuns suggested that we should wear their habits, since the Japs seemed to hate the British more than the Dutch; if we kept silent we might pass as a silent order.

This seemed a dismal prospect and we were very dejected in consequence. Added to this, we now heard on the wireless that the “TANJONG PINANG” had been captured and the 208 people had been taken back to Singapore. Just as this news began thoroughly to depress us the telephone rang, and a nun rushed in to tell us that 2 destroyers were coming in to refuel and we were to be down at the docks, 7 miles away, in ½ hr.

What excitement and hope! Charabangs and gharries were requisitioned; troops and civilians made their way to the station, and soon we were trundling along in a Dutch train.

With quickening interest we watched as the train drew near. Yes! – there they were, 2 grey ships of the British Navy waiting calmly in the brilliant moonlight.

With thankful hearts we stepped once more onto British soil and soon we were being welcomed with good English food and large cups of cocoa. At 4a.m. on Monday, March 2nd, 3 cruisers were sighted. To these we trans-shipped and in convoy made our way to Colombo. And so for awhile we must say farewell to Malaya, the “Land of Court and Kampong”, and to the brown, smiling people whose home it is; to a hardy race of Chinese and willing Indians, who had lived happily and for so long under a benevolent British rule.

**REPORT BY CAPT. WILLIAM ("BILL") REYNOLDS
ON HIS RESCUE OF SURVIVORS FROM POMPONG ISLAND.**

[REYNOLDS W.R. {William Roy} MBE 8.43 'Bill'. Australian former Shipmaster [WW1 & Hong Kong]. In Perak since 1925. Dredgemaster Anglo-Oriental [Malay] Ltd., Malim Newar, Perak. Cpl. LDC Perak 12.40 then Royal Engineers Mine Watching Corps. Left Singapore on the **KOFUKU MARU** [later **KRAIT**] 12.2.42 to assist on the Sumatra escape route. Subsequently worked on with SRD then US Intelligence. Captured by the Japanese. Imprisoned at Balikpapan Gaol then Surabaya Gaol. Executed by the Japanese 8.8.44 Surabaya.]

REPORT No. 168

Acland Street
Saint Kilda, Victoria.
16th May 1943.

My dear Mrs. Howell,

I know how busy you must be in sifting out the facts from a veritable mountain of conjecture, so in an endeavour to save you some time, I thought perhaps if I wrote my story, you would then prune the irrelevancies, and so be able to concentrate on the points that really matter when I see you on Wednesday next. Here then is the narrative of 'Barnacle Bill' turned tin miner.

In a former life I was a shipmaster, and after years of world wandering, finally gravitated to Hong Kong. From this port I commanded ships engaged in the great annual pilgrimage to Jiddah (sic) and so to Mecca, my vessels usually carrying through to such ports as Genoa and Barcelona. On return, we picked up our pilgrims, and returned them to Singapore, Java and neighbouring islands. From this you will gather that the Dutch Archipelago is as well known to me as the back of my hand. I tired of this in the year 1925, and 'swallowed the anchor', coming ashore in Malaya for the purpose of building tin dredges. I have been in the State of Perak pretty well ever since, and in recent years in the employ of Anglo-Oriental (Malaya) Ltd. at Malim Nawar. I joined the Perak LDC on its inception, and on the night of the 23rd December 1941, after getting all our people away from Malim Nawar and on the road for Singapore, joined up with the Royal Engineers in the Northern Command. Here I was allocated to the 3rd Field Company Bombay Sappers and Miners, as an expert in demolition and came south with them to Singapore in front of the advancing 'ape man', blowing the dredgers, mining machinery, bridges, telephone exchanges and generally 'scorching the earth' in approved fashion, finally arriving in Singapore on the 19th January 1942. As we were the last to leave on almost every occasion, I did not see many people other than service men. However, I did speak to a **MRS THACKERAY**, wife of the Perak Inspector of Machinery, in Segamat Rest House, on or about the 10th January. She appeared to be acting as Manageress, and was quite self-possessed, and in good health, at that time. On arrival in Singapore I reported to the Man Power Bureau, and was sent off by old man Barron to a half dozen potential jobs, but nobody wanted me, least of all the Navy when I went aboard the "Laburnum" at Telok Ayer. Whilst there I saw some 30 odd Japanese fishing boats, equipped with diesel engines, and all breaking themselves up, for lack of attention. I asked to be allowed to put them in order, but was peremptorily told to go about my business, "in any event nobody can put their engines in order" said a 'sage' aboard "Laburnum". And so I wandered disconsolately about Singapore - a 'handy andy' that nobody wanted. Now and again I gave a hand at Tanjong Pagar when fires were bad, but only as an onlooker that had butted in. A sorry business!

It was obvious on the 10th February that Singapore was to be another Dunkirk, so I took things in my own hands. Engaging some eight Chinese from a local boarding house, I took them to Telok Ayer, and choosing the best of the erstwhile fishing boats, we worked day and night reconditioning them, scrounging fuel oil etc., and on dusk on the 11th February, 1942, had her ready for sea. She was a tiny thing, some 70 feet long, and rejoiced in the name of "**KOHFUKU MARU**" (sic). That night I wandered about Singapore, buying up odd foodstuff, and at 10a.m. on the morning of the 12th February, 1942, cast off and proceeded towards Blakang Mati, my intention being to take off as many of our Volunteers as possible, they being **billeted** at the Straits Trading Company's Works. As we neared the Strait some 27 Japanese bombers **came over and** plastered the place with high explosive, so we sheered off hurriedly and scooted over close to St. John's Island. Here we lay drifting for some time, meanwhile directing sundry motor boats, and **power driven** tongkongs that were making a 'get away', filled with troops. A further succession of **bombing raids taking** place, I decided at 1p.m. to make for Rhio, and so we went off eastward, since it seemed **suicidal to follow** the exodus through Durian Strait. We arrived in Rhio about 8p.m. on the 12th, without incident, other than that the Dutch authorities put us under arrest on arrival, and ordered us to anchor. At 9a.m. on the 13th February 1942 two enemy bombing planes arrived and bombed the town, but fortunately without any casualties.

As soon as they flew off I went ashore and offered my services, since some 200 women, the wives of the

native garrison, were in a very excited state. A broken down island vessel, the "Silver Gull" being alongside the wharf, we loaded some 216 women and children aboard her, and with 50 on my own deck, set off at 7a.m. with "Silver Gull" in tow, our destination being Rengat some 120 miles up the shallow Indraghiri (sic) River in Central Sumatra. We steamed along throughout the night with our tow, and at dawn, lest we be bombed from the air, I disembarked them all on the island of Ichwang. Here they rested under the trees and foliage throughout the day, whilst we lay at anchor and took on board some much needed fresh water. At dusk on the 14th February 1942, we re-embarked our refugees and again set off, steaming without lights, and at dawn, were close to the river estuary in Amphitrite Bay. A hard plug with the tow up river, and at 4p.m. on the night of the 15th February 1942, we berthed "Silver Gull" alongside the tiny wharf at Chenako, some 30 miles from Rengat. Here our refugees disembarked and were taken by lorry to Rengat, whilst after a hearty meal we too left and proceeded up river with our ship to Rengat, where we arrived at 10p.m. On arrival, we were met by the Dutch Resident Mijnheer van Breakel, his secretary, Mr. Kaag, and sundry officials, who took charge of our refugees. In conversation, we learned that a number of wounded were on the island of Pompong, some 100 miles from Rengat, so without any more ado we commandeered mattresses, blankets and foodstuffs, and at dawn set off downstream to pick them up. Unfortunately, in my anxiety I cut a river corner too fine, and my ship went aground, where we stuck fast for six hours despite our efforts to get off the mud. However, late in the afternoon, we got away, and once more set off, arriving at Pompong Island at 3a.m. on the 17th February 1942. At dawn, we got busy and after a very difficult time took off some 76 people, of whom 9 were dreadfully injured, and full of gangrene. By great good fortune, **SISTER DOWLING** was among those picked up and was, with what medicaments we had brought along, able to give the badly wounded some measure of comfort, and feed them.

We stumbled back into the Indraghiri River and on to the tiny riverine port of Tembilahan, where there was a small Malay hospital. Here we were again fortunate, for **Lt. Col Albert Coates** of the 10th A.C.A. had arrived with **Sergeants Clancy and Hugh**, their ship too having been bombed and sunk. As it was low water when we arrived we had a strenuous time getting our wounded on to the decking of the slippery jetty. That night Coates did seven major operations alone, Sergeant Clancy acting as his anaesthetist, Sister Dowling being "all in". Two very stout ladies at this period were **Sister Brenda Lee (Mrs. McDuff)#** and **Patsy* Brennen (Mrs. Clark)** both formerly from the Batu Gajah Hospital. I am glad to be able to say that all these ladies finally reached India. One bad case among our wounded was Matron Jones of Singapore Hospital, whose back in the lumbar region was badly shattered with bomb splinters, one piece of which bearing on the spine. Her operation was successful, but of our badly wounded both the Brigadier and a Squadron leader died.

Immediately after we got rid of our people we cast off and once more returned to Pompong. On this trip we picked up 96 people, including **Group Captain Nunn** R.A.F.V.R. and his wife, formerly of Kuala Lumpur. These people we brought back with us, and after resting and feeding them at Tembilahan, we took them on to Rengat. Whereafter we shuttled back and forth to the islands of the Archipelago – the first eight days and nights we did not stop.

In turn we visited Mono (Monkey) Is; Menko Is; Singka Is; Pompong Is; and Singga Is; the Malay fishermen, by arrangement, bringing stragglers to these rendezvous, where we picked them up. On the 6th March, we undertook an espionage trip, at the instance of the Dutch Resident, visiting in turn, Tanjong Pinang (Rhio), Tanjong Bali (Karimoen) and Tanjong Batu (Koendoen). At the former, we fought an action with a Japanese patrol vessel, finally chasing her into a small strait south of Rhio. Other than a peppering from their automatic arms, we suffered no harm, and gave them more than we received. We returned via the north part of the island of Singlap, it being too dangerous to go into Dabo, the town in the South in which the hospital is situated. A road some 15 miles long connected the north and south points of this island. We gathered from the Dutch Controleur (sic) that there were 17 patients, all soldiers, in the hospital but that they were too badly injured to take off in my small boat, lest they haemorrhage and die en route. Two military surgeons, the Dutch resident doctor, six Scottish sisters, and four Eurasian and Chinese nurses remained with them at their own request. Reluctantly we steamed away and returned to Rengat, gathering a number of men in small craft en route. On this passage my Chinese crew deserted at Tanjong Satu (Koendoer) where there is a big Chinese community, leaving Messrs. Alex A. Elliott and Geo. Papworth, who had been with us from Singapore, together with myself to handle the ship. On arrival at Rengat, we were given instructions to proceed to sea, lest we be captured, the Japanese then being some 10 miles away, and coming from Djambi. After a sleep which we badly needed, we cast off, our objective this time being India. By dint of steaming at night and hiding in creeks masked by mangroves, and fish traps by day, we slowly made our way westward through the Malacca Straits, visiting the ports of Bengkalis and Bagon-Si-API-API, en route. On this stage of the journey we had picked up Madam Looi Pok Sye, a 25 year old Cantonese girl, with her 3 year old daughter, Looi Laur Kwai (Twin Blossoms) and a seventeen year old Malay boy Saitaan bin Abdulhamid of Kuala Lumpur. The Nonya cooked food when she was not too seasick, took the wheel while I got snatches of sleep, and was as good as two men. Her story is an epic of courage and fortitude from Ipoh to India via Sumatra, and would make a best seller in any country. On the 26th March 1942, we

were off Diamond Point and from here shaped a course northward of the Nicobar Islands , and on reaching this point, hauled away westward for the long run across the Bay of Bengal. At 3p.m. on the afternoon of the 31st March 1942, we raised the land and shortly afterwards anchored in the roadstead of Negapatam, Madras residency, six miles north of the port, and twenty miles ahead of the reckoning. A pretty good fluke, considering we had no charts or instruments – a compass and a gigantic ego being their substitutes. Verily, we rested in the Shadow of Allah! From here on I suffered enough vicissitudes to drive me crazy, but they form no part of the story. Suffice it to say that I answered about a million questions, went hungry for two months, and finally took my vessel (now rejoicing in the name of 'Suey Sin Fah (sic) [Lotus Bloom]) to Bombay, and thence, pick-a-back on another vessel to Australia. She now lies in a northern port, and will be heard of again, "Sine Die", as Tuan Howell would say.

So much for the narrative, which is not of much use for your purposes, so let's see whom, and where we have seen people who matter. Unfortunately, so much had to be done by myself, as the only skilled seaman, that I kept but very sketchy records and so must trust to memory. However, by cross checking, possibly you will be able to confirm some at least of the information you already have in hand. At least I hope you will. Suggest that Mrs. Howell get in touch with my former "Second in Command":-

Alex. A. Elliott

c/o Ford Motors (India) Ltd. Queens Road, Bombay, INDIA.

Much of my time was taken up navigating and handling my vessel, so that of the 1519 people we brought to Rengat, very few were known to me personally. Elliott as an engineering traveller knows many people, and could perhaps give you a list of people he saw the day before we left Singapore and subsequently conversed with on board. With reference to the "Tanjong Pinang", this vessel almost collided with us when bound upstream to Rengat. Report had it that she had been captured by the Japanese, whilst bound for Batavia from that port. It would seem that she took off a number of people from Pompong Island on the night of the 14th February 1942, but whether she landed these at Rengat, I do not know. Possible the following officer could give you some information, he being a liaison officer at Rengat when she arrived:-

Major A. M. Campbell K.O.S.R.

c/o Naval Intelligence Office, Garden Island, Sydney, N.S.W.

Among my passengers from Pompong Island were five lady doctors, but unfortunately, I only know the name of one, Mrs. Doctor Clark, who was suffering from a fracture of the base of the skull. I'm hopeful that these disjointed notes will give you a basis for questioning on Wednesday, so until then,

Best wishes in your good work,

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) William R. Reynolds.

**N.B. #Brenda Lee (MacDuff) was captured in Padang and became a civilian POW in Sumatra.
* Brenda calls her Paddy, & says she met her husband in Padang. They got away safely – probably on the KPM.**

EVACUATION and REPATRIATION – How was it for you? – A request from Julie Summers.

In 2008 I published a book entitled '*Stranger in the House*', that looked at the effect of men returning from war on women's lives. Now Simon and Schutter have asked me to write another book about returning evacuees. This is a marvellous topic because it concerns something that lots of today's children learn about in school. I think all three of my sons have been to 'Evacuee Day' at some time in their school careers

I am only too aware, however, that the public's perception of Evacuees is limited to pictures of grubby little children leaving London stations with gas masks around their necks and luggage labels on their wrists.

This book will seek to redress that balance and deal with the far greater range of the evacuation during the Second World War, including those who were evacuated from Singapore, Malaya and Hong Kong. I realize the experiences of those who were evacuated from these places was very different from the children sent from London, Liverpool and Glasgow to the countryside. What I am seeking are the stories from anyone who was evacuated in the Far East. I would like to hear where you were sent to, how long you were away, what you found when you came home and whether you remained in the Far East or came back to Britain.

As with '*Stranger in the House*', this book will comprise a mixture of oral history, information from diaries and letters and research that will place the stories in their historical, social and to some extent economic situation.

If you would like to share your memories with me or find out more about how I plan to use information I gather, please contact me either via e-mail: julie.summers00@googlemail.com

or by letter: Julie Summers, 17, Adderbury Road, Oxford OX4 4ET.

If you wish to find out about my other books please visit: www.juliesummers.co.uk

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Michael Thompson writes:-

"I am writing briefly just to let you know that I have in my possession a DVD of an Australian made programme about the Burma Siam Railway [Called "Spirit of the Railway"]. It was shown on Australian commercial television and replayed in Malaysia where a close friend saw it and made a DVD for me knowing something about my father's death on the Railway. Much of the material was already known to me but some Japanese camera footage was new and Rod Beattie, whom I have never met, but of whom I have heard much, figured prominently in the film. Several Australian ex-POWs were interviewed; while they make no bones about the awfulness of those times, they struck me as being remarkably free of bitterness. All these years on the film still made its impact felt. I am not sure whether MVG members would have an interest in seeing it?"

Jonathan says that the film was possibly made in about 2000, and is well worth watching – and features Jack Chalker as well. Jonathan has made a few disc copies of the DVD, and if anyone would like one, please contact him.

Richard Yardley telephoned to say:-

"The information given on P.15 in the January edition of A.K. in the book section, about the hell ship '*Asaka Maru*' is incorrect – she was not torpedoed, but wrecked on rocks during a typhoon." [Ed: Apologies for the error]

Richard also mentioned that he knew Padre Webb well (Padre of St Andrew's Church in KL), while he was stationed in KL as Assistant Controller of Telecommunications (Radio). He said that on Sunday evenings they switched on a transmitter on a frequency known to local residents and read information sent by the Department of Information. It only lasted a few minutes, and record music was played before and after the announcement. Afterwards he would go to Padre Webb's house and play badminton until dark, when they would adjourn for a light meal.

He later wrote:-

"I must explain that '*Asaka Maru*' was the correct name for the ship, '*Osaka Maru*' was the way which the POWs on board pronounced or named it. As regards the '*Asaka Mahru*' and the '*Hakasan Mahru*', my experiences are described in my book, "The Amonohasidate", Chapter 5, starting on P.37.

I am well aware of the book written by Ronald Hastain (called "White Coolie") shortly after we were released.....It was written shortly after the War Crimes trial of the ship's Captain and the Japanese officer who were in charge of our group of 750 POWs plus two doctors. As you know, I gave evidence at that trial, which took place in Changi gaol in 1946 or early 1947. Although I was a witness for the prosecution, I did ask The Court at the end of my evidence if I could make a personal statement about the two accused and my request was granted. I told the Court that both the men were victims of circumstance. The ship's Captain had objected to taking 750 POWs on board as there was inadequate accommodation for them in the holds, which were mainly full of bauxite. His objections were overruled by senior Japanese army officers who were determined we were sent on our way to Japan. We were paraded on the dockside in front of them and we could see that an argument was going on. As far as the Japanese army officer in charge of our group was concerned, he was a Lieutenant and was quite junior in rank compared with those who were trying to get rid of us. Furthermore, he was a wartime soldier who was a bank official in civilian life. He had been on the railway in Thailand with us and as far as he was able, he had treated the POWs reasonably well. Both the accused were found guilty but only received 6 months imprisonment. As it was an Australian Court that sentenced them, they were very fortunate. I saw them both on television in the 1950s or 60s, in a programme about our journey to Japan.

Ronald Hastain was one of 5 Warrant Officers in our group of 750 POWs. There were 5 parties in all, each of 150 men. Each party was commanded by a British Army Captain or Lieutenant, who was assisted by a Warrant Officer and a Sergeant. I knew him well, although he was not in my party of POWs. He was in the 18th Division, which landed on the Island of Singapore a week or so before the surrender on the 15th February."

Bill Vowler writes:-

"I have just read the latest edition of A.K..... I can remember some of Miss Griff's teachers at Tanglin School, Cameron Highlands – Miss Delaney (art), Miss Raines (sport – she did wonders for my cricket in later life!), Miss Fay (arithmetic). I left in 1938. I also see that Christ Church in Malacca can do with a bit of restoration. It was my family Church – I was christened there and my sister was married there. My father's funeral service was there also. I cannot remember the area he was buried in, but I did visit the cemetery many years ago. If anyone is going to Malacca, I would love to have a photo of his grave – if it's not too much to ask. I understand that the head stone was vandalized some while ago."

John Gullick writes:-

"Many thanks for the latest issue of A.K. I was particularly interested in John Corner's account of his father's career, as I had dealings with him over the publication of 'Botanical Monkeys', a fascinating minor work on training monkeys to bring down specimens from the tree tops of the Botanical Gardens. He was indeed a talented though controversial figure. Henry Barlow who handled the reprint of Corner's classic "Wayside Trees of Malaya" said he was the most difficult author he had ever had to deal with..... I have just heard from John Corner who is trying to trace the papers of Bishop Wilson, who gave evidence for

his father in the official enquiry into his father's conduct.

I was also interested in the obituary of Mary Turnbull, (in A.K. 16) as we had been colleagues in the same Dept. in KL in the 1950s and I knew her well and much admired her work. She became a brilliant historian and her death is a sad loss.

Gareth Owen writes:-

"Great news (on the index for A.Ks. now posted on the website). Apa Khabar is such a useful source of information that an index will be invaluable. I've got a list of all British & Commonwealth POWs in Sumatra 1942-5 put together by a Dutchman, van de Bos. The list is mainly of Dutchmen and women but I encouraged him to add others as well. From time to time queries to Apa Khabar can be answered by reference to this list.

I expect to be in London in June/July but not for this year's lunch. But last September's function was very enjoyable. I managed to obtain a copy of Anne Kennaway's book which describes the conditions aboard the *Duchess of Bedford* to which I was unwittingly exposed. I was also amazed to meet the Arbuthnots – he was my boss at the British Council Germany during the Eighties. Did you see Geoffrey Brooke's obituary recently? [Ed: see under obituaries] He was a survivor of the "Prince of Wales" and helped many people to escape from Singapore, including my Dad. Brooke was one of the very few who managed to escape internment in Sumatra by sailing from Padang in a small boat to Ceylon."

Mason Nelson writes:-

Good to hear of MVG's continuing growth, in particular in Australia. A meeting there, by chance, in Canberra? A thought very much to be kept in mind. When visiting some three years ago, I had my photo taken standing next to the larger than life bronze statue of Weary Dunlop – and sent to his long standing friend and Railway patient Charles Letts in Singapore. It was much appreciated by him – who likes to tell the story of visiting Australia and dining with W.D. at the Melbourne Club where, at the great man's approach, members fell silent in respect."

Elizabeth Bunney writes:-

"Many thanks for all the material about the MVG. It will take a bit of reading. However, the aim of reuniting old friends is a good one, because I was delighted to find an old school friend listed in the membership – Trish Niblock, now in Edinburgh. She and I and many others were sent to boarding school in WA from Singapore and Malaya in the late 1940s onwards, and travelled up to Singapore, to spend the Christmas holidays with the parents by ship, either on the "Gorgon" or the "Charon". I wonder how many of your membership remember fondly those schoolship trips between Fremantle and Singapore? It was a slice of social history, before the air service came into being, and when travel was by sea. Ten days up and ten days back on the schoolships (the entire passenger list was children) was enormous fun, and has been committed to print by Juliet Ludbrook (nee Adderley), called "Schoolship Kids of the Blue Funnel Line". It is a collection of old photos and reminiscences by those very kids! Quite a few came back to WA after finishing senior years at schools in UK – couldn't stand the climate after growing up in Australia!

I notice that in your paragraph of information, it says "...wife Isabel evacuated pre-hostilities" – in fact my mother and I were on a winter holiday visiting her parents in Perth, who had retired there in 1940, and their newly built house was now ready, so we came in June 1941. As time passed Dick (my father) saw the war advancing and kept writing to stay put meantime. (I have inherited all his wonderful letters to Mum) The visit was a bit longer than at first anticipated as my grandfather became ill and eventually died in September 1941, so we stayed on a bit to support Gran.....A few months later Gran's house was requisitioned by the U.S. Navy 'for the duration', so we had to move to a rented house! Gran ran the house, Mum got a job in the Perth branch of the ocean Accident, and I had to go to school."

Liz Higgins writes:-

"My father, William Edward Lancaster, was a colonial vet. in Alor Star when the Japanese invaded from Siam. On the 8th December 1941, my parents heard the sound of bombs falling on the Alor Star airfield. They were told to evacuate their house as it was going to be used as an Officers' mess. This they did within a few hours, taking some possessions in two suitcases. My three uncles and my father were POWs – my uncles in Changi, I think, and my father on the Burma Siam Railway. In his memoirs of these times, dad said that although he was a Volunteer he was not called up immediately – although others were as soon as the Japanese invaded. Instead, he was made Assistant Supply Officer. During this time he loaded cattle into lorries to be sent south. I think there were 15,000 Balinese cattle to be moved. On the way down the Malay Peninsula he seemed to meet my mother and us, and the whole family would stay with various people on the way south. By about the 16th-19th January 1942, the Sewell sisters and their families got ships to Fremantle and it was in WA that we spent the war years. Apparently my mother's brother Anson Sewell was on leave when Singapore fell, but as a member of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force felt it his duty to return to Singapore – just in time to be made prisoner. My grandparents who owned an island near Singapore called Seligu, just managed to get a ship out before Singapore fell. This took them to India and eventually they were able to get to Fremantle too.

Dad and some Veterinary officers continued to move cattle and even tried to cultivate land on Singapore to grow food. This was after Malaya had fallen to the Japanese. When one of his mates died as the result of a tractor accident, Dad decided to

join the SSVF in late January 1942. He was issued with a uniform and gun and was a soldier when Singapore fell on the 15th February 1942. He, like many others, was marched to Changi prison where in the early days the POWs organised lessons in just about everything. His statistics on the fall of Singapore are as follows:-

The Japanese took one week to capture Singapore and 70 days to conquer Malaya. This cost them 3,500 killed and about 6,000 wounded, compared to the 8,700 combined Commonwealth killed and wounded. There were 138,400 men in the combined forces opposing the Japs and more than 130,000 became prisoners. After a short time in Changi, Dad was put in a working party stationed at Pasir Panjang and housed in coolie lines. After a year in Singapore some of the prisoners were then sent to Siam – about 200 from “D” Force. They were sent to Bampton about 40 miles west of Bangkok. They stayed in one camp for two years.

After the war, my three uncles, Peter Frennd, Albert Talbot (both in Customs) Anson Sewell and my father returned to WA. Dad went back to KL and became the Director of Veterinary Services until “Merdeka” in 1957-8.

My sister and I went to a boarding school in the Cameron Highlands for a while but when the communist terrorist threat became a real danger we were sent to a boarding school in WA. We travelled to and from Singapore each Christmas holidays on the “Gorgon” or “Charon”. With a cargo of about 200 children from boarding schools in WA and SA the weeks on the ships became ones of high jinks on the high seas! A book called “The Schoolship Kids” has been published. During the other two holidays we stayed at my grandparent’s home in the hills outside Perth.

OBITUARIES

We would like to express our heartfelt sympathies to Sandy Lincoln, on learning about the death of her mother, **Florence W. Page, widow of Lincoln Page SRA [V]**, architect in Singapore with the Singapore Improvement Trust, before and after the war. Our thoughts and prayers are with Mike and Sandy and their family at this sad time. Florence, together with her own mother and son Michael, were evacuated from Singapore on the “Orion”.

We are also sad to report the death of **Margaret Kavanagh**, aged 91, **widow of Patrick F. Kavanagh 3/FMSVF**, and mother of Marsha Anson. Our deep sympathies are extended to Marsha and her family. Margaret was evacuated from Singapore on the “Duchess of Bedford”.

Lt-Cdr GEOFFREY BROOKE

The death of Lt-Cdr Brooke was announced on 30th January. A survivor from the battleship *Prince of Wales*, he made a dramatic escape from Singapore on Friday 13th February on a badly damaged unarmed Yangtze river steamer carrying 140 passengers. The next night the ship was sunk and the survivors stranded on a desert island. Using a motor boat he rescued women and children from 2 other ships which had been sunk, and attended to their wounds. The most seriously wounded were loaded onto rafts and towed to Sumatra, while Brooke and 60 other men, mainly survivors from the *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales*, stayed behind. After 7 days they were taken off in 4 small Chinese Junks to Sinkep Island, and eventually made their way up the Indragiri River, collecting more survivors as they went. Having missed the last ship which left Padang, (and which was sunk) he was ordered by SOE to take a Malay *prauw* and sail to Ceylon with 16 other officers. It took 37 days to reach Ceylon waters, where they were picked up by a merchant ship the ‘*Anglo-Canadian*’ and taken to Bombay. Later in the war he returned to the Far East on the carrier *Indomitable* when the Fleet Air Arm raided the refineries under Japanese control at Palembang in March 1945. He was on board the carrier *Formidable* when she was twice hit by kamikazes. He was awarded the DSC for gallantry, and after the war wrote several books including, “*Singapore’s Dunkirk*”, which is mentioned in the Book Section. His first book about the war, “*Alarm Starboard*”, led a number of survivors, who had escaped from Singapore, to contact him with further details of the horror and heroism of their escape from Singapore.

MARY THOMAS

A former Civilian Internee in Singapore, first at Katong and later at Changi, Mary Thomas was one of the longest lived survivors of internment by the Japanese. Born on 13th December 1906, she died on 9th February aged 102. Her experiences were recorded in her book, “*In the Shadow of the Rising Sun*” which gave a factual and unbiased account of her internment. Changi jail was designed to hold 1,200 prisoners, but by March 1942 there were more than 3,000 men, women and children held. The numbers rose to over 4,000 by 1944, under the command of the Japanese Kempeitai.

Mary was the eldest of 6 children, the daughter of a rector in Gloucestershire. She went up to Oxford to read History, and after graduating, spent 2 years in British Columbia doing some teaching, before returning home via the Pacific. At the outbreak of WW 2, Mary, aged 32, travelled to Singapore with her brother, who was assistant master at St. Andrew’s School. As the Japanese advance came nearer, she became Assistant Superintendent at a first-aid post in the school. Although many civilians were evacuated from Singapore, those who stayed, and were able to help with nursing, were transferred to Singapore General Hospital to help with treating the wounded both civilian and military.

After the surrender, Mary was interned with the other women and children left in Singapore. The comparatively new Changi Prison had cells measuring 7ft x 6 ½ ft with a concrete (damp and dusty) slab in the middle to act as a bed. Two women had to share these tiny cells. She got into trouble with the Japanese for a poem she wrote in the POW-WOW camp newsletter entitled, “Changi Lullaby”, (they misconstrued her reference to the nightly pulling of lavatory chains) but escaped with only a telling off. The regime in Changi took a turn for the worse as a result of the ‘Double Tenth’ (10/10/43) when the Kempeitai

took over Changi.

When the war ended, Mary returned to England and teaching, and later became closely connected with the Society of the Sacred Cross, a contemplative Anglican order based at Tynmawr Convent near Monmouth. She became a supporter of Plaid Cymru. In her nineties, she joined in the controversy over an initiative to associate Monmouth with a Japanese Town. Her letter described her treatment at the hands of the Japanese, but suggested that it was now time to move on.

WEBSITES TO VISIT

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/obituaries/article5913597.ece>

A full report on Mary Thomas's obituary in the Times.

<http://www.eacclub.dk>

Website for the OK Club in Denmark – but written in Danish.

<http://www.goochlandgazette.com/index.php/obituaries/article/264>

The obituary for Alexander Udny LIND : 1915-2007. Joined the Malayan Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in 1939 as a Sub. Lt. promoted to Lieutenant in October 1941. In December 1941 seconded into the SOE where he joined Lt. Col. Alan "Cocky" Warren DSO and in February 1942 commanded ML 310 inserting 'stay-behind parties' along the Malayan coast behind Japanese lines. He organised the escape of 16 European Officers and 2 Malay Fishermen on the "Sederhana Djohanis" (Dutch for Lucky John) a Malay 'prauw' (see Geoffrey Brookes' obituary above). He was in Burma, under the command of Lord Louis Mountbatten at the Japanese surrender of Rangoon when war ended. He retired to Canada in 1975.

<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2008/04/24/2226571.html>

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23543563-5001986,00.html>

Two stories about the launch of a book in April 2008 by Pattie Wright called, "Men of the Line: Stories of the Thai-Burma Railway Survivors", in which she interviewed over 20 Australian POW survivors.

http://books.google.com/books?id=RtDTYPUI-yEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+up+saga&ei=kYV_SZ-wLJbCyQTbpZjgAQ&hl=da

A very good read about the Danish United Plantations planters/Grut family by Susan Martin – accessed online- googlebooks.

<http://www.danishww2pilots.dk/articles.php?id+31>

Interesting short article about Danish pilots in the MAAF

http://www.far-eastern-heroes.org.uk/Keeping_The_Faith/

An article about Bishop Wilson on Ron Taylor's website

<http://www.jollyqueenlouise.org/>

Australian MVG member Louise Crossley's website about her travels - including a visit to the TBRC in Thailand and a photo of the MVG Plaque with the Volunteer badges.

<http://edinburghnews.scotsman.com/latestnews/Doctor-hands-city-university-biggest.3945618.jp>

An interesting Malaya-related story.

<http://www.cofepowdb.org.uk/cdb2/Controller.jsp?action=simplesearch>

COFEPOW has started to put searchable Liberation Questionnaires [WO344s] online. Amongst those recorded are some Volunteer Questionnaires – to quote a few – Archibald Arbuthnott (father of MVG member Robert), Trevor Allin and Kenyon Archer. There are more for those who wish to browse.

BOOKS

"The Other Side of Paradise". By Margaret Mayhew. A Corgi book. Price £6.99 ISBN 978-0-552-15492-5

Anne Scott writes: 'I have just received Margaret Mayhew's latest novel which is about the fall of Singapore. We met when Margaret came to lunch 2 years ago and I was able to help her with material (letters, diaries etc.) It is only just published, but I recommend it as an interesting book – romantic fiction, but it is very correct on detail. I think you would enjoy it.'

"Singapore's Dunkirk. The Aftermath of the Fall". By Geoffrey Brooke. A Pen and Sword hardback book priced at £19.95. ISBN 0-85052-971-9

This is the story of Geoffrey Brooke's incredible escape from Padang with 16 Officers, several of whom would return later to take part in undercover operations behind enemy lines in Malaya and Singapore. The book has very good photographs of many of the ships involved in the final frantic hours of evacuation from the doomed island of Singapore – many of which were sunk by Japanese bombs. This account also mentions Bill Reynolds and the 'Krait' which is now on permanent display in Sydney harbour, and whose story is mentioned below.

"Krait. The Fishing Boat that went to War". By Lynette Ramsay Silver from the research of Major Tom Hall. Published by Cultured Lotus, Singapore. ISBN 981-04-3675-0

The story of how the former shipmaster-cum-miner, Bill Reynolds, sailed a worn-out Japanese fishing boat from Singapore to Sumatra and became involved in the rescue of hundreds of survivors from bombed and sunk evacuee ships. After escaping finally to Australia, the 'Krait' was used for the clandestine Allied Commando Raid on Singapore, codename 'Jaywick' in which the enemy shipping was mined right under the noses of the Japanese. Sadly, Bill Reynolds was later captured by the Japanese and executed by them on 8.8.1944.

"Schoolship Kids of the Blue Funnel Line". By Juliet Ludbrook. Published by Black Swan Press, Perth, WA. ISBN 1-86342-735X

A wonderfully funny, yet poignant story of the heartache for hundreds of children, whose families lived and worked in Singapore and Malaya before and after the war, and who were sent to Australia to be educated. They were parted from their parents for a year at a time, only travelling home for the long Christmas holidays. Without supervision on board the Blue Funnel Ships, apart from the efforts of the crew, the antics and pranks the children got up to, are quite frightening in the light of today's 'health and safety' cocoon.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

MONDAY- 4th May 2009 (May Bank Holiday)

Presentation of the Volunteer Badges to the FEPOW Memorial Building at the NMA.

Please see Ps. 1 & 2 for details. If anyone else would like to attend, please let **Jonathan or Rosemary know asap**. About a dozen members have indicated that they are coming, and a few more would be appreciated, if you are free.

SUNDAY – 10th May 2009

Annual Service of Remembrance at the FEPOW Church of Our Lady and St, Thomas of Canterbury in Wymondham, Norfolk. It is advisable to book if wishing to attend this Service.

SATURDAY – 15th August 2009

V-J Day Service at the NMA.

This will take place in the MVG Memorial Garden, and, as last year, will be arranged and conducted by MVG members, followed by a picnic in the grounds. **Please let Jonathan or Rosemary know if you are thinking of coming.** More details will be given in the July newsletter, but a 12 pm service is planned.

SATURDAY – 3rd October 2009 (apologies for the incorrect date in the January newsletter)

Annual London Lunch and Reunion – RAF Club, 128, Piccadilly, London.

Details are given on P.2. If you would like to attend, please let **Hugh Chaplin** know as soon as possible:-

The Stone House, Main Road, Witney, Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire OX29 5RJ Tel: 01865 881664/07740 797124
e-mail: hugh.chaplin@gmail.com The set lunch costs £26.50 per person, (vegetarian option available if booked) and cheques should be sent to **Rosemary by 4th September 2009** – payable to:- **Mrs R. Fell Volunteers Bench Fund,**

SUNDAY – 8th November 2009

Remembrance Sunday – Service and March Past at the Cenotaph, Whitehall.

Details will be given later.

MVG SUBSCRIPTIONS 2009 – 2010

Please may I remind you that your annual subscription is **now due**. Cheques for **£15 per family** should be made payable to:-
Mrs. R. Fell, Volunteers Bench Fund

A very big thank you to all those members who have already paid their subscriptions for 2009-10, and added a donation to MVG funds. It is much appreciated. Receipts for subscriptions will not be sent unless requested, but donations will be acknowledged. Overseas members **MAY** pay in their own currency (at the current exchange rate) – if they cannot pay in sterling. If you are experiencing difficulties with huge bank charges when converting other currency into sterling, please let me know, and we may be able to work out a solution.

N.B. To all Australian members (MVG Australia)

If you are paying with a sterling cheque, please send it directly to me as above. If you cannot pay in sterling, please contact John Pollock (Group Secretary for Australia) and send him \$Aus 35. He will collect all subs in Aus dollars and change the total amount into sterling. John's details are on the July – Oct 2008 list of members – e-mail: rosspoll@iimetro.com.au

MEMBERSHIP LIST 2009 – 2010

The new list of members will be sent out with the July newsletter. Please would you let me have any changes of address, telephone numbers, or e-mail addresses **before** the list comes out. Every effort is made to make the list as accurate and detailed as possible. If there are any amendments or additions you would like to make to your entry, again, would you please let me know in good time.

CONTACTS

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

SANDY LINCOLN. For contacts with other Volunteers and Volunteer Children

19, Burke Street, Harrogate, Yorkshire HG1 4NR. E-mail: antulincol@googlemail.com Tel: 01423 500351

HUGH CHAPLIN. For the MVG London Lunch. Tel: 01865 881664 / 07740 797124

The Stone House, Main Road, Witney, Stanton Harcourt, Oxon OX20 5RJ. E-mail: hugh.chaplin@gmail.com

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

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

**MALAYAN VOLUNTEERS GROUP 2008 – 2009
NEW MEMBERS JANUARY - APRIL 2009**

ARCHER, Bernice.

Thorn Barton, College Road, Lansdown, Bath BA1 5RU

Tel: 01225 311980 E-mail: bernice@barcher.free-online.co.uk

Author of, "The Internment of Western Civilians under the Japanese 1941 – 1945", and Researcher into Civilian Internees in the Far East.

BUNNEY, Elizabeth (nee PEALL).

A "Schoolship Kid"

5, Penistone Street, Greenwood, Western Australia 6024

Tel: 08 9247 3374 E-mail: Elizabeth.binney@bigpond.com

Daughter of 2nd Lt. Richard Harcourt **PEALL 2/FMSVF**. He was the KL rep. for Harrison, **Barker & Co. Ltd.** My mother Isabel and I went to Perth (WA) on holiday in June 1941 to visit the maternal grandparents – and missed the hideous evacuation. Richard was killed in action, Singapore 15/2/42. Isabel re-married in 1947 – I am the step-daughter of John **CRICHTON**, Mansfield & Co. Singapore, who was also a Volunteer, but interned as a Civilian in Changi, as he was in the office trying to keep records of Evacuees when the Capitulation came into effect.

GODDARD, Jan (nee HUNT).

Evacuated on the "Orion" & a "Schoolship Kid"

50, Northumberland Road, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 6HB

Tel: 01926 339353 E-mail: jgoddard@btinternet.com

Daughter of Staff **HUNT** who worked for Malayan Railways. Evacuated with my mother and baby brother to Perth on the "Orion" 31-12-41. Family returned to Malaya 1947 and left in 1958.

HUMPHREY, Maurice.

58, St. David's Drive, Scawsby, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN5 8NF

Tel: 01302 785974

Served in the Royal Air Force 22 ½ years 1955-1977. Far East Service – Singapore/Malaya 1956-1959 and Singapore/Borneo 1963-1964 NMBVA and MVG member.

JOHNSTON, Ian.

23, Parkstone Road, Leicester, Leicestershire LE5 1NP

E-mail: anihadass@tiscali.co.uk

MOGGIE, Elizabeth.

4, Lorong Jarak Kanan, Damansara Heights, 50490 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Tel: 603 2095 0937 E-mail: Elizabeth.moggie@gmail.com

Friends of the family of the late Revd. Geoffrey Mowat. Hon. Council Member of 'Badan Warisan Malaysia' (The Heritage of Malaysia Trust)

AMENDMENTS TO 2008 – 2009 LIST of MEMBERS

CHAPLIN, Hugh & Elspeth – Please add the following information to the current list of members.

Edward Chaplin's Diary can be read on the MVG Website under "Diary" Section. It can be opened using the password "guthries". If anyone would like more information, please contact Hugh or Elizabeth.

Please amend the information given on the list of new members for Oct 2008 – Jan 2009 for

CORNER, John.

Evacuated on the "Orion"

22, Myriong Avenue, Vermont South, Victoria 3133, Australia.

Tel: 61 3 9802 1091 E-mail: astley22@bigpond.net.au

Born in Singapore at the General Hospital 3/1/41. Christened in St. Andrew's Cathedral. **Mother and I** evacuated on the S.S Orion on 31/12/41 – arriving Melbourne 11/1/1942. Father, E.J.H. **Corner**, Assistant Director of the Straits Settlements Botanic Gardens 1929 – 1942. My Godfather was William **Birtwistle**, Director of Fisheries from 1929 – 1942.

FORMAN, Joan – Please change address given on list of new members for Oct 2008 – Jan 2009

2/2a, Antony Street, Palmyra, Western Australia 6157

Tel: (08) 9339 1782 E-mail: forjoan4@bigpond.com

LINDNER, Gerald – Please amend Postcode on list of new members for Oct 2008 – Jan 2009

Powys House, Church Street, Ruyton-XI-Towns, Shrewsbury SY4 1LA

A Memorial to the Malayan Volunteer Forces

by Elizabeth Moggie

Perhaps the best way to begin this account is to explain how I came to be present at the unveiling of the Memorial Plaque to the Malayan Volunteer Forces at Changi Museum, Singapore, on 12 September 2008.

Some members will remember the Rev Canon Geoffrey Mowat and his wife Louise. He was last attached to St Mary's Cathedral (1979-82), but his association with Malaysia goes back to his appointment as District Officer Alor Gajah in 1940. Geoffrey and Louise lived in the DO's bungalow (it was still the DO's bungalow when Geoffrey pointed it out to me a few years ago) until the Japanese advance saw Louise being evacuated from Singapore and Geoffrey serving as a Corporal in the Straits Settlements Volunteer Forces.

Even after retirement to England the Mowats were frequent visitors to Malaysia until 2005, but Louise died in December 2007 and Geoffrey in May 2008. Their daughter Alison and her husband Crofton kindly invited me to accompany them on a trip to Singapore for the unveiling of the plaque. We were joined there by a Mowat granddaughter, Eleanor, and her fiancé, Chris.

A Tribute by the Malayan Volunteers Group

The plaque was presented by the Malayan Volunteers Group (MVG) whose members nowadays are mostly the children, grand children and friends of Volunteers.

Also present was an informal group who call themselves "Malay Children" – though, as their leader Marilyn told me, none of them is Malay! They are the children of former British planters, miners etc who meet regularly for lunch, eat Nasi Goreng and Gula Malacca, and talk with great fondness of their childhoods. Some were from Australia, one from South Africa.



The plaque was donated by the MVG and the event was generously hosted by the Changi Museum. We all met up on the evening of Thursday 11 September for an introductory talk and dinner at the Singapore Cricket Club overlooking the Padang and next to the former Town Hall where the official surrender of the Japanese forces in the area took place on 12 September 1945. I met three of the local-born Volunteers who, though in their mid 80s, were very vibrant fit men.

There was Jimmy Chew, ex RAF, who was taken prisoner in Java; George Prior of the Royal Artillery, who survived the Siam-Burma Railway; and George Hesse who "walked out of Changi after three days because I didn't like the food"!

He later joined Force 136 and operated in the Kajang-Semenyih Area. Though he now lives in Perth, he was brought up in KL as his father owned Caxton Stationery which was until a few years ago situated in Market Square (Medan Pasar).

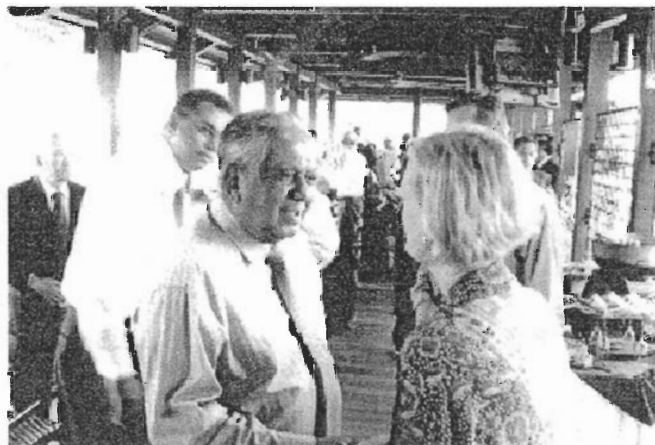


George Hesse.

On Friday 12 September we gathered at the Changi Museum. A number of Singapore military officials were present and the High Commissions of Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia were all represented. At 3.00 p.m. the President of Singapore, Mr S. R. Nathan (whom some will remember as a former High Commissioner to Malaysia) arrived and the ceremony began. Mr. A. Jeyathurai (Jeya), the Director of the Changi Museum, gave a Welcome Address in which he told us of the setting up of the Museum and spoke about the "culture of remembrance" and admitted that Singapore had been "slow to recognize our heroes".

A Survivor Speaks

There followed a talk by Mohd Razeen Chan, Assistant Curator, on the newly published book by Peter Rhodes, "To Japan to Lay a Ghost". The author, an Englishman, who was present, had been in the Artillery and fought in battles that took place in Northern Malaya. He was taken prisoner in Singapore and later taken to Japan where he worked as a labourer in a coal mine on Kyushu. The book is an account of his experiences and how he came to terms with the memory of his captivity. His daughter Janet then spoke on what it meant to grow up as the daughter of a former P.O.W. From his wheelchair, Peter presented a copy of his book to the President. He is generously donating all proceeds from sales to the Changi Museum.



L to R: Jimmy Chew, A. Jeyathurai, Director of the Changi Museum, S. R. Nathan, President of Singapore, Elizabeth Moggie

The next talk was by Brian Farrell, Deputy Head, Department of History, National University of Singapore, in which he traced history of the Volunteer Companies from Victorian times to the comprehensive network of formations created to meet the Japanese threat. Probably about 20,000 volunteers served in all. He noted that the initial Volunteer Companies such as the Eurasian and Chinese Rifle companies tended to be community based. By the time of World War II they included all races in such formations as the Local Defence Corps of 1940 and the Malayan Auxiliary Air and Auxiliary Naval Forces.

He paid tribute to such Singaporean Legends as David Marshall and Goh Kheng Swee who had both served as Volunteers. He noted the great tragedy that here were men who knew the country and spoke the languages and could have been of great assistance to the regular forces. He revealed that after the war even Arthur Percival (General Officer Commanding (GOC) Malaya at the time of the surrender of Singapore to the Japanese) had admitted when writing of the Volunteers that the military "had not been able to use them to best effect"

Members who knew Professor Mary Turnbull who died in early September (a few years ago she gave a talk at Badan Warisan on her experiences as one of the first women members of the Malayan Civil Service) will be pleased to know that Dr. Farrell paid tribute to her. In a review of an earlier book by him, Mary Turnbull had remarked that he had neglected the role of the Volunteers and Dr Farrell said that this was his opportunity to make good that omission.

A Testimony to Permanent Affection

Next to speak was Rosemary Fell, Secretary of the MVG. She spoke of her pride in her father, a former headmaster, who had died as a POW on the Burma-Siam Railway.

In 2006, the MVG had contributed towards two memorial benches that were placed at the Far Eastern Section of the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, in England (Rev. Geoffrey Mowat officiated at that occasion).



L to R: Alison Brierly (daughter of Geoffrey Mowat), A. Jeyathurai, the Director of the Changi Museum, Eleanor Hodge (granddaughter of Geoffrey Mowat), her fiancé Chris, Crofton Brierly, Elizabeth Moggie [this photo is taken at the Singapore Cricket Club]

As more money was collected than was needed it was decided to have a wooden plaque made to the memory of the Volunteers and placed at Changi Museum.

The President of Singapore was then invited to unveil the plaque. A bugler sounded the Last Post, followed by one minute's silence then Reveille. The official ceremony was ended and we all adjourned to the Museum Café for afternoon tea, renewing and making new friendships.

It was a wonderful occasion and a testimony to the permanent affection that Malaysia and Singapore have for those who lived and worked here. Children and now grand children were gathered to honour the memory of those who served and some who made the final sacrifice as members of the Malayan Volunteer Forces.

The Plaque Reads thus.

Malayan Volunteer Forces

*The emblems from left to right are:
Straits Settlements Volunteer Force
Federated Malay States Volunteer Force
Kelantan Volunteer Force
Johore Volunteer Engineers
Kedah Volunteer Force*

Note: The Changi Museum situated at 1000 Upper Changi Road is well worth a visit. It has interesting exhibits on daily life during World War II. The Museum is open daily from 9.30 am to 5.00 pm and can be reached by a combination of MRT and bus.

A riveting tale of imprisonment in Changi, escape, recapture and imprisonment in Pudu, participation in a Japanese propaganda film, experiences on the infamous Siam – Burma Railway and eventual repatriation may be read in Geoffrey Mowat's book "Rainbow Through the Rain", available in the Badan Warisan gift shop.