

APA KHABAR

Patron: The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk

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THE MVG REDEFINES ITS AIMS TO REFLECT ITS GROWING INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Working together with **John Pollock**, who has compiled an excellent, comprehensive brochure for MVG Australia, we have modified the aims of the MVG within the context of our growing membership; our planned projects in Australia and Malaysia, and our application for charitable status. There are now 4 aims to reflect this:-

1. To educate and raise historical awareness of the Malayan Volunteers in the U.K. and worldwide, and to gain recognition for their unique role in the Malayan Campaign and in captivity.
2. To re-introduce former British Malayan Volunteer families and other Volunteer families, of all races and creeds, who have lost contact over the years, and to help them keep in touch with each other.
3. To help these families and other interested parties research their own and/or other people's Malayan Volunteer connections.
4. To raise money to commemorate the Malayan Volunteers by the presentation of new memorials and the restoration of existing ones, both in the U.K. and in other parts of the world where Volunteer families have settled.

We are very grateful to John for his work in producing this brochure, which will be sent out to all members once finalized. We are also awaiting the report from **John Pollock** and **Merilyn Hywel-Jones**, who recently met the relevant authorities in Canberra, to discuss the MVG's offer to present a Memorial to the Volunteers within the grounds of the Changi Chapel in Duntroon. We also hope that the brochure and list of aims will help MVG member **George Hess'e**, who lives in Perth WA, and who has been asked to speak to the Perth Branch of The Military Historical Society. His talk will be on his experiences as a Volunteer, but will also cover the Malayan Volunteers Group, its activities and future plans.

V-J Day – 15th August – 2009 was marked with a Service in the MVG Memorial Garden and the laying of a wreath on the Memorial Stone. It was most disappointing that so few MVG members attended this important date in our calendar. Out of the 18 people who assembled in the Memorial Garden on that day, only 8 were MVG members. A report of the event is given later. The 15th August 2010 is the 65th Anniversary of victory over Japan. The MVG is planning to hold a Service in the Chapel at the Arboretum, to mark this important date. We very much hope that this will be well supported, and urge you to keep this date free from holiday commitments for next year. Those of you who have not visited the National Memorial Arboretum recently – or at all – will be surprised at the new developments which are already taking place and are proposed for the future. The 5 Volunteer Regimental Badges, similar to those which were presented to the Changi Museum last September, will soon be displayed on the walls of the newly re-opened "Arbour" Restaurant with other Regimental Badges. Remembrance Sunday this year falls on the 8th November. We have again been allocated 12 tickets, of which 8 have already been taken. It is a very rewarding day, and if you would like to attend, the details are given later in the newsletter.

Our continuing links with **Badan Warisan Malaysia** are proving to be very useful. There are plans for the MVG to visit the Heritage Centre in January 2010 and give a talk on the Volunteers and the MVG, by kind invitation of member **Liz Moggie**, who is also one of the Honorary Council Members. Gaining the support of **Badan Warisan** would also be invaluable in helping the MVG restore WW1 & 2 War Memorials throughout Malaysia, and bring us to the attention of a wider audience in that country. We are hoping to inter-relate with articles, and, indeed, MVG/BWM member **Leslie James** has written a most interesting article in the May/June edition of the *buletin warisan* about the Battle of Muar and the massacre of wounded Australian troops at Parit Sulong. An article by **Kevin Y.L. Tan** in the April-June "*Heritage Asia*" magazine records the history of how the lion came to be used as the symbol of Singapore – leading to the use of the lion in the Arms of the Colony of the Straits Settlements and its subsequent adoption in the crest of the Singapore Volunteer Corps in 1928. A good colour photograph shows the crest of the SVC on the façade of the Corp's old Drill Hall on Beach Road, which some of you may have seen. The MVG is delighted to welcome Canadian MP, **Steven Fletcher**, as a member. His grandfather, **Norman Barry Fletcher**, was an engineer with the FMSVF Signals. As Canada's Minister of State for Democratic Reform, Steven was in Australia on V-J Day this year, to lay a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Canberra. He said, "Australia has been one of Canada's greatest allies in peace and war. It is a great privilege to have the opportunity to honour Australia's fallen heroes, some of whom were prisoners with my grandfather in Southeast Asia."

For those of you who have visited the cemeteries in Kanchanaburi, a report in the Telegraph on September 1st will be disturbing news. A 55ft Buddhist statue has been built next to the Bridge on the River Kwai. Many local conservationists deplore the development – claiming that it is... "culturally, morally and ethically inappropriate", while some war veterans believe that the site is already spoilt. **Rod Beattie**, who founded the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre Museum, said, "The site is so degraded by vendors there's little you could do to degrade it further." He went on, "But the riverside where the complex is going up was reasonably pristine and now looks like a fairground. It degrades the area even more."

Lastly, we congratulate Gerald Lindner and his wife on the occasion of their 50th Wedding Anniversary this summer.

VJ DAY SERVICE AT THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM – a report by Jonathan Moffatt

This took place in the MVG Memorial Garden on 15th August 2009 at 12 noon. MVG members and friends gathered. After the wreath laying by Ron Mitchell [1/SSVF] and Anne Hinam and the two minutes silence, Jonathan read out the names of those whose lives are commemorated on plaques against the trees and bamboo in the MVG Garden:

Eric Reeve & Aden McLeod of the Malacca Volunteers [4/SSVF]
James & Penelope Landon of the Selangor LDC and Medical Auxilliary Service
Allan Barrie, Sholto Stitt & George Bean of the FMSVF
Charis Crabbe, Joseph Dunne & Lincoln Page of the Singapore Volunteers [1/SSVF]
and the men of the FMSVF Light Battery.

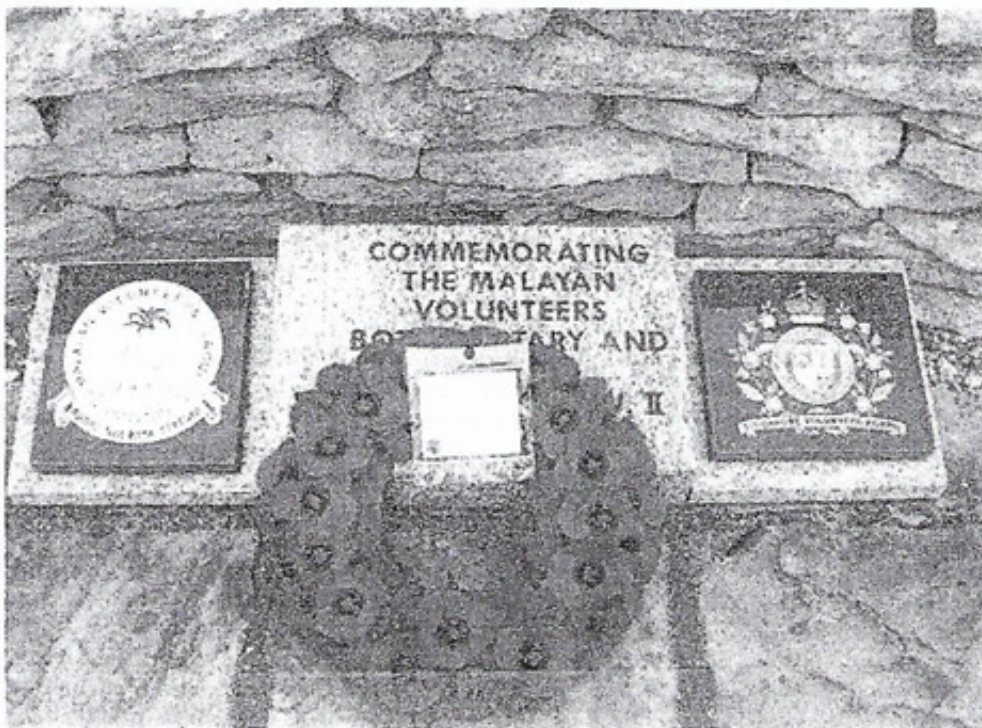
Further readings followed: Corinthians 2:1 [Keith Andrews], 'For the Fallen' by Lawrence Binyon [Anne Hinam] and 'Singapore 1942' by Patricia Wood [Rosemary], then Anne read her mother Beryl Dohoo's moving poem in memory of Kenneth Dohoo MCS and Jean Lips, a child evacuee on the 'Felix Roussel' read Margaret Dryburgh's 'Captives' Hymn. The service concluded with the FEPOW Prayer and Kohima Epitaph.

We were particularly pleased to welcome at our service the daughter of Major Vincent Bennett RAMC. His name will be remembered by many Malayan Volunteer POWs and who later joined the Malayan Medical Service. A visiting Singaporean family who had shared the experience of evacuation and whose father was in the Singapore Volunteer Corps also joined us. It was as if they were meant to be there at that moment!

The service was followed by a substantial picnic lunch and chat.

A full order of service and photos are on the website news page. We are very grateful to Simon and Lynda Moss who attended the service and took the photographs of the event for us.

MVG WREATH ON THE MEMORIAL STONE



SPONSORSHIP STILL REQUIRED FOR 3 BAMBOO IN THE MEMORIAL GARDEN

If any member would like to sponsor one of the 3 remaining bamboo shrubs to commemorate their father or another relative, please would you let Rosemary know. The costs are as follows:-

Bamboo - £18 - paid to the MVG, which purchased the bamboo initially.

Plaque - £200 - paid to the NMA, but I will send you a plan of the garden with the relevant bamboo shown, and an application form for the Arboretum. With this form you are asked to supply a drawing of the Volunteer unit to which your relative belonged (this can be obtained from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission) and the wording you would like on the plaque. The artwork is drawn up by the plaque makers and submitted to you for approval before the plaque is processed. To date the Memorial Garden has all plaques in place for all the sponsored trees and bamboo, except for one which is currently being made.[See above]. We very much hope to have plaques on every tree and bamboo as soon as possible, so that the Memorial Garden will be finished before VJ Day next year.

VJ DAY 2010 – 65th ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WW2 – SUNDAY 15TH AUGUST 2010

We are already making plans for the VJ Day Service next year, and have provisionally booked the Chapel at the Arboretum. We feel sure that it will be well remembered as an important landmark, after the low-key commemorations since the 60th Anniversary in 2005. However, we cannot justify our booking unless we are sure that we have at least **50 members and/or friends** committed to attending. **Please would you mark down this very important date in your diaries, and if you wish to attend, let Jonathan or Rosemary know AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. We need to have some idea of numbers BY THE END OF DECEMBER.** This gives us a chance to organise and book the other personnel in connection with the service i.e. A padre and organist; a piper and bugler – all of whom, naturally, make a charge for their services. We realize that the middle of August is the time when most of you are away on holiday, but perhaps it would be possible to leave a gap so that you can visit the Arboretum and attend this service on Sunday 15th August 2010. The provisional plans are as follows:-

12 noon. Meet at the Arboretum for a buffet lunch (about £12-£15 per person). This will be in a marquee as the Dining Room is already booked for another Group.

2pm. Service in the Chapel – taken by a visiting chaplain (possibly one of the Queen's Chaplains). We have asked for the Services of Pipe Major Duncan Thomson, who played so beautifully for us when the Garden was dedicated. We may also have a Bugler to play with Duncan in the Chapel.

2.30 -2.40pm. Process from the Chapel, led by the Piper and Bugler, down to the Memorial Garden to lay a wreath on the Memorial Stone and complete the Service with a reading and final prayer.

The Arboretum is not difficult to find from London, and is very well worth a visit to see not only the MVG Memorial Garden, but also the impressive and most humbling Armed Forces Memorial, with its panels of names. Even more poignant is the sight of the plain panels now being filled with the names of those soldiers who have recently fallen in Afghanistan.

There is also a newly unveiled Memorial to the Polish men and women who fought for this country during WW2. As with the MVG Memorial Garden, commemorating the Volunteers, this Memorial is the first one in this country to the Polish dead.

PLANS FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM

Following Keith Andrew's report in the July edition of "*Apa Khabar*" about the future of the Arboretum, we have received further information about the changes which are planned to turn the Arboretum into a truly remarkable place.

a). **"Remember. Their names will live for evermore."**

This is the name of the new guide book (edition 2) which is now available at a cost of £5. This may seem expensive, but it is a glossy publication and gives the history of the Arboretum, detailing every plot and where to find it. Most entries have a colour photograph and all have a write-up about the organizations they represent.

The MVG Plot is Number 239 and the details are given on P.82. There is a good photograph of the Memorial Stone with some information about the MVG underneath.

b). **"Despatches. The Arboretum Update."** A booklet sent to every stakeholder with information about progress.

On 24th April 2009, HRH Prince William visited the Arboretum and accepted an invitation to become Patron of the £8 million Future Foundations Appeal, which is designed to turn the Arboretum into a world-class centre for remembrance. His tour included the St. Dunstan's Path, War Widows' Rose Garden, the Armed Forces Memorial and the Police Garden of Remembrance. Afterwards he said, "The Arboretum has a real poignancy for me, as it must have for the hundreds of thousands of visitors who come here every year. It is a living tribute not only to servicemen and women who have died on active duty, but also to members of vital organizations, such as the police, ambulance and fire service, who have lost many of their number carrying out acts of selfless service. It is a place where families and friends of those they mourn can remember their loved ones and reflect on their gallantry.

Since its opening, the Arboretum has become a very popular site, with its own special place in the national psyche. It touches not only the bereaved, but also anyone wishing to come and pay tribute to all those magnificent individuals who, in the course of duty, have sacrificed their lives."

- **New Buildings** – will include an impressive new 'signature' visitor centre, able to accommodate 6,000 visitors/day.
 - A new service pavilion and theatre for over 200 functions and events held annually.
 - A new remembrance centre, housing exhibitions and educational events.
 - A new 'free-flow' food hall, restaurant and lounge that opens onto an outside, covered piazza.
- **New Landscaping** – will include a doubling of the present site from 150 to 300 acres.
 - An inspiring new landscape with woodlands, lakes and water features
 - Organized footpaths and routes taking visitors directly where they want to go in a logical way.
 - Memorials arranged in meaningful groups with spaces to expand as necessary.
 - Principle memorials on sculptural mounds to act as gateways and landmarks.
 - The NMA as part of an enhanced riverside landscape between Burton-on-Trent and Tamworth.

For more information about the Arboretum – visit their website on:-

www.thenma.org.uk

The enclosed leaflet gives more information about the activities which take place, and other details.

ORION AND THE EVACUATION OF PASSENGERS FROM SINGAPORE ON 31/12/41 contd.

Researched by John Corner

Mary O'Sullivan wrote:

Our story is that we had been living outside Kuala Lumpur and made our way hurriedly to Singapore by car where we stayed with a family called **Lenihan*** who had a big house overlooking the harbour. **Mr. Lenihan** was, I believe, something to do with education either the Head of the Education department or Vice-Head. There at the **Lenihans**, we waited for a boat with the **McMahon** family and finally we all managed to get on the **Orion** which, I believe, was either the last boat or the second last boat with evacuees, to leave Singapore. The other boat was, I think, sunk with the loss of everyone on board!

I do not think we had a choice in what ship we took, it was just a matter of luck. **Fergus Lenihan*** is now a writer and the one book I know about is "*Under the Durian Tree*"; he lives in Dublin, but I will ask my brother to try to get in touch. As your list only commences at **Lewis** I do not know if any of the **Lenihans** were on the **Orion**? [JKC – They weren't – I have now found and exchanged with **Fergus Lenihan**].

I do not believe we travelled as a convoy, I think we were just a single ship alone. I do not think we were attacked and had for part of the way the protection from the battleship "*The Prince of Wales*" which at some stage turned and passed us going in the opposite direction. It was as close as 100 metres away, or so it seemed at the time. "*The Prince of Wales*" was later sunk by the Japanese.

I do not remember putting into any port and think my mother knew the **Orion** was bound for Australia. She had been ill with breast cancer and had been flown down to Sydney by flying boat for the previous 6 months and either she knew or she prayed hard enough that this was where we were going. I never heard her mentioning anywhere else. Our stay in Australia was a long story.

I have 2 recollections of the **Orion** one of which I will never forget and amuses me to this day when I think about it ... there was in the bowels of the ship a huge section dedicated to the bathing of soldiers, in those days they did not have showers just baths. There were about 6 rows of baths each with 3 baths in a line and the big kids devised an obstacle game with 2 teams (may be 3) where we had to slide down the back of each bath under the soap rack and onto the next bath & so on & so on. To make for faster times the backs of the baths were soaped to make them slippery. Perhaps **Trish (Niblock)** remembers these races or do you? It kept us endlessly amused and no doubt out of everyone's way.

The other memory was of a fire drill in the middle of the night. There was a full moon but it was scary and we all but got into the lifeboats. Luckily it turned out to be a fan that had caught fire and there was no damage and we were able to return to our cabins. I remember **Molly McMahon**, at least 6 months pregnant, trying to fit on a lifebelt; it was one of those old fashioned heavy things with oblong pieces inside some canvas cloth. These were the only 2 things, as well as seeing "*The Prince of Wales*", that I remember.

Joan Lardy (nee Mulligan), her sister wrote, entirely separately:

I was 5, as you can see from the passenger list, the second of 4 children. Our 2 brothers John and Ted were younger. To my recollection, our mother **Greta Mulligan [nee Daly]**, with us 4 siblings shared a cabin on the **SS Orion** with another woman who had 3 children – that made 9 in the cabin. Needless to say we didn't sleep too much which was not helped with the nightly onboard deck drills in the moonlight, for fire and lifeboat evacuation drills, which I remember vividly as they are etched in my mind. We all had to go to the lifeboat we were assigned to and stand there in the moonlight with lifejackets on. We had been told the 2 ships ahead of us were torpedoed and we were lucky to avoid the torpedoes which were all around.

We left our house in KL as the Japanese planes were trying to land on our lawns. We could see the Japanese pilots in their planes as they circled our house. The lawns were acres of land with a few flowering shrubs here and there. Our Dad was a civil engineer working for the PWD in Malaya. He built dams and bridges in Malaya. He had been called to the jungle earlier that day to help defend against the Japanese invasion which came by air instead of by sea. He went to the jungle army post when called up and that was the last we saw of him until 1946. He was a prisoner of war in Japan for many years, and was in a prison camp at Nagasaki just prior to the atom bomb. As mentioned, we left our house in KL on the telephoned instructions to evacuate immediately, and which told us that we had 20 minutes to get out. Our mother did not know how to drive and the chauffeur had run away. She just grabbed us and a silver bowl on the hall table and left with us 4 children (with **Ted** the baby under her arm) and **Elizabeth Yeo** (a 16 yr old young Chinese girl she had adopted). Mum started the car, a big old Ford, and it jumped across the driveway until she got the knack and drove us the 300 or so miles to Singapore. We saw fires all along the way from Japanese bombs. Before we got to Singapore, I think we stayed somewhere along the way, but I do not remember where, it was so dark. In Singapore, we stayed at the house of friends called **Dr. Lennahan** (not sure of the spelling) for about 3 weeks. Mum had to go every day to try to get us on a ship. It didn't matter where it was going, as everyone was trying to do the same, and it was an impossible task for her. Singapore was being bombed daily by the Japs and we slept under sideboards and dining tables in case a bomb hit **Dr. Lennahan's** house. Finally Mum got us all onto a ship the **SS Orion** and we left Singapore in late December 1941.

At first we were not sure where it was going but found out it was going to Australia. Our father (**Edward Mulligan 'Ned'**) had a first cousin in Australia called **Bishop Fox**. He lived in Broken Hill where we stayed for 6 months after arriving in Sydney. **Bishop Fox** put us 2 girls in an orphanage as he was worried about us in this town which was still a rough mining town in those days. Broken Hill, I remember, had red clay roads in those days. Then **Bishop Fox** sent us to Sydney and we were helped by **Monsignor Giles** and the wonderful Australians who helped us from that time onward – **Mrs. Helen Scott** and **Mrs. Odillo Maher**, both dead now but they and their families were lifetime friends with us to whom we are eternally grateful. They did everything they could for us.

Our father miraculously came back after the war was over. He was one of the last groups to be brought back from Japan by the Red Cross via flying boat to Rose Bay in Sydney Harbour. We thought he was dead as Mum had not heard from him for a very long time and the war was over in 1945. Sadly we left Australia because Dad wanted to go home. We loved Australia and the wonderful people there and still do. Dad's hair which was grey and a crew cut returned to black after 6 months of good Australian food. Unfortunately he had suffered many diseases as a prisoner, including malaria, TB and other illnesses, and died at the age of 69. He was so thin when he came back from the Japanese prison because he had one bowl of rice a day and was used as an ox with a yoke on his back to plough the Japanese fields. He rarely spoke of those times. We had an auntie called **Pat Daly** who was taken prisoner of war in Singapore and was confined in Changi Jail. She spoke a lot about the war and her experiences. She too is dead now. It was a bad time for her too. Our Dad went on to work in Nigeria and was Sec. for Agriculture there for a while when it was under British Rule. More recently a friend of the family told us that there is a museum somewhere in Malaya that has our Dad's works and photos on display, but we cannot trace where it is. His driver gathered up the photos and gave them to this museum. We would also like to trace **Elizabeth Yeo** who eventually married a doctor in Singapore. She would be 10 years older than my sister and me, so would be in her eighties.

Graem Castell sent me this story:

The scene in Singapore's Keppel Harbour was one of confusion and anxiety bordering on panic ... The docks had been heavily bombed the night before and the fires were burning out of control ...

My mother, Walter and I, Joan and Benjamin had permits to board the **Orion**, a single-funnelled P & O liner. We sailed on December 31st 1941. There were around 1,000 of us; the **Orion** could take 5,000! There were naval, military and RAF personnel, British, Australian and Indian nurses, civilian men, women and children. Minutes before the ship's single gangplank was raised, a friend of my mother, **Bess Pickthall**, forced her way back onto the wharf in a last-minute attempt to speak with her husband. She was left behind. My mother took charge of the **Pickthall** children, 14-year Elizabeth and younger brother Richard, for the rest of the war. My father and Gerard were in the swarming dockside crowd as the ship sailed. Like the numerous other separated fathers in that crowd, they had no ideas whether they would see their wives and children again. The same was true for the wives and children waving bravely from behind the ship's railings as their husbands and fathers stoically raised their hats in response.

We were lucky. We reached the safety of Fremantle, in Western Australia, 6 days later, on January 6th 1942. The 5 of us – seven now, counting the **Pickthall** children – were to spend the next 2 years in Australia. It would be many months before my mother and Aunt Joan received word of their husbands.

Tom Iriam, now Lt. Col. MBE wrote:

I was in Singapore from 1935 to the day we sailed. My father was a Regular Army Officer but, at that time, was attached to The Straits Settlements Volunteer Force. He remained in Singapore, was captured, and was in the first tranche of prisoners sent to Thailand. He spent the remainder of the war building a railway. He survived that ordeal but was never a fit and well man afterwards. He soldiered-on in the British Army and died from the conditions he suffered in 1968. My mother died last year aged 98!!

We were fortunate to be able to leave the island on **Orion** because it had been delayed in dry dock bring repaired after a collision with a British Warship. I believe that it was the last but one ship carrying refugees. There were several ship loads before us but, from people I have met subsequently, they were destined for the UK, India and Ceylon.

I recall that we sailed alone from Keppel Harbour in the early evening of New Year's Eve. At some stage during the night we were joined by two RN destroyers. At first light on day one we were found by Japanese aircraft(s?) and attacked. The destroyers put up a great barrage and prevented the aircraft making good its attack. They did not hit anything but from my army speciality as an Air Defender I am not surprised, as the aim of air-defence is "to prevent the enemy interfering from the air with the conduct of operations on the ground", and the navy did their stuff.

I believe that not even the Captain knew where we were bound until day two when he was ordered to Australia to pick up troops in Sydney. We sailed alone once the destroyers signalled farewell and good luck. Our first stop was Fremantle where heads of families were given the option of disembarking or going on to Melbourne. My mother opted to remain on board. On arrival in Melbourne no one was given another option, it was everyone off!!

My mother soon got a job with the American Army which was establishing its Pacific base in Melbourne. She had worked for the British Army in Singapore so had some experience of "Service Speak". The Americans soon realised, in a matter of a couple of months, that Melbourne was not the best place to have their HQ so up-sticked to Sydney taking my mother and me with them. I was then sent to boarding school, The King's School, Parramatta, and set about becoming an Australian; in spirit if not legally – some of the best times of my life.

Sadly, despite efforts by my mother to get him sent to Australia, my father was repatriated back to the UK so we had to follow. This was quite a culture shock and I know that my mother spent the rest of her life regretting it. I joined the family business (Army) in due course, but retired early in 1978 to take up a senior post in the defence industry which took me back to Australia several times on business.

Dennis Luff wrote about his Aunt Rita Mason and daughter Geraldine:

Rita travelled out to Malaya with her husband and daughter **Geraldine** in 1939. They travelled on the liner **Orion**. Her husband **Denis**, a Civil Engineer, was employed by the Air Ministry on airfield construction. Shortly after the Japanese invasion **Rita** and **Geraldine**, then aged 5, were driven by her husband **Denis** from their home in Kluang, Johore, to the docks in Singapore. **Rita** and **Geraldine** then boarded the 24,000 ton liner **Orion**. She had been in dry dock to repair damage to her bows caused by a collision with **HMS Revenge**. The **Orion** left Singapore bound for Australia on New Year's Day 1942 carrying women, children and sick and wounded soldiers. The ship could have carried 3,000 but carried far less. The **Orion** docked in Perth and **Rita** and **Geraldine** were taken to the King George V hotel which charged £5 per week. They stayed in Perth for 6 months during which time **Geraldine** contracted Pneumonia and Whooping Cough.

Kenneth Miles wrote briefly:

Hello my name is **Ken Miles**. I was on this ship the same time as you, with my mother, elder brother and younger sister. We ended up in Ararat, Victoria. We came back to England after the war, to meet up with my dad who was a prisoner of the Japs. He was in the RAF and captured in Java. We came back to England on the New Zealand ship the **SS Rangatiki**. The Bishop of Singapore was also on board. We were so out of control on board we had to go to school and the Bishop tried to teach us French.

Bridget Kitchin (nee Hayward) wrote:

My father was the D.O. [District Officer] Kuala Lipis in 1941 and was a member of the Pahang Volunteers so was called up. I can remember him arriving dressed like an Australian soldier and saying "Hello **Tricia** [my mother] can you be off in two hours? ... his brigadier had given him four hour's leave in order to tell my mother that she must go to Singapore – not by KL, as she would be stopped – and to make sure she understood that we must leave the country as they were "not going to hold this". My sister thinks my father wanted us to fly to Australia! However there were no planes available. We left by car with a **Mrs. Creagh(?)** and her 6 week old baby and a daughter.

We stayed with various friends in Singapore while waiting for a passage. I can remember sleeping under a dining room table to protect us from bombing. Mother always said that we spent 2 weeks in Singapore until we sailed for Australia on the **Orion** on 1st January 1942 (I was always given this date and my sister says it is correct). My brother had the original telegram which my mother sent to her father in England on 28th December 1941 saying "Going Australia with children". Dates were not mentioned to avoid being censored. We had to be on the quay at 7.30am with all our luggage which we had to carry on board – a woman without children helped my mother.

We had a 3-berth cabin – more berths had been fitted in for wartime conditions – and were made to sleep in our clothes (which horrified us) only taking off our shoes, which we had to practice putting on quickly. My mother obviously felt she could not cope with having to get 3 children dressed in an emergency! My 2 ½ year old brother had to share a bunk with our mother who fitted a net across it to stop him falling out. He was kept on reins for the whole journey, and we were not allowed out of my mother's sight until, on the last day, I was once allowed to go to the cabin on my own.

We had endless practice drills. There were 2 different alarms; one for bomb alert [when we had to gather by the dining room below decks], and one to go to our allotted lifeboat stations for a torpedo warning. My mother carried a 'shipwreck bag' with her at all times in which she put necessities for an emergency plus her jewellery (in case she could sell it). Many years later she once froze when she heard a bell which she said was the same tone as one of these alarms.

The voyage was full steam ahead and we arrived in Fremantle on 6th January without stopping anywhere. Before we were allowed ashore, a doctor examined everyone's wrists – I have never discovered why. We were put up in Toc H in Freo for a week where we children slept in rows on an enclosed verandah, before we went to Applecross Hotel for a month – it seemed full of evacuees.

We then lived in rented houses (2) with other evacuees until leaving for the UK in August 1945. My sister and I went to school and my brother to Kindergarten. We were made to feel very welcome in Australia and made some lifelong friends.

At first, my mother was very worried about finances, until she heard that she would be paid half my father's

salary. It was a steep learning curve for her but she coped well. The last she heard of my father before the fall of Singapore was sent on 5th February '42, until a telegram from my grandfather in England on 26th December 1942 saying that he had heard that Daddy was a POW in Malaya. Later he was sent to Thailand.

Jill Smallshaw's (nee Wright) account:

My mother and I (**Margaret** and **Gillian Wright**) were aboard the **Orion** ... All I do know is that we travelled with great friends whom we lived near in Malacca, and we went by road together to Singapore and shared a cabin. I am still in touch with the children.

However, I do know that we were escorted alone out of Singapore harbour by a small destroyer for a short distance, and not in convoy. The children shared the cabins, and the mothers sat outside with their backs to the walls in case we were torpedoed. To my knowledge the ship was never attacked as such, but I was only 2 ½ years old.

Sandy Lincoln's story:

My mother (**Florence Winifred Page**), her mother (**Florence Louise Robson**) and my brother **Norman**, who was a baby, were living at 11, Kay Siang Road. The front of No.11 was surrounded by sandbags. Mother had gathered everyone into the hall. The Japs bombed the petrol dump near the Japanese golf course at the end of the road. It made the most terrible noise. Mother, on impulse, grabbed Norman from his cot to hug him, and at that moment a lump of shrapnel flew in, whistled past Gran's neck (she said she could feel the breeze as it passed), and landed right where Norman's head had been. Mother had been urged to get out with Norman as soon as she could, but she was reluctant to leave my grandmother who was unable to get a passage out. However, she decided that she and Norman must go when they could, and Gran also urged them to go without her. At this point fate took a hand. The morning they were due to go, my father, **Lincoln Page**, was working at the Beach Point, but got permission to take them to the boat. They were only allowed to take one case, which was filled mostly with nappies and baby food. At the last minute, Gran threw a few extra things in a small bag, "just in case", and they all got into the car. Literally, just as they were leaving, an army car drew up and the military said that they had come to requisition the house. Daddy said that his mother-in-law would still be living there as she could not get a passage out. They were told to take her, and at the office, on collecting mother's ticket, they were handed 2 tickets enabling Gran to sail on the same boat as mother and Norman. Daddy took them to the boat but could not stay to see them off.

They left on the **Orion**, a troop ship which was full of refugees. The conditions were very cramped, with 5 people in cabins designed for 2 and no doctor on board. The boat was due to sail at around 7pm but the Captain got worried and they left earlier, at about 5pm. That evening the docks were bombed by the Japanese. At first, there was a cruiser to accompany the **Orion** for protection. They passed one of the big Dutch liners on its way to Java, and that evening their cruiser had to go to the rescue of the Dutch ship which was being badly bombed by the Japanese, so from that time they had no escort. The seas were full of enemy submarines and mines. After a while they noticed that the **Orion** was going much faster, and this was because the Captain decided to let out the ballast in order to get out of those dangerous waters as fast as possible. It took just over a week to get to Fremantle in WA.

Early one morning, as my mother was taking Norman out on deck, she came across a very harassed looking officer. After she greeted him, he said, "This ain't no blooming war, it's a blitz of women and kids!" There were 500 women and around 1,000 children on board the ship.

Sandy added: I cannot vouch for the historical accuracy of this account – it's how my mother remembers it.

Patricia McEntee – contacted through **Mary O'Sullivan** says:

We left the Cameron Highlands and drove past Fraser's Hill to Singapore. We caught the ship **Orion** to Sydney. We played with other young boys on deck quoits and went swimming. We were ten years old.

Yvonne Heritage (nee Spranklen) writes briefly:

We had one hour to pack one suitcase and get to the docks. Bombs hit the docks just missing our ship and father had to run for cover. The Captain left 2 hours early as he had a premonition we would be bombed, and after we left we heard big explosions coming from the docks as ships were blown up. We set a zig zag course to avoid Japanese subs which followed us. I remember our food sliding up and down the tables. There were 800 wounded troops on board too, so it was very crowded.

I was 6 ½ at the time and do have very vivid memories, but my older sister cannot remember anything.

John Corner sums up his findings:

a) As expected there is both common ground and variation in these memories of so long ago.

b) It seems certain that **Orion** was attacked.

c) It seems unlikely that she put into any port en-route for Australia.

d) Although thought to be one of the last "evacuee" ships to leave Singapore – this is not true. At least 1 other ship (of 5) sailed that day, (no-one can recall the name, but she was lost). **Cissie Hatton**, says **Kit Seddon**, was on this ship. **Kit** also says that, at the docks, people were selected for the **Orion** or this other ship, there was no choice.

e) Although there is doubt, **I think Orion** sailed in New Year's Eve, 1941 – probably late that evening.

f) In Melbourne, evacuees had to register at the Town Hall where lodgings were arranged. The RAC took people to their accommodation. My mother and I were billeted first in Toorak and later in Dandenong – 25 kms east of Melbourne

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF ESCAPE – by Patricia Wood

On January 16th 1942, a small convoy of ships carrying refugees left Singapore for Australia. The two troop ships, with an escort of destroyers, left behind a besieged island still crowded with people who had fled the advancing Japanese army as it made its way down the Malay Peninsula. Some had already escaped the chaos and many more were waiting for a ship that would take them away from this overcrowded island. But there were many who, six weeks after the beginning of the Japanese bombardment still did not believe that this bastion of British colonialism could ever fall into enemy hands.

I was seven years old and my older brother was nearly nine when we embarked that day. My younger brothers were three and a half and twenty months. At this stage it was only women and children and some elderly British residents who were allowed to leave officially, so our father had to stay behind. We didn't see him again for three and a half years. Besides missing our beloved daddy, we would miss the other friends who had helped to look after us in the preceding years: we had always had a Malay Ayah and friendly men servants who lived in quarters at the back of our house with their families. My mother was to spend the following years of separation as our only provider and career for the first time in her life.

On Boxing Day 1941, we were living in Kuala Lumpur, where my father, **Ernest Hodgkin**, had been employed in the British Colonial Service as a scientist in the Institute for Medical Research (IMR) since 1931, and where we were all born.

Christmas Day had been tense for my parents because they were very aware of the presence of the Japanese army on the Malay Peninsula, although there was little understanding in the community of just how close they were. There had been raids most afternoons since early December, when the Japanese planes flew over on reconnaissance flights down to Singapore before the seasonal rain clouds began to gather each day. We used a shelter dug into a bank at the end of the garden. People would provide themselves with books and games and migrate to the shelter until the planes had gone, but the raids were not treated very seriously. It was expected that the British and Australian armies would intervene in time to prevent invasion and there would be no need to leave Kuala Lumpur. That is, until the big raid on Boxing Day.

When Japanese planes bombed Kuala Lumpur for the first time, there was some serious damage to public facilities and many of the people looking after these ran away, so public services ceased. The family still did not consider leaving K.L. until it was decided to move the government office where my father worked. We joined a convoy of staff and their families which left very early on the morning of the 28th December with the very minimum of luggage. I remember the Christmas tree standing there in all its splendour as we were woken and hurried out in the dark to the waiting car. We left behind our Christmas presents, including Cherry, my new kitten, along with most of the family possessions.

The drive to Singapore was an adventure for me – a fearful adventure – but to the grown-ups it must have been very worrying, as by this time it was clear that the Japanese army on bicycles could not be very far behind. At one point our whole convoy was stopped and the cars left by the roadside as we scrambled down a bank and into a plantation of rubber trees to hide. The planes we hid from had more urgent business further south and left us alone, so after a while we climbed back up to the road and continued the journey. When we arrived in Singapore later that day, everything was happening. Our first night was spent 'sheltering' in a ditch dug in the damp red earth of some open space. My eldest brother, **Graham**, and I were together but I don't remember who else was with us in our ditch or where **Jonathan** and **Michael** (my younger brothers) were, though they and my parents could not have been far away. I could see the searchlights weaving patterns against the black night sky. There were tiny moving lights in the sky too, which, when picked up by the searchlights, turned out to be aeroplanes. Around us there seemed to be a ring of fires. Huge flames came from bombed oil storage tanks around the city and they backlit the black silhouettes of trees and buildings on a huge panorama of destruction. The air was full of noise: air raid sirens wailed; there were bursts of ack-ack fire from defence posts around the southern and north east perimeters of the island and explosions could be heard as the bombers rained their deadly cargo on the poorly defended city. There were more nights and days like that one, but having arrived in Singapore we were now faced with the challenge of finding accommodation. The city had already been under fire for a few weeks and as some people had already fled, it was possible to find room in empty government owned houses. Our refuge was just such a place. It was on a hill above the town and near the General Hospital so should have been safe, though I do remember noticing small holes in its white walls where shrapnel from nearby exploding shells had hit. We were in Singapore for about three weeks. The raids got worse, and I seem to have spent a lot of the time under the dining room table. My mother wrote that it 'wasn't much fun'.

Soon after we arrived in Singapore, my father drove back to K.L. in an endeavour to collect more of the important equipment and data left behind at the IMR. He also managed to collect and hide some of our personal belongings from the house, so we still have their wedding 'canteen' of cutlery and a few other

precious family belongings, which would otherwise have been lost. The drive north was fraught with danger but more staff had to be evacuated while it was still possible to keep ahead of the advancing Japanese army. Although there was still hope that more troops would arrive to defend the island and drive the Japanese back up the peninsula, Singapore was obviously no longer a safe place for civilians, especially children. (Despite this, my brother and I were sent to school. Our Cameron Highland School was operating "for the benefit of anyone wanting to further the education of their children".) There were so many desperate families trying to leave that the shipping offices were inundated. Long queues formed outside: vulnerable targets for the strafing raids coming in over the town. Troop ships bringing extra armed forces (who were already too late to help in the defeat of the invaders) were amongst the few ships coming into Singapore at that time, and some escaping civilians were able to take places on these. In turn, the influx of troops meant more mouths to be fed and, as happened eventually, more personnel to be dealt with by the Japanese when Singapore fell.

These were the circumstances in which arrangements had to be made for us to leave. Ships were being bombed and lost as the harbour was under continual bombardment, so there was very little notice as the troops disembarked and berths became available. Suddenly, on the 16th January, with just twelve hours notice, an opening was found, the family said our farewells, and **Mary Hodgkin** and we four children boarded a troop ship called the **Narkunda** and set sail for Australia. The women and children who packed our ship were some of the lucky ones. Three weeks later the Japanese entered Singapore, and many who were on board ships trying to escape died as they were bombed entering the Malay Straits. Many more were destined to be captured and spend the next three and a half years in Prisoner of War camps in Java and Sumatra. The **Narkunda** and its accompanying convoy headed towards the port of Fremantle, in Western Australia, with a cargo of about 300 women and 500 children "packed like sardines". My mother described the trip very graphically, writing "I know exactly what hell is like now". Although there was some excitement when floating mines were seen and fired at, the hell was not due to Japanese attacks! The passengers did have to deal with the rigours of overcrowding, bad water and sanitation and very little food, with only the remainders left over by the troops from South Africa. To add to the discomfort, the mothers had to carry lifebelts, babies and all their needs with them all the time. During the eight day long voyage my mother wrote an alphabet, which described the experience well.

A is for Ack-Ack we hope we won't need

C is for Cabins where few of us sleep

E is for Evacuees – that's what we're called

G is for Gasbags – the rumours abound

I is for Indians who must think we're mad

K is for Klim – large tins are about

M is for "Mummy" – the ship's battle cry

O is for Officers, the kindest of men

Q is for Questions beginning with "Why"?

S is for Stewards who are full of good cheer

U is for Undies which hang on the rails

W is for Women – all shapes are about

Y is the Young – the reason we're here

B is for Bottles of Cow & Gate feed

D is for Dinner which some of us keep

F is for Flags i.e. napkins unfurled

H is for Husbands we hope safe and sound

J is for Jitters that most of us had

L is for Lifebelts – a weight without doubt

N is for "Nappies" all washed but not dry!

P is for Purser – the father of ten

R is for Rubbish – the baskets piled high

T is for Tummies – a number feel queer

V is for Violence applied to kids' tails

X is our Future – a problem and doubt

Z is the Zest – when we leave, the crew cheer

She signed it 'Mother of 4'

The ship arrived at Fremantle on a Saturday – the weekend of Australia Day – and the weary refugees had to queue up all day while our papers and few belongings were attended to. Then we were herded into buses and taken to Perth where we were 'sorted' and put into the hands of the Red Cross who, to my mother's relief, organized us. We spent our first week in Australia at Christ Church Grammar School, sharing space with about fifty other evacuees in dormitories, which I recall as being grey and somehow 'underground'. It is hot in Perth in January, and most of the children were ill with dysentery, which must have made things even more difficult – there was not much sleep for anyone. As we had not been able to bring much in the way of clothes, the heat was, as she said, 'providence' for Mum. We had to be out of the school before the term was due to start, so she started looking for somewhere to live straight away. It must have been hard to know where to start. Mum was alarmed at not being able to find suitable accommodation, until she had the idea of finding the Quakers (my father's family were Quakers in England), and through them she found a family she had met in Manchester years before. We were taken to a small outer suburb called Gosnells, about 12 miles from Perth. We rented a small furnished house there and that was home for the first year of our life in Australia.

Far Eastern War Damage Claims

By Stephanie Hess

The article "In Correspondence with Sir Roger Moon" in the last edition of 'Apa Khabar' has reminded me of some letters and newspaper cuttings amongst my grandfather's papers that have been quietly waiting for attention. They offer a glimpse into his efforts to recover some form of financial compensation for the losses he suffered as a result of the Japanese occupation of Singapore and his years as a P.O.W. in Singapore and Japan.

J.B. Dunne was born in Ireland in 1907. Like all Irish born into those times he was a British subject and travelled on a British Passport. He left Dublin for Singapore in 1928 to pursue a career with the firm D. Gestetner, Ltd. He spent the 30's building a life for himself and his family in a city which became his deeply beloved home - a home he was prepared to lay down his life for.

One of the first things he did upon arrival in Singapore was to join the Singapore Volunteer Corps. For years he participated in the required training and drills, first as a member of the Scottish Company, then later as a member of 'B' Company. When the time came to defend the besieged island, he took up arms without a second thought, ready to "do or die", as he put it, for the Crown Colony. Attached to the Royal Corps of Signals, he fought alongside the 'regular' soldiers, and after surrender was billeted with the R.C.O.S. at Changi prison camp until, many months into captivity, he was able to get himself reassigned to the SVC.

For three years and eight months my grandfather experienced the hardships of life as a FEPOW, determined to "see it through"; determined to be reunited with his wife & children who he had sent to safety in Australia only weeks before Singapore fell. He did survive, and returned to his loved ones, but as a ghost of his former self - nearly blind, nearly deaf, a walking skeleton who would suffer physical ailments to the end of his days.

All that he had built in Singapore was gone. His home had been razed to the ground, his worldly goods sacrificed to the looter and to the bombs. Like so many who had lived in the East and lost so much, he tried to pick up the threads of his old life, hoping to secure a future for his family in a world that had changed beyond recognition.

I have no memory of my grandfather ever talking about what was lost to him, but the little bundle of papers that I have before me on my desk tell an interesting story.



Singapore 1946

NOTES REGARDING THE REGISTRATION OF RETURNS IN RESPECT OF LOSS OR DAMAGE
ARISING FROM THE WAR, OF OR TO BRITISH PROPERTY OUTSIDE THE UNITED KINGDOM.

Returns will be accepted by the Trading with the Enemy Dept. (Treasury and Board of Trade), 24 Kingsway, London, W.C.2 from:-

- (a) ~~British subjects resident~~ and British companies registered in the United Kingdom.
- (b) British subjects in foreign countries.
- (c) British subjects resident, and British companies registered in Colonies, Protectorates or other parts of the Empire where no facilities for the registration of claims exist.

in respect of their property outside the United Kingdom which has suffered loss or damage as a result of the war, including any in Colonies, Protectorates or other parts of the Empire where no war damage legislation is already operating or where for other reasons no facilities for the registration of claims exist.

2. Claims in respect of:-

- (a) Goods insured under the Malayan War Risks (Goods) Insurance Scheme, or
- (b) Property requisitioned in Malaya or Hong Kong.

should be addressed to the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Whitehall, S.W. 1.

3. Enquiries concerning personal effects lost at sea, ships (including inland craft such as tugs, lighters and yachts) outside the United Kingdom and cargoes lost or damaged as a result of enemy action on water should be addressed to the Ministry of War Transport, AT/GEN. (Insurance) Berkeley Square House, London, W.1.

4. It is emphasized that acceptance of returns does not commit H.M. Government in the United Kingdom in any way either to pay compensation or to secure the restoration to owners of the property which they have lost as a result of the war. No decision can be taken on these matters during the war.

As regards British Colonial territory now occupied by the enemy, however the Colonial Office have indicated that it will be the general aim of His Majesty's Government after the war, that with a view to the well-being of the people and the resumption of productive activity, property and goods destroyed or damaged in the Colonial Empire should be replaced or repaired to such extent and over such a period of time as resources permit. If the resources of any part of the Colonial Empire are insufficient to enable this purpose to be achieved without aid, His Majesty's Government will be ready to give what assistance they can in conjunction with such common fund or organisation as may be established for post-war reconstruction.

5. In view of the hurried departure of many British subjects from countries occupied by the enemy, and the difficulty of obtaining precise information as to the fate of particular property, the Board are prepared to accept bonafide returns based on a reasonable presumption of loss or damage. It is left to the applicants to estimate in good faith the value of their property and the extent of their damage, and no correspondence can be entered upon as to the basis of any particular item of claim.

6. A form R.C. is enclosed and in giving the particulars asked for you should, if possible, distinguish between loss and damage. For the purposes of registration property may include bearer securities, negotiable instruments (including bank notes) and other documents passing by delivery only, as well as goods, furniture and personal effects, luggage and other movable property, also machinery, plant and immovable property, e.g. lands and buildings.

7. No papers other than the enclosed form R.C. and any schedule of the property attached to it should be sent. Invoices, deeds or other evidence of ownership should be retained by the registrant.

The form giving instructions on how and where to file a War Damages claim shows the first step in a process that was to go on into the mid-Fifties.

Having sent in a claim, as instructed, to the Trading with the Enemy Department of the Treasury and Board of Trade, my grandfather received the letter dated 27 March, 1947, requesting that he submit a new claim to the newly created Malayan War Damage Claims Commission.

Telegraphic Address:
Insurecbot, Sewest,
London.

Telephone No: Abbey 3801

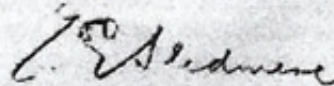
Far Eastern Claims Commissions,
c/o Board of Trade,
Rcmey House East,
Tuften Street,
London, S.W.1

.....27 MAR 1947..... 1947.

Dear Sir/Madam,

1. With the approval of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Governors of the Malayan Union and Singapore have now appointed a Commission under the title "Malayan War Damage Claims Commission", to register and assess claims for property lost or damaged in those territories as a result of the war.
2. Pending the appointment of this Commission, many claimants have already lodged claims with the Trading with the Enemy Department, 24, Kingsway, London, W.C.2 or with some other registering authority, but, generally speaking, these claims amount to little more than statements of property left behind in Malaya.
3. Other claimants have not yet submitted claims, and have asked to be supplied with forms on which to do so.
4. The Commission have decided that, in order to enable them to deal with all claims as expeditiously as possible, it is necessary to ask all claimants, whether or not they have already lodged provisional claims with one of the registering authorities, ... to submit fuller particulars of their claims on a new form, a copy of which is enclosed, ... together with notes for the guidance of claimants in completing it.
5. The Commission much regret the necessity of asking those claimants who have already lodged claims to resubmit them in fuller detail on the new form, but the information now sought is the minimum required for a proper consideration of the claims.
6. You are accordingly asked to complete the new form and to forward it in time to reach the Commission at the appropriate address given on the form by 31st May, 1947.
7. Claims and any accompanying schedules already lodged with the Trading with the Enemy Department under paragraph 2 above, have, at the Commission's request, been transferred to the head office of the Commission at Kuala Lumpur, where they will be linked up with the new claim forms referred to in paragraph 4 above.

Yours faithfully,



J. B. Dunne Esq.,

2nd Sept. '48
v. important
The Free Press Thursday

\$50 million set aside for private chattels

THE interests of private claimants rank high in the War Damage Compensation scheme. The Commission's report proposes that a sum of \$50 million should be earmarked for private chattel claims.

Compensation from this allocation would be made with a view to meeting the cost of replacing items "reasonably necessary, having regard to the claimant's status in life, but not intended to restore his possessions exactly or completely."

For this reason it is recommended that awards should be limited to essential household goods, and personal effects of ordinary quality.

Compensation would not be awarded for excessive quantities of articles necessary in themselves. On the other hand, claimants who have included jewellery or valuables necessary in nature but of exceptional quality, an allowance might be made for ordinary quality.

Items such as works of art, cameras, wireless sets, ornamental jewellery, sporting guns and rifles, pleasure boats and yachts are disallowed by the Commission.

No guarantee of the full cost of any necessary replacement should be given, the report says.

It is intended that this \$50 million should be expressly for private chattels, and "should not depend upon the outturn of awards, whether restoration or outright, upon other classes of property."

The sum earmarked represents 13.3 per cent of the proposed available fund, whereas private chattel claims represent only 12.5 per cent of total claims.

It is pointed out that "private chattel claimants will, therefore, receive better treatment than the average of the remaining claimants."

WAR INSURANCE PAYMENTS

A SUM of \$100 million is set aside under the War Damage Compensation Scheme for the payment of contractual liabilities under the War Risks (Goods) Insurance Scheme.

A total of a little under \$12 million was collected in premia and up to the end of June last, 193 claims for approximately \$11 million had

been settled for \$1,531,000, representing a percentage settlement of 16.3.

Claims total \$196.5 million, against \$220 million goods insured, representing a loss of 90 per cent.

The Malayan Governments are under a statutory obligation to keep the Board in funds to meet all claims proved against it.

Rulings already made by the Board include the decision that

the risks of seizure on land by an enemy was not covered by the scheme. Looting by armed forces or by civilians was also not a risk covered by insurance.

This decision, however, can be challenged in a court of law.

Over 75 per cent. of claims have been under investigation, and it is hoped that the rate at which they are finally settled will increase, so that most of the fund's liability will be discharged by the end of 1949.

It would seem that nothing much had happened by 1948, based on the fact that various newspaper cuttings from The Free Press were deemed "v. important" and worth keeping. The message was clear - "It is pointed out that 'Private Chattel' claimants will therefore receive better treatment than the average of the remaining claimants."

In April 1950, the War Damage Commission on the 4th Floor of the Fullerton Building, Singapore, sent a letter with the request that my grandfather fill in a supplementary questionnaire to the one already submitted with his Claim Form.

An initial payment in Sterling equivalent to Malayan \$350 was posted from the War Damage Commission in Kuala Lumpur in July 1951 with the comment that the claim would be reassessed in detail at a later date

At the end of 1951 a letter from the War Damage Commission in Singapore arrived announcing that "the Assessment Board cannot accept your claim as it now stands" and requested that a new claim form be filled in and sent. Further instructions on how and where to file a claim were included with the original Claim which was returned.

In January 1952 a communication was sent, again from the War Damage Commission in KL, to say that the Assessment Board of the Commission had made a final Outright Award which would be allocated to the Personal Chattels payment category. The amount awarded was half of what my grandfather had claimed and "will qualify for dividend payments".

It had taken six years of determination, but at least the Private Chattels claim processed in Malaya brought some compensation to my grandfather for the loss of his home and its contents.

His efforts to claim compensation in Britain as a member of the Singapore Volunteer Corps seem to have met with more disappointing results.

By 1954 J.B. Dunne was in communication with the Chief Inspector of Taxes, Liverpool, the Returned British Prisoner of War Association, London, and the Ministry of Pensions & National Insurance, also London.

The Returned British Prisoners of War Association (Including Civilian Internees)

(Registered under The War Charities Act, 1940)

President:
THE COUNTESS MOUNTBATTEN OF BURMA,
C.I., G.B.E., D.C.V.O

Chairman:
MAJOR THE VISCOUNT TARBAT, M.C.

Vice Chairman:
SIR GERALD HARGREAVES

Overseas Chairman:
RAFAELLE DUCHESS OF LEINSTER

Organising Secretary:
COMMANDER K. DOWNEY

8 LOWER GROSVENOR PLACE,
S.W.1

Tel.: VICTORIA 3447

1st November 1954

Mr. J.B. Dunne,
"Milcoursey"
Graystones
Co. Wicklow, Eire.

I have received your letter of the 25th Inst. re claim to compensation against the Japanese. Please note that our address is now as above, and was never 24, but 34 Eaton Place. As during the months of October 1952 to March 1953 we received and dealt with something like 50,000 letters, it is more than likely that yours never reached us if sent to 24 Eaton Place.

Neither we nor N.F.F.C.A. are actually responsible for the payments of compensation, and I suggest you should write at once to the Ministry of Pensions, R and W Division, Thames House South, Millbank, London, S.W.1. and ask for an application form on which to claim for 1) the amount £15 paid in 1953 for which you should now be eligible and 2) any further sums which may be paid in the future. According to the ruling of the Ministry of Pensions, in 1952, residents of Eire who had been F.E.P.O.W.s were not eligible to receive the £15 but we are glad to say that this decision has now been reversed and you should therefore receive the full payment.

Signed
Kenneth Downey

K. Downey
Organising Secretary.

My grandfather did, as advised, write to the Ministry of Pensions. After various communications and forms being submitted and resubmitted the final reply was as follows:

Ministry of Pensions & National Insurance,
Thames House South,
Millbank,
London, S.W.1.

Ref: R/DJA

.....30.11..... 1954.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing with regard to your application for a share in the distribution of the proceeds of Japanese assets in the United Kingdom.

I should explain that the money which is being distributed is that obtained from the liquidation of Japanese assets frozen in the United Kingdom and payment is, therefore, limited to those persons who, being otherwise eligible, were normally resident in the United Kingdom before internment and are either normally resident here now or returned to the United Kingdom after release from internment and have since emigrated.

A person would be regarded as normally resident in the United Kingdom if he had his home and roots in this country but was, for instance, called upon by the nature of his business or profession to leave the United Kingdom and work overseas for a period.

On the information at present available you do not appear to satisfy these residence requirements and it is regretted, therefore, that we are unable to pay you a share.

If, however, this was not the position and you will let us have further information regarding your connections with the United Kingdom together with details of any periods of leave you have spent here both before and after internment we shall be glad to give your claim further sympathetic consideration.

The Singapore Volunteer Corp in which you served was not a unit of H.M. Forces based in the United Kingdom.

Yours faithfully,

D. A. King
for Secretary.

T. B. Durrant Esq.

"THE SINGAPORE VOLUNTEER CORP IN WHICH YOU SERVED WAS NOT A UNIT OF H.M. FORCES BASED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM."

In response to the third paragraph, my grandfather points out that though he is now a citizen of the Republic of Ireland he was then a British subject whose business appointment took him to Singapore and that he was otherwise resident in the United Kingdom, returning there during his Leave periods. He concludes:

“My service record is there – the hardships were there- I lost very considerably financially from Internment, and although I never made claim for disability pension I had and still have grounds for such a claim in respect of my sight which has never been the same since I was taken P.O.W.”

There is one final communication in 1955 from the Organising Secretary of The Returned British Prisoners of War Association in which he regretfully apologises for being under the misconception that my grandfather was eligible for compensation.

I have talked to the Ministry about this decision, and they tell me that the reason for your ineligibility is that you did not serve in a Regiment based on the United Kingdom - but in the Singapore Volunteers, and that in the case of a Regiment not based on the United Kingdom, in order to be eligible, people had to have lived previously in England and then have emigrated.

It all sounds very involved to me, but I have asked the Ministry of Pensions to write again to you, and really to explain the reasons, and I sincerely hope they will soon do so.

That appears to be the conclusion to the matter. No further documentation follows.

It would seem that a man born a British subject, who fought for Britain, and who was interned as British did not qualify for even a £15 compensation payment.

One poignant scrap of paper is included amongst my grandfather's War Damages Claim papers – a prayer to St. Jude, patron saint of desperate cases and lost causes.

RAF MEMORIALS IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH K.L. - a message from Andrew Hwang.

Two entries have come to my attention from St. Andrew's Church archives.

1. An entry dated 5th January 1961 confirming that an RAF WW2 Memorial previously installed in the chapel at RAF Station Kuala Lumpur had been officially handed over to St Andrew's Church at a ceremony at the most recent Battle of Britain Service (Possibly September 1960?) presumably to be installed in our church. I checked on the internet and discovered that RAF Station KL was handed over to the Royal Malayan Air Force in 1961 and the chapel was deconsecrated. This Memorial has quite simply disappeared.

Does anyone have any photographs, drawings or descriptions of this RAF WW2 memorial? We intend to begin a thorough search within the Church property and a description or any information as to where the memorial could have ended up would help tremendously.

2. On 10th November 1963, the Remembrance Sunday Service was held at St. Andrew's and at the close of the service, 50 Poppy Day crosses were planted in a plot at the front of the Church, prepared as a Garden of Remembrance. The Ex-Services Association, British High Commission, New Zealand High Commission and French Embassy representatives were present. We have no photographs of this event. **Does anyone know who may be able to help with finding photographs of this event?**

THE MISSING FIRST WORLD WAR MEMORIAL PLAQUE IN ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, KUALA LUMPUR – Report by ANDREW HWANG

In the past 24 years there have been at least 2 known failed attempts at replacing the memorial plaques and tablets of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Kuala Lumpur, looted in WW2. St Andrew's was well known as the "Planters' Church" or "Scottish Kirk" of Selangor and many of its members served in the volunteer and regular forces.

In 1934, Rev. William Buckingham wrote that "the walls within which we worship are hallowed by the sacred and inspiring memories of a great cloud of witnesses who, having served their day and generation, have passed on into the fuller life and higher service".

The War Memorial was originally a bronze plaque. It was presented by the Kuala Lumpur Branch of the Ex-Servicemen's Association in honour of those men from Selangor (and presumably especially those of the parish served by St. Andrew's) who died in WW1. It was unveiled by the Hon. Sir George Maxwell, the Chief Secretary of the Federated Malay States (who also later unveiled the Kuala Selangor War Memorial) and dedicated by Rev. A. Drummond Marcus on 20th May 1922.

A proposal to install an additional memorial in the form of a stained glass window was postponed. After WW2, the women of the congregation raised money to install a stained glass window to those who died in both World Wars and this was unveiled on 13th November 1955.

The wordings of the missing War Memorial were recorded by Rev. Buckingham in 1934 as follows:

**In Memory of the Following Once Resident
In This State Who Fell in the Great War
1914 – 1918**

Allan, J.S.	Lane, H.C.H
Andrews, W.F.	Mackay, P.S.
Cameron, E.	Meikle, P.S.
Campbell, D.G.	Niven, J.L.
Carrs, S.	Phillimore, H.B.
Chapman, A.F.	Ross, G.J.
Crossland, R.C.	Ruspack, L.A.
Dickson, S.A.	Simpson, J.A.
Finlay, G.G.	Stephenson, A.F.V.
Gardiner, K.E.McA	Selby-Lowrides, M.E.
Healy, E.	Webb, G.T.
Keith, D.H.	White, W.K.
Leggatt, E.G.B.	Wilson, T

From several eye-witness accounts, it is now quite certain that the War Memorial and the other memorial plaques in St. Andrew's were looted between 11th January 1942 (the day the British withdrew from Kuala Lumpur) and 13th January 1942 when the Japanese gained full control of the city and stopped the widespread looting. St Andrew's was looted by a native gang made up of mainly armed Police and Volunteer deserters who roamed about at will along Weld Road and Ceylon Hill. The bronze and brass memorials were looted for their metal together with the organ pipes, brass lectern and church communion plate. Bibles, hymnals and Christian literature were burnt in an orgy of senseless destruction.

Members of the congregation of the Wesley Methodist Church who were mainly English-speaking Tamils at this point in time (the British had all left) tried to stop the desecration of St. Andrew's but were driven away at gunpoint. The Japanese subsequently took control of the premises and later allowed the Methodists to use the church building for the rest of the war. Methodist Bishop Emeritus Datuk Dr. Denis C. Dutton remembers attending St Andrew's as a young lad during the occupation years.

Contrary to popular belief, the Japanese were very respectful of memorials to the dead, especially war memorials. That is why they left all the memorials they came across intact and sometimes even refurbished them. They were also not against non-Shinto religions and encouraged Malaysians in religious worship, perhaps as an insurance against popular insurrection!

The leadership of St. Andrew's has not been keen on replacing the lost memorials ever since it was first proposed by J.R. McKechnie 24 years ago in view of the high cost of replacing the memorials as well as a lack of appreciation of the history of St. Andrew's as a whole. **MVG's member Andrew Hwang put forward a formal proposal in 2008 to the church's leadership to have the War Memorial restored, with the costs to be borne by third parties in line with St. Andrew's 90th anniversary celebrations but was unsuccessful.**

It is uncertain how much a replacement bronze memorial would cost, especially since there is no longer any craftsman in Malaysia who is able to work in bronze. An alternative would be to use marble to re-create the War Memorial, but that is not a cheap option either and would probably cost in excess of GBP 500. The British High Commission in Kuala Lumpur had indicated unofficially in 2008 that they might be of some assistance in restoring missing war memorials, and more discussions are required to pursue this further. While the money could be raised, the support of the British High Commission for such a project would be most advantageous and could help overcome opposition to the restoration of the War Memorial.

References

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- Chin Kee Onn. *Malaya Upside Down*. Kuala Lumpur. Federal Publications, 1976 (1946)
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KUALA SELANGOR WAR MEMORIAL – FOUND! A Diary of Investigation – by ANDREW HWANG

My wife, Lisa, and I drove to **Kuala Selangor** again this morning to look for the memorial. This time we decided to give **Kampung Kuantan** a miss, but to concentrate on the Dutch-era ruins of **Fort Altingsburg (today's Bukit Malawati)** and the surrounding neighbourhood. In the event we were unsuccessful, we planned to move on to **Fort Utrecht (today's Bukit Belanda)**

Before we started on our search, we decided to make enquiries at the **Majlis Daerah Kuala Selangor (Kuala Selangor district council)** tourism office. They were very nice there and tried their best to identify the 2 photographs provided by **Jonathan Moffatt** but they could not recognize the obelisk. They were quite certain we would not find anything at **Fort Altingsburg**. We then proceeded to climb all over **Bukit Malawati**, but there was no sign of the memorial. An elderly ice cream man at the fort also confirmed he had never seen the memorial despite having lived all his life in Kuala Selangor. He suggested that perhaps it was in another part of the Kuala Selangor district, but not in the town itself.

When we reached to foot of the hill, I decided to put myself in the shoes of the British district officer who, most probably, had erected the memorial. Where would he have placed it? It had to be at the original colonial heart of the town. The K. Selangor tourism staff were very helpful again, and described where the colonial parts were. We were warned that there had been extensive re-development, and we might be disappointed with what we found. Our starting point was the white clock tower in the shape of a lighthouse at the foot of **Bukit Malawati**. We drove passed the hill along **Jalan Raja Jalil**, turned right, passed a mosque on the left and came to a rather odd junction with a Public Bank facing us. We then turned left into **Jalan Sultan Ibrahim**, went straight through another junction, passed by an old colonial post office which was still in use, and then passed a St. John's Ambulance office painted in buff, and followed the road right, which took us to a roundabout – and there was the memorial obelisk right in the centre of the roundabout!

We immediately parked and went to look at the memorial. It was in a sorry state. The original 2 bronze plaques had long been looted by scrap metal thieves and forlorn looking signs had been nailed across where the plaques had been bearing the words: **Medan Perwira (Bellamy)**. *Medan Perwira* means 'Heroes' Place' in Malay. All 3 granite steps were completely visible whereas the photograph showed the top 2 steps and only the top of the bottom-most step. The soil level must have receded over the years. The tree which used to give shade to the memorial had long disappeared. Four decorative sculptures of Malay water pitchers were placed around the edge of the roundabout. The sculptures somehow detracted from the solemnness of the moment – it had been trivialized by the sculptures and turned into a mere decorative curiosity.

A badly faded bi-lingual information board at the roundabout itself gave a startling inconsistent history of the memorial. The Malay version was not consistent with the English version and informed us that the memorial was called **Madan Pahlawan ("Warriors' Place")** as opposed to the "Heroes' Place" label on the memorial itself. The road running around the roundabout was supposedly named **Jalan Pahlawan** but there was no road sign to confirm this. The English write-up said the memorial was known as the **"Bellamy Arena"** (?) and was a memorial to the fallen British soldiers. No mention was made of the brave Malay soldiers and volunteers. In my opinion, the roundabout was probably **Bellamy Circus** as the Malay account stated that the road around the memorial was once known as **Bellamy Road**. The English version described the

roundabout as being the junction of **Keramat Tanjung Road, Penggawa Road and Batu Burok Road**. All the original buildings close to the memorial had been demolished and replaced with more modern buildings of less than 15 year's vintage. The open space with the drying laundry beyond the memorial in the photograph is now partially blocked by a building owned by an Islamic organization.

Although the Kuala Selangor War Memorial was once in the heart of the town, that is no longer true. We saw many contract workers from China and Vietnam lodged in shophouses not 30 feet from the memorial and the general atmosphere was that of a coolie line.

The memorial has to be restored – the plaques listing the fallen have to be replaced by marble tablets to prevent further theft. I would strongly recommend that the decorative sculptures be removed and bushes or trees be planted instead. The footpaths to the memorial were uneven and paved with irregular shaped flagstones (not in the photograph). It would be best to raise the ground level and have it properly paved. A new, historically consistent bilingual information board would also be required. [See website for photographs.]

WHEN WAR CAME TO AUSTRALIA DARWIN 19TH FEBRUARY 1942

The attack on Darwin on February 19th 1942 by the Japanese was the first attack ever made by an enemy on Australian soil.

Darwin was attacked by 242 Japanese aircraft in a raid starting at 09.58am. 8 out of 45 ships in the harbour were sunk, 23 aircraft destroyed and an estimated 900 people killed, with hundreds more injured. This was the first of 64 raids which the Japanese made between 19/2/42 and 12/11/43. The islands to the north of Darwin were swiftly overrun by Japanese forces, and by the end of 1942 they controlled them all except the southernmost strip of New Guinea. Due to strict censorship which was imposed until 1995, Australians know very little about those who served in the Darwin area – the shortage of food and ammunition, or about the dangers and discomforts endured for months and years to keep the Japanese out of Australia. Their efforts are unknown and unrecognized (**like those of the Volunteers**) and an organization called "Darwin Defenders Inc" was set up to try to rectify the situation, including the setting up of a Heritage Tour which takes 3 ½ hours and costs \$68 Aus. There is also East Point Military Museum to visit. This tells the largely unknown story of Australia's war.

MVG Australia member Marea Smith sent this information about Darwin's war.

Every year a Memorial Service is held to commemorate the dead and those who took part in the fight to save Darwin and Australia. Marea attended the Memorial Service in 2008 – this is her report:

"When staying with my daughter in Darwin last year, while she was doing a locum, she suggested that I go along to the 66th anniversary ceremony of the bombing of Darwin on 19th February 1942. This ceremony is held each year at the Cenotaph in Bicentennial Park close to the harbour. This is the rainy season and when I woke on the morning the rain was pelting down and I thought twice about attending. However, I dressed in my shorts, polo top, canvas shoes and plastic raincoat and took off with my trusty golf umbrella.

At the Cenotaph a crowd had gathered under a huge marquee – Defence personnel immaculate in their uniforms mingled with civilians dressed mainly like me in casual attire. School children, bands and other groups were ready to perform the national anthem and, of course, Waltzing Matilda, hymns and stirring marches.

At exactly 9.58 am, the time of the first raid, sirens sounded and the Army fired blank rounds with highly coloured smoke from field guns mounted on the harbour's edge. The noise was deafening. Army machine gunners bare to the waist ran to their positions to fire at the phantom Jap planes. From the harbour the Navy fired its guns from small ships. An old DC3 Dakota flew over followed by some FA – 18 fighters from Tindall Air Base. In view of the low cloud base the pilots showed great skill flying low enough for us to see them. Ironically the weather on the fateful day was unusually fine.

What with the hymns, wreath layings, drummings, speeches and the sounding of the last post I found myself quite tearful so I was glad to walk over to the Northern Territory Assembly building (similar to a State Parliament House) where, after parking a wet umbrella, a generous buffet lunch with beer and wine was served to officials, relatives, defence personnel and general public like me. I was glad I had made the effort to attend even though the weather was LOUSY!

A second raid followed on that fateful day followed over the next 21 months by 64 attacks on Darwin. These attacks were part of 97 on Broome, Wyndham, Derby, Katherine, Horne Island, Townsville, Mossman, Port Headland, Nooamah, Exmouth Gulf, Onslow, Drysdale River Mission and Coomalie Creek.

It appears that a total of 292 people were killed in Darwin mainly people who were on the ships and wharves. 8 ships were sunk and 15 others were damaged. Very little information about these raids was made public and even today we are not very enlightened though the subject is gradually attaining attention. We were lucky that no further attacks or an invasion occurred on Australia except for a midget submarine attack in Sydney harbour"

For more information about "The Japanese Bombing of Darwin and northern Australia", log onto the website:-

<http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/darwinbombing/>

Also go to: culture.gov.au Australian Culture online

THE SOCFIN BUNGALOW and a Penang Doctor's Wartime Legacy
Researched and written by Michael C. Rawlinson & Leslie A.K. James (with thanks to Pierre Laine)

The transformation of Tanjong Bungah from a once quiet and demure stretch of beach bungalows along Penang's northern shore to a brash strip of unsightly tower blocks is almost complete. One of the last buildings from the 1950s is about to succumb to the wreckers in the name of "development". The Tanjong Country Club, once the beach bungalow of the French plantation company SOCFIN, is soon to be demolished and replaced by two condominium towers. Its impending demise coincides with news from Edinburgh this month of a Penang doctor's wartime act of extraordinary beneficence for three great universities. This coincidence provides an opportunity to explore an intriguing story about the doctor and his fate in WW2. The story goes that during the Japanese Occupation: "Dr. McKern took refuge in his bungalow basement (the present SOCFIN bungalow) at Tanjong Bungah and remained hidden there by his servants for over two years. He secretly operated a radio and made transmissions to Allied forces, but was subsequently given away by his Malay driver and was executed by the Japanese." (Bryan C. Cooper, *'Decade of Change: Malaya & the Straits Settlements 1936-1945'*, Graham Brash, Singapore, 2001, p221). This story had wide currency in post-war local circles in Penang and a variation is related by Lim Kean Siew in his autobiography, *'Blood on the Golden Sands'*. Dr. McKern's house, however, more a mansion than a bungalow, was not the present ex-SOCFIN bungalow, which was built by the French company after the war, and the story itself is controverted by evidence that Dr. McKern did not remain in Penang during the Occupation as he was a prisoner of the Japanese in Sumatra where he died in 1945.

Before the Second World War, Dr. Albert Stanley McKern, BA, MA, MB, ChB, owned and lived in a large house called "Elysian" at 522, Tanjong Bungah Road. Now sadly demolished, "Elysian" was where the four towers of the "Cove" stand at 521A Jalan Tanjong Bungah. Probably of Scots descent, Albert Stanley McKern was born in New South Wales in 1885. He married Effie Clark in the Sydney suburb of Burwood in 1908 and obtained his BA from the University of Sydney in 1911. Travelling to New York with his young family in 1911 (his first son Ralph Noel was born that year) he continued his studies at Yale and went on to study medicine at the University of Edinburgh.

The McKerns arrived in Penang after the First World War. Effie McKern is recorded as sailing from London to Singapore in 1919 and to Penang in 1922. Both Dr. McKern and his wife sailed from England to Penang in 1924, 1929 and 1930. Also sailing to Penang on the same 1929 and 1930 voyages was their second son Kenneth born in 1924. On the 1930 voyage they were also joined by son Ralph, visiting Penang probably after completing school in the UK and before returning there to join the Royal Air Force in the early 1930s.

Whether Dr. McKern, widely respected in the local community as an eminent gynaecologist, remained in Penang or fled with most of the European population before the arrival of Japanese troops on the island in December 1941 is the crux of the mystery surrounding the local story. The news from Edinburgh, however, confirms that Dr. McKern was aboard the *Mata Hari*, one of the fleet of small ships that carried refugees from Singapore in the last days before the British surrender. The *Mata Hari* was captured by the Japanese in the Banka Strait on 15th February and taken with its passengers to the port of Muntok on Pulau Banka. According to the diary of Gordon Reis, a civilian internee and a planter from Province Wellesley, Dr. McKern treated him in Japanese internment camps in Sumatra on three occasions between March 1942 and July 1944 (Reis diary held by Imperial War Museum). Moreover, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission records Dr. McKern's death aged 62 at Belalau in Sumatra on 16th June 1945 only two months before the end of the war, the diary of another prisoner noting that he died from dysentery.

The news from Edinburgh reported in the major Scottish dailies on 5th April 2009 is of Dr. McKern's bequest of a sum of more than US\$11 million to be shared by the 3 universities of Edinburgh, Yale and Sydney. For Edinburgh University this means almost £2 million, the largest legacy ever bequeathed to the university. In his will dated 24th December 1944 and a codicil signed the day of his death, Dr. McKern divided his estate between his wife, children and a friend with the remainder to be invested. The estate was wound up in December last year, 10 years after the death of his last son, Kenneth – also a doctor – and as requested by Dr. McKern the money went to the 3 universities for research to investigate problems during pregnancy. After the war SOCFIN negotiated a lease of a section of Dr. McKern's property on Tanjong Bungah Road and in 1951-52 built "Villa Aremi", now the Tanjong Country Club at 521, Jalan Tanjong Bungah. The dark wood panelled interior design of "Villa Aremi" is identical to that of the now demolished Minyak Club that stood amid the SOCFIN oil palm estates at Rantau Panjang in Selangor, near the famous "Maison des Palmes" (House of Palms) associated with the French planter Henri Fauconnier, author of the novel *The Soul of Malaya*.

SOCFIN dealt with the Chartered Bank as the Trustee of Dr. McKern's interests in Penang. SOCFIN had a 30 years + 10 year's lease. Therefore, the land and the bungalow built by SOCFIN went back to the Trust. This is why SOCFIN could not buy the land and only leases could be arranged. With the expiry of the terms of the Trust and the eventual sale of the property, the current owners are understood to be planning the demolition of the "Villa Aremi" cum Tanjong Country Club and its replacement by two 38-storey tower blocks.

A footnote to the story of Dr. McKern concerns his eldest son. Ralph Noel McKern joined the RAF in Britain and trained as a pilot and flying instructor. He was an avid sportsman, playing rugby and association football for the RAF. Appointed to a permanent commission in 1936, he was assigned to the Straits Settlements Volunteer Air Force in Singapore and in 1937 joined No.36 (Torpedo Bomber) Squadron at RAF Seletar. He had command of the squadron at the outbreak of the Malayan Campaign. The squadron had 12 serviceable aircraft, Vildebeestes, as at 22nd November 1941. These were biplanes with a maximum speed of 143 mph and no match for the Japanese Zero fighter. First flown in 1928, the last Vildebeestes were flying against Japanese forces over Singapore and Java in 1942. Wing Commander R.N. McKern returned to operations with the RAF in Britain and survived the war.

CONSTRUCTION OF MONUMENT AND GALLERY AT SUNGEI SIPUT ESTATE, PERAK.

A letter written to State Presidents and State Committee Members, NMBVAA Inc., Planters, Miners, and Friends with Malaysian connections, by Bill Adamson, President of NMBVAA WA State Branch (Whitfords) – and MVG member.

Gentlemen and Ladies,

Those members of NMBVAA Inc. who attended the Ipoh Commemoration week in 2009 will know that the Malaysian Palm Oil Association – Perak have decided to construct a monument and gallery at Sungei Siput Estate.

The cost of construction is estimated to be in the region of RM\$100,000.00. The Little Acre Sub Committee hopes to raise sufficient funds from voluntary donations from their members, other well-wishers and Corporations so that the monument and gallery can be built in good time to enable participants and supporters of their next Commemorative Ceremony to make arrangements to visit the 'Historical Site'.

The main purposes of the Memorial Project are:-

- To commemorate those planters; miners; police personnel; Australian, British and Commonwealth troops who rallied to the support of Malaya/Malaysia to curb and eradicate the Communist Terrorist (CT) menace – many making the supreme sacrifice in the course of their duty.
- To preserve this place of deep historical interest for the benefit of posterity.
- To provide and preserve historical information/records/photographs about the Malayan Emergency (1948-60)

Remember – and this is solely from a personal slant

- **MALAYA remains the only theatre of conflict where the Communist was clearly defeated.**

As an ex-planter myself, the Little Acre Sub Committee, has asked me to assist them to obtain contributions from planters, friends and my Association within Australia. State donations should be forwarded direct to the MPOA – Perak Secretary, Mrs. Tan Seow Heng, 7, Jalan Hussein (P.O. Box 424), 30750 Ipoh, Perak Darul Ridzuan, Malaysia. I would respect your advice of donation numbers.

The Little Acre Committee are fully conversant with the manner in which NMBVAA Inc have assisted in relation to 'God's Little Acre' and alternate Commemoration necessities during past years, but this product is intended as one to "unite the historical significance of the Emergency as it was within the Commonwealth and World theatre of the period, and promote a central historical record and shrine surrounding Emergency Operations for posterity – qualifying all those who sacrificed their lives for the future stability of Malaysia".

I would be most grateful if my fellow State Committees would approach their State members with an enquiry for any donation possible, either individual or as a Branch, be that our 'little way' towards helping the Little Acre Committee reach their target of RM\$100,000.00

NMBVAA WA State Branch (Whitfords) has confirmed a donation of A\$200.00, and a member has boosted this sum by A\$100.00, thus far.

The 'Memorial Gallery' will benefit 'our' future generations, for there will be a physical record of the history of the Emergency, the regiments and civilians of the Commonwealth and Malaya who gave their all for the emerging Malaysian nation. A skirmish into posterity, no less, recorded for the benefit of the general public in Malaysia and all the Commonwealth Nations who were involved, and will visit Malaysia on occasions.

[Bill Adamson attended the Annual Batu Gajah Commemoration Week in June 2009. This year the commemorations included a service at the Kamunting Road Christian Cemetery, Taiping, on 11th June, where Australian servicemen and women, and family members, who were killed during the Malayan Emergency have been interred.]

CD of "The Colonel of Tamarkan. Philip Toosey & the Bridge on the River Kwai" by Julie Summers.

Reviewed by Jonathan Moffatt

Julie Summers' biography of her grandfather is now available as a 3 CD audio set produced by Chromeaudio.

For those unfamiliar with the story, Toosey, a Royal Artillery Territorial, was the Colonel who, as a Japanese POW in Thailand, was responsible for the prisoners of war who built the Tamarkan bridges across the River Kwai, and became quite wrongly linked, post war, with Alec Guinness' Colonel Nicholson in the late 1950s David Lean movie.

The story covers the background to Pierre Boulle's novel and the making of the movie; Toosey's early life and career; his character and personality; his participation with distinction in both the retreat to Dunkirk and the Battle for Singapore and subsequent captivity in which he proved one of the few effective and highly regarded Senior British Officers. Toosey's post war life and contribution to FEPOW affairs is also covered.

Actor Anton Lesser has done a superb job: his clarity of speech and enunciation are excellent and he uses a range of voices to bring to life the various characters. He catches Toosey perfectly.

The story is skillfully abridged and three and a half hours long. Even if you have read the book, it is well worth listening to because different parts and aspects of the story remain in your mind that, perhaps, were overlooked on reading the book.

The overall impression is the enormous suffering endured by prisoners and slave labourers of all races in construction of the Burma-Thailand Railway, and the courageous efforts of this man to retain the discipline and dignity and ensure the survival of as many of his men as possible.

ISBN 978-0-9560740-1-0 Cost £15.99. See www.juliesummers.co.uk for ordering.

OBITUARIES

HARRY ARNOLD HESP 1924 – 2009

It is with deep regret that we record the death, on September 6th 2009, of very active MVG member and veteran Harry Hesp. Our condolences go to Merle and daughters Susan and Sandra.

Harry grew up in a Cheshire village near Warrington. In 1940 he joined the local LCD and tried to enlist in the RAF, but was told he was too young. He took himself to the Liverpool docks and joined the crew of the Empress of Asia [Canadian Pacific] as an assistant butcher. The Empress was sunk approaching Singapore with elements of 18th Division on February 4th 1942. Harry was among the surviving crew members who volunteered to serve as medical orderlies at Singapore General Hospital. It was a grim task, for the hospital was packed with civilian and military wounded and Harry was in the burial team. Following the fall of Singapore he was interned in Changi Gaol then from May 1944 in Sime Road camp. Most male civilian internees were middle aged so most of the work including heavy wood fatigues fell to the 'Asia Boys' as the young merchant seamen, mostly from Liverpool, were known. In the early days of captivity, Harry participated in football matches in the prison yard. The traumatic events of the Double Tenth affected him deeply. A few years ago he returned to Changi to participate in a TV documentary, an experience which helped him to lay to rest a few ghosts.

For many years Harry edited and produced the excellent Manchester & District FEPOW Focus newsletter. He was extremely supportive of the Malayan Volunteers Group and Researching FEPOW History Conference.

Christian gentleman, strong family man, rugby league enthusiast, a great encourager – all phrases that applied to Harry.

Harry's funeral service was held at his church, the beautiful St. Wilfrid's Church, Grappenhall, on September 15th 2009. Some 200 attended – a clear indication of the respect and affection in which Harry was held.

[Editor: I would like to add my deepest sympathies to Merle and her daughters at the news of Harry's death, which came personally from Merle. Her kindness at letting me know at such a difficult time was extraordinary and so thoughtful. I came to know Harry comparatively recently and his faith and concern for his fellow man shone out. His kind words and appreciation of the newsletters – as a fellow editor - were always most welcome. We shall miss him greatly.]

DOUGLAS 'Duggie' FORDYCE.

We are sad to announce that Douglas Fordyce died on 3rd August 2009 aged 89. He arrived in Singapore in 1946 after war service and worked for many years for McAlisters. He married Ginger [Dorothy] Heddie, daughter of the late Douglas Heddie of Straits Trading. Ginger was evacuated with her mother and sister on the Empress of Japan to Durban SA. We send our condolences to Ginger, Sandra and family.

TED KENNA, VC.

The death of Australian VC Ted Kenna was announced in the Telegraph on 9th July 2009. He won the Victoria Cross while serving with the 2nd/4th Australian Infantry Battalion in New Guinea, where, single-handedly, he destroyed an enemy bunker and enabled the company to capture the final section of the north western spur of an area still held by Japanese forces. His citation read: "There is no doubt that the success of the company attack would have been seriously endangered and many casualties sustained but for Private Kenna's magnificent courage and complete disregard for his own safety". He was invested with the Victoria Cross by the Governor-General of Australia, the Duke of Gloucester in Melbourne on 6th January 1947, and in March 2000, he was presented to the Queen when she visited the newly-restored Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

The MVG also sends its deepest sympathies to member **Susan Whitley** on the death of her husband **His Honour John Reginald Whitley**, and father of **Elizabeth**, who died on 17th June 2009 at St. Richards in Chichester, aged 83. Our thoughts are also with member **Jane Edrich**, on the death of her mother aged 98.

We remember, too, **Arthur White**, a delightful Hong Kong FEPOW who attended the 2008 RFH Conference and died recently. The death of **John Hedley**, on 25th September, has just been announced. A stalwart member of the MVG, John attended every event at the NMA, and, only in May, was present at the presentation of the Volunteer Badges to the FEPOW Building. We will miss him greatly, and send our sincere sympathies to his family. A full obituary will be given in the January newsletter, after his funeral on Friday 9th October, in Bickenhill.

WEBSITES TO VISIT

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/obituaries/article6611954.ece> - Stephen Alexander's full obituary in the Times

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/military-obituaries/5926893/Stephen-Alexander.html> Stephen's Telegraph obit.

<http://www.pows-of-japan.net/books.html> This website gives the detailed diary of George Wiseman FMSVF

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/20289/complex-will-detract-from-historic-bridge-site> This gives more information about the 55ft Buddhist statue which is being built next to the Bridge over the River Kwai – as mentioned in the editorial.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/military-obituaries/army-obituaries/5967882/Peter-Rhodes.html> Peter Rhodes' obituary in the Telegraph on 4th August 2009.

http://www.straitstimes.com/Breaking%2BNews/Singapore/Story/STIStory_401270.html The death of Maria Hertogh as reported in the Straits Times on 10th July 2009

<http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/6/18/north/4143448&sec=nort> An article in the Star newspaper in Malaysia (<http://thestar.com.my>) entitled "The pain lingers on". It is the story of veteran Tom Turnbull who served in the Police Force in Malaya from 1948 until independence, during the Emergency years. Now aged 83, Tom attended the annual Remembrance Ceremony on June 3rd this year, at God's Little Acre cemetery in Batu Gajah. Veterans also visited the graves of servicemen buried at the Kamunting Christian Cemetery in Taiping. Tom wrote a poem in 1980 to commemorate the local civilians – one verse reads "We who gather here each year, Remember them within out prayer, They stood naked unlike we, Well armed in an Emergency

BOOKS

http://eprints.usq.edu.au/2369/1/Wicks_Shelley.pdf The death of Rex Shelley, a Singapore-based author, was announced in August. Rex was born in 1930. He ran his own trading business and had a long term involvement with the Public Service and Education Service Commissions. He was a member of Singapore's 'Eurasian' community and his 4 novels were based on his experiences of that community. Shelley's plots are also drawn principally from the years of his youth. The experiences of the Japanese occupation of Singapore from 1942 – 1945 are central in many of his novels, as are the years of the Malayan "Emergency" which saw racial and political tensions in Singapore out of which the modern independent states of Malaysia and Singapore ultimately grew. His novels have been well received in Singapore, where most of them have won prestigious awards from the National Book Development Council of Singapore, his first novel, *'The Shrimp People'*, being awarded the top prize in 1993. *'People of the Pear Tree'* and *'Culture Shock Japan'*, received NBDCS book awards in 1994. *'Island in the Centre'* was published in 1995.

Found on **Google Books** – **K.D. Luke's memoirs, "Luke's log"**. Formerly Malayan Education Department and FMSVF 'H' Force. About a third can be read online.

"Forgotten Regiments: Regular and Volunteer Units of the British Far East". By Barry Renfrew. Published by Terrier Press (1/9/09) Hardcover 245 pages. ISBN-10: 0956317502 and ISBN-13: 987-09563 17506. Cost £25.00 Delivered FREE in the UK. [N.B. Published in South Africa – may be difficult to get.] MVG Veteran Tom Evans was interviewed for this book.

"Escaped Singapore – Heading Homewards" by George Rocker. Published by Graham Brash (Pte) Singapore. ISBN Rights 9971 49-173-7 N.B. **Now out of print – but copies may be available on Amazon Books.**

This is the entire story of how vets from all over Malaya were involved in moving Brahmin and Bali cattle south to Singapore ahead of the Jap invasion. The cattle had been stockpiled throughout Malaya the year before to feed the Indian troops. Three of the vets subsequently escaped just before Singapore fell, in a 12 foot open veterinary launch on 12th Feb 1942.

"SANDAKAN 1942-1945. Stories of the local people who heroically helped the Australian POWs." By Doreen Hurst. ISBN 9 780980 671506. This book has been sponsored by the Australian-Malaysia Institute part of the Dept. of Foreign Affairs & Trade. Available from Doreen Hurst, PO Box 3091, WESTON CREEK, ACT 2611 or Tel: (02) 6288 6195. Price: In Australian Dollars – Book \$30, post \$26.40 + postbag \$1.50. N.B For 4 books \$49.50 +bag \$1.90 Doreen says that all money from sales will be given to the descendants of members of the underground and the indigenous people who did so much for the POWs and saved the lives of 6 escapees. Without their courage no one would have survived to give an account of the horrendous suffering of the camp and on the march itself. She has opened an account so that money can be paid directly.

The book consists of first-hand accounts by members of the underground, their families and 1 indigenous man (still alive) who together with 2 others rescued Bottrill, Moxham and Short, 3 of the escapees from the Death March. There are maps, copies of documents and many photographs. Of special interest to British readers is the story of Dr. Valentine Stookes, a decorated pilot of the Royal Flying Corps.

Doreen adds -I thought of putting the word "British" in the title, but as I have no contacts in the UK, I didn't.....the 400 British servicemen who were murdered by the Japs are mentioned in the text.

[Editor: I can put anyone interested in this book in touch with Doreen]

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Yvonne Heritage (nee Spranklen) wrote:

My parents, sister and I moved to Singapore in early 1937 when I was 2 ½ years old. As my father was born in India and had also lived in Rangoon, he could speak Hindi and other dialects. He was in the British Army Royal Artillery, and I believe he had connections with the Gurkhas. Initially we lived at Changi, but later moved to Neesoon.

We lived a carefree life, swimming daily in the 'Pagur', and on Changi Beach where there were shark nets and high diving boards. I can also remember many happy times such as going to the Raffles Hotel for tasty hot sandwiches; fancy dress parties; concerts, where I sang from the age of three (my mother was a pianist and my father was also musical); and we had trips to Penang.

On 31st December 1941, my mother had one hour to pack a suitcase, and get to the docks, with my sister now aged 9 and myself aged 6, where we boarded the *'Orion'*. I am told that our father saw us off but had to run for cover when a bomb hit the docks. I really regret not remembering he was there, but I do remember crying because I was not allowed my doll's pram on board, only my doll, which I still have today, albeit headless! Our parents were informed that the Captain wished to leave 2 hours early, and despite being followed by enemy submarines, and hitting a mine near Australia, which did not explode, we reached Fremantle in one piece. Apart from the women and children on board, there were 800 wounded personnel on board. We did not disembark at Fremantle, but stayed on the *'Orion'* until she reached Melbourne. Here, those who disembarked were sent to different towns in the area. I was lucky to spend 5 happy years in a small bush town called Ararat in Victoria. I made many friends and felt such freedom. Those friends have remained for life and I have visited them twice – 12 years ago and last October. My sister later emigrated to Australia and now lives in Sydney.

Although I was very happy in Ararat, my mother received some hate mail, telling her to go back to England. This upset her greatly, and later, when she received a telegram to say that my father was missing, presumed dead, she never fully recovered from the shock. My sister, who is 3 years older than me, blotted out many of the memories of the evacuation details and the

death of my father by making lots of Australian friends and enjoying their family life. I always dreamed that my father was lost in the jungle and would turn up one day. We came back to England in 1946. It was such a culture shock – no open spaces such as the Australian bush and a lot of restrictions. I still feel a sense of not belonging anywhere, and that I have no roots. I think this is also true of others with similar experiences.

From information received from Beryl Canwell of COFEPOW, I have been able to establish what happened to my father after we were evacuated from Singapore. He was taken prisoner at the fall of Singapore and a short time later, he was transferred with 600 other Royal Artillery men to Rabaul, on one of the 'hell-ships'. In Rabaul, 83 sick and wounded men were taken off the ship and the remainder were sent on to Ballali in the Soloman Islands, to build an airstrip. When it was completed in 1943, those who had not been killed or died of disease and malnutrition were massacred and buried in a mass grave. Luckily there was a native eye witness to the massacre, and he was able to direct the Australians to the grave after the war. Their remains now lie at rest in the Australian War Cemetery in Port Moresby in New Guinea.

The effect of finding out this information on me was to re-open the visions of explosions on the docks at Singapore which I had experienced as we sailed away on the evening of 31st December 1941. These had been in my mind for years, but I had buried them. My sister also had managed to blot out everything – even memories of our father – and this is how she overcame the trauma.

Gerald Lindner writes:

The story of Hugh Pilkington, (mentioned in July's 'Apa Khabar and called "The Missing Years", by Stu Lloyd) very nearly never saw the light of day. He had kept his secret diary on scraps of paper, which became a memoir on the repatriation ship HMT Sobieski. The bound manuscript remained on the familial bookshelf, "but nobody ever read it" according to his son, Paul. It had subsequently gathered dust in Paul's attic in Sydney, along with various other inheritances from his dad, including a Malay Regiment forage cap, and some ceremonial krisses.

The memoir had frequent reference to the fact that it should be read in conjunction with his earlier letters home and eventually his son, Paul, produced photo albums and pages of Searle cartoons, who was a fellow 'H' Force and Sime Road camp mate. This is a very comprehensive account as the author and Paul Pilkington retraced Hugh's steps both before and during the war. This information came through an ex-Singapore Australian friend (Ron) who had met Paul in Sydney. Paul mentioned to Ron that his father, Hugh, had been at Shrewsbury School, where he was in the 1st Rowing 8, and had left some rowing memorabilia. Having an interest in rowing myself, and close connections with the School, I was asked to enquire whether the memorabilia would be of interest to Shrewsbury School. It was during Ron's visit that I learnt of this interesting book.

Jill Smallshaw (nee Wright) contacted MVG through John Corner and Mary Harris:

I have recently been in touch with John Corner in Australia and Mary Harris in London regarding my escape from Singapore with my mother, **Margaret Wright**. We escaped with the **Russells** (also Malacca) on board the S.S. Orion, which sailed from Singapore on 31st December 1941. We shared accommodation with the **Russells** in Perth for some time before travelling back to England via Durban when my father caught up with us after his escape. My father, **Ronald Wright**, was a Vet in Malacca, and he was sent up country to help with the movement of Brahmin and Bali cattle south to Singapore ahead of the Japanese, and the subsequent shooting of them so that the Japs couldn't use them for food. He found this very traumatic. He escaped with 2 other Vets **George Rocker** and **William Orr** (with whom he had been working) on 12th February 1942 in the veterinary launch off Collyer Quay, and made it to Sumatra by hugging the coastline and hiding up in mangrove swamps. They eventually reached Djambi before heading overland to Padang. Like many others, he then managed to get aboard the destroyer HMS Endeavour to Batavia and from there he sailed in a small ship to Perth where he joined my mother and me. I know **Penny Dembrey** (we were friends with the **Todmans** in Malacca), but we haven't met for 25 years since living near each other in Hong Kong. I have also recently been in touch with **Malcolm Reid** – an old school friend of my cousins – and we discovered that pre-war he lived with his parents at 13, Orange Grove Road, Singapore, and this is the very same house in which my parents lived in the mid fifties until my father (then Chief Veterinary Officer in Singapore) retired in 1958. With his interest in large animal farming, his job was to help with food distribution and livestock to feed the Singaporeans. Another Vet my father talked about was **Rufus Bowden** who was captured and spent the war in Changi. His daughter, **Josephine**, lives near us. Her mother, **Isobel (Toot)**, escaped on the Duchess of Bedford.

The **Russells** eventually sailed for England on the Denbighshire, without knowing what had happened to her husband, **John**. He survived the Burma Railway, and they later returned to Malaya as he worked for Dunlops. Their daughter **Christine** lives near me in Orford, and their son **Stephen John (S.J.)** in Australia.

Both my parents kept diaries of their escape from Singapore, but my mother insisted on taking her copy into her nursing home, and when she died no-one could find it. Sadly, I only have her original rough draft to go on.

Penny Dembrey writes:

Thank you for the recent issue of Apa Khabar. I was particularly interested to read about Chin Peng (wasn't sure if he was still alive), as my late brother Tony did his National Service in Malaya aged 20, as a young Lieutenant, in the jungles of Malaya in 1957 to 1958. My father was still working in KL at the time, so they were naturally quite worried for him, and I also joined them in June 1958 straight from college. We did manage to have a party at home in KL for Tony's 21st Birthday, together with his other National Service friends from the Royal Lincolnshire Regiment. As you can imagine, Chin Peng was high on the list of wanted Terrorists. I am enclosing a photocopy of a newspaper cutting (from the Sunday Times dated 28/4/58) with a photo of my brother congratulating an Iban tracker who had fatally wounded an important local terrorist leader on his first operation. {Ed: This was too faint to reproduce}. At that time (towards the end of the Emergency) it was

necessary to identify all the terrorists left who were either killed, wounded or surrendered. It is rather amazing to think that a little boy who had escaped from Malaya aged 4 on the Duchess of Bedford 2 weeks before the fall of Singapore in 1942, was to return 15 years later himself to fight in the Malayan jungle!

The newspaper quoted Tony Todman's story of the operation:-

"We found heavy blood trails 15 yards from the contact, and then picked up the bottom half of a machete. It had been cut through by a bullet. We lost the track after 150 yards, rested that night, found the track the next morning, lost it again even though we had a tracker dog, then picked it up again 100 yards away. Another night in the jungle, we followed what we thought had been the general line of escape – and came on the dead body. On it was the other half of the machete."

The body was carried back to base and identified as that of Law Swee, the leader of the 'Pig Trappers' – a branch of the Tong Peng C.Ts.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY – 8th November 2009

There are still a few tickets available for this event. We are only allocated 12 tickets, and it would be good to have a full complement of MVG members and friends present again this year. Although there is an hour's wait before the Service begins, everyone who has taken part in this Remembrance Service over the past 4 years has found it to be a memorable and very rewarding experience. The March Past is organized by the Royal British Legion, and we are issued with all the information about attendance at this ceremony. **Please let Rosemary know if you wish to attend, and you will be sent the information together with a ticket, which you need to produce to gain access to Whitehall.**

Following the March Past and arrival in Horse Guards, we are asked to remain in line until the National Anthem has been played and the member of the Royal Family, who has taken the salute, has left the Dais. As usual, we plan to have lunch together at "The All Bar One" wine bar afterwards.

V-J DAY 2010 – Sunday 15th August 2010

This is the 65th Anniversary of the end of WW2. Undoubtedly it will be marked by special Services of Remembrance in the country, and we very much hope that as many members as possible will endeavour to attend the MVG Service in the Chapel at the National Memorial Arboretum, followed by wreath laying in the MVG Memorial Garden.

For details see page 3. Please send names and numbers of those wishing to attend to Jonathan or Rosemary asap.

LONDON LUNCH and REUNION – Saturday 2nd October 2010

This has already been provisionally booked for next year at the RAF Club. Please put the date in your diary now! More details will be included in the January 2010 edition of the newsletter, when Hugh will again be organizing the event.

RFH CONFERENCE – Saturday & Sunday 9th and 10th October 2010

The Researching FEPOW History Group is holding its 3rd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire, on 9th & 10th October, 2010.

The Conference is entitled "INTERNEES, EVACUEES AND FEPOW: Far East Captivity Explored", and speakers will include International and UK based experts in the field of FEPOW history research, including Rod Beattie, Bernice Archer, Robert Havers and Tony Banham. Once again we hope to welcome several FEPOPW as guests of the Conference.

Delegate fee will be £100 and places will be allocated on a strictly first come, first served basis.

For registration forms and further information log on to:- www.researchingfepowhistory.org.uk

NEW PASSWORD FOR ACCESS TO THE NEWSLETTERS ON THE WEBSITE

Please note:-

The password for entry into reading the newsletter "Apa Khabar" online has been changed FROM "selangor" TO "kampar".

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

We are very grateful to SJA Accountants Ltd., once again, for preparing the Annual Accounts for the MVG without charge. As the MVG is growing in membership and funding, the preparation of these accounts becomes more onerous, and we thank the Accountants very much for giving their time and expertise as a favour to the MVG. A copy of the Income and Expenditure Sheet is enclosed with the newsletter.

If anyone would like a full copy of the accounts, please ask Rosemary and send a SAE.

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MVG LONDON LUNCH AND REUNION
Saturday 3rd October 12.00 – 4.30 p.m.
Report by Jonathan Moffatt

This year, the Lunch and Reunion was held in the attractive and spacious Ballroom of the RAF Club in Piccadilly. A record number of 55 people booked to attend the lunch, but owing to unavoidable family matters and illness, the numbers were reduced to 47 on the day. This was still a very good gathering and fully justified the move to larger and more prestigious surroundings. It was also attended by Guest Speaker, Colonel Piers Storie-Pugh OBE, a former battalion commander and ADC to HM The Queen, and recently retired head of the Royal British Legion's Remembrance (now Poppy) Travel.

There was a good balance of old and more recent members and much chat and reminiscing of well remembered times. Various photographs, items of research and the new MVG Brochure, designed by John Pollock in Australia, were shared and exchanged. On show were the 5 Volunteer badges which are to be presented to the NMA for display in the newly enlarged and refurbished 'Arbour Restaurant', together with the new Guide Book and plans for the expansion of the Arboretum.

After a good, substantial lunch, the Volunteers were toasted and the draw for the Raffle took place. Merilyn Hywel-Jones showed us an outline plan of Kanchanaburi, which she and her sister have researched and drawn up, to show in more detail how the original town looked in 1942-45, compared with the town as it is today. Before introducing the speaker, Rosemary gave brief details of the next V-J Day service in the NMA on 15th August 2010, which we hope will be well supported.

Piers Storie-Pugh then gave a wide ranging and informative talk summarizing the Malayan and Burma Campaigns, touched on the Malayan Emergency, and told us about the war cemeteries in Malaysia. We thank him for finding the time to fit us into his hectic schedule and for giving us such an interesting afternoon.

Thanks to the hard work of Daniel and Catriona Chaplin, the Raffle raised £160 towards MVG funds. We also thank Hugh Chaplin, for all his hard work in organizing and hosting the lunch, which was acknowledged to have been a great success. We are very grateful to him for taking over the running of the lunch from Sandy Lincoln.

We are also pleased to announce that Hugh has already provisionally booked the Ballroom at the RAF Club for next year's lunch, which will take place on Saturday, 2nd October 2010.

