

APA KHABAR

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Patron: The Duchess of Norfolk

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THE MVG MUST PERSEVERE WITH ITS AIM TO GAIN RECOGNITION FOR THE VOLUNTEERS WORLDWIDE

As MVG members gathered in the FEPOW Memorial Building at the NMA at the beginning of May, to attend the presentation of the Volunteer badges, the Hessian covered board adjacent to the beam where the regimental shields are displayed appeared to be still available. The MVG had asked for the use of this board for

information about the Malayan volunteers. As reported in April, this request was refused on the grounds that it would "clutter" the FEPOW story. The MVG felt that more information about the role of the Volunteers in the Malayan Campaign and in captivity should be sent to **Sir Henry Every**, explaining why the Volunteers deserve special mention. To date, the MVG letter, sent on 26th May 2009 has been acknowledged, but no reply has been received.

The NMA continues to offer its support to the MVG. A request to present the 5 Volunteer badges to the Arboretum for display on the walls of the Arbour Restaurant, has been granted. Plans for the board with the 5 Volunteer badges will be given in the October newsletter. The Visitor Centre and Restaurant is currently being enlarged and refurbished – see **Keith Andrew's** following report – and the new restaurant will have regimental badges on display, with the Volunteer badges included.

We salute **Joanna Lumley** on her remarkable success in gaining recognition for the Gurkhas and in obtaining residential status for those who wish to stay in this country. With her battle cry and determination to overcome all the odds, the MVG could well take a leaf out of her book, or find someone like Joanna to bat for our cause.

Other projects, on which we were hoping to report, have made very little progress. We have received the application forms from the Charities Commission. However, changes to the way in which Groups, such as the MVG, can apply for charitable status were made in April this year. One criterion was the level of income received annually, and on this rule alone, the MVG does not qualify at present. However, this does not mean that the application cannot be made, and that charitable status is beyond our reach. It may have to be postponed until next year, and this may affect the way in which MVG Australia proceeds with its application to become Incorporated. We thank **John Pollock** for all his work towards setting this up.

Disappointingly, there is nothing to report from Malaysia, to date, on the progress made to restore the War Memorials in KL and Malacca.

Those members who receive the Researching FEPOW History Group newsletters will know that the Imperial War Museum North, which is housed in Manchester, is holding an exhibition from May 2009 – January 2010 entitled "Captured – The Extraordinary Life of Prisoners of War". It includes the experiences of British and Commonwealth prisoners and civilian internees in Europe and the Far East. The website is given on P. 14.

We are sad to announce the death of **Peter S. Rhodes**, whose book "*To Japan to Lay a Ghost*", was officially launched at the presentation of the MVG Memorial Board to the Changi Museum on 12/9/08. We send his daughter, Janet, our sympathies.

The MVG would also like to offer its congratulations to **Col. Piers Storie-Pugh** on his award of the OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. As the Guest Speaker at the Annual Lunch in October, the MVG looks forward to meeting him then.

STOP PRESS: We are delighted to announce that The Duchess of Norfolk has agreed to become Patron of the MVG.

STAKEHOLDERS' MEETING at the NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM – MONDAY April 27th 2009

Report by Keith Andrews

The purpose of this meeting was to outline the conceptions only for the future of the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas in Staffordshire. These conceptions are still to be approved.

The NMA has seen an increasing number of visitors since the dedication of the Armed Forces Memorial. Originally set up to cater for around 75,000 visitors a year, between October 2007 to October 2008, 300,000 visitors passed through their doors. It became obvious that the NMA had to somehow expand to cater for that number of visitors.

To this end, the Future Foundations Appeal has been launched, with His Royal Highness Prince William as its patron, to raise £8 million in a three year campaign with the aim to make this happen.

This is a long term project and will cover the next 25 years, and will see the site double in size long term, and cover both side of the existing entrance road to the NMA.

The original building at the entrance will be retained, but there will be a 2-story building either near it or alongside. The other facilities will increase in size as follows:-

Restaurant by two and half times.

Shop by three times.

Education by five times.

The first area of expansion will be the site where Lafarge are still working; this is the area behind the MVG Memorial Garden. This area will have two lakes and is expected to be handed over in 2012 and the NMA would then border the A38. The fields' area the other side of the entrance road to the NMA is expected to be handed over in 2014, again from Lafarge. This area will

house areas of parking to cater for the increase in visitor numbers.

The plan is also to have an official well designed entrance to the NMA, and this may mean some alterations to the existing road that leads to the entrance that is now used.

This is a very big undertaking with woodland areas and the use of water features and horticulture to fully develop the NMA as a true place of remembrance.

Assurances were given that any changes or proposed movement to a particular stakeholder's memorial site will not take place without consultation due to this being a very emotional undertaking.

The FEPOW Building will stay where it is, that much I know, and I assume the other Far East Memorials will remain around it, but this was a meeting to talk about the concept and not the detail

It is also envisaged that perhaps another three memorials along the lines but not the size of the Armed Forces Memorial be set out around the site to give certain areas a central focus, but again no details at this stage.

Having been at the meeting, listening to all that was said and seeing a plan of the concept, the National Memorial Arboretum will in the future truly become a worthy place of National Remembrance and education.

This broadly is what was set out, over time these plans may be redefined or changed.

[Editor: We thank Keith very much for representing the MVG at this meeting and for giving up his time to attend.]

PRESENTATION OF THE VOLUNTEER BADGES TO THE FEPOW MEMORIAL BUILDING – 4TH May 2009

A group of 18 MVG members and friends collected in the Visitor Centre at the National Memorial Arboretum on a cold and breezy Bank Holiday Monday, the 4th May 2009, for a warming cup of coffee. In small groups we made our way down to the FEPOW Building – some via the MVG Memorial Garden, and others directly to the Building for a look round before the presentation. Shortly after 12p.m. everyone had gathered under the beam in front of the upstairs archival section, and **Jonathan Moffatt** gave a brief introduction before the 2 Volunteer badges were handed over to **Keith Andrews** by **Sandy Lincoln**. After a vote of thanks, Keith invited everyone to look at the records and books in the upstairs gallery, and gave us an explanation of how the filing system works, and how one would use the information for research purposes. He also reported on the meeting he had attended at the NMA, on behalf of the MVG, the previous Monday, 27th April 2009, when the future plans for the Arboretum for the next 25 years had been unveiled. **[See above report].**

Despite the weather, we set up our picnic lunch under the covered walkway, and enjoyed a variety of delicious quiches and salads followed by cakes and other sweet delights, amid much conversation.

We are pleased to have the SSVF and the FMSVF now represented in the FEPOW Building.



THE DISBANDING OF THE MALAY UNITS OF THE FMSVF

Following the article on P.2 of the 18th edition of A.K. about the problems surrounding the Malay units in the FMSVF by a Malay member of the 4th (Pahang) Battalion, extracts from the official reports by Brigadier Moir and M.J. Hayward of the MCS are given below:-

Brigadier Moir – 1/FMSVF

“About 28th December desertions among the Malays became numerous – it must be remembered that owing to

the withdrawal, the majority of the Malays had left their families and homes behind, and their kampongs had been occupied by the enemy – the deserters took with them their rifles and equipment and there was a considerable shortage of both.... After due consideration had been given to the problem it was decided to offer the Asiatic personnel of the Battalion:

- a) to return to their kampongs, having previously handed in their rifles and equipment and been paid up to date.
- b) to serve on and remain with the Battalion.

These terms were offered on December 31st and the majority of Malays accepted alternative (a). There were of course outstanding exceptions. The Chinese on the other hand practically all chose to remain with the colours.”

2 & 3/FMSVF

“Since the withdrawal of the 12th January would entail the total abandonment of the Federated Malay States it was regretfully decided to offer to all Asiatic Personnel of the FMSVF in Port Dickson the same terms as had been offered to the 1st Battalion on the 31st December. Many Malays – in fact, the large majority, handed in their arms and returned to their homes. On the other hand, practically all the Chinese and most of the Eurasians and Indians remained loyal to the colours and fought on. It is somewhat difficult to condemn altogether the attitude of the Malays as they had their homes and womenfolk in the FMS and the Malay is a very home-loving and family man. Those who did remain are deserving of great credit, as in spite of the attitude of their comrades and family ties they elected to fight on with their units. Moreover, owing to the FMS Government’s refusal to mobilize the Volunteers there had been little opportunity to instill into them that pride of regiment and esprit de corps which is so essential to hold together a unit in spite of all diversity.”

M.J. Hayward MCS – 4/FMSCF:-

It was the evening of the 9th January, just one month after the Japanese had landed in Kelantan. We made an uneventful trip to Mentakab, but news had come in that our Volunteers at Kuala Krau, a Platoon of Lipis Malays, had deserted with their rifles when Abel took over command from Osman. I was not surprised and told the Penghulu Ulu Cheka that I would come and fetch them though I never intended to follow them up. They were not the first refugees in Pahang history to go to that kampong. Brahim, my batman, was loathe to come with me to Temerloh and was terrified when Mentakab was bombed that morning. The rice store and the A.R.P. Headquarters were hit, and some Chinese sheltering in a concrete drain were killed. The Royal Engineers made as much noise blowing up the railway bridge and I had to spend my time fishing the Rest House staff out of the jungle nearby or we should have had no lunch.

There were some touching incidents before we left Jerantut. The Penghulu Tebing Tinggi brought me some fine wicker baskets, a gift from a group of local aborigines wishing us victory over the Japanese. We sold them to Malays and sent the proceeds to the War Fund. The older men were vehement in their denunciation of the modern Malay youths who hoped to get at the Chinese if the Japanese arrived. “We pray daily for a British victory”, declared the Imam at Jerantut Ferry. “What else can we do?” We heard how they suffered later. When the Japanese had decided to use no more prisoners for work on the railway line to Burma, they called for labour from Malays. Each State was given a quota according to the 1931 population figures. Each Mukim was then called on to produce a quota, and one male in three was sent. Even if one were an infant in arms and one an old man of seventy, someone had to go. So the youths of sixteen and seventeen were sent and died in scores. They got the pay that was promised them but not the food to spend it on. Well-to-do Chinese doctors were forcibly sent uncountried and told that if they did not go they would be sent as coolies. One Chinese was dragged from his bed in the middle of the night because they were one short on the quota.”

CHIN PENG'S RETURN TO MALAYSIA DENIED

Chin Peng's return denied



On 26th May 2009 it was reported in the Straits Times that Chin Peng’s final legal appeal to be allowed to return to Malaysia has been denied. The one-time boss of the outlawed Communist Party of Malaysia (CPM), left the country in 1961 after a 12-year insurgency (1948- 1960). Some members of the government feel that the 85 year-old should be allowed to return on humanitarian grounds – others feel that his return would be an insult to the families of police, soldiers and irregulars who died at his hands. While he is still living in exile in southern Thailand, his children, sisters and brothers are all Malaysian citizens, although his nationality is still in dispute. The CPM signed a peace agreement with the Malaysian Government in 1989, and pledged loyalty to the Malaysian Government. Born Ong Boon Hua in northern Malaya in 1923, Ching Peng won the Order of the British Empire and 2 medals for helping the British fight the Japanese during WW2.

K.G.A. DOHOO MCS
by Anne Hinam – his daughter.

Our father was Kenneth Dohoo, more usually referred to as K.G.A. Dohoo in those more formal days before the indiscriminate use of Christian names. (The family is English and has been as far back as the surname can be traced.) He was born in Hornchurch in November 1906, was educated at the City of London School, and read Greats at Exeter College, Oxford. He joined the Malayan Civil Service and after a short course in Law and the Malayan language went out as a Cadet in March 1929. He held various positions over the next eight years – Assistant Judge, Magistrate, Assistant Adviser, District Officer. A colleague of his in the 30's was John Falconer, who survived Changi and after the war became British Adviser, Johore. He remained a friend of our family, and lived to the age of over 90.



Our father married our mother, Beryl Beck, in April 1938, during his second leave. Jean was born in Penang in April 1939 (our parents were living in Bukit Mertajam) and I was born in Johore Bahru in October 1940 (when the family was living in Segamat).

Members of the MCS were allowed six months' leave every four years. It was normal for the wife and children to return "home" three months earlier and go back to Malaya three months later in order to benefit from a full year in a healthier climate. In 1941 it was not possible to return to Britain because of the war, so in August our mother, Jean and I, with our Chinese amah, sailed to Australia on the Charon. In Perth our mother found a house to rent and our father joined us in November.

News from Malaya soon became serious and our father made arrangements to be flown back to Singapore (by, we assume, the Australian Air Force). He left early on Christmas Day morning. During the next seven weeks he wrote frequently to our mother. The first letter is started at "Some pub or other, Port Headland". They had proceeded in short hops up the west coast of Australia, with tea and sandwiches at Geraldton, down at Carnarvon for lunch, tea

and biscuits at Onslow, five minutes at Roebourne, and on to Port Headland for the night. "What a Christmas Day, my darling, what a Christmas Day". There is a final paragraph from Darwin, and "I'll probably let you have a line from Surabaya."

The next letter is from Singapore, started on December 30th. "As you will have heard on the wireless the Japs, realizing the importance of my return from leave yesterday, have started on this place." He describes air raid sirens and the sound of bombing, but tries to reassure our mother that the situation is not dangerous. He stays at Raffles for the first couple of days, doing "a special job in the Treasury, very monotonous and boring but urgent and important."

"Tomorrow I am going out to live in suburbia. Inevitably when in a few days I am through with my present job I have no idea what I shall be doing, perhaps going right away from Singapore." He mentions "a lot of women folk around who have got away with little more than they are wearing.....A good crowd of folk thrown out from their homes, the alerts, a distinct sartorial deterioration (I always wear shorts to the office), everyone doing two jobs, his own and something special.....a most bizarre atmosphere..... it is rather like trying to describe a dream."

A day or two later: "Just off to Segamat to get car and clothes. More later....."



Kenneth with daughter Jean.

7.15pm. Not so much later as I had thought – got to the station and found the train is cancelled for tonight so I shall have to go on living in shorts.”

Soon he is helping with the evacuation of women and children. “It makes me want to shriek with anger or weep to think of all the glorious happiness that men and women can and ought to enjoy and then to see the dull misery caused by war – men nearly dead with fatigue, women nearly cracking under the strain and children terrified of the unknown.” “I have vague memories of giving your address to lots of folk whom I didn’t know, but anyhow you will be seeing friends. I need not ask you to be kind – but there has been and will be lots of suffering by Malaysians.”

11th Jan. Segamat. “I am back in my old haunts, staying in Jordan’s house. I came up on Friday night to get the car and a bit of *barang* and here I stay for a bit. There is work to be done here and, with grace, I hope to do it. Don’t worry, dearest. If I go out I shall have finished in doing my life’s work: if, as the chances overwhelmingly are, I come through safe and sound, you will share my pride in having stood my ground and not run away.”.....“But yet, in a queer, perverted sort of way, I am enjoying it, living absolutely keyed up with the whole of one’s beautiful settled world crashing around one’s ears. Please don’t think I am mad...”

17th Jan. “I have the car with some of our possessions, not many alas, and the car still goes, though the ignition is a bit dicky.....I was 8 miles away when our old town got some eggs laid on it the other day. 4 in de B T’s garden and one in the bathroom so the house is not quite its old self! But if when the planes come over you lie flat, or better, get into a trench, the danger is very small.

I have a queer, but not uninteresting, job, have had 7hrs sleep in the last two nights and got my first food for 22hrs at 11 this morning.”

Continued on the **18th**. “We ought to know soon the result. If it is good, as it will be, there is a man’s job to get the country straight again – the destruction is appalling and it is grim to see civilization falling to pieces....I am now about to have my second breakfast in ½ hour!

25th Jan. “A pleasant morning in a pleasant house south of Johore.” Continued the next day: “This morning we are off out, with the possibility, not to say the hope, of meeting some of our yellow friends, but I would sooner be doing that than crouching in a drain in Singapore with no chance of retaliation. The situation here is pretty grim and Churchill says it will get worse and you may guess what that means.”

28th Jan. Singapore. “Busy, very busy, one night bed at four after driving since 9.30, the next night “bed” (on a concrete floor) at two.....I can’t tell you what I am up to but I have done a few things that might have been useful – and in war you must waste 99% of effort to get success over 1%.....I saw Sandy (our dog) not long ago and can only hope that Booth put a bullet through him before he left his place.”

7th Feb. Singapore. “I can now tell you that when I went up to the old home to collect *barang* I stayed on doing jobs which my knowledge of the country enabled me to do and all the way back I was on this sort of outdoor jobwork.”

And a p.s: “Just off to my new job. It will enable me to indulge one of my hobbies. Not exactly safe but there is not much safety anywhere on the island these merry days.”

This was the final letter. After the war our mother was told that at the Fall of Singapore our father had enlisted on one of the small boats engaged in evacuation work. Quite recently we have learned that our father was on the passenger list of the *Mary Rose*, a forty-foot motor launch skippered by Captain George Mulock and carrying several officials, including Lt. Col. John Dalley. This suggests that our father may have been working for Dalforce in the final few weeks. In the Banka Straits the *Mary Rose* was captured by the Japanese and escorted to Muntok Harbour. Those on board were taken prisoner and apparently there was some doubt as to whether our father should be classified as civilian or military. We have now learned of a list compiled in Changi of the whereabouts of prisoners in other camps, on which our father is down as “K.G.A. Dohoo MCS RNVR Palembang”. This is the first time we have heard of any naval connection – unless the stoker story is true. Anyway, the Japanese decided to classify our father as civilian, and his profession was recorded as **Tide Waiter**. In the process of translation and retranslation **Servant** must have turned into **Waiter**. Perhaps somebody with knowledge of the Japanese language can suggest how **Civil** became **Tide**. Soon our father was moved to Palembang, to the old prison, where the men were mostly Dutch and Indonesian. We do not know when or how our mother learned that he was a prisoner, but she received one card from him, sent in March 1943, on which he says he is in the best of health and time is passing quickly. And with the publication in 2007 of the diaries of a fellow prisoner, American journalist **William H. McDougall Jr.**, we now have detailed information about life and conditions in the camp. At Palembang the prisoners organized classes and lectures and morale seems to have been reasonably high. Our father is mentioned in the diaries.

March 26 1943: “Attended my first session of debating society.....Next week Malay Civil Service Officer K.G.A. Dohoo proposes ‘That the privately owned newspaper is an evil that should be eliminated from the state’. I will oppose.”

April 2 1943: “Tonight debated with K.G.A. Dohoo on his resolution which I opposed. Won debate by score 29 to 11. He presented his resolution well, eloquently & without notes.”

In September 1943 the prisoners were moved to Muntok. The area was infested with malarial mosquitoes, food became even more inadequate, and death rates increased. The camp ran a hospital, there were doctors amongst the prisoners, but no medicines were provided. Enthusiasm for entertainments seems to have waned as the grim struggle for survival took priority over all else.

McDougall's diary entry **Oct 26 1944**: "Last night died four men, including K.G.A. Dohoo, 38, British civil servant in Malaya, a real gentleman & to me personally the most tragic death yet in camp. Dohoo died of malnutrition & malaria – lack of food and lack of quinine, as so many others now are dying daily. His story is the story of the British community here. Bombed, shelled, wounded, sunk in Malacca Straits, swam for life & won, landed & interned penniless, clothesless. Never had a cent except infinitesimal loans in camp, uncomplaining & cheerful, tolerant, cultured – but one of those persons constitutionally inept at almost every practical aspect of living. Completely unable to successfully care for himself. Septic sores & chronic malaria, coupled with malnutrition, sapped his physical reserve until he collapsed a few days ago, was brought into hospital & died. Always active in camp life, always willing to work on many jobs, but never succeeded at any of them. He just couldn't work with his hands without spilling something, or dropping something or burning the rice. But he was (a) man other men loved because he was a genuine gentleman – heart and soul. I was with him when he died at 8.45 p.m. after 24 hours of coma."

When the European war was drawing to a close, our mother booked a passage to England on a cargo boat and we sailed home in May 1945, via the Suez Canal. We stayed for a while with our father's parents in London, then went to Devon to our mother's parents. I can remember that we talked about "When Daddy comes home."

Just before V J Day our mother was informed by the Colonial Office of our father's death.

When our mother died in November 1992, shortly before her 84th birthday, we found she had left a collection of letters for us to read: letters of condolences she had received, letters our father had written both before he joined us in Australia and after he returned to Malaya and also letters from men in the same camps who had survived the war, with whom she had managed to make contact.

With the letters we found her poem.

My love was one who came but could not stay,
My love was mine but for a little space,
Yet Lord, in the abundance of Thy Grace,
We found a love that never can decay.
Tho' I may never hear his voice again,
Nor take his weary head upon my breast,
Yet I am not bereaved nor in pain,
Possessing all that ever I possessed.
For, loving as we loved, we overcame
The earthly love of lips and hands and eyes,
Distilling passion to a rarer flame
And all eternity before us lies.
Eternity together – oh my dear,
There is no separation even here.

FAR EASTERN WAR DAMAGE CLAIMS

A reply to Sir Roger Moon's article – by Stephanie Hess

Sir Roger Moon's observations in the April edition of *Apa Khabar* on the post war care for Volunteers in Britain prompted me to explore a box of my grandfather's papers which caught my attention a while ago. Amongst the papers there is a bundle of documentation covering his efforts in the decade following the war to claim some kind of war damage compensation. Gran'pa, J.B. Dunne, went out to Singapore in 1928 to work for the firm Gestetner. He was a member of the Singapore Volunteer Corps, fought during the siege, was taken prisoner and was a POW in Singapore and Japan. After the war, my grandfather returned to Singapore in an attempt to resume the old life, but that was impossible. His home and all its contents had been destroyed, he lost four years of his life, had missed his children growing up, and he was to suffer various POW related ailments to the end of his days. As I sorted through the letters, forms and newspaper cuttings I was interested to follow the convoluted, and no doubt frustrating, journey he was sent on as he was directed from one Government office to another, having to submit new claims at each turn. The Malayan War Damage Commission in Kuala Lumpur eventually awarded a portion of his Private Chattels Claim after six years of continued effort on my grandfather's part. He was less fortunate with his attempts to claim compensation in Britain as a member of the Singapore Volunteers. The main reason for his ineligibility, he was told, was that he ".....did not serve in a Regiment based in the United Kingdom – but in the Singapore Volunteers....."

[Editor: A full version of Stephanie's findings will be included in the October newsletter, with copies of letters and newspaper cuttings. It makes very interesting reading.]

ORION AND THE EVACUATION OF PASSENGERS FROM SINGAPORE ON 31/12/1941
Researched by John Corner

I am writing a biography of my late father **Professor EJH Corner** and as part of this will include something about the **Orion** and that journey to Australia, departing Singapore near to midnight on December 31st 1941. I hope to title the book "**Corner san**" – a change from the title given in the last MVG article – and I intend publication to be in Singapore.

The **Orion** journey, that included the Singapore evacuation, began in Avonmouth (Bristol, UK) on August 6th 1941 and terminated in Glasgow on March 11th 1942. Information about the **Orion** has been taken from:- "*Emigrant Ships to Luxury Liners, Passenger Ships to Australia and New Zealand 1945-1999*", written by Peter Plowman and published by Rosenberg Publishing Pty Ltd., NSW.

Orion picture courtesy of Don Hazeldine and "*Passenger Ships of the Orient Line*", by Neil McCart.

Orion was launched on December 7th 1934 and built to the same hull design as the **Strathmore** but with a different superstructure, and only one mast. Her tonnage was 23,696; she measured 665ft x 82ft and her service speed was 20 knots.

The Duke of Gloucester performed the launching ceremony but he was in Brisbane (Australia) at the time! He pressed a button that sent an electric signal around the world to Barrow in Furness that triggered the launching process.

She was completed in August 1935 and was the first British ship to have air-conditioning, although it was only in the dining rooms.



She gave accommodation for 486 first class and 653 tourist class passengers, however for cruises, to be the main part of her service, her design allowed for 600 passengers in a single class. Her first cruise was to Norway followed by the Mediterranean.

On September 29th 1935 **Orion** sailed from Tilbury on her maiden voyage to Australia and she created a favourable impression at every port of call. The only problem was smuts falling on her decks and to remedy this her yellow (buff) funnel was heightened in October 1936.

She alternated line voyages with cruises out of Britain and Australia. In 1937 she was joined by her sister ship **Orcades**. Both liners were requisitioned within weeks of the outbreak of war to be troopships.

Orion was in the South Atlantic in a troop convoy bound for Singapore when, on September 15th 1941, she rammed the escorting battleship **HMS Revenge**. She had a large hole torn in her bow but was able to limp into Cape Town for temporary repairs before continuing on to Singapore where repairs were completed at the new and 'high-tec' dockyard.

Here is an account of that collision with **Revenge** - no doubt one of many!

On Tuesday September 2nd 1941, at 11pm, in a position 4 deg 12' W, 10 deg 36' S, the whole convoy had just resumed a zigzag course. The battleship **HMS Revenge** was directly ahead of **Orion** when, 29 minutes later, her steering failed and she swung to starboard. The officer of the watch on board **Revenge** ordered full astern both engines and this put her directly into **Orion's** path. At exactly 11.35pm **Orion** collided with **Revenge's** stern, causing considerable damage to **Orion's** bows.....civil labour at the docks (Keppel Harbour) had been severely disrupted by Japanese bombing raids but fortunately on December 31st **Orion** was ready for sea. Her **Captain Arthur Lewis Owens** was later criticized by the owners for being 'laconic' in his report of this collision, but after he had embarked wounded troops and over 1000 civilian evacuees **Orion** sailed into the dangerous waters surrounding the island (Singapore). The voyage passed without any incidents although on January 5th (1942) the day before she arrived in Fremantle, a baby girl, **Margaret K Johnson**, was born on board.

Orion arrived in Fremantle on January 6th 1942 and Melbourne on January 11th. She then sailed on to Sydney. In Melbourne the Boarding Inspector (**S.E. Gebbie - ref: 42/2/494**) wrote on 28th January 1942, "the **SS Orion** arrived at this port on the 11/1/42 having on board a large number of passengers for Melbourne and Sydney. As these people were embarked at Singapore it was impossible for the Purser to complete Forms P.2. Under the circumstances the attached lists were accepted in lieu of the usual passenger lists."

1. Names of all passengers on board vessel from Singapore for disembarkation in Australia.
2. Names of passengers disembarking at Melbourne.
3. Names & addresses of passengers (from Mr. Allan of Housing Commission) disembarking at Melbourne

I am trying to find the answers to the following questions:-

- a) How was the **Orion** chosen by the evacuees and was there a cost?
- b) Did she sail in convoy for all or at any stage of the journey to Australia?

- c) Did the passengers know, initially, that she was destined for Australia?
- d) Was she attacked – did she receive any damage?
- e) Did she put into any port on that journey, before reaching Fremantle?
- f) Another vessel sailed just before, or after, **Orion** and was lost – what was her name?

Other ships which sailed on 31st December were:-

BONTEKOE – BRITISH JUDGE – LYEMUN (Lost in E. Med 4/1/43) – MARNIX VAN St. ALDEGONDE (Lost in W. Med 6/11/43)

One ship sailed on January 1st 1942 – **MARILYSE MOLLER (Lost in E Med 1/7/42)**

IF ANY READER CAN HELP WITH INFORMATION AND CONTACTS PLEASE LET ME KNOW DIRECTLY OR VIA THE MVG.

I now have the full passenger lists but, to date, have been unable to trace the ship's log book The recollections of 16 surviving passengers (so far traced) who were on the **Orion** are as follows:-

Mrs. EJM Corner – my late mother Sheila.

My mother occasionally spoke about it to Peter, her second husband, but absolutely refused to discuss her time in Singapore. She remembers the ship being blacked out most of the time and the situation being very tense. Her account was that they were in particular fear of imminent attack by Japanese midget submarines which were known to be operation in the area. They were clearly highly dangerous waters at that time and it would be a miracle if one 'made it' as there was no escort of any kind. Where her account differs is she remembered the ship sheltering in Wellington harbour for several days to avoid these subs; possibly she confused this with Fremantle but much more likely another port actually on the journey like Batavia/Tjilitjap. I also believe that **Orion** left in convoy, as another passenger says.

Ian Richardson wrote:

The **SS Orion** was built and operated by the P&O Line and was meant for the migrant travel to and from Australia and Colonial ports in between like Colombo and Singapore. The **Orion** joined other P&O passenger vessels named **Orontes** and **Orcades**.

P&O stands for Pacific & Orient. I think their headquarter offices were in Liverpool. I don't know if P&O still exists and if so they would certainly be able to tell where the old ships' logs are kept. **Orion** was set up to take on as many as 5,000 troops. She was carrying such a number of troops bound for Singapore when she rammed another vessel off South Africa but managed to make it to the Singapore giant floating dock for repairs. This, however, points up an astonishing fact that the number of people escaping the Japanese invasion, who boarded the **Orion**, was only a fraction of what the ship was capable of handling. It is quite apparent that the passengers on the **Orion** felt this was little more than an unexpected vacation in Australia and the service aboard the ship was near normal for a cruise. The only thing much different was the annoying daily life-boat drills and the requirement to carry one's life jacket at all times. The complacency felt in Singapore by the civilian population remained in place for only another week or two when it was seen that evacuation wasn't so much a choice but a vital necessity.

The **Orion** as far as I know did not join any convoy when she left late in the evening of 31st December 1941. Vaguely remembered family history is that the **Orion** was originally intended to travel to Sydney, Melbourne and then Perth. However, Jap submarine activity targeting ships off Borneo and Philippines made passage through the Lombok Straits dangerous. The **Orion** then chose to travel through the Sunda Straits and head into the Indian Ocean to make Fremantle/Perth her first port of call. Another family memory is that the **Orion** stopped to assist survivors from a sunken vessel. How many were rescued is unknown and their names didn't appear on the ship's manifest. Maybe that was not the practice to do so.

Another passenger's memory [**Kit Seddon**] is that the **Orion** was about to enter the Sunda Straits in blacked-out conditions when a Dutch ship appeared, with all her lights ablaze, sailing out of the Straits. (Fully lighting up the ship was to make it known the vessel was from Holland, which had declared her neutrality in 1939, and at that time Japan had not attacked Indonesia – then a Dutch Protectorate). The **Orion**, in darkness, hove to, to let the Dutch ship pass by before entering the narrow Straits.

No one yet has mentioned that the **Orion** was ever attacked by Japanese aircraft or naval ships, nor did she go into a foreign port (in Indonesia) to hide out during daylight. Such details would have been recorded in **Orion's** so far untraced log book.

Kit Seddon (nee Cox) recalls:

"Auld Lang Syne being sung soon after departure suggesting it was close to midnight on 31st December 1941. She also remembers the ship being asked for total silence and blackout because a vessel had been seen, fully lit, sailing close by! **[This must have been Japanese; or was it Dutch as Ian Richardson suggests?]**

Judy Bryning said:

"Just after the ship's gangway was lifted up, the air raid siren sounded, and my father took shelter against one of the sheds on the wharf.

We left New Year's Day [**could this be right – it was the Eve?**], just as a daytime air raid was starting. Before it was every night and I used to say to my parents "Don't forget to wake me up for the air raid". We used to get under the table, dogs and all. My father used to be out watching the Jap planes caught in the search lights, because when he was a teenager he was in the Royal Flying Corps, in WW1. The anti aircraft guns were on Caldicott Hill just above the house. It was amazing that the walls and ceiling used to shake without falling in on us. The garden faced onto Bukit Timah Road. Little green trucks were driving from left to right bumper to bumper. Maybe they were going to or from Johore Bahru. The ship took only 4 days to get to Perth despite zigzagging to avoid mines. I wasn't allowed to go in the swimming pool which upset me because all the other children were in the pool. There was a rope along the handrail in all the passage ways. If the lights went out, if we got torpedoed or hit a mine, following the rope would lead us up to the deck where the life boats were. Mum didn't want me to be in bathers (Aus for swim suit) getting burnt in a boat.

Trish Niblock:

"The Captain said he was leaving the convoy of smaller boats as he was a sitting duck with x number of evacuees. All my mother ever said was that she could not swim and was terrified that we were going to be sunk as bombs were being dropped on ships...and she had two children...my sister had her seventh birthday on board and the ship's cook made her a birthday cake. You possibly went to the party?"

June Dunnett:

"I do remember that the night before my mother and I embarked on the **Orion** we spent the night sitting under palm trees. I think it was outside the Raffles Hotel. Although my mother was allowed to take two cabin trunks on board I was allowed only my teddy bear. My dolls, which were in a string bag, had to be left behind. My father did tell me that he gave them to some Chinese children. The only other memory that I have is of sitting up on deck, along with other passengers, with my life jacket on. It was broad daylight. I think I remember my mother saying that we were bombed on the voyage or, perhaps, that there was bombing near us."

Nigel Killen:

"My recollections of the **Orion** voyage when I was 9 are rather scary, perhaps because I was not very mature or perhaps because of selective amnesia from the shock of it all. I had been at boarding school, Tanglin, Cameron Highlands, when there was an outbreak of polio. We were all sent home which for me was a very comfortable officer's house at Faery Point, Changi, as my father was **Major L.O.W. Wooldridge RE**. I remember my parents listening to the radio when the Japanese invasion began and seeing bombing and flames from Singapore City; the next thing was my Mother and I being driven by my Father to the docks and my Mother crying because she didn't want to go but he insisted. I think our cabin on the **Orion** was crowded with other evacuees and I do remember having sight of a destroyer off our port bow and being told it was our escort. I don't suppose we paid for the voyage being army. I expect my parents knew the destination but I don't recall. I don't believe the **Orion** was attacked on the voyage and I don't remember putting into any ports on the way to Fremantle. I do remember standing in a queue at TOC H and receiving handouts."

Sheila Stuart passed on an account of Jane Brighouse's voyage on the Orion:

"**Jane Brighouse (now Jennings)** was born in Bangkok where her father was legal adviser to the King of Siam. The family had a very good life style until the Japanese invasion and the fall of Singapore. Jane's father, mother and two older sisters were interned in Bangkok but Jane was away at boarding school in Cameron Heights [Highlands] Malaya (Pensionat de Notre Dame). All the girls were sent home apart from Jane and her friend **Margaret Fraser** who could not go back to Bangkok or they too would have been interned. Jane was 17 at the time and Margaret 16 years of age.

Margaret's parents were in Singapore (Kuala Kubu) and they got two tickets for Australia – Jane has no idea how. Jane and Margaret made their way by train to Singapore and stayed with Margaret's mother's cousin. They got a telephone call that morning to say be at the docks in half an hour to go to Australia. There was no time to think about it. They sailed on the **SS Orion** as you and your mother did, all the way to Melbourne. There was an air raid warning whilst the ship was still in dock and everyone was taken down well below decks for safety, Jane thinks to a dining room. Jane does not know if any other ships left that day, but there was no convoy, no attacks on the journey and no stops at any other port on the way. It was a 'good' journey by the standards of 1941/1942. Jane did say it was terribly rough crossing the Australian Bight.

Margaret's father was interned in Changi and died there – I do not know about her mother.

Jane's father died of throat cancer in prison but her mother and two sisters survived and got back to Britain at the end of the war. They did not know where Jane was for a long time, or if she was safe. Jane's father is buried somewhere near Saigon they think, but the family have been unable to locate his grave.

Jane's godfather (**Mr. J. Sinclair**) met the two girls from the boat – he had not seen her since she was a baby – and they stayed with him. As soon as Jane was 18 she joined the WRANS (her records are in the Australian Archives) and she served from 1943 – 1945.

ARTICLE TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE OCTOBER EDITION OF A.K. IF ANYONE HAS ANY FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORION PLEASE CONTACT JOHN CORNER – astley22@bigpond.net.au

WHO PAYS FOR EVACUATION IN WAR TIME?

The following letter from the Captain of HMAS "Hobart" deals with how payment is apportioned for evacuees rescued by naval vessels in war time. The evacuees in this case were those who had been rescued from the S.S "Kuala" which had been bombed and sunk by the Japanese.

H.M.A.S. "HOBART"
12th March 1942

The Secretary
Naval Board
Navy Office
St. Kilda Road
MELBOURNE

CIVILIAN REFUGEES FROM MALAYA EMBARKED AT PADANG, SUMATRA p.m. 1st MARCH 1942. DISEMBARKED COLOMBO p.m. 5th MARCH 1942.

1. Submitted for the information of the Naval Board with reference to K.R. & A.I. Article 1685, clause 1, that the civilian refugees detailed in the attached list were embarked in H.M.A.S. "Hobart" and in H.M.S. "Dragon" at Padang on p.m. 1st March. The refugees who embarked in "Dragon" were transferred at sea to "Hobart" p.m. 3rd March and all were disembarked p.m. 5th March at Colombo.
2. In accordance with K.R. & A.I. Article 1690, the sum of £1.10. - . each was recovered from the male civilians marked #, and the sum of £1. - . was paid by Mr. Barclay on behalf of his wife Mrs. Barclay. The total sum of £37. - . has been taken on charge in "Hobart" Cash Account March 1942, Voucher letter "A" and includes the charge for the period embarked in "Dragon" which was collected at the request of that ship.
3. The male civilians marked @ stated that they had no means of payment as did also the women similarly marked, and the two children. Their statements were accepted and payment waived in view of the following circumstances:
All the above civilians were evacuees from Malaya and Singapore, who sailed from Singapore on or about the date of surrender. The ships in which they sailed were bombed and sunk. Most of the refugees lost their personal baggage and some lost whatever money they were carrying. Two children became separated from their parents of whose fate no information was available. After spending some time on various islands in the Rhio Archipelago, the refugees found their way to the coast of Sumatra and were passed on by the Dutch Authorities to Padang. As it was also ascertained that bank balances held in Malaya were "frozen" till the end of the war, no further action was taken.
4. As regards the four members of the Q.A.I.M.N.S., as these nurses had been on military hospital duty and as they are members of an official Nursing Service, they were not approached for payment but have been regarded in the same light as Officers of the Army and Air Force embarked for passage under K.R. & A.I. Article 1696.
5. Payment at the established rates under K.R. & A.I. Article 1685 Class V1 for the whole of the British refugees has been made in accordance with K.I. & A.I. Article 1689 - "Hobart" Cash Account March 1942 - Vouchers 9 and 10.
6. The Chinese civilians shown on the attached list arrived on board at Padang carrying their own food. Only trifling amounts of sundries were drawn from the Wardroom Mess and accordingly no claim has been made.

Signed
H.C. Harding (?)
CAPTAIN

[Editor: Various stamps and remarks at the side and bottom of the letter appear - mainly dated 1944.
The list of Men and Women survivors and Chinese civilians can be sent if requested.]

PASSENGER AND CREW LISTS FROM S.S. KUALA and S.S. TANJONG PINANG Researched by Michael Pether

The first comprehensive and detailed piece of research into the fate of these two ships, her passengers and crew has been carried out by Michael Pether. This has not been attempted before by any other authentic compiler of wartime documents. **We are very grateful to Michael for allowing his records to be displayed on the MVG website and we congratulate him on a very fine piece of research. [If anyone can add to these records, please let Michael know.]**

The S.S. Kuala was a small coastal ship on which between 600 and 650 men, women and children were evacuated from Singapore in the final days before she fell. The passengers comprised a cross section of European, Chinese and Eurasian families; nurses; and men from the Public Works Department (PWD) who worked in Government offices. Sunk off Pompong Island on 14th February 1942 as the result of deliberate bombing by Japanese planes, probably no more than half the passengers survived. Some of these survivors were fortunate to have been picked up from Pompong Island by Captain Bill Reynolds in the **Kofuko Maru**, and taken to Sumatra, where they were rescued from Padang. Many were transferred to the **S.S. Tanjong Pinang** and subsequently died when she was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine on 17th February 1942. There was only a handful of survivors from this tragic sinking.

Full details of the history of these ships and their passenger lists can be read on the MVG website, in the **Evacuee Section**;

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk

OWEN HENRY EUSTACE - ICI MALAYA Pte. Ltd. - An enquiry from Michael Pether.

Michael Pether writes to enquire whether anyone has knowledge of the family or documents left by Mr. OWEN HENRY EUSTACE, Managing Director of ICI Malaya Pte.Ltd., during the period leading up to the Second World War and possibly after the War. Mr. Eustace may have been the last person to have seen Michael's uncle in February 1942 before that relative was "missing presumed killed" according to the authorities.

The background to the enquiry is a search for information on Michael's uncle, Private John William "Jack" Clark, Selangor Battalion, FMSVF and aged 19 years at the time of the Fall of Singapore. Jack Clark had been working for ICI Malaya during 1940 - 41, after leaving boarding school in New Zealand. He had joined his parents in Taiping and then Kuala Lumpur where he appears to have been working for ICI when the Japanese invaded Malaya. At the time of the Surrender of Singapore, Jack was on the island of Blakan Mati (now Sentosa) with many other FMSVF who had the job of manning the machine gun defences on the beaches of the island.

He escaped from Blakan Mati and the last known record of Jack Clark is in the amazing list secretly compiled by an internee in Changi on eighteen sheets of 'Jeyes' toilet paper. This list of several thousand men from Malaya and Singapore was written in microscopic pen and ink and is today held in the National Archives. It states insofar as Jack Clark "...CLARK J W ICI SEEN PADANG..." - this refers to the town of Padang in Western Sumatra which was the final escape point for the thousands of men and women who succeeded in escaping from Singapore during February 1942.

The key to this information is that it had to have been reported to the document writer in Changi by someone who knew young Jack Clark, his initials, and the fact that he worked for ICI - and then also someone who was in Padang in February 1942 and who then probably was returned to Singapore (specifically Changi prison) by the Japanese as an internee or POW.

After a decade of research on the FMSVF, the fall of Singapore and the seaborne escapes by Malayan Volunteers and civilians Michael has found that Owen Eustace - who would have been the person most likely to have employed Jack Clark and known his details - also escaped from Singapore at the time of the Surrender, had been on a ship which was sunk and had reached Padang in late February or early March 1942, been taken prisoner by the Japanese on 17.3.42 in Padang and was moved to Changi Southern area camps by 1.4.42. Thereby being one of the very few feasible people who might have been the source of the information on Jack Clark.

The request for assistance of MVG members is whether anyone knows of Owen Eustace's family or any diaries, memoirs or other documents surrounding his life or experiences. Alternatively it would be of great assistance if anyone knows of any ICI employees or contemporary documents of ICI Malaya during the 1940's.

**Michael's e-mail is: mncpether@xtra.co.nz or his postal address is:
55, Te Pene Road, Maraetai, Manukau 2018, New Zealand.**

BOOKS

"Surviving by Magic, The remarkable story of Fergus Anckorn, magician and survivor of the Burma-Thailand Death Railway". By Monty Parkin. Softback. 107 pages. Illustrated. ISBN 13 978-1-871525-16-8 published by A.M. Parkin, Kemsing, Kent TN 15. Price £8

Reviewed by Jonathan Moffatt:

Fergus Anckorn and elements of his remarkable story plus a magical trick or two will be well known to many who attended the Researching FEPOW History Conference. The story, told in his own words, combines harrowing experiences with humour. The story begins with childhood memories of Dunton Green where the locals included Robert Baden-Powell's brother, the eccentric 'Major Sodit', a machine gun enthusiast and, of course, scoutmaster. Fergus' father, a magic enthusiast, gave him a magic set for his 4th birthday and his first 'professional' engagement was at the age of 7.

Wartime enlistment into the 118th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery involved Fergus in the Divisional Concert party as the magician Wizardus. Arriving in Singapore on the USS Westpoint in late January 1942 his regiment was immediately in action and he was severely wounded with his right hand nearly severed on February 13th 1942. As if by a miracle he survived the Alexandra Hospital Massacre and soon found himself in Changi POW camp where he became involved in putting on shows. Sent to Thailand he endured horrific conditions at Kanburi, Wampo and Chungkai, again performing at concert parties. Fergus also used his magician's skills to earn extra food from the Japanese to keep him alive. He narrowly escaped execution and Allied bombing. The last chapter of the book covers Fergus' repatriation, problems settling down post war, career as a member of the Magic Circle and trips to Japan and Thailand. An enjoyable and interesting read.

"The Missing Years. A POW's Story from Changi to Hellfire Pass, 1942-45". By Stuart Lloyd. Softback. 304 pages. ISBN 9781877058776 published by Rosenberg.

The gripping story of ex-planter Captain Hugh ('Pilk') Pilkington's part in the Malayan Campaign, in which he was shot by a Japanese sniper, survived the Alexandra Hospital Massacre, became a POW while still in hospital, and with only one good arm was packed off to work on the Burma-Thailand Death Railway at the dreaded Hellfire Pass.

After his early years in Malaya, when he trained with the FMSVF and later the Malay Regiment, he retired to Norfolk, and returned to fight the Japanese as a Captain in the 6 Royal Norfolk Regiment.

DIARY EXTRACTS

By Mrs. Shirley Joice

The following extracts are from the diaries of Mrs. Shirley Joice, a Western Australian living in Malim Nawar, Malaya, at the time of the Japanese invasion in 1941. Mrs. Joice was evacuated from Malaya, via Singapore and Batavia to Sydney. Her husband of just three months, Jack Joice, was a Mining Engineer and remained in Malaya for a short time before having to flee himself – escaping past Japanese occupied Sumatra and Java, through enemy waters, to Fremantle. The couple did not reunite for three months, all the time not knowing if the other was alive.

Monday 1st December 1941

A new month, with the East waiting and watching the movements of the Japanese. What shall the month bring? I have been so happy here, but one cannot ignore the feeling of unease, and of course the war against Germany still goes on. I have had a quiet day at home. Jack has more 'susab' on the mine at night, and had to go along and sort things out...

Friday 5th December 1941

I did not go out today. The Japanese situation seems no better. The talks with America are still going on, but so far we do not know what the result will be, but everyone is uneasy...

Saturday 6th December 1941

Last Tuesday Jack was called up (the Army) but Jim who is in charge here obtained leave for him. I have been too miserable to write about it, and although he is still here, I am worried that he may have to go at any time if he is called again. He is very busy with work here and did not return home until midnight...

Sunday 7th December 1941

I enjoyed today. Jack spent most of it at home. We had *tiffen* and a rest in the afternoon, and then took a walk to the mine later. In the evening we played bridge with Rosa and Jim until 11pm...

Monday 8th December 1941

Last night Singapore, Manila, Honolulu and other places were bombed by the Japanese. The fact that negotiations were still going on between America and Japan (for peace!) during these raids shows the type of enemy we have in the Japs. As if there is not enough trouble and unrest in the world! – now this! We now have to go onto a war footing and that means blackouts for a start. This morning I went to see Mrs. Munro, and while I was there Mrs. Davies arrived. We drove back to Mrs. Davies' bungalow just as Helen Yews dropped in, so we had morning tea. I spent the afternoon at home. Rosa called in on her way to Ipoh with Joan Miles. Stan Miles is in camp. Jack was home early and I had a *stengah* or two and dined in the dark. The bungalows are built for coolness, not wars, and any light will show outside. Jack had to go down to the mine, and I went with him as he did not have to stay there long. I have never seen so many fireflies before but I think that was because it was so dark...

Tuesday 9th December 1941

Last night was peaceful and quiet, but of course very dark! I did not like going to the bathroom in the blackout, and wondered if there could be spiders or a centipede crawling about! This morning I went to Kampar with Helen and enjoyed the outing. I bought a few extra stores in case we need it later, and some whiskey...

Wednesday 10th December 1941

Today brought some very grim news, as England has lost two of her greatest battle ships in the Gulf of Siam, off Kuantan, sunk yesterday by the Japs. It is a great blow and everyone is bewildered and depressed. It is difficult to know exactly what is happening.

Thursday 11th December 1941

Our way of life is beginning to change. We are no longer having dinner served at night as it is too dark. There can be no lights on as the bungalows are open to keep the air cool within doors at night. So instead we sit and eat sandwiches or rolls of an evening and I do not mind that at all. A nice change from a late and often heavy meal. I went to the knitting session this morning with the ladies, who are looking worried, and wondering what is to happen next...

Monday 15th December 1941

I went to Rosa's bungalow this morning, although the day was fairly hot. She was sorting out clothes to send to evacuees. While I was there we had our first air raid warning. We put cushions on the dining room table and waited almost an hour. I don't think the table and cushions would have been much use if a bomb had dropped!! The 'all-clear' siren went and I returned home. Jack was calmly reading the paper and hadn't moved from the cane lounge upon which he was reclining. During the afternoon I wrote to Dora Bateman, a friend in Perth to whom I owed a letter. At 5pm the air raid siren went again. Jack was at home and wouldn't get out of the bathroom where he was having a shower, so I decided not to get rattled, but it is not a happy feeling. After a while the all clear sounded and the weather became very overcast and thundery. Jack has now received (today) a supply of bullets for his rifle.

Tuesday 19th December 1941

Mrs. Davies is having an air raid shelter made and she asked me over to see it so that I would know where to come during a raid. We were having morning tea at her bungalow when the air raid alarm sounded, so we made our way to the underground shelter. Helen Yews joined us there, and we sat there for about ¾ hour. Eric Davies came along and told us that it would be safe to come out, but he told us that the L.D.C. had issued orders for women and children to pack a weekend case and drive down to Kuala

Lumpur until the situation had cleared. We were told to be ready to leave in 20 minutes. I packed a few things into a case just as Jack arrived home for *tiffin* about 11.30am. We both felt upset and confused. I did not pack very much – a few changes and some toiletries. I hated the idea of leaving Jack, and left most of my clothing. My new dressing table set which he had bought me in Singapore – I left on the dressing table so that he would feel nothing was different, and that I would be back after the weekend.

Monday 22nd December 1941

Another day spent in Singapore. We spent the morning making arrangements for our departure. We are unable to gain a direct trip to Australia, but a Dutch ship named the “*Cremer*” is going to Batavia in Java, and from there we may obtain a passage to Fremantle. The Station Hotel manager said that they are unable to provide accommodation for us for more than a few days, as so many people are arriving daily from up country – people who are having to leave their homes as we have done. The “*Cremer*” has no cabin space, but as we have no children we can sleep on deck!... At the hotel we had dinner and were in bed by 9.30pm, and feeling very tired, but at 10pm, just as I was dropping off to sleep the air raid siren went, and the already dimmed lights in the hotel went out. I jumped out of my bed and called Rosa, and we put on some clothes and shoes and I hurried to Mrs. Humphries’ room to wake her, and when she was ready we joined other people in the corridors who were making their way to the air raid shelter. One elderly lady had panicked and was running about holding a brilliantly shining torch so I took it from her, and told her I would escort her to the shelter which was under one of the railway platforms which had been excavated I guess for this purpose. There were wooden trestle seats along the walls where people could sit. We waited there and could hear distant dull bangs and the sound of anti-aircraft guns, the hum of aeroplanes. Rosa and I had a look out of the door of the shelter and saw searchlights, and a silver plane dodging the lights. After about 20 minutes we heard the all clear, and went back into the hotel, but we were hardly there before the siren sounded again and I found “my old lady” and hurried her along with me. To reach the shelter we had to walk along one railway platform, climb down from it and walk along to the next platform, under which the shelter had been created. The poor old lady was so frightened she ran ahead of me, and before I could do a thing, she went over the end of the platform, and I expected broken bones – but no, she rose quickly to her feet and dived into the shelter. It was all very confusing in the dark, but after a brief wait we were able to go back to our beds, but I must admit that I did not sleep very well at all after the events of the evening!

Tuesday 23rd December 1941

...Our ship left Singapore during the morning, and I stood alone on the deck, leaned on the rail and cried my eyes out as we sailed out. To leave Jack, my home, the country I had already grown to love – it has all been a kind of nightmare.

I do not think I will ever forget how utterly desolate I feel today, leaving not knowing how or where Jack is, and not knowing where I am. However, I know that if he can survive all this he does stand a better chance on his own...

Wednesday 24th December 1941

...It is Christmas Eve, but dinner was a quiet affair, and people are subdued. There is no music or noise or lights visible as we are afraid of being heard or seen by our enemies. I can not think of anything worse than being sunk by a torpedo – especially at night!

Thursday 25th December 1941

It is Christmas Day. Last night I had a really good sleep, and only woke once when it suddenly rained and I had to move my stretcher under an awning. It has been quite pleasant sleeping on deck as the nights are warm. This morning we arrived at Batavia, feeling worried as we only have what is left of our money which we had when we left Malim Newar. We tried to get money through our bank while in Singapore, but it seems there is confusion everywhere, and we did not succeed... here in Batavia we went through the usual formalities of Passports and Customs, and then we drove to the home of the British Consul who informed us that the Dutch Red Cross ladies had arranged to meet people who needed help... we only had to wait a short time and then a very nice Dutch lady [Mrs. Hockstra] came in her car and took us to her home.

Friday 26th December 1941

This morning Rosa and I went into the business section of Batavia to arrange a passage on a ship to Australia...

Wednesday 31st December 1941

...we learned that we are to leave tomorrow. The Hockstras are becoming increasingly worried about the movements of the Japanese. Mr. Hockstra said that he would like Mrs. Hockstra and the girls to leave also, and she became so upset, and could not bear the thought of leaving him...it was decided she could fly down to Australia with the girls if things got worse... there have been one or two air raid warnings so there are strange planes about.

Thursday 1st January 1942

...and so we sailed away, accompanied by 12 sea planes, and about 8 ships of different kinds, a couple of mine sweepers and two battleships. The movement of our ship was puzzling, we sailed along, and then the ship stopped suddenly at a signal from the pilot boat, turned about, and sailed back to Batavia, then we turned around again and sailed into the blue...

Saturday 3rd January 1942

The sea was rather rough today and I did not feel too well – it’s that awful cabin I think! However, I must not grumble, and I will keep out of it as much as possible. Today we saw no sign of land.

Tuesday 6th January 1942

...the news from Malaya has not been good, but today it is said British forces are holding the Japs in southern Perak. My home is in Jap hands – everything we own, our wedding gifts, my box of linen only partly unpacked which I brought from Australia – everything – and all this means nothing at all, for I am sick with worry about Jack... and we were able to learn... that our men

have been sent to Kuala Lumpur, and they have removed key parts from the dredges so that those damned Japs cannot work them. The loose tin has been thrown back and the rubber burned.

Friday 9th January 1942

... we saw a ship today, a freighter, evidently on its way to Australia... we learned today that the First Mate aboard our ship is sick, so hope he does get over it. We sailed south of Bali and into the blue horizon all day.

Sunday 11th January 1942

Last night the First Mate became more ill, and the Captain decided we must return to Bali to a hospital there... but towards the morning the radio operator picked up an SOS signal. That unfortunate freighter we passed at Bali was sunk by a Japanese submarine and was calling for help. The Captain decided that with so many women and children on board our ship he could not go back to assist... so he had to turn about and go full speed ahead in a southerly direction... we are bound for Sydney via the route south of Australia...

Monday 12th January 1942

It was whispered today that we had another submarine in our area. The radio operator evidently picked up a warning. It has been an awful day. The poor First Mate died about 3pm. He was such a nice man, so friendly, and only 35 years old. His wife and two children, also Dutch, have just arrived in Batavia from Malaya and they shall not hear of his death until we reach Sydney – if we reach Sydney!... the crew are all very depressed and show more emotion than a British crew would...

Friday 16th January 1942

The temperature is down to 60* and is falling, and a very cold wind is blowing... we are a long way south, and heard 'via the grapevine' that we had another close call with a submarine operating in the vicinity – fairly close to Perth and Fremantle, but we kept well out to sea, and saw no sign of land...

Tuesday 20th January 1942

... news is coming through on the radio – awful news of Malaya... as the Japanese sweep down the Malayan peninsula...

Wednesday 21st January 1942

If we had been nearer, it is said we would have seen the south coast of Tasmania today. Instead we felt the south pole... nothing would stay on the tables, our chairs kept falling over, the waiters kept falling on us!...

Sunday 25th January 1942

... there is still no sign of land, and indeed we have not seen a scrap of land since we left Bali, and I am heartily fed up with this trip.

Monday 26th January 1942

I came out of the cabin early this morning and came to the rail of the ship and a Dutch Officer pointed, "There is the beginning of your beloved Australia", and he said, "and we will be in Sydney at 10.00am"... I went down to breakfast and ate stewed pears, bacon and eggs, and marmalade on toast, and just as I was finishing the Chief Steward said, "Madame, The Sydney Harbour Bridge is now visible above the coastline, a wonderful sight!" He accompanied me out onto the deck, a young fellow – Dutch, with curly hair, who told me during the trip that he had been twice married, and early in the trip he offered to teach me to speak Dutch, giving me a book to study, but I gave it back to him as I think he had visions of cosy tete de tetes in his cabin, so I did not accept his offer!... we sailed through the heads and saw skyscrapers and the wonderful arc of the bridge spanning the harbour. That huge ship, the Queen Elizabeth was moored within the heads... I felt many mixed feelings as we sailed under the huge span, excitement, awe, but also sadness, because Jack and I had planned to see it together...

Wednesday 28th January 1942

... we are now trying to obtain a train booking to Perth, but so far no luck...

Thursday 29th January 1942

... I received a telegram from Alice to say that there was money waiting for us in WA and also that Jack was well, thank God, but I am still worried things are going badly in Malaya...

Friday 30th January 1942

... we are all very unhappy as news filters through from Malaya. The Japs are 45 miles from Singapore with the city itself being bombed, and Jack?, well I can only hope and pray that he is well and unharmed...

Jack managed to escape in a small ship, avoiding Japanese and German ships and submarines, to Fremantle. He and Shirley were eventually reunited approximately 3 months after Shirley fled Malaya.

Notes on terminology: *Tiffen* – dinner *Stengah* – whiskey and water *Susah* -- trouble

WEBSITES TO VISIT.

<http://www.usswestpoint.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=seastory&story=SheldrakeAMERICA'sFirstBorn.htm>

An evacuation story on a USS Westpoint website. Both the USS Westpoint and Wakefield were used as evacuation ships.

www.north.iwm.org.uk

For information about the exhibition at the Imperial War Museum North from 23/5/09 – 01/10 – which includes experiences of British and Commonwealth prisoners and civilian internees in Europe and the Far East.

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk

See the "Evacuees section" on the MVG website for details of the passenger lists from the "Kuala" and "Tanjong Pinang" compiled by **Michael Pether**, together with details of the ships and sinkings.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Leslie James writes from Penang:-

"Thank you for the joining pack and covering letter which arrived yesterday – Easter Monday – very speedy service indeed especially as the envelope was stamped 10th May as having been passed by Malaysian Customs!

I was interested to note that the joining pack included the report by Liz Moggie on the unveiling of the memorial plaque at Changi from the Badan Warisan Malaysia (heritage of Malaysia Trust) bulletin. You may be aware that the latest issue of the BWM bulletin has published your letter in response.

In that letter you mention that your mother arrived in Singapore in 1937 to take up a post in the maternity Hospital. Having trained at Winchester and the Queen Charlotte's my mother, Doris May Preston, joined the Malayan Nursing Service and arrived in Penang in December 1934. She was assigned to the maternity department of Penang General Hospital until 1937. (From December 1937 to May 1938 she went on long leave to the UK via Western Australia and South Africa.) She served in the Singapore General Hospital from 1938 (with brief stints in Johore Bahru and Muar) until she was assigned on loan to the Kuching General Hospital in Sarawak, probably in 1939. In Kuching she met my father Leslie Keir James, who was serving with the Chartered Bank. In 1940 they both resigned from their jobs and were married at the Presbyterian (Church of Scotland) Church on Orchard Road in Singapore in September. They left for the UK at the end of the year. On returning to Britain my father was commissioned in the RAF, serving until the end of the war."

Audrey McCormick writes:-

"This is from my sister-in-law Isabelle, who lives in Queensland.....I am sending it to you in case you would like it for the magazine.

Queensland 27th April.

"I went to the dawn ANZAC Day Service on Saturday at 5.30am and it was so touching. Standing by the beach as the dawn came up under the gum trees and hearing the cockatoos and parrots waking up and flying past in noisy squadrons. So essentially Australian. Interestingly, 94 years down the track the ANZAC parades and ceremonies are attracting bigger crowds than ever including many young people, so they will not be forgotten."

[Editor: we were pleased to have this short account of ANZAC Day to report this year.]

Judith Heimann writes:-

"I just read your comment on the book ("The Airmen and the Headhunters" which was reviewed in July 2008 A.K. Edition 15). So glad you liked it. We are filming a documentary of it now, that will eventually appear on Channel Four."

OBITUARIES

BRIAN ROBERT EDRICH

It is with great sadness that we report the death of MVG member Brian Edrich, on 31st May 2009, aged 86. We send his extended family our heartfelt sympathies, and especially his wife Jane and daughter Fiona. Brian's interest in the MVG came through his brother Geoffrey, who had joined the 5th Battalion of the Royal Norfolk Regiment, and in January 1942 found himself in battle against the Japanese in Malaya, before being taken prisoner. After a spell in Changi, he was sent up to the Thailand-Burma Railway. Later he experienced the horrors of the "hell ships" when he was sent to Japan in a convoy of 15 ships, 12 of which were sunk on the way. He ended up on Honshu Island.

Brian was the youngest of four brothers in the cricketing family Edrich – the only family with 4 brothers playing first class cricket at the same time. According to his brother Bill, who played for England, Brian was probably the most talented of the four brothers, but the war was to interrupt his progress as a cricketer. For the first few months of the war, Brian worked on a satellite airfield near Bircham Newton. In March 1942 he was called-up and joined the RAF as a trainee pilot, following in the footsteps of his more famous brother Bill. The receiving centre to which he was ordered to report was Lord's. Training was done in Canada where he won his RAF wings. Brian travelled across the Atlantic in the liner Queen Mary, which he described as a wonderful experience. He was posted to India where he flew Vultee Vengeances. In the later stages of the war, Brian was stationed at Ratmalana in Ceylon, just outside Colombo, as a warrant-officer pilot, flying sorties around the coastline to report on Japanese activities in the air and at sea, and was involved with air-sea rescue work.



After the war, Brian resumed his cricketing career with Kent – six seasons after his initiation with the county. He was to play for them from 1947 – 1953, winning his county cap in 1949, and for Glamorgan from 1954 – 1956. A middle-order left-handed batsman and an off-break bowler, he played some of his finest cricket for Kent. In the summer of 1949, he scored 193 not out against Sussex at Tunbridge Wells. In partnership with Fred Ridgeway, he added 161 runs for the ninth wicket, and as Brian himself remarked, "I'd have got a double century but for the fact we ran out of tail end batsmen."

When his first class cricketing days ended, partly due to a shoulder injury, he promoted cricket in Wales, and captained Glamorgan 2nd X1 before becoming Cricket Master at St. Edward's School, Oxford, where he ran 14 teams and the RAF section of the CCF. On and off the field, Brian was a gentleman to all who knew him – a brilliant cricketer, raconteur and friend. He had an extensive knowledge of and interest in WW2; he enjoyed gardening and all countryside activities in which he showed great expertise and a passionate interest.

Editor:- As a friend of the family, I would like to extend my sympathies to my school friend Jane, and goddaughter Fiona on their loss of their devoted husband and father, and my very dear personal friend.

JEANNETTE BARRETT

Roger Barrett writes to say: "I am sad to tell you that my wife died on September 5th last year, while we were sailing in Greece. She was 80 and a child of Malaya. Her parents were Harry and Kathleen Rawcliffe who lived in Port Swettenham before and after the war. He was a ships' pilot there. My wife was always known as Jette. She and her sister Sheila left Malaya for school in England in 1938 and didn't see their parents again, due to the war, for 10 years. Jette went to Dartford College and qualified as a teacher of physical education, returning to Malaya in 1948 where she worked for the education department. She subsequently joined the Colonial Service and became the Lady Superintendent of P.E. for the Federation of Malaya. She retired when we got married on 14th July 1956 at St. Mary's Kuala Lumpur. Her parents went to Australia before the Japanese arrived, to allow her father to recover from an illness, and spent the war there. Her father joined the Navy and eventually returned to Malaya with Force 136 to pilot the first ship into Port Swettenham."

Editor: On behalf of the MVG we would like to offer our apologies for this oversight and send our sincere condolences to Roger for his loss. We are grateful to Roger for telling us about Jette's long connections with Malaya.

Lt-Col GEOFFREY SHERMAN

We report the death of Lt-Col Sherman, aged 93. A Royal Marine Officer, he was responsible for organising the surrender of the Japanese in Singapore on 12th September 1945. As one of the first Allied officers to land on the island, he saw first hand the horrors of Changi jail. His task of arranging the surrender was made more difficult by Lady Mountbatten, who insisted that the signing table should be covered in green baize – a difficult task after 3 years of occupation – but some remnants were found and hastily stitched together. He received a Samurai sword from one of the Japanese officers, which he kept, together with the Union and Malayan flags used during the surrender and said to have been flying at Tanglin Barracks when the Japanese invaded in 1942. This Union flag flew at his thanksgiving service.

JG BALLARD

The death of JG Ballard was announced on 19th April 2009, aged 78. He was best known for his fictionalised autobiography "Empire of the Sun" which told of his childhood in a Japanese internment camp outside Shanghai. Ballard admitted to finding the camp "absolutely the reverse of anything I had ever known" after living a privileged life, mainly in the care of a nanny. Suddenly he was part of a 2,000-strong tenement family in Lunghua Camp. He says that he had a good time and thoroughly enjoyed himself, but later in life his experiences there coloured his writings which showed the darker side of his character.

We are also sad to announce the death of **Stephen Alexander**, author of "Sweet Kwai Run Softly and a Postscript" who worked on the 'bridge over the River Kwai' and in the jungle near the Burmese border.

The obituary of **Major Martin Clemens** aged 94, was also reported on 25th June. As British Colonial Officer, he hid from the Japanese on Guadalcanal and supplied the American 1st Marine division with intelligence as they attempted to dislodge the Japs from the island. His Scouts proved invaluable to the Americans and he was awarded the MC, & American Legion of Merit.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SATURDAY – 15TH August 2009 – V-J Day Service at the NMA, Alrewas.

This will take place in the MVG Memorial Garden, followed by a picnic lunch in the Arboretum grounds. Please let Jonathan or Rosemary know if you plan to attend AND if you would like to take part in the Service with a reading or prayer.

The Service will start at about 12noon and further details will be sent to those who let us know that they are coming.

SATURDAY – 3RD October 2009 – Annual Lunch and Reunion at the RAF Club, 128, Piccadilly, London.

There are still places available for the Lunch, but please **BOOK with Hugh Chaplin (contact details below)**. The cost for the set lunch is £26.50 pp (vegetarian option available if booked) and payment is requested **BY 4th September**. Cheques payable to:- **Mrs R. Fell Volunteers Bench Fund and sent to Millbrook House, Axminster, Devon EX13 5EE.**

SUNDAY – 8TH November 2009 – Remembrance Sunday Service and March Past at the Cenotaph, Whitehall.

Details will be given in the October newsletter. If you would like to attend this year, please let Rosemary know.

MVG SUBSCRIPTIONS

A big thank you to all members for paying their subscriptions so promptly this year. Many of you have kindly send donations as well, and my humble apologies if I have not written to thank you. We are very appreciative of your ongoing generosity.

MEMBERSHIP LIST 2009 – 2010

The yearly list of members is enclosed with this newsletter. If there are any errors, please let me know, and I will send out the corrections in October. Evacuation ships and other information are included where available – **PLEASE NOTIFY NAMES OF SHIPS.**

CONTACTS

JONATHAN MOFFATT. For research on British Malaysians/Volunteer Forces/Argylls & 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: anulincoln@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