

APA KHABAR

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MVG HONOURS ITS VETERANS ON
THE 65TH ANNIVERSARY OF V-J DAY

DUTCH QUEEN HONOURS ROD BEATTIE

To mark the occasion of the 65th Anniversary of V-J Day on 15th August this year, the MVG wishes to honour its Veteran Volunteers; Members of the LDC; Nursing Staff and Civilians who were imprisoned by the Japanese throughout the Far East from February 1942 – August 1945, by bestowing on them Honorary Life Membership from 1st April 2010.

Plans for the V-J Day Service on Sunday 15th August at the NMA are now well under way. Details are given below. Please let **Rosemary** know if you are coming to this important event, unless you have already done so.

As well as this Service, Australian member **George Hess'e** is organizing a Memorial Service in **Perth WA** on 12th September 2010, to mark the 65th Anniversary of the signing of the surrender by the Japanese in Singapore. Originally it was planned to hold this Service in Singapore in the Changi Museum Chapel, but due to lack of support and other factors the Service was switched to Perth.

The MVG is delighted to announce that **Rod Beattie**, Director of the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre Museum, has been made a "Knight in the Order of Orange-Nassau" by HM Queen Beatrix, Queen of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, for his outstanding and tireless work in researching and helping families whose relatives worked on the Burma-Siam Railway. We congratulate him on this prestigious award, and thank him for all he has done for our members.

The last three months have been busy ones for promoting the MVG. In January, **George Hess'e** gave a talk to the Military History Society (MHS) in Perth, Western Australia, on his service with the FMSVF; his capture and subsequent walk out of Changi Jail, and his return to K.L. to join Force 136. **Rosemary** gave a talk in K.L. and Penang on the History of the Volunteers and the aims of the MVG. **John Pollock** (MVG Australia Secretary) is giving a talk on Easter Saturday – 3rd April – at the Biennial Conference of the MHS. His talk is on the Malayan Volunteer Forces, including Australian Volunteers. He will emphasize the lack of recognition for the Volunteers in the U.K and in Australia; give the aims of the MVG and draw attention to the brochure and website. http://www.mhsa.org.au/national_conference.html John says that he will be wearing the MVG Name Badge which has been designed for the Group by **George Hess'e**. [Ed: See A.K No.21 for details. They are of excellent quality and good value. Has anyone else ordered one?]

We also congratulate and thank **Michael Pether** and **Becca Kenneison** for another fine piece of research into the loss of "HMS *Giang Bee*" on 13th February 1942, with a list of passengers who were on board. Details may be found, with the passenger list, on the MVG website. It was Michael's suggestion to award Volunteer Veterans with Honorary Life Membership, and we thank him for this excellent idea.

To reflect the MVG's growing membership in Malaysia, we are very pleased to welcome **Andrew Hwang** as Secretary of MVG Malaysia. We thank him for his valuable research into the state of the War Memorials throughout Malaysia and for his enthusiasm in encouraging Malaysians to join the Group. Andrew can be contacted by e-mail if anyone has any queries. Don't forget to let **Hugh Chaplin** know if you are planning to attend the Annual Reunion and Lunch in October. Further details can be found under "Dates for your Diary".

Jonathan reports that the MVG Memorial Garden is in need of attention. The NMA deals with mowing the grass but it does not carry out the weeding of the dry stone wall, the paved area or the paved "V", all of which are looking rather unkempt. **Jonathan** and **Rosemary** will be at the Arboretum on Saturday morning 5th June, and plan to tackle as much weeding as possible. If anyone else has the time (or inclination) to join us, we would be very grateful for some help. Please advise one of us if you can come.

"In Oriente Primus" by **Jonathan Moffatt** and **Paul Riches** is reviewed in the book section. The bulk of the book covers the short biographies which Jonathan has in his database. It focuses mainly on the European and Eurasian Volunteers, but future editions will include some of the Malay and Chinese Volunteers. It is available from Jonathan at a special rate of **£20.00 plus £5.50 postage to all MVG members**. It is a heavy book and air mail postage abroad is extremely expensive and best discussed with Jonathan first. Books can be delivered by hand to MVG events in August and October to avoid postage.

Olga Henderson (civilian child internee in Changi) was interviewed about the Changi Quilts on Channel 4 News in March, at the start of an exhibition of Quilts and Embroidery at the V & A Museum. See: <http://www.channel4.com/news/> The Royal British Legion's "Poppy Travel" has asked the MVG to distribute the enclosed leaflets giving details of their Pilgrimages to the Far East in the Autumn. The MVG is sorry for the typographical errors in the leaflet, and apologizes particularly to our Malaysian members. The MVG was not consulted over the wording of the leaflet.

V-J DAY SERVICE – SUNDAY 15TH AUGUST 2010.

Arrangements and timetable for the Service are as follows:-

- 12.30 – 1.00p.m. Collect in **Pod 1** of the **Pavilion Marquee** for a finger buffet lunch, booked through the NMA.
- 2.00 – 2.40p.m. Service in the Chapel.
- 2.45 – 3.00p.m. Parade to MVG Memorial Garden for wreath laying and second part of Service.
- 3.30 – 5.00p.m. Return to the Pavilion Marquee for tea and biscuits.

Canon Christopher Samuels is officiating at the Service, with MVG member Gerald Lindner playing the organ. We have booked Piper Duncan Thomson and a Bugler for the afternoon. 4 Gurkha soldiers are also expected to attend. **The cost of lunch and tea is £15 per person.** This may seem expensive, but it includes a donation of £1 per person attending the event, which is requested by the NMA. We have already had to book the marquee and refreshments for 50 'attendees', and bearing in mind how busy the Restaurant can be in August, we strongly advise members who are coming to the Service to take advantage of the lunch and tea provided in the marquee. It will have to be paid for by the MVG now that it has been booked. The MVG is also paying for the use of the Chapel, the Marquee, the Piper and the Bugler. It is very important, therefore, to let Rosemary know if you wish to attend this event, unless you have already done so. **Numbers have to be given to the NMA.** We will assume that you will wish to have the Buffet Lunch and Tea provided, unless you advise otherwise. Please would you let Rosemary have your cheque asap, or at the latest by **1st July 2010.** Cheques should be made payable to:- **Mrs. R. Fell – Malayan Volunteers Group**

PERTH WA – MEMORIAL SERVICE TO COMMEMORATE THE 65TH ANNIVERSARY - SUNDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER 2010.

This Service is being held at St. Martin's Church, Noranda, Perth, WA, (77, Bramwell Road), at 5.30 p.m. to commemorate the signing of the Surrender by the Japanese on 12th September 1945 in Singapore. It will be conducted by the Revd. Barry May, Th Dip. JP, SSC, OAM, a West Australian Police Chaplain, and followed by a Fellowship gathering in the Church Hall where light refreshments will be served. All members of the public are welcome as well as MVG members. For further details please contact **George Hess'e Tel: (08) 9349 2002 E-mail: geohesse@bigpond.net.au**

ROD BEATTIE'S AWARD.

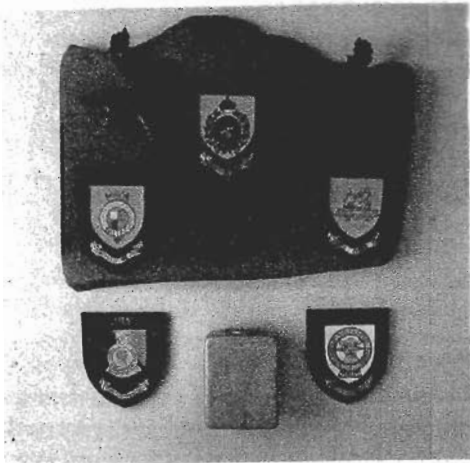
On 23rd January 2010, the following announcements were received from **Terry Manttan, General Manager of the TBRC:-** "At a function in Kanchanaburi on 15th January 2010, the Queen of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (via her Ambassador in Thailand) bestowed an honour on **Rod Beattie** for his years of work in researching and helping all families connected with the Thailand-Burma Railway, including 17,000 Dutch PoWs involved, 2,700 of whom died. Rod has been made a **'Knight in the Order of Orange-Nassau'**. (The 'Order of Orange-Nassau' can be considered approximately equivalent to the 'Order of the British Empire' in the UK). This award is a Royal Honour in the Netherlands, conferred on people who deserve recognition and high appreciation from society for the special way in which they have carried out their particular activities. We feel this is a very fitting personal tribute to Rod who has devoted a significant number of years of his life to this work and it is also a wonderful recognition of the role of the TBRC and its team. This is a great celebration coming after the end of a highly successful research year for TBRC and on the eve of the 7th Anniversary of our opening – 20th January 2003.



PRESS RELEASE Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands Bangkok, Thailand

Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands has conferred a high royal decoration upon **Mr. Rodney William Beattie, Managing Director of the Thailand Burma Railway Centre and Manager of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Thailand.** The Netherlands Ambassador to Thailand, H.E. Tjaco van den Hout, presented the Decoration of "Knight in the Order of Orange Nassau" to him during a Ceremony at a hotel on the banks of the River Kwai in the presence of his staff members and close friends on January 15th, 2010. The tireless efforts of Mr. Rod Beattie contribute greatly to memorizing the allied prisoners of war who worked on the Thailand-Burma railway in appalling circumstances. He has also proved to be indispensable to those who cope with the loss of relatives, friends or acquaintances as a result of the construction of the railway. The royal decoration bestowed upon him should be seen as an acknowledgement of, and an expression of gratitude for, the manifold contributions of Mr. Rod Beattie to the TBRC and the CWGC Thailand, thereby further broadening and deepening relations between Thailand and The Netherlands that have existed for over 400 years.

THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO THAILAND.



During the Secretary's trip to Kanchanaburi in January, she visited the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre Museum, where she presented the Museum with 2 more Volunteer Badges – those of the Kedah and Kelantan Volunteer Forces, as shown on the left. This collection of Volunteer badges may be found on the second stair landing at the TBRC, where they make a very impressive display. Rosemary was able to meet Rod, Terry and new Library archivist Andrew Snow at the TBRC. Final adjustments were made to the Kanchanaburi map which was sent out to members in the January newsletter. The map will be available on the MVG website and in the TBRC shortly. The MVG is grateful to **Merilyn Hywel-Jones** and her sister **Jane** for their work on this map.

The visit coincided with the presentation of the Dutch award to Rod. The Secretary was able to add grateful thanks and congratulations from every MVG member who has visited the TBRC and been given personal help by Rod and other members of staff.

THE SECRETARY'S TRIP TO MALAYSIA – Report by Liz Moggie.

When I heard that Donald and Rosemary were planning a holiday trip to Penang, I (as an Hon. Council Member of Badan Warisan Malaysia – BWM) prevailed upon Rosemary to give a talk. On Saturday, 23rd January 2010 at 11.00 a.m., Rosemary spoke at the BWM Stonor Centre. Approximately 50 people were present, including BWM members, military historians, representatives from the National Library, various para-military institutions, members of the Press and other interested parties. Rosemary had assembled an interesting collection of photographs and these were shown on Power Point operated by a BWM staff member. The talk was well received and was followed by an interesting Q & A session. The talk had a 3 point focus – the history of Volunteer formations, the increased participation and action during the invasion of WW11 and the location and present situation of War Memorials (especially those commemorating the Volunteers) in the country. Afterwards, Rosemary gave a long interview to members of the Press and we hope that forthcoming articles in local newspapers will highlight the part played by local Volunteers and stimulate interest in conserving and restoring War Memorials. The talk is to be repeated in Penang at the premises of the Penang Heritage Trust, PHT, on 27th January.

KUALA SELANGOR WAR MEMORIAL.

On Saturday, 23rd January, afternoon, Donald, Rosemary and I drove down to Kuala Selangor to look at the site. Thanks to MVG and BWM member **Andrew Hwang's** excellent directions (see Apa Khabar October 2009) we found the Memorial easily. We were delighted to find that structurally the Memorial is very sound and the immediate surroundings secure and obviously regularly well maintained. We observed the holes in the stone where we presumed the now missing WW1 & WW11 plaques were once attached.

Further Action.

Various people are now researching the WW1 wording and when it and the WW11 plaque disappeared. (As they were probably bronze we suspect they were for scrap). We are hoping that information about the seven Malays who were commemorated on the WW11 plaque will surface. Eventually we hope to be able to reinstate appropriate plaques.

MALACCA WAR MEMORIAL.

On Sunday, 24th January, the three of us drove down to Malacca to look at the memorial to the SSVF Malacca which is set into a recess in the wall of the Stadthuys. Again, we found the memorial in very good order, the lettering having fairly recently been "re-incised" and re-painted in gold.

Further Action.

There are two things we would like to see done. The emblem of the SSVF Malacca had not been touched up and is rather faint – it needs to be re-worked. And we would like to see some sort of low railing installed at the entrance to the recess which would prevent accidental damage from ice-cream sellers' carts and trishaws seeking to park there.

IPOH WAR MEMORIAL.

On 25th January, we drove to Ipoh where BWM member James Devadason showed us the War Memorial situated on one side of the Padang, opposite the Railway Station. Structurally it is very sound and the bronze plaque (restored in 2008) is there. Sadly, it appears that parts of it (possibly badges and insignia) are missing. The plaque commemorates those from Perak who died in WW1, and very likely some of these men were Volunteers before going back to Britain to enlist. It is possible to see very clearly the names on the WW1 plaque. Now stone plaques have been put up to commemorate those who lost their lives in WW11, the Emergency 1948 – 1960, Confrontation 1962 – 1965, and the Insurgency 1972 – 1990.

Further Action.

There are several questions to be researched about this memorial including:-

- a). the wording of a commemorative plaque to Indians who served in WW1 which is now missing
- b). was there a WW11 plaque
- c). dates of unveiling

VISIT TO PENANG BY MVG SECRETARY – Report by Leslie James.

In January, MVG Secretary **Rosemary Fell** visited Penang where arrangements were made by MVG member **Leslie A.K. James** for her to speak at the Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) on Wednesday evening 27th January. Leslie is guest editor of the PHT Newsletter and a retired Canadian diplomat whose parents lived and worked in Penang before the Second World War. Rosemary's presentation at the Penang Heritage Trust on the MVG and the Straits Settlements & Malayan Volunteer Forces followed a similar talk she gave a few days earlier in Kuala Lumpur at the Badan Warisan Malaysia (Heritage of Malaysia Trust). The audience in Penang consisted of some 50 local and expatriate members and guests of the PHT as well as members of the Penang Veterans Association (PVA), including PVA President **Lt. Cdr. Thyagarajah, RMN (Retired)**. (The PVA was responsible for the recent restoration of the Penang Cenotaph on the George Town Esplanade.) The story of the Volunteers and their part in the Malayan Campaign has been largely forgotten locally as a result of the tendency in post-colonial Malaysia to regard the Pacific War as primarily a European-Japanese conflict tangential to local history. Reminders that local people were not only victims but also active participants are reviving local interest in the period. Rosemary's talk with its details of the multi-racial composition of the Volunteers provided one such reminder and this was reflected in the subsequent media coverage.

As a token of appreciation for her talk the PHT presented Rosemary with a book on historical post cards of Penang. In return she presented the PHT with a facsimile copy of a 1938 Penang information guide. The original copy of this booklet belonged to Rosemary's late mother.

Leslie and his wife **Pow Lin** also provided a separate opportunity for Rosemary and her husband to meet former Gurkha officer **Geoffrey Bennett** and his wife **June** and retired officer of the Royal Hong Kong Police **Michael Rawlinson** and his wife **Elsie** who have a keen interest in local history. Geoffrey Bennett is a veteran of the 1945 Burma Campaign as well as the 1948 – 60 Malayan Emergency. His wife, the former **June Clifton**, was born in Penang, the daughter of a pre-war Malayan Police Officer and was a child evacuee from Singapore on **SS Orion**.

[Editor: There is also a very fine Chinese War Memorial on the Ayer Itam Road in George Town. Sadly the inscriptions are all in Chinese, and there is no other sign to say what it represents. The memorial appears well cared for – the grass around the monument had been cut and the hedges trimmed.]

Rosemary's talks were reported in the Malaysian newspapers. On Friday 29th January in the Nation section of "The Star"; on Friday 5th February in the "New Straits Times" section 'Your Story'; and on Saturday 20th February in the "Star-Weekender" in the 'Spotlight' section.

TALK BY GEORGE HESS'E TO THE MILITARY HISTORY SOCIETY OF WA.

On 19th January, I delivered a talk to the Military History Society. The subject was "The FMSVF Volunteers, and my service with them". As a talk, I feel it was a success, as a membership drive for the MVG it was a failure, which disappoints me. Normally we have between 30 – 40 members at these meetings, but on this night we had about 65 members and friends. I reprinted 50 copies of John's Brochure and 15 copies of a leaflet called "Malaya" sent by Jonathan. They were well accepted. I started with an overview of pre-war British Colonial Malaya, both social and economic, and gradually introduced the FMSVF, the Services it provided, its strengths and the array of units within the FMSVF, the SSVF and the UFMSVF. I followed this up with the work being done by the MVG.

It was my first experience at public speaking and I admit I was nervous at first, but once I started I found it just flowed. I was supposed to talk for a total of one hour including time for questions, but I spoke for 45 minutes, followed by another 45 minutes of questions. I was even accosted in the car park, and arrived home exhausted! Peter Wilshaw was at the talk, and was tickled pink when I mentioned that his father was my C.O. in the Light Battery. Peter is friendly with Dr. Mike Galvin the President of the MHSA. Bill Adamson was not able to come.

I did not have time to mention Force 136, but my promise to talk about the Force on another occasion was accepted. The West Australia Newspapers sent a reporter over to interview me, but all he wanted was a "Blood and Guts" story. Entitled "Escape from hell they called Changi", the newspaper report gave the story of my escape from Changi, disguised as an Indian labourer, with my T-shirt wrapped round my head, and being paid 50 cents for my day's work. It also mentioned that I was "mentioned in dispatches" for my service with Force 136. However, it is nothing like my talk or what I told him during my interview. It is his version.

REPORT ON THE IPOH WAR MEMORIAL – By Andrew Hwang.

Only one of the 2 original bronze plaques with lists of names remain. The surviving one is from the Great War, minus some of its decorations. This plaque was removed at some stage and installed in the foyer of the Ipoh Town Hall, before being restored to its rightful place on the War Memorial. **The missing one is the one detailing the dead from the Malay States Guides.** The 3rd plaque, a black plastic one framed by white marble is a replacement of the original bronze one which was stolen by scrap metal thieves some years ago. The 4th black marble tablet is original and commemorates the police, military and civilians who fell during the Emergency and Confrontation.

The Malay States Guides was a Malayan Punjabi unit (Volunteers?) which served in WW1 in Aden fighting against the Turks. This unit was disbanded in 1919 but its soldiers were not shipped back to Malaya, but a few returned by paying for their own passage home.

See the link: <http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Overseas/ipohmemorial/index.html> Commonwealth War Graves "Roll of Honour"

FEPOW MEDICAL HISTORY MEETING/ROUND TABLE – Report by Jonathan Moffatt at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, February 16th 2010.

Sixty eight years after they became Far Eastern Prisoners of War, eight veterans, aged between 86 and 95, were reunited at Liverpool School of Tropical medicine (LSTM) to discuss their experiences. The veterans represented the last remaining survivors from over three and a half years of Japanese captivity. More than 2,000 FEPOW have received medical treatment by staff at LSTM since 1946. Many others took part in tropical disease investigations up to the 1980s, contributing to research into a range of tropical illnesses that had affected them during their post-war lives.

MVG members **Keith Andrews, Meg & Mike Parkes, Merle Hesp, Nigel Stanley and Jonathan Moffatt** were among 67 participants who included both medical experts and historical researchers.

LSTM's Professor's **Geoff Gill & Meg Parkes** both gave presentations. **Geoff Gill**, who will also be a speaker at the Researching FEPOW History Conference at the NMA in October, outlined the major diseases in Changi POW Camp, then on the Thailand-Burma Railway. In Changi's Roberts Hospital 42% of admissions were suffering from dysentery, 96% of these from bacilliary dysentery. Shortage of M & B 693 sulphonamide tablets was critical. Deficiency syndromes such as beri beri, burning feet syndrome and pellagra were also rife. Post war, Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton, treated over 4,000 FEPOWs, 41% for psychiatric problems. In the years 1946 – 1955 FEPOW mortality was 2 to 3 times higher than normal with TB, Cirrhosis and suicide the commonest causes.

From 1968 the centre for such work shifted to LSTM where outstanding work was done by tropical medicine consultant **Dion Bell**. 2,153 FEPOWs were treated, 35% for psychiatric problems, 15% for the 'clever worm' Strongyloides which had entered the feet of POWs and moved to the bowel area.

The LSTM Scarborough Survey, which compared the medical problems of FEPOWs and Burma Campaign veterans, found great similarity except that FEPOWs had much healthier cholesterol levels.

Meg Parkes spoke of her LSTM FEPOW project. She had interviewed 61 FEPOWs including several of our Malayan Volunteer Veterans. In extracts from her recordings FEPOW artist **Jack Chalker** spoke of witnessing 'men of enormous courage' ranging from '**Weary**' **Dunlop** to a cockney cat burgler. Meg ended with an audio extract from **Tom Evans [SRA(V)]** reflecting on his captivity. "I'd never want to repeat it but it taught me an awful lot. That's how I think about it."

A strong sense of humour featured high among FEPOW survival strategies, together with kinship and finding a purpose in life.

Geoff Gill chaired a round table discussion between the veterans and an audience.

FEPOW **Steve Cairns**, aged 92, travelled up from Somerset. Steve, who was seriously wounded in the Malayan Campaign witnessed an atrocity early in his captivity and was severely brutalized at Kaorin, Thailand in 1945. He was a patient in Liverpool in the late 1940s. He said, "I owe a great deal to LSTM and the nursing I received at both Mossley Hill and Smithdown Road hospitals. My experience there laid the foundation for a life-time in FEPOW welfare work. I believe FEPOW everywhere owe a debt of gratitude to the work carried out by staff at LSTM and I am proud to have played a part in it."



One of the subjects under discussion was how tropical diseases continue to affect the Armed Forces today, as issue commented on by LSTM alumnus **Lt. Col. Mark Bailey**, Royal Army Medical Corps.

Consultant Physician at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine, Col. Bailey, certainly the youngest half Colonel I've ever seen, leaves shortly for Afghanistan.

Local teachers and sixth form pupils participated as interviewers. The students are working with LSTM's Meg Parkes and Professor Gill in a project which is being funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

GLADYS FISHER'S ACCOUNT of her EVACUATION FROM SINGAPORE – widow of Noel Fisher, Manager of the Harpenden Estate, Kapar. By kind permission of her grandson Guy Scoular.

Part 1 – Written in New Delhi, February 1942.

We were so peaceful and happy, and the war did not seem to be coming near us. Everyone said, "Of course the Japanese won't come in – they have been fighting China for 4 years." People in high places told us Malaya was impregnable, so we went on our happy, almost carefree ways, and then they came...., bombing Singapore and bombings and landings at Kota Bahru. I was up at Cameron Highlands and early on the morning of the 8th December, heard noises outside my bedroom window – I looked out ready to curse the gardeners for making such a din at that early hour and saw the Japanese who were working on the tea estates being put into vans. I dressed quickly and was told by a member of the Local Defence Volunteers that unless I wanted to be marooned up there to go as quickly as I could as the petrol pumps were being shut off. I threw a few things into my suitcase and sped down the hill with just enough petrol to spare, and started off on my homeward trip to Port Swettenham – 180 miles.

It was quite uneventful and I lunched at Tanjong Malim which was bombed to pieces a very short time after. I got to Port Swettenham where my daughter, her husband and baby son were living, and was thankful to get there. That night was hideous – alerts and information that hostile aircraft were approaching. Twice we brought baby down and put him under the staircase while my daughter Judith sped to her first aid station. Next morning I took the baby out to a friend in K.... on a rubber estate, as they rightly anticipated that bombings would get worse at Port Swettenham. We made a nest for him in the rubber and every morning as the Jap planes came over I took him to his shelter. They nearly always came at 10.40a.m. on their way to Port Swettenham and Klang, and we could hear bombs being dropped at both places – 12 and 17 miles away. We had settled in very happily but one day Murray, my son-in-law, came out and said we must go south. The Japs were infiltrating into Kuala Selangor some 20 miles away and it would be better to move, so on the morning of the 31st December, my daughter, Judith, baby son Guy, Amah and I left in my little car for our journey South. We stayed at Malacca for a week, but there we did not feel really safe for every evening petrol lorries were brought up our drive, planted round the house we were staying in, to be removed next morning – they were camouflaged in a fashion with leaves and boughs, but as the Japanese planes were often overhead it was a dangerous spot. The natives were not as friendly as up North and we were rather glad to leave, and here I must pay a tribute to the English Chaplain who after all the Europeans had left, chose to stay on and minister to his Asian flock, and now we hear he is a prisoner.

Our next stop was at Panchor, 18 miles from Maur where we were given hospitality by a charming Australian – if ever he reads this I hope he will realize how grateful we were to him and how happy we were under his roof. Events moved too quickly for us to write and thank him. The bungalow was right on the river and war seemed far away, but one day Jap planes came over and dropped leaflets. "We will burn the white devils in the fire of Victory." Judith and I decided one day to motor into Maur, and there we met some survivors from H.M.S. Prince of Wales, who, strangely enough, had been living in my little house in Port Swettenham after I had left, whilst they blew up the jetties down there. We arranged to meet them next day for tea at the Rest House – alas, that evening the Police rang up our host and advised us to leave for Singapore, so I sent a message to the sailors and afterwards heard That the Rest House at Maur had been bombed at the time we should have been having tea with them. I learnt later that the sailors had not been hurt.

Next morning we set out for Batu Pahat not knowing where we were to spend that night – we were told to go to the Assistant Advisor – we were bound for Singapore, but wanted to break the journey as it was too far for the baby; to our delight we found the A.A. was an old friend, and he, I think, was as pleased as we were to meet again and put us up. Bombings were bad there and one morning will always stay in my memory, the baby wanting his breakfast and as the Japs were overhead and we saw them machine gunning, we had to take him into a wet latrine trench – I don't know who made the most noise, the baby yelling or the Japs machine gunning. We had two or three days rest there with our kind host. But he had to turn his house into naval headquarters, so as all the other women were leaving, we thought we should push off once more for Singapore. So off we set, this time with an escort (a sailor from H.M.S. Repulse and an engineer from a Malayan Volunteer Unit). They had business in Singapore and offered to take some of our luggage, and also to escort us. We passed endless military lorries and ambulances – my little Austin 8 went like a bird, as indeed she did all the way down Malaya. Afterwards I gave her to a friend in Singapore and now I am afraid she has been scrapped rather than fall into Japanese hands. We saw in one village the people taking cover and I spied a lone Jap plane overhead, so we all darted into the rubber – then as it passed we sped on our way. A few miles further on we found water across the road, decided to go on and stuck – our kind escort shoved us out, but only to get into deeper water further on. As we were wondering what to do a Sergeant of a Scotch (sic) regiment came up and said, "For God's sake take the baby under cover, there is a Jap plane overhead and a large convoy behind you." I was out of the car in a flash and, carrying the baby, jumped the drain and took cover, while Judith and the Amah drove the car up a side road. I looked back and saw hundreds and hundreds of lorries, but mercifully the Japs dropped no bombs and passed on. The escort told me that the water was 4ft. further on over the road and we could neither go on nor go back. We were wondering what on earth we could do when the manager of the rubber estate came up,

and like the Good Samaritan he took us into his house and gave us and our escort lunch. That evening we heard the water was still rising and our host walked down to the end of the drive to find out if we could reach Singapore that night. Hundreds of cars had been held up and were making for Singapore. Amongst the hundreds of cars passing was Murray's. He had only met our host once, years ago in Penang, and had no idea where Judy, Guy and I were and was frightfully worried. Our host yelled at him and he pulled out and came up to us – wasn't it an extraordinary thing?

Next morning the flood was down and we left for Singapore, and there we were billeted on a friend in Murray's firm, four miles out of the city. I stayed there for a few days and later left and stayed at a Dutch Hotel (Oranje Hotel) as I wanted to do canteen work. Meanwhile the Japs were just romping down the country and the bombings got worse and worse. Murray decided that Judy must take the baby to relations in India, so early one morning, we saw them off on a French ship – *the Cap St. Jacques*. She looked so small and so crowded that our hearts shrank when we said goodbye to Judy but we felt thankful that she was going away from the bombings.

Events moved very quickly after that – I wanted to stay and see the end – the end being the hope that the tide would turn and the Japs would be retreating, but it was always the same cry from the soldiers who came in from the front line, "Not enough air support." On Thursday evening – January 30th – during the raid, the Dutch proprietress of the Hotel came in whilst we were lying under sofas and tables in the drawing room to say that the P. & O. wanted all women who had booked provisionally to report at once – it was then 9 p.m. and the office was 4 miles away. I got a lift and sped through the blackout to find hundreds of women waiting – the 'all clear' had gone, but as we lined up another alert sounded and then a whistle which meant Jap planes were overhead. Flat on our faces did we fall and then resumed the waiting. We were told that we must board a ship next day, and take our forks, spoons etc. with us, and as far as they knew we were bound for Ceylon. Next morning was a nightmare. I had lost my passport in the bombings and had to get an emergency one and then get a ticket from the P. & O. and all the time we were being bombed. But eventually, at mid-day, I got to the docks. I found that we were on an American Merchant Cruiser. No sooner were we on board than we were bombed again and although we escaped, our sister ship was hit and five American sailors were killed. After that we had a peaceful voyage with a day and night at Batavia and then, what a reassuring sight it was, we saw H.M.S. Cruiser Exeter (sic) and two of the destroyers which escorted us part of the way to Colombo. And then Colombo – no words of mine can express the kindness and hospitality of the women of Colombo; they treated us as honoured guests, not refugees and so truly fulfilled the words of One who was homeless and said "I was a stranger and ye took me in." Ten days of rest there, though our hearts were in Singapore, which fell on February 15th, and then four nights in the train up to Delhi where I had a wonderful meeting with the family.

So many memories of the Southward trek down Malaya stay in my mind, the kindness of people who we were billeted on – finding so many friends in Singapore, all Malaya seemed to be there, and I think above all our little Chinese Amah – she had indeed left all to follow us, her husband in K.... and her beloved daughter in Kuala Lumpur. When Judy and the baby left for India she came to me – one of the hardest things I have ever had to do was to tell her that I, too, had to go – in fact had been told that I must go, and I can see her now outside the Hotel, looking very small and woe-begone as I drove off with Murray. I had arranged with friends to look after her and I pray that all is well with her now.

One lives in the hopes that we shall return to peace-loving, happy Malaya, and perhaps one day we shall meet our faithful servants and friends there once more.

**Part 2. Guy says that this part was hand written, and found amongst his mother's papers.
Tunbridge Wells 1955 – Gladys Fisher continues her memoirs.**

I started this scrappy diary in Singapore written on odd bits of paper – then only a few months ago I found the lot in an old diary. I'd quite forgotten about it. I've put it all together so that my grandsons may read it. It all happened 14 years ago, at times it was difficult to write with the bombing and shelling in Singapore and I've lost the part about our adventures from the time we left our homes in Malaya with the Japanese very close behind us – until we reached Singapore – and here it is. My son-in-law Murray came through the three and half years' imprisonment. He was sent to the north of Japan. When he was freed the prisoners' diet was fish heads. He came home and after three months of bliss with Judy and Guy felt he should return and start the shipping business in Malaya. He was killed when he was walking in his sleep and fell over his veranda. Philip was killed over France the night Hugh was born and I can say that no woman ever had two such sons-in-law – and I do thank God for their love and goodness to me.

"I have put my days and dreams out of mind
Days that are over and dreams that are done."

When in Singapore I met several survivors from the Prince of Wales and Repulse – I promised once I got to Delhi I'd write to their mothers and tell them how they were etc. None of us was allowed to write to the U.K. so their families had only heard the bare news from the Admiralty that they were safe. I wrote when I got to New Delhi and told them their sons were fit and how they looked and what they said and when I got to England had such grateful letters.

Part 3 – written in a diary in Singapore.

Oranje Hotel – Singapore Jan. 26 1942.

.....Have lost my car, so had to walk to the Docks as I was determined to see Judy and Guy off in their French ship. It was terribly hot and when I saw a lorry pass me and heard someone say, 'Mummy' I nearly died with joy, for there were Judy, Murray, Amah and Guy – Murray pulled me up and covered me up with a rug and coat as without a permit nobody could enter the Docks. A sentry came up with a fixed bayonet, so Murray told me, but I was under the rug so could not see. We managed to get onto the ship and said goodbye to Judy and Guy. We waved from the Dock as she stood on the deck with Guy in her arms – (She never saw Murray for three and a half years). He and I went back to the Hotel and had breakfast – feeling terribly sad. Then we went for a long drive round the Golf Links and met **Kerr Bovell** (afterwards Bursar at Radley College d. aged 60). Being a policeman, he knew the latest news and that was grim – the 18th Division had been surrounded the other side of the Causeway and the Japs were romping down onto the city – we felt a bit depressed but suddenly saw 2 Europeans playing golf and we giggled all the way back to the Hotel. Amah (Guy's) came to me that night and slept in my room – what a faithful servant she has been.

Wednesday.

Everlasting raids and the bell ringing which means they are overhead. Beverley (**Beverley Clifton**, Rubber Planter near Kapor. Brother-in-law of **Claud Stratford**, Solicitor in Norwich) and Murray on duty most of the day, met in the evenings. Rumours that we women must go but nothing official and anyway I'm not going to leave my canteen.

Thursday.

Victor took me to the P.G. as I had a paper to fill in. That night **Miss Van Reem** who runs the Oranje Hotel came into the drawing room and said all women must report at 9 p.m. to the Embarkation office 4 miles out of town – I cadged a lift from some unknown man and we sped out – flew through a lovely moonlit night, then as hundreds of us were lining up in the drive, over they came and we had to lie flat – masses of cars. Booked for Ceylon and told to take 1 small suitcase, a mug, plate and fork and spoon. The kind unknown man waited for me and we sped back.

Friday.

A frightful day – no news of Murray or Beverley. A **Mr. Grey** took me to the Bank and some other man who vouched for me for a new passport, then on to the R. Office shed. Waited ages. Sent Mr. Grey off as I knew I should be hours and cadged a lift from a Local Defence Force man. Cadged yet one more lift from a Czech and had a perilous drive as the alert went. He shoved me into an empty shed, Japs overhead and terrifying. Could hear the buildings falling – at last the Czech appeared and we tore to the Oranje – a most petrifying experience and I had a lovely welcome from Friends in the Hotel. Murray came in, to my delight, and we went and lunched at a low down Café and then he took me to the Docks – and I knew I really had to go. It was dreadful leaving him. He was one side of the barrier and I on the other – the crowd was so awful I could not get my arm up to wave and the sun was terrific. There were 1500 women and children, and as we stood there the Japs bombed the ship behind us and killed 5 men. Eventually I got on board and waved to darling Murray from the deck and **Neville Godwin** who was with him – both in tin hats and so on to this colossal "**West Point**" – a converted cruiser – shown to my cabin and my heart sank – 12 mattresses hung from the ceiling and a tiny bathroom. Alert went and we all floundered down to the bowels of the ship – rather alarming as we and our sister ship **U.S.A. Manhattan** were enormous targets. Later on we heard on the Tokyo Radio the Japs had sunk us both. Again the **Empress of Japan (Canadian Pacific)** and another ship were bombed in the Docks and we were lucky to have got away in time. 1500 women and children – the noise is indescribable and meals awful – babies yelling, women crying and lots had not even had time to say goodbye to their husbands, and have only the clothes they stand up in. Thank God the children are not here and that I am by myself. The British soldiers (don't know what they are doing here) ladle us out food and we stand in long queues. They're wonderful and so are the U.S. A. sailors – managed to have **Nancy Godwin, Mrs. Scott and awful kid, and Mrs. Mills** in my cabin – no port hole and lights and fans off at 9 p.m. and the doors at the end of the corridors clamped down and guarded by burly negroes. We hear we are near enemy submarines – there are no life boats or life belts.

Saturday.

Lovely to find **Molly Puckeridge** and **Dinah Tovey** – we sit on deck and they weep as to their husbands' fates – I never thought I should live to be thankful that Noel died with angina and could not have got through all this misery.

Sunday.

Mollie P and I to the Early Service, a mixture of C of E and Methodist. As the Chaplain gave us the Sacrament he said to each one "Go in Peace". Midday H.M.S. Exeter, with the sun shining on her, passed across our bows with a destroyer on either side and the Manhattan following.

Monday.

Our escort has left us. We've anchored off Batavia and now are steaming off – nobody knows where – U.K., Ceylon, Australia. How I wish I had let them all know I am safe. Wretched news from Singapore. How I loathed leaving. It is our friends and dear Murray and little Amah, looking so forlorn on the steps of the 'Oranje'. Although this ship is like a Yarmouth Bank holiday, it's peaceful after the raids and the perpetually having to lie

flat wherever one was. I can hardly bear to think of our beloved Malaya in Jap hands. Can't think what the congestion in Colombo will be like – have just heard we are going there – just heard that the Johore Causeway has been blown up by us. Judy, **Guy**, Amah and I were over it such a short time ago. Fixed up with **Mrs. Leggatt** to join up with her in Ceylon – and must find the best way to get to Pam and Philip in New Delhi. The Americans have done us awfully well as far as they could but it was heaven to see our own flag when the Exeter came along (sunk 1/3/42 Java Sea).... and now we are getting in, very soon shall I see my beloved family? Must go at once on shore and cable to them – Mollie, Dinah and I found a tiny cabin which in peace time is the Admiral's – nobody seems to know of it and we've kept it dark and so smoke in peace. Mollie actually produced a bottle of gin she had been given at Government House. It's been a nightmare of a journey but thank God we're almost in.

After thoughts as we steam along the Coast of Ceylon – the awful knowledge that had we had sufficient air support this would never have happened, stories of inefficiency and muddling in high places and our lads sacrificed – battles on Harpenden, Batu Tiga, Bukit Raja and my beloved home turned into a Jap headquarters.... The Padre always finding me out when raids were at their worst and coming to sit with me; generally under the tables in the Oranje drawing room – the real fear one had as the buildings were falling round us. Beverley finding me having searched the City and not knowing where I was, and the happy evening we had together, I wish I could have told him I was made to leave. I hope Murray contacts him. The rumours that lifted us up to the heights that the Americans had landed up country – all untrue and that wretched Singapore Broadcasting everlastingly playing "Land of Hope and Glory" to boost us up – then hearing **Wavell** and his staff had gone to Sumatra, which seemed a bit ominous – Murray saying to me "Remember darling in the years to come you can tell your Grandchildren you were in a real Siege! His cheerfulness, however bad and frightening things were, and however awful things were; the laughs he, Beverley and I had – wonder if they are prisoners as I don't think they would ever leave, specially as some idiotic women flatly refused to go. I do pray Judy is safe and Guy – that ship looked so small. Must go up on deck: one stage passed and I wonder what the future has in store –

After thoughts from Singapore – the last view of the Cathedral spire dignified and lovely and just as I saw it 34 years ago when I arrived a homesick bride of 21 – then 34 years of complete and utter happiness, which very few people can say they have had – so I can never grumble.

Ceylon.

Since we landed there's not been much time to go on with this – the kindness of the people of Ceylon is just beyond words – (went to the Chartered Banks and found Murray in his thoughtfulness had sent all my money) – so is the organization – along the quay were tables with 2 or 3 men and women behind each giving out clothes, money, names and addresses of people who were putting us up – we do look a miserable lot, but the bravery of the women who have left their husbands and homes and have tiny children, I can never forget.

Sent off cables and got some answers to-day, but one sent my heart down to the depths. Pam said from New Delhi, "Thank God you are safe – where are Judy and Guy?" They should have been with her days ago – contacted the Admiral who was so fatherly and kind – said he would have heard if any Allied ships had been sunk in the Indian Ocean and probably her ship had made a big detour to avoid enemy submarines, so must just wait. My host and hostess are so kind and have asked me to stay for the duration, and now the Governor has sent word around that all Malayan refugees must leave. I go up on the night mail to-night to Madras then across to Bombay and then to N. Delhi – just had time to write to the ladies of Ceylon in the name of the Malayan women thanking everybody – it's in to-day and my kind host and his wife are so pleased – the Governor has sent a note asking me to go to Government House and stay there – he's an old friend, but I refused. Feel I must go to the end of this journey – he must have a list of our names now and so has discovered I'm on the island.

Left last night and am going slowly up East Coast – train runs parallel with the sea – stopped at a small station and saw a white man – yelled for news of Singapore and he yelled out "General Percival surrendered this morning" – we knew it must come – now it has – its hard to realize – miserable journey – no white people – Madras to-night.

16th February – now on so-called Bombay Express – everything brown – huts – undulating brown country – brown huts – it's strange, there're no Europeans travelling. Judy and Guy never leave my thoughts – a long weary day in which I've felt very sorry for myself and would welcome a good railway smash – but now I have put my days and dreams out of mind.

"Days that are over and dreams that are done."

Only another day and night and then Bombay early in the morning. Only 2 years ago since we had that lovely trip. Noel and I were in Agra, Lahore and then the North West Frontier.

Bombay. Such a wonderful day – as we steamed into Bombay on the platform was **Olive Lyon** – an old friend of Pam. She screamed at me "Judy and Guy are safe – they passed through here this morning – she thought you were dead or missing or a prisoner. I only got a message to meet you from Pam after her train had gone to New Delhi." Slept most of the day and to-morrow start on the long trek – went to the native Bazaar this evening, found a stray kitten and am taking it on my journey – it followed me all round the Bazaar – and I thought we were a couple of waifs and strays.

Well it's over – the wonderful meeting with my family. Thank God for everything – reason for Judy's delay was one of the crew being Vichy; and they just drifted for hours as the engineers would not work. A few weeks here and then the U.K. – **what an odyssey!**

ROBERT DEVADASON – A Malayan Volunteer. By his son James Devadason, a BWM member from Ipoh.

When the 2nd World War broke out in Europe in 1939, my father, **Robert Devadason**, who was then 19 and living in Ipoh, enlisted in the Perak Battalion of the Federated Malay States Volunteers (FMS Volunteers). At present, I do not have access to his Regimental Number but I gather he had 4 months training as a sapper. He did tell me that he fought in a battle north of Taiping and as the situation deteriorated they were forced to make 'strategic withdrawals'.(1) In the course of retreat on one occasion his unit and other divisions stopped at the Bidor Government Resthouse. **William Giles Pillai** (the adopted son of **Sybil Kathigasu**), told me that when they reached the Bidor Resthouse, Robert poured out drinks from the Bar and passed them to the soldiers and happily said, "Drinks are on the house." An English Officer said, "This place is off limits to coloureds." An angry Robert retorted, "This was is not our war but your war, nevertheless we fight to defend the Empire. Are we not citizens of the Empire?" There was an awkward silence, then suddenly another voice with an upper class English accent said, "If that's the case, I'll have a beer." That broke a tense silence and they drank and intermingled.

According to Robert they retreated frequently and along the way the sappers blew up the bridges. Finally, they reached the town of Gemas and the British officer in charge told them that the situation was grim and he disbanded the unit and told them to go home. Robert and two of his friends then changed into civilian clothes but made the mistake of walking along the main road. Their destination was Ipoh. At a road block, the Japanese stopped them and they asked Robert whether he was an Australian which Robert denied.(2) A Japanese soldier ripped off his shirt and found the marks made by the haversack. He and his friends were detained in a police lockup. The Japanese soldiers tortured them to extract information and this went on for a week. A Punjabi policeman in charge took pity on them and 'helped' them to escape and warned them to keep off the main roads. To get to Ipoh they went by back roads i.e. via rubber plantations, Chinese farms and Kampung. He told me that the people were kind and provided them with shelter and food. Finally after a few weeks they reached Ipoh.

In 1944, he married my mother Gladys and after the war he was awarded the following decorations by the British Government i.e. the 1939-45 Pacific Star, Defence Medal, War Medal, General Service Medal and Efficiency Medal. Early 1946 he joined the Health Department but became bored with his job. In 1949 as the Emergency intensified the British Government began recruiting more Malaysians and Robert applied to the Police Force. The British recruiting officer told him that he was two years past the age of recruitment and then asked, "Do you speak Hindi?"(3) and Robert said, "No, but I do speak Malay." The officer replied, "I am sorry we can't recruit you." Robert was angry and said to him, "In Malaya, Hindi is not the lingua franca but Malay is, and for your information I fought in the War." He then took out his medals and placed them on the table. The officer looked at the medals and then said, "All right you're in."

Robert served with distinction in the police force and was promoted to Deputy Superintendent of Police, he retired in 1976 and passed away in 1989.

(1) Robert made mention of the constant 'strategic withdrawals'.

(2) Robert was of Anglo-Indian descent and his light skin was a disadvantage.

(3) The officer had served in India.

PENANG VOLUNTEERS.

MVG member **Marsha Anson** sent us this late 1930s photo of a section of 3/SSVF Volunteers including her father, **P.F. Kavanagh** who is holding up the sign. Although the sign states No.7 section, we believe the photo may show B [MG] Coy, No.6 Platoon, No. 6 Section. Ptes. **A.M.R. Currie; E.G. Gardiner; P.F. Kavanagh; E.M. Scouler & J.C. Matheson**. The Sgt. is presumably Platoon Sgt. **H.F. Clements**. Any confirmation of identities would be welcome. Marsh also has a medallion that belonged to her father – see below. Have any other MVG members come across similar or/and can explain it?



A VIGNETTE of FATHER GERARD BOURKE'S WARTIME MINISTRY – A GREAT REDEMPTORIST. A GREAT PADRE.
Compiled by Rosemary Fell.

BOURKE. Rev. G.M. [Gerard] C.SS.R B. B.1910 Wellington NZ. R.C. Redemptorist Monastery, 339, Thompson Rd. Singapore. RC Padre/Captain 1/SSVF. POW Singapore incl. Great World Camp and Thailand. Returned to NZ 7/3/46. These bare facts about Father Bourke, taken from **Jonathan Moffatt's** and **Paul Riches'** book. "**In Oriente Primus**", belie the greatness of the man, particularly on the Burma-Siam Railway, where he ministered tirelessly to his Catholic Flock. As one reads different books about the Railway, Father Bourke's name crops up in various contexts. One thing stands out above all else, to use the words of "**Weary**" **Dunlop** in his Foreword to **Brenden Bourke's** book about his brother, published for private circulation in 1987, when he said that the Father's "...sense of priestly authority appeared to cross all military and racial boundaries..." Later, Weary said that he "...offered no honeyed sympathy to his hard pressed flock, but a stern and critical disapproval of neglect of Christian duties and of their many sinful deviations." There were so many examples of his courage and selflessness, but one story stands out. It is mentioned in **Sue Ebury's** book on "**Weary**" **Dunlop**, and tells of one incident, witnessed by "**Weary**", when he attended a stormy interview between Father Bourke and a drunken, incalculably angry Japanese officer flourishing a samurai sword. "**Weary**" himself later recorded it thus:-

Officer: Why do you disobey the orders of Imperial Japanese Army?

Chaplain: I take my orders from a much higher authority than the Japanese Army!

Officer: (incredulous) Higher Authority? Where?

Chaplain: (pointing upwards) I take my authority from up there!

Officer: (perplexed, looking up) "Nunda, Nunda?" Then in explosive anger raising the swords, "Bugero, I will kill you!"

"**Weary**" hastily stepped between the erect frame of the priest happy to embrace martyrdom, and the blotched faced, angry executioner, tapping his head and saying, "Kistian churches very eccentric man." The tense situation was defused, and Father Bourke lived to continue his Redemptorist Mission deep in the Thailand jungle. **Sue Ebury** continued, "**Weary** was curious to hear what Fr. Bourke had to say, for he had concluded that 'formal religion appeared to have no enhanced appeal in camps of sickness and death.' Fr. Bourke's theme was death, 'Let not one console himself that we were much more fit in this camp than others. Death always comes like a thief in the night.....' He illustrated his sermon with 'numerous precedents of men who had neglected their religious duties only to be caught by death, dying unabsolved', then dived straight for the jugular with a stinging attack on mortal sin. '...retired with my tail between my legs,' wrote Weary. Bourke missed little, surmising that the Australian commanding officer 'emerged from the ordeal with head...bloody, yet unbowed.'

Bourke and Weary were drawn to each other, and their dialogue and differences about faith, humanity and religion did not cease until Bourke's death some 45 years later. Each had a profound respect for the other's intellect and Weary spoke to Bourke about matters which he seldom aired, even to his intimates."

The short biographical details again do not quite tell the whole story, for three weeks before Singapore fell, Father Gerard Bourke was seconded to the Malacca Volunteers (4/SSVF). He took up his duties in camp in Jalan Eunus, in the Katong district where the Malacca Volunteers had their headquarters. This is where he first met **Eric Reeve** who was officer in charge of the Signals Section. After capitulation and for the first fortnight of their captivity, all the Volunteers were billeted together on one floor in one of the big barracks in Changi. Then during the first week in March, Officers were made to live separately from the men in what were known as married quarters – rows of flats. Each was a small 2 storey building with a kitchen and a "boys" quarters at the back. Father Bourke and Eric Reeve shared the tiny verandah upstairs. The friendship which was forged during the time they spent together was to last throughout their time in Singapore, and follow them to Thailand. This was no convergence of minds, indeed Eric Reeve had been brought up as a Non-Conformist – quite contrary to Catholic ideology, yet far from falling out, they seemed to thrive on deep discussions on topics such as Communism and the Catholic Church's attitude to it. Father Bourke was quick and excitable, while Eric Reeve was by nature cautious and deliberate in his actions. But in Father Bourke's words, ".....the wonder of it was no matter how hectic the controversy it never made the slightest difference to our complete amicability."

In October 1942, they were sent to Thailand on the same train (although not together in the same cattle truck), and later the 2 men were once again thrown together on the 4 day march to Tarsau. Much of Father Bourke's Mass Kit was carried by Eric Reeve on this march, as the Father was finding the amount of Church paraphernalia he had with him too heavy to carry. This led Father Bourke to describe Eric as "perhaps his closest buddy on the railway." Some other of his closest friends on the Railway were also non-Catholics – **Sir Edward Dunlop** was a Presbyterian; **Ray Parkin** an agnostic; **Pat Garden** and **Charles Thornton** also Presbyterians.

Another reference to Father Bourke comes in **Stephanie Hess's** grandfather's diary. Entitled "**Dear Hon – The Hidden Years**," **Joseph Benedict Dunne**, talks about attending Mass taken by the Father. He says, "**On March 15th**, I have a note 'attended third Mass at POW Camp' – the first was in the open air, a turned up packing case the altar, the congregation about 50. The next was celebrated in the ticket office of the cinema in Changi Village, and on the occasion mentioned above, under the porch of the original Catholic Church in Changi – the porch was all that was left! **Fr. Burke** (sic) an Irish Australian [**Ed**: He was a New Zealander], of the Redemptist (sic) Mission gave a short address with particular reference to the coming feast of St. Patrick on the 17th and exhorting all Irish Catholics particularly to attend Mass and, if possible, Holy Communion also." **Theodore Moissinac** also wrote about Father Bourke's life before and during the war:-

"In October 1936, I was transferred from Penang to the Tranquerah English School in Malacca. War clouds were forming over Europe and East Asia, so I thought I should enlist in the army. In January 1937, I went to Malacca Customs office and was duly enlisted as a member of the Malacca Volunteer Corps (later known as 4/SSVF). After taking an oath of allegiance to the British Crown in the person of King George VI, **Captain E.V. Rodrigues**, OC of the Eurasian 'D' company witnessed my oath.

From 1937 to 1939 I underwent training in arms and foot drill, rifle drill and training in attack and defence. I enjoyed every bit of it. In 1940 I was promoted Company Quartermaster Sergeant which was the rank I held until the end of the war in 1945. In the middle of 1940 we had a church parade, and all the 'D' Company boys in their cleanest uniforms marched into St. Francis Xavier Church and occupied the front pews. The Mass was said by **Rev. Father Lourdes** but another priest gave the sermon. By his attire we recognized him to be a Redemptorist Priest from the Singapore Mission.

For a long time we have had sermons by French and local Asian priests but when this Redemptorist priest opened his mouth to begin his sermon all of us just sat still and looked at him in wonder for the language and the words that he used were different from what we had been used to hearing.

To my ears it was like classical music. He spoke of our loving duty towards Malaya which badly needed our services and our wonderful spirit of sacrifice in defence of our country. In June, 1941 as I was standing on the verandah of our building a military jeep came up the driveway and out stepped a British officer. I noticed the three pips on his shoulder and knew he was a Captain. So I hurried down to meet him. I gave him my smartest salute to which he responded just as smartly and I said, "Can I help you, Sir?" He said, "I am the Roman Catholic Chaplain who has been posted to your battalion." I said, "Yes, I'll take you to **Mr. Roy De Vries**, our Second-in-Command.

I brought him to Mr. De Vries's office and I told Roy: "This is our new Chaplain, **Reverend Father Bourke**." He then asked Mr. De Vries if he could have a Mass said in the evening. To which Mr. De Vries responded, "Why, yes, CQ (**Moissinac**), please show father his room and the place downstairs where Mass could be said.

So I showed Fr. Bourke round the camp. He seemed to be satisfied but he told me not to use 'Sir' when addressing him but to call him 'Father'. I passed the word round and in the evening a large number of the boys gathered for the Mass which was said in Latin. **Mr. Benedict Gomes** was the organist. Father Bourke took his meals at the CO's table.

Before being posted to Jalan Eunus in Singapore, the Battalion was quartered in St. Patrick's School in Katong but after the initial bombing of Singapore our CO asked that the battalion be housed further inland. So we all went to a wooden building in Jalan Eunus which was next door to Geylang. Father Bourke also went to other companies in the area.

On the night of 8th December, 1941, the Japs began their bombing of Singapore. Geylang being crowded with the Chinese received the most attention. While the bombing was still going on, I saw Fr. Bourke rushing towards Geylang, a small bag in his hand. I saw him again about 2 hours after the bombing had stopped. His hair was mussed up and his uniform was dirty with mud and blood. After giving him a mug of strong tea I said to him, "Father, is it so necessary for you to go out during a bombing raid? They have the Red Cross and others to look after the wounded." He replied, "Yes, I am a non-combatant but I am also a priest and a human being. Can you get me a bicycle?"

I got him one and he used it when the bombing was further afield. There was no way to stop him, his compassion for the wounded and the dying was so great.

Some time before the surrender, because of the pressure of the Japanese forces, our Battalion was ordered to go about 5 miles back. Captain De Vries told me to get everybody out of the camp. So I ordered the signallers the buglers, the transport staff, the medics and the cooks to meet at a certain point in the camp.

When they had gathered together I drilled them in the formations recommended in the British infantry on what action to take when attacked from the air. The last to arrive was Fr. Bourke. We got into a square formation and proceeded southwards. It was not long before we were spotted by a Zero fighter which swooped down with machine guns blazing. After a few strafing rounds the plane flew off. The bullets went straight through our formation but missed everyone! No one was injured. We experienced one more attack before we reached our destination but again no one was hit.

When the British surrendered in Singapore we were holding the fort just north of Newton Circus and Fr. Bourke was with us. Our boys were scared and miserable and Fr. Bourke stayed with them till he was forced to join the European troops that were marching to the Changi point camp nearly 10 miles away.

Before the Padre left he told me to stay with the boys because they were very nervous and frightened. All the officers and NCOs had disappeared. There was nobody to lead them so I took over and formed them into 2 large circles with everyone standing with their best friends beside them. I made them ease themselves before lying on the grass so that they would not be walking about in the darkness of the night. I pointed out to them the 2 machine gun units on the high ground. They could be shot for trying to escape. The men slept - only tired men could sleep. Not one man disappeared in the night. The next morning the Nip guards came, and we formed up in marching order and went as prisoners to Farrer Park.

Fr. Bourke told me to gather the boys every evening after dinner and to pray the Rosary together. I followed his instructions and in the dark took the boys to a field far away from the huts. While we were on our 2nd decade of the Rosary we were all startled by a loud and furious shout. It was an angry Nip who was annoyed that we had wandered so far from the camp. I showed him my Rosary and told him we were praying. He kept quiet for a moment and then suddenly put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a Rosary. He told us to start the Rosary again, this time he would lead saying the Rosary in his own language while we answered in English. After the Rosary we all shook hands with him and he told us not to go so far away from the camp.

In 1944, I was warded in the big hospital camp at a place called Tarsau in Thailand. I had malaria and had been in this hospital for 3 months. One morning about three weeks from Christmas I took a stroll outside my hut for some fresh air. The hospital was on the edge of the jungle and there was a group of Nip guards who were using hand gestures and signalling to me to come to them. A number of Catholic men had been hard at work building an altar of bamboo for the Christmas Mass on Christmas day. I was scared because such action by Nips usually meant a beating up for some wrong you have done. When I reached them they held up their rosaries and crucifixes.

I began to breathe more easily. I signed them to wait for a while. I then went to Fr. Bourke's hut and told him about the Nips. He told me to call the interpreter. I did so and through him we learnt that they needed confession and would like to attend

Mass on Christmas Day. Fr. Bourke agreed to my arrangement. I said, "But Father, you do not know the Japanese language." Fr. Bourke smiled and told me to get a blanket and a mat. He also told the interpreter to be present. The next day I got up early in spite of the chilly weather and waited for the Japanese.

They came, all eight of them. With the assistance of the interpreter the priest showed them the routine. The priest would sit on the ground with the interpreters and a Bible by his side. The interpreter would read the command in Japanese. All hands to be under the blanket. The penitent would hold the priest's hand and by pressing his hand he would state the number of times the sin was committed. All the Nips went through the same procedure. All of them were present for Mass on Christmas Day. On another day, Fr. Bourke told me that his stock of communion wafers was about to be finished. A group of men from our group used to go daily to a small village. There was a small chapel there but it was locked and the priest had gone away. They asked permission from Fr. Bourke to break into the chapel and to obtain communion wafers. Fr. Bourke was very reluctant to give his consent but in the end he did. The men broke a window and entered the chapel. They found 2 boxes of un-consecrated wafers. They took one box and left a letter from Fr. Bourke beside the other. I did not see Fr. Bourke again until three months after we were released."

Edited by **Andrew Hwang**.

NOTE: The unedited verbatim form of this article was originally published in the Ujong Pasir BEC Newsletter of December 2001. We thank him for his permission to print it in A.K. and the family of Theodore Moissinnac for their permission to use it. The late **Theodore Moissinnac** was born in 1912 in what is now Indonesia. He was educated in Penang and later moved to Malacca in 1936. He was active in Eurasian musical circles and was even elected Music Convener of the Eurasian 'D' Company of 4/SSVF. He held the position of choirmaster at St. Francis Xavier Church in Malacca for over 30 years.



Father Gerard Bourke,
C.S.S.R.



Birth	21 Jan. 1910
Baptism	2 Feb. 1910
Profession	2 Feb. 1931
Ordination	8 Mar. 1936
Death	23 May 1984

Some of Fr. Bourke's answers in his Liberation Questionnaire. Changi Peninsula.

Question:- "What were the circumstances of your capture?"

The car bearing the white flag went up the Bukit Timah Road about 11 a.m. on 15th February 1942. The ceasefire was finally ordered about 8 p.m. The following morning the Japs began to come into the Singapore area. Indian and Malay fifth columnists brought up a Jap interpreter to the bungalow which our Coy (4/SSVF) were using as H.Q. The interpreter was quite courteous and helpful. He allowed me to remain behind with a wounded man till he could be carried down to the valley through which Whitley Road runs. Here all the other members of our own and several other units, who were fighting in the Thomson Road area, were congregated during the whole of that day and the following night. He also gave me some Jap words to explain to the Jap troops when they should arrive, that I was a Priest. The Indians on the contrary were very contemptuous and overbearing in their manner to us. Through the stupidity of one of our own senior officers who interpreted the Jap order that all our military equipment was to be dumped, our men left their water bottles behind and were thus without water for most of that sweltering day in the valley. After spending the night lying beside the road, (the Asiatic members of the Batt. having been separated from the European Volunteers) the rest of us were made to swell the seemingly unending columns of over 60,000 British and Australian troops marching out to Changi Barracks, some 15 miles from the city.

Thailand.

Question:- "Did you ever receive any Red Cross food? If so, how much and how often?"

We received some Red Cross food from South Africa in August 1942. This was a wonderful help. It included tinned fruit, meat, flour, oatmeal, sugar. It arrived in bulk but made up in small packages which made distribution easier. In June 1944 in Thailand we received one USA food parcel to every 6 ½ - 7 men.

Question:- "What were your rations from the Japanese?"

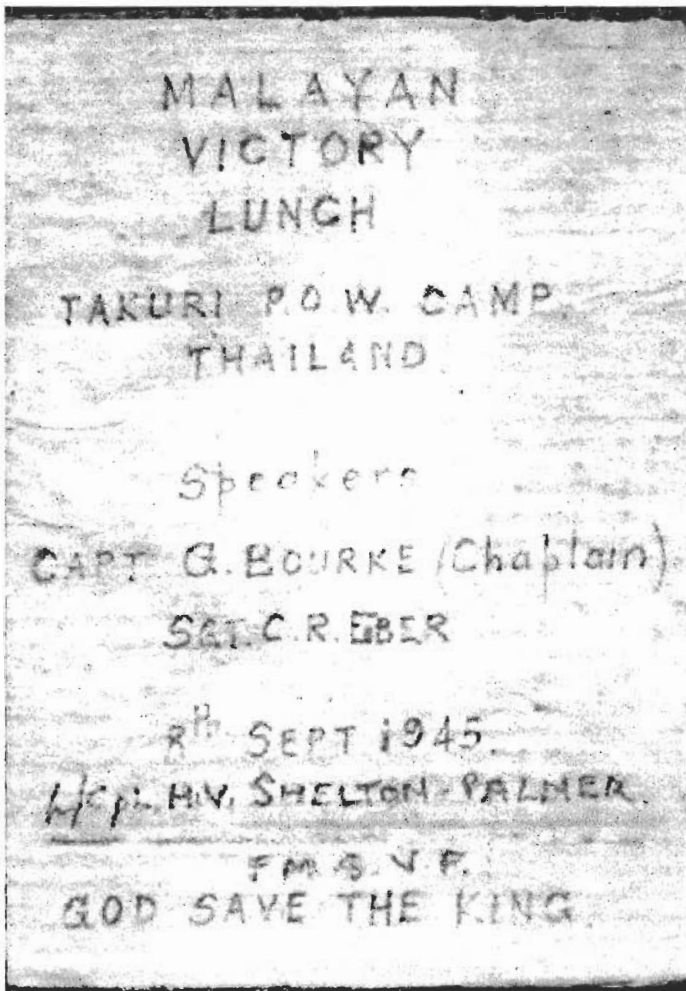
The rations varied at different times. The first few months we subsisted mainly on rice alone, which was later supplemented by what authorized Purchasing Officers were able to purchase from the natives outside. A small ration of meat once a week, and some vegetable was given later. Both John Coast and Rivett in their books give a good idea of the ration situation later on in Thailand.

Question:- "Could you say that you have gained any benefit or learned anything from your captivity? If so what?"

I consider that I have learnt more in three years of human nature, and the things in this present life that are of real account, and of one's shortcomings, than I could learn in thirty years of normal life. For this reason I don't regret it at all. One feels somehow different from others who did not have such experience. For doctors it was rather different – they were hampered and baulked in their work, and had the feeling of frustration in many ways, because of knowing how much could have been done had the Japs released the piled up Red Cross Stores in Bangkok.

In my opinion two books "Behind Bamboo" (Rivett) and "Railroad of Death" (Coast) give the story of prisoner of war life on the Burma Siam Railway as accurately as it is possible to give it.

"Weary" Dunlop called Father Bourke "a man for all seasons" with his true compassion, inflexible courage, high minded spiritual authority, and austere self denial, making him, "...one of the legendary figures of prison camps."



A GREAT REDEMPTORIST



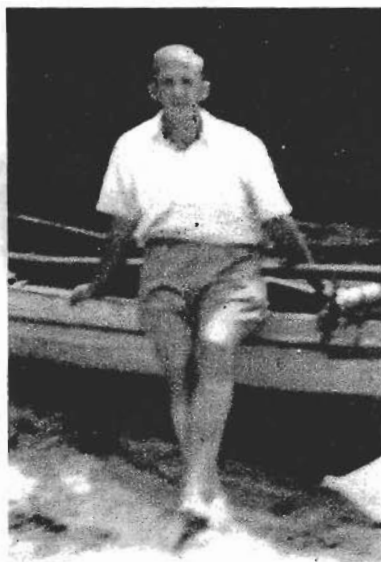
A GREAT PADRE

Father Gerard Bourke

Camps in which Father Gerard Bourke lived and ministered:-
 Kinsaiyok – Hintok – Upper Konyu Camp – Konyu
 River Camp – Tarsao – Wampo – Chungkai –
 Tamuang – Takri – Bangkok.

Father Gerard Bourke photographed with Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop, at the end of the ABC "This is your Life" programme, featuring Sir Edward in 1978.

THE THINGS MY MOTHER DIDN'T TELL ME By Tony Parrini



John Brookfield Gould (Left) and Margery Gould (Right) at Mersing - 1947

for the following:
 At noon on the 12th inst. at the General Hospital, Malacca, there passed away Ralph Colin Gould, popular and well-known in the legal and social circles of the Settlement where, for the last eleven years he resided and practised as an advocate and solicitor of the Straits Settlements and F.M.S. Born at Sheffield in 1871, the son of Thomas Gould of that city, and of Messrs. Gould and Coombe, one of the oldest established firms of solicitors in the United Kingdom, Mr. Gould comes of a stock which has, for many generations, sent its sons into the ancient and honourable profession in which not a few have attained to distinction and renown. He was himself entered on the Rolls on August 4, 1900 and in 1905 came to Malaya, first practising in Penang until 1911, when he made Malacca the sphere of his activities. A man of great personal charm, of kindly temperament and of remarkable ability and intellectual brilliance Mr. Gould had always at once endeared himself to and commanded the respect of his many friends, and, in the course of his professional duties, his opponents. His remains were laid to rest in the cemetery at Malacca on the 16th instant when the many floral tributes sent and the large number of distinguished members of the Malacca community in attendance were an eloquent surmise of the esteem and regard in which Mr. Gould was held, and of the deep sympathy which all felt for his widow.

THE THINGS MY MOTHER DIDN'T TELL ME – by Tony Parrini

The advent of the internet and the various genealogy sites has opened up many opportunities to research one's family history. The potential for discovering previously forgotten facts about one's ancestry are enormous. However, I'm sure there comes a point in many lives when one realises that matters of detail are lost forever, certainly I regret the fact that my mother has taken to her grave much of the detail that I'm now researching – "If only I had talked to my Mum!"

In 1905, **RALPH COLIN GOULD** born in 1877, left behind his father's legal business in Sheffield after obtaining his legal qualifications. He travelled to Malaya to become the Legal Advisor to the Straits Settlements in Penang and Malacca. What an adventure for a young man of 27 in those days, as he packed his belongings and headed out on his 7,000 mile voyage to a future in the Tropics.

EDITH EMILY JOHNSTON arrived in Malaya soon after and married Ralph on 3rd August 1906 and settled down in Malacca. Her family was from Newcastle-upon-Tyne and included one brother and three sisters, among them **Evelyn Mary Seymour Johnston** who was later to become the Matron of the Bristol Royal Infirmary and **Mary Nancy Isobel Johnston** who was later to marry **George Denholm**, and whose son **George Herald Denholm** was to be awarded a DFC during the Second World War.

The family homes in Malacca appear to have been a town house not far from the Straits Settlements Offices in a building that by 1970 was the Family Planning Clinic. They also had a weekend villa on the coast road near a Government Rest House. On 28th August 1908 the marriage was blessed with the birth of **JOHN BROOKFIELD GOULD** and on the 26th April 1911, my mother **MARGARET EVELYN GOULD** was born. Passenger lists show that **Mrs. E.E. Gould** and her 2 children came back to the UK in 1912 and returned to Malaya a while later. The next 10 years appear to have been uneventful until sadly, on 3rd March 1923 the head of the household died leaving Mrs. Gould with her 2 children to determine a future for themselves – an ex-patriot British family living in the colonies, gaining the respect of everyone. My mother's Manuel of Private Devotion called "Before the Throne" records that she was confirmed at Christ Church Malacca on 7th June 1923, aged 12, by Reverend Norman Bower the Colonial Chaplain. Mrs. Gould taught the pianoforte to local children.

However, for whatever reason, at the age of 12, my mother (Margaret Evelyn) was sent back to Europe for her schooling at Sheffield High School and then attended Thildonck Convent in Belgium for her finishing school. It would appear that her Aunt Dora (Johnston) and Uncle Jack (CARRICK) became her guardians; holiday photographs show her teenage holidays at various seaside locations including Filey and Sutton-on-Sea at play with her cousins Jimmy and Mary. Mother never returned to Malaya. Jimmy later qualified as a GP. After the death of his wife many years later, my mother and Jimmy resumed a very close friendship in their later years. I've yet to find out about John Brookfield ("Jack") Gould's education. It appears he stayed with his mother in Malacca to work on the Plantations.

As the Japanese Occupation and the possibility of war in the Far East increased, Mrs. Gould was evacuated on the **SS Aorangi** arriving in Fremantle, Australia on 23rd January 1942. (In discovering this particular piece of information from the MVG website, I find that Rosemary Fell slept underneath the grand piano in the ship's saloon - and perhaps my grandmother "tinkled the ivories" of that same piano to maintain morale!)

At some stage my grandmother arrived back in England to live with her sister Evelyn Mary Seymour Johnston in Wiltshire. Her death is recorded at Marlborough on 11th December 1945. Whether or not she reunited with my mother during the war years isn't recorded – my mother by this time had fully qualified at Sheffield and nursed during the war at Queen Mary's Hospital and worked at Carshalton in Surrey.

Meanwhile **John Brookfield Gould** was conscripted to the Johore Volunteer Engineers (Sapper 681).

Unfortunately his active service didn't last long, for in February 1942 he was captured by the Japanese in Singapore and spent time as a POW in Changi, then Siam (Thailand) and finally in the Ube POW Camp in Japan. There are two pieces of information that lead to the final mystery that I would love to resolve.

John Brookfield Gould wasn't married when he enlisted. When he was captured he recorded his mother at her evacuation address in Australia as his Next of Kin. When released in December 1945, his Release Report shows a Home Address in Wiltshire where his mother and aunt were living. Possibly as a result of the captivity in the hands of the Japanese, John Brookfield Gould died in Malacca on 15th August 1948. His gravestone has the inscription "beloved Husband of Margery" – quite how she came on the scene or when or where they married remains a mystery. I met Margery at my mother's home in London in around 1957 and hadn't realized until recently her significance to the family story. My mother's old address book indicates that Margery lived in Newcastle-on-Tyne – I have been unable to trace her.

So why did I never sit down with my mother to find out more about her intriguing background? What is even more annoying is the fact that my own service in the Royal Air Force sent me to Malaysia from November 1968 to October 1971 and still I received no information about my mother's childhood in Malacca. When out in Butterworth and Penang, our Parish Priest was Father Louis Ashness whose brother was the Catholic Priest in Malacca. On a trip down country in 1971, we visited Malacca and the local people recounted their knowledge of "lawyer Gould" and the "Piano Teacher".

This story is far from complete. I wonder whether there is anyone who can fill in some of the gaps – if so, I'd love to hear from them.

THE EXPERIENCES OF AN EVACUEE CHILD IN SOUTH AFRICA.

By Audrey Holmes McCormick.

I have written these notes, based on finding my 1944 diary. This diary contains the invasion date, announced on the news in South Africa, where I was at the time with my mother, and like others, with no news of my father. It was, I now think, probably a terrible mistake to return to the UK, from being, at that time, settled in Cape Town. Nonetheless, it was probably good for other close relatives, and my father's parents back in the UK, too. But to leave that school in Cape Town, was a very great pity. Based on that 1944 diary, with perhaps some echoes for others, I started this recollection:

I found my earliest diary today - for 1944, kept when I lived in Cape Town as a refugee from Singapore, where I had started at senior school, St. Cyprians, close under the Table Mountain. (It is a wonder I had time for school, the amount of riding I seemed to be doing then, when 10/- notes sent weekly by my Aunt Barbara in Johannesburg, paid for my riding...weekends, holidays, early evenings.) But I was also enjoying this particular school - which frequently figured in the daily write-up, as: "school - nice!" and was the first time in my life such remarks had begun to appear. I doubt if any school was ever so lauded again.... I had my own tennis racquet: I played hockey: swam much: doted on laboratory work: rode many times a week - on beaches around Table Mountain, in the woods of Devil's Peak with scented pine trees, or along the cliff paths east above the beaches, learning about freedom, out of reach of "don't" and "be careful!"

The diary started at Hill Street, in Cape Town, where mother ran the house for an elderly widower, whom I only recall seeing once ... she had met him through the doctor whose patient I had been when ill in hospital at Groot Schur ... the Cape Town hospital. (I have no idea how it was paid for, but essential at the time as I had jaundice seriously.)

A forgotten name started the diary ... a Captain Brockwell. Seemingly he sometimes came for lunch along with Capts. Percy Bruce, and/or Frank Caithness of "The Kuala", who had been a friend of my father. At that time these surviving Straits Steamship captains (although Brockwell was not), were working in South Africa for the Royal Navy. I knew nothing of the horrific evacuation and sinkings of refugee ships from Singapore, then. And I don't recall Caithness or Bruce speaking, in my hearing, of them. It was Captain Brockwell who met us in Cape Town, and showed us a glimpse of the sights - through the rain - taking us for a ride in the city's one remaining handsome cab with a waterproof cover glistening in the wet as the horses clopped along. It was, I think, a treat organized for me ... hardly for the grown-ups, but I have always remembered it.

Another name was "The Empire Club", where we went to meet others from the Far East, in Adderley Street or nearby, I believe ... just a couple of simple rooms, upstairs, with a Red Cross listing available as POW names came through. One could get a light lunch perhaps, and I remember their fruit salad.

In the diary, meantime, I was having a bad time at the dentist who was trying to save my abscessed front tooth ... no injections then of course, and no antibiotics ... so I didn't rate those regular visitations highly at all ... and how they were paid for, I have no idea. But with the amount of horse riding I was also recording then, I wonder there was time for anything else. Fortunately for me, riding was being funded by my aunt and any monetary presents I was given - and even my kind South African fellow riders would sometimes pay for extra time for me.

However, what then did happen in the diary shortly after that entry, was a note with many exclamation marks, that appears on Monday 14th February 1944 (I am 12 years old then, moving on towards 13). I have simply written: "News of daddy at long last!" (The diary space was barely a half inch per day ... so I don't detail what I have heard ... this was enough). But it did not last. A few days later another line says: "News of daddy not authentic. Mum says it came through too many people". So me is brought back to earth. It doesn't record her emotions at this time, but now, one can guess. A few more days later comes this strange remark: "Mother opens 'the trunk' again, and goes through its contents of 'silver and linen'".

I remember that trunk. It had travelled with us from Perth, Australia, where I remember she first received it *after* Singapore had fallen, amazingly reaching us at the boarding house there, having been sent by my father - and actually getting to us!! I know we had sat and looked at it on the floor of our small bedroom, as an apparition: a time bomb from the past. It was opened almost in slow motion, so carefully: and so carefully packed. Singapore had fallen. My father was missing. What was this doing here? All she wanted was her husband back: but the trunk and its contents sat there - not even battered. Of course she burst into tears. Mum said she would have given anything to have my dad back, not this impeccable, un-dented trunk here instead. Later I realized it had come due to his knowledge of what was about to happen; something he could retrieve for her, with luck: a touch of their past. But not himself.

After this rumour was scotched, that dad might still be alive, my diary returns to the daily round: "...toothache as bad as ever...." was a regular for months, listing my almost weekly appointments to have the abscess drained. "It might be saved - in Scotland", mum said. School actually continued almost daily being "nice", a high accolade from me for any school, ever ... (Such a contrast to the truly awful one I had first started in Cape Town, where naughty pupils were caught by the ear, and which had the oddest, skinny spinster teacher - a little old woman with dyed black hair, who delighted in telling us that in her native Italy, black haired young men would peer through the keyhole of her bedroom at her. Had she removed the key?)

Mother's youngest companions, both UK Wrens, were nice friends for me too. The diary also records mother is particularly friendly with "Aunty Peg" ... another evacuee ... I can see her face, but her surname ... Peg ... who? ... Oh yes ... Peg Paramor(e): an extrovert woman my mother remained friendly with for years after - until Peg's death in the UK.

However, just a few days after the high hopes of news of dad's survival are dashed, I get "Mickey". Mickey was a dog of highly original ancestry: white with a black patch or two, and a lead. He seemed thereafter to get frequent baths, the diary records, plus sessions of flea powdering (done on a concrete path, with a hammer in hand to kill the fleas when they dropped onto the concrete.) I am very quickly extremely fond of him ... and he adores me, and doesn't scamper off when I hammer his fleas beside his toes.

When Frank Caithness returns to our area of Cape Town again on 12th March, I wonder where he had been ... interesting ... but Straits Steamship captains were working for the Royal Navy, based at the local Naval harbour. He brought me a bathing cap (how odd!!) and a camera, so mother took a photograph of us both together, which I still have. School also continued "nice, playing rounders, moving up a class," (although Miss Kollers was "bad-tempered") Aunt Barbara's postal orders for riding continued to come ... I doubt if I thanked her properly ... but I haven't forgotten.

Oddly (as it seems to me now) I really was extremely bad at spelling then, as the diary illustrates. Perhaps going to the library for books eventually helped along with that pretty wonderful St. Cyprians School in Cape Town. I assume the fees were paid for by my mother, I do not know, but she also took on a part-time office job as well as being a housekeeper. She did have her own maid servant in the house - a Cape Coloured of past Malay origin whom we both liked very much. But change comes: for on Tuesday 6th June 1944, the first diary line is: "Invasion Started!!!! Listened to the News at school! ..." Somebody(?) made a speech at 9 p.m. It was also Aunt Barbara's birthday.

Another note announced that Rome had been liberated on the 5th ... and now we are taking note of daily news reports. By Monday 4th September, Mum had met me from school (I normally walked back to the house.) A Mrs. Iris Bolton and her dachshund come to supper ... "We want Mum to go home", I record ... but why, I wonder now, was Mrs. Bolton involved in the decision-making? Who was she? Goodness knows - but I recollect a thin, energetic woman, but don't recall the dachshund further ...

And then it comes about - on Tuesday 5th September, the entry is - we are "going to Scotland!!" I remember my mother asking me, what I would like to do - stay or go. I was then (unknown to us) running a temperature. It was hot, sunny, glaring sunshine outside - I remember being very hot, and hating the dazzle, as my mother asked me what I thought we should do - asking *me* - should she go, or should she not ... Well what did I know? "Home", I distinctly remember saying, because I was so hot and ill.

It was absolutely typical of my mother's experience of taking her daughter travelling around the world on ships, that the very next day's entry might be thought to make a difference, only we were rather used to it: "Got chicken pox ..."
(Previous experience on ships had been whooping cough, with my head buried under a pillow when I whooped - although the doctor had been told after the ship had sailed - also measles, both mild, fortunately. When we arrived in Johannesburg to see my mother's sister, it was promptly "scarlet fever" ... and wet sheets were hung over the exterior of our boarding-house bedroom door until I was better.)

However, the diary now continues: "Doctor says can still go." (Really?) "Got to stay in bed but Margaret Hollyer and June Lloyd come to see me" Meantime the weather is "fine"...

So the die was cast: I didn't feel well: I wanted out and about again. "Let's go!" was the result. (Of course, mother was probably exhausted, and we were both silly Tho' only she knew the financial burden she was then bearing ...)

Two days later, by the 7th September, I am recording the spots have come out "a bit better" ... (better???) ... "only slightly. I'm itchy". The doctor declares on the 9th, that I can get up "tomorrow" ... We get airgraphs from Peg (Paramore). I gather she has gone and arrived "at home" ahead of us. I clearly don't know if this is "good" or "bad" however. Meantime the footnote still is: "No news of dad". Mother is saying the news of him might go to the UK first. Aunt Barbara, mother's sister, arrived with us again from Jo'burg on Wednesday, 13th September, to bid farewell. My little dog Mickey was given a bus conductor meantime, for his new owner. I don't know who got our lovely, truly affectionate and talking budgie. When I came back from hospital, he had leapt about demented in his cage I'd never seen a small bird evince pleasure, yet so it seemed.

On Monday, 18th September, we boarded the "Andes", so quickly was all arranged - with "Joan (a nice young woman - was she a WREN??), Mrs. Hunt and Mrs. Gammon in our cabin, and Airforce chaps taking our cases on board". On Tuesday, Durban people came on board ... and "Mrs. B. slightly drunk..."

My mother's birthday was Wednesday, 20th September. We moved to "outside dock" in the morning: I was immediately sea sick in the harbour. We had two boat drills, and were handed 'siren suits' and a lifejacket light ... while I managed (as usual) to be seasick on that day too, still in harbour. Then, "We ran into a fog ... discovered a King's School Mistress". (This being Dorothy Squires - King's School Singapore Art and PT mistress). "Not supposed to keep a Diary. Boat drill every morning", I record regardless of state secrets. Records were played over the ship's wireless; and - wonderful - there is a library! (Also gun practice and shuffleboard...)

I record that I was sorry to say goodbye to South Africa, and our friends of whom (I now belatedly realise) I had many - far more than I would ever have again at one time, and at that age, had I but known it ... that great loss was yet to be discovered. When back in Scotland, I duly became someone rather different from everyone else, or so everyone else seemed to think. I personally had no idea why, but now I can guess. I certainly never again had a school laboratory to start working in.

By 27th September we are in Freetown. There is deck tennis ... the RN sailors on board sing at night on deck, to a mouth-organ. They are not allowed to smoke on deck because of glowing cigarette ends. I sit in a dark corner, listening, neither with them, nor of them, but somehow heart stirring. They are exotic young men - to me - never met as such before. I watch their amazing camaraderie.

On 6th October "anchored near Mersey in the night - entered it at 2 p.m. and anchored (or - docked rather -) at Liverpool. Weather is cold..." And then, all that would come, was quite irreversible, as too the mentions of mists, rain and snow.

We learn on 7th October, mother and I, somehow, that my brother Robert in RAF Bomber Command's Pathfinders, has been awarded a DFC. Meantime we - the "children" - have gas masks given us, with drill in their very strange use ... this was pretty alarming. But adults don't get any...

On that Saturday, 7th October, we left the ship at 7.30 a.m. The weather was "dull". We went through Customs, and simply, somehow, "went to Largs" ... in Ayrshire, by train I think, to stay briefly with my grandparents (my father's own people) before being offered a home in the seaside town, in the form of a private flat to rent. I am quite blank, as to how I met gran and grandpa again, as everything was so acutely strange, and grey, and stony - the houses, the pebbled paths, high box hedges, and rain. And at Glasgow station, I recall a Clydesdale horse, whose cart was loaded with passenger luggage, pulling it all between railway stations as one walked nearby. There was smooth paving between the cobblestones, for wheels to run on. The horse recognized the traffic lights.

On Monday, 9th October, I noted that the King of Norway visited Largs ... it was then used by flying boats, and had had, long ago, Viking connections with Norway - no idea which party prevailed at that time! On the 10th, the enormity of being with my father's parents, but without him, is striking home. Mother was depressed. She must have hugely missed the camaraderie the wives from the East had developed as they waited together for news of their men. The weather drooped too. I write "Wish dad was here" ... The next day, 11th October 1944 is Dad's birthday. We had made the wrong decision, it seemed possible. Even the date was concurring. Mother's heart must have been breaking: so many times of waiting, in having had a Far Eastern home, and worst of all, now. "The weather is mostly wet" I continue to record.

On 14th we are taking Mrs. Bone's offered flat in Largs. I note, "Wish I was a man to join up Grandad gave me a 1d. black stamp..." Meantime, we don't know too much about rationing.

On 21st October 1944, I have entered "Invaded Malaya"....

Meantime, the travelling greengrocer in Largs has offered me the use of his cart-pony, Donald, with a saddle what's more. The local lads tend to yell, "Ride 'im cowboy". Donald's pace is not adventurous except when returning home ... oddly, I did enjoy him, bless his owner, and I didn't think back to polo ponies. Did someone pay his owner?

On 24th October, my brother finally gets to see us, wearing his ribbons, and can stay three days ... He is nine whole years older than I am ... I hardly know him, a stranger, but I remember him tipping me out of my pram, absolutely clearly ... in the past. But one is shy, even though he did his RAF training in South Africa, and we had gone to stay nearby in a karroo dorp (Queenstown, to me) for the few months he and his fellow cadets were there I didn't set foot in any school at that time in Queenstown, but caught that jaundice instead with fevers and nightmares, undiagnosed until we got to Cape Town. He spent his older schooldays in boarding school in Scotland, near Dumbarton, while I was born in Singapore. And he hated it. He ran away at least twice. He wrote a pencilled note which reached my mother in Singapore - it said only that he was on the train, running away from school. He was found at a night watchman's fire, eating a sausage. But he did it another time too ... But it is strange ... now back in Scotland, I seem to quarrel with my mother quite a lot. I also loathe my local village school at Largs, in one large room, with two elderly sisters who smack their younger pupils for wrong answers ... children are afraid of them. I seethe, and glare, and they look at me sometimes. I think that if one of them tries to hit me, I shall hit her back, but wonder if politeness will permit me to? Perhaps this is visible. **I walk out of it one day. I** notice that one boy, who is often hit in the classroom, turns into a bully himself when he is outdoors.

My mother's life suddenly faces a reality which is bleak, unless my father turns up alive. **But he does not - ever. And** there is no word of him even, to still her wondering. How does she not crack up? She visits her brother and his wife at times, or Far Eastern friends, but they seem to stay mostly well south - I can see they cling together. But she never did learn what happened to dad ... whereas, long, long in the future, I did.

I learned that he died of bomb blast on a raid on the docks when, with a group of Straits Trading seniors (like himself), who had been rendering the tin smelter on Pulau Branni (off Singapore) unusable - as ordered - before heading urgently - as instructed - for evacuation. He was buried in a mass grave in Singapore, but my mother never learned that, and had to have him legally declared dead. She had an assumed death for him entered in Westminster Abbey, in the roll of civilian dead whose roll calls are kept there and are still by the entrance, one of the volumes picked out for its turn in a glass frame. I was able, a long time ahead, to correct it for her.

In Scotland, mother eventually gets me into a "good" private school (so far as the war permitted good teachers to be available - but we were lucky. I had an excellent English/History teacher from the Scottish west coast, and an interesting French/German language teacher, both concerned with their pupils). I was government-funded as it could be proven I was in private education when war broke out ... thus my exam results went to a government department (and bless them, those civil servants wrote and congratulated me when I got the Cambridge School Certificate with Matriculation - and even replied kindly once when I enquired - how did one get to become Prime Minister? They felt I should wait a little ...)

Until that assumption of death, my mother became housekeeper in an area where Far East friends had also settled. Eventually she receives access to my father's estate some longish time after the end of the war. She went to court to have Bob, her husband, declared dead so that his will could be exercised (prior to which, the family lawyer had arranged a loan for her ... at, of course, an interest rate.)

And then, a little time after that, she re-married. He was a widower, a son of the manse: a tweed knicker-bocker clad, tall and lean Scottish gentleman ... an angler who had been gassed when in World War 1 in the 8th Argylls. And, thereby,

sometimes, he endured hallucinations - the Germans were attacking again with their gas, to which purpose he kept a fierce Gurkha kukri hidden under the bath to protect us. My mother only learned about the kukri some time later. He would ring the police to come and help him catch the enemy, who were hidden in the mist in the garden at night. His cat, Puddles, sat on his shoulder every mealtime, and he would use his paw, sometimes, to share a forkful, so gentle was David at other times. But I could not - later - drive over a bridge, without his demand to get out and see what trout were around ... and mother sometimes hid his worn old "comfortable" tweeds, until he was obliged to accept the new pair on offer. They were fond of each other, certainly - how different it all now was. And the Captains would sometimes gang together, and come up to visit. I wish they were here still.

I do not believe I ever thanked my mother adequately in word or deed for all the love, care, concern - and hard work - she gave me in lieu of the father I had certainly most doted on, until, perhaps it was too late. Once, after I, too, had grown up, I took her for a ride on the back of my motorbike, and was amazed how much she enjoyed it. Alas, I gave her too little time in my particularly hectic life.

I know my father would have admired her spunk, always, and she was of the character who would not "be beat" - as she would sometimes say firmly. Neither was she until the end. I would so like to hug and hug her now.

Footnote by J.M.

Captain Harold William Brockwell was master of the "Aelybryn", severely damaged in the Norwegian Campaign then sunk in May 1942 by U-160 east-northeast of Durban. After questioning by the Germans the surviving crew members including Brockwell were picked up by the Portuguese steam passenger ship "Lourenco Marques" and landed at Cape Town.

OBITUARIES.

It is with great sadness that we announce the deaths of MVG member **Thyra Godber** and two Malayan Veteran Volunteers, and we offer our sincere sympathies to their families. We also would like to record our condolences to the families of those with Far East and wartime connections.

THYRA MUNRO GODBER (nee Landon). **1917 – 2010**

Born in Batu Gajah, Malaya, like most Colonial children, Thyra spent her early childhood in the Far East. Her father, **James Landon**, was Manager of **Cluny Rubber Estate** on the Slim River, near Tanjong Malim. Educated at St. George's School, Harpenden, Thyra went on to finishing school in Lausanne before returning to Malaya in 1937.

Thyra married **John Godber** in Kuala Lumpur in 1939. In 1941, on leave in Australia, the couple went hiking and camping in Tasmania. When they emerged from the bush, they learned of the Japanese invasion at Kota Bahru. Leaving Thyra and baby **Jen** in Fremantle, John immediately sailed on the "**Gorgon**" to join his FMSVF Armoured Car Company in Singapore. Ten days after he arrived, the British surrendered to the Japanese. Like so many other wives, Thyra would spend the next 3 ½ years raising her child alone, never knowing where her husband was, or if he was even alive. In fact he was: John worked on the Burma/Siam railway, while Thyra's father was interned in Changi for the duration. No one knew the fate of her mother **Penelope Landon** - nor would they until the war's end.

Money was tight. After a brief stint as a typist in Sydney, Thyra eventually rented a tiny overseer's hut on a sheep station outside Sydney. Here she and Jen gathered wood to fire up the cone heater that provided hot water for the bath; she did her laundry in a copper at the big house, learned to cook, and to milk cows, stooked the corn and grew her own vegetables. Subduing her fear of large animals, she would catch and harness the horse to the sulkie for shopping trips into town; and during annual **sheepshearing**, she would help cook the shearers' enormous evening meals. Despite her loneliness and her fears for John, she always maintained that this period was a time of contentment and peace. During the last year of the war, she took a job as housekeeper at an Anglican Convent orphanage, so that Jen could learn to associate with children of her own age.

Finally, with the European war coming to an end, Thyra and Jen returned to England, on the "**Mauretania**" via New Zealand and Bermuda. As they lay at anchor in the turquoise waters off Bermuda, radio news of VE Day arrived. A few hours out of Bermuda, the "**Mauretania**" joined a long line of ships in an escorted convoy for the last long lap to England.

Many weeks later after the Far East was ended, Thyra and her sister, **June Wingate**, learned that their mother had been killed during the bombing of **MV Tanjong Penang**, which had rescued survivors of the ill-fated **MV Kuala** from Pom Pong Island. Their brother **Jack** had lost his life in his first RAF mission over Germany. Their father died in 1947, less than two years after his release from Changi Gaol - Thyra believed that he had never really regained his appetite for life after Penelope's death.

In April 1946, John and Thyra returned to a war-ravaged Malaya, where John resumed his rubber planting career at **Somme Estate, Kulim** - a remote area in the northernmost Malayan state of Kedah. All motor vehicles having been destroyed as the Japanese surged down the peninsula, the two travelled about on motorbikes - John carrying Jen on the petrol tank in front of him, Thyra on a smaller army dispatch bike, her pigtailed flying out behind her. Not long after their return, the Emergency broke out and the country was once more mired in conflict. At one point, women and children were evacuated to Penang Hill. After a few more years in Malaya, John and Thyra wound up in Singapore, where they lived with their three children, Jen, Tim and Pen, until John retired in 1956. John died in 1990.

In November 2002, Thyra and Jen, June and her son David, travelled to Kanchanaburi in Thailand, where they joined a tour group whose common goal was to see the country in which husbands, fathers and friends had suffered during one of the most

notorious episodes of WW2. Despite her advanced years, Thyra would balance on the viaducts, scramble through cuttings, tramp the jungle, tour the cemeteries and visit the site of some of the camps, once quagmires swarming with flies, now tranquil river-side clearings.

During her last decade, Thyra embarked on tall ship, *HMS Tenacious* – one of two ships in the world designed and built to enable people of all physical abilities to sail side-by-side as equals. Sailing the Caribbean – an accomplished yachtswoman from way back – she steered the ship, scrubbed the decks, took her turn in the galley, stood her regular watch, and made an assisted climb up the ratlines to the crow's nest. This voyage – although by no means her last hurrah – was perhaps an achievement that she recollected with the most pleasure and pride in her final years.

A founder member of the MVG, Thyra's support and encouragement for the Group never wavered. She attended various events, including the 60th Anniversary of V-J Day. In Spring 2007, Thyra and June sponsored a Chinese birch tree (*Betula albosinensis*) in the MVG Memorial Garden at the National Memorial Arboretum to remember **James Munro Landon** and **Penelope Minna Landon**.

Thyra: Gallant, intrepid, indomitable and irreplaceable. How we will miss her!

[Editor: I would like to extend my own personal heartfelt sympathy to Thyra's family. I had the great pleasure of driving Thyra to and from the NMA on a couple of occasions – she even stood in as my mother once, with enormous aplomb, to enable us to park in the NMA car park! We always had a great chat and laugh, and thoroughly enjoyed the journeys.]

HUNTER RALSTON CRAWFORD OBE.

We send our sincere condolences to Hunter Crawford's family. The announcement of his death was published in the Times on 4th February 2010. As a member of the Johore Volunteers, Hunter was a friend of the late John Hedley.

He was Assistant Planter on Juru Estates Ltd. Province Wellesley, but joined the JVE as Sapper 1271 and is recorded as 2nd Lt. on 27.1.42. He was a POW in Padang, Sumatra. Postwar he had a long career in planting – Manager, Batu Lintang Estate; Managing Director Plantations Agencies, Penang; President, Malayan Planter Association.

He was made a Freeman of the City of London and also worked in Edinburgh and Sussex. He died on 28th January 2010 aged 88, leaving his widow, Anne, two children and six grandchildren, and a sister Gay.

OLIVER WILLIAM HARTLEY - 1919 – 2009.

We are sorry that we did not report Oliver's death in earlier newsletters, but the notice has only recently come to our attention. We send Christine Cavender and her family our sympathy for the loss of her uncle.

Oliver Hartley was born in Ipoh, the son of Melville Ralph Hartley, a planter and honorary game warden in Pahang. His family was deeply affected by the events of 1942: his father died in captivity, his mother and uncle were lost at sea, one brother was murdered after capture by the Japanese, two others survived captivity and his two youngest brothers survived the *Kuala* sinking. In 1941, Oliver was Assistant Planter, Lukut Estate, Port Dickson. He enlisted in the Volunteers in 1938 and in 1942 was Pte. 13935 in 1/SSVF. A POW in Singapore then to Thailand in September 1942. He returned to planting post war, then retired to Western Australia and wrote his memoirs "*Rimba Raya – Deep Virgin Jungle.*" Oliver died on 7th September 2009 aged 88 in Perth WA, predeceased by his wife, Daisy.

THE DOWAGER DUCHESS of St. Albans.

Susanne St. Albans who died on 12th February 2010 aged 88, had a colourful background to rival that of her husband the 13th Duke, who was descended from Charles 11 and Nell Gwyn.

A British national of French descent, she was born Suzanne Marie Adele Fesq in Kuala Lumpur on 4th May 1921, and by her own account was fortunate to survive childhood in which she was exposed to numerous hazards. One such hazard involved her *Amah* who calmed her with chloroform, alarming even her neglectful eccentric and extrovert mother and shy and introverted father. Both sides of the family, although French speaking, considered themselves to be part of the British Empire. On her mother's side, her great grandfather was a pioneer rubber planter in Malaya, and although the family settled back in France when Suzanne was 12 months old, they were to return to Malaya when her father resumed his management of the Assam Java Plantation at Selangor. Accompanied by her father's old Swiss Nanny, Marie, Suzanne and her younger siblings were to live a wild life in their sprawling estate bungalow which was riddled with termites and later collapsed – with forays into the jungle to collect exotic fauna, including scorpions, tarantulas, bird-eating spiders and foot-long poisonous centipedes. Returning to France once more, Suzanne was sent to boarding school in England, but at the outbreak of war in Europe, she was at the family's holiday home in France. Evacuated to England, Suzanne served in Psychological Warfare during the Second World War as a news writer in North Africa and Italy. Posted to Vienna in 1945 her CO was Col. Charles Beauclerk, whom she subsequently married, and who later became the 13th Duke of St. Albans.

PROFESSOR FRED BACHRACH.

Professor Bachrach died on the 18th December 2009, aged 95. He was a wartime prisoner of the Japanese and devoted his postwar life to encouraging cultural links between the Dutch and the English peoples.

Son of a French father and German mother, Alfred Gustave Herbert Bachrach went to Amsterdam University before taking up a post teaching English at Semarang in the Dutch East Indies. The day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour he was conscripted into the Royal Netherlands Colonial Army. His outnumbered Dutch army unit surrendered to the Japanese on the east coast of Java, and thus began his nightmare. He was regularly starved and beaten for more than three years, but kept himself going with the aid of a "holy book" – not a religious work, as his guards believed, but a volume of Shakespeare's plays which he would discuss with fellow prisoners. Such meetings were, of course, forbidden, but he used to wear a pair of

creased trousers, carefully pressed as such under his sleeping mat, to signal these sessions.

Hideously tortured when a radio he had built was discovered, including time in "the oven" – a 10ft square baking hot, dark corrugated iron hut – with 3 others, Bachrach nearly went mad, but was saved by one of the men scratching the sign of the cross on his hand with a fingernail.

After the war he pursued an academic career, teaching English, writing in Dutch, and promoting Anglo-Dutch relations. He put on Exhibitions which reflected his passion for closer ties between Holland and England – his last major exhibition being "Turner's Holland" at the Tate. He finally came to terms with his experience of captivity after reading Eric Lomax's book "The Railway Man". He met Lomax at the Café Royal in London.

Bachrach was married 3 times, and was living in Twickenham at the time of his death. He was appointed an honorary CBE in 1970 and a knight of the Order of the Netherlands Lion in 1980.

Also reported is the death of **Maurice Kinmouth** on 30th December 2009 aged 92. He became one of Britain's most eminent plastic surgeons after spending 3 ½ years as a POW of the Japanese.

In 1941 he joined the RAF as a qualified surgeon, and was sent to Singapore with his squadron. Withdrawing first to Sumatra and then to Java, he elected (with all the other medical officers) to stay with his patients. He worked at the POW hospital at Tjimahi under "Weary" Dunlop, and later at the POW Camp, where there were more than 1,000 Australian and British prisoners including Laurens van der Post. He was mentioned in dispatches for his work in the POW camps.

Captain Val Bailey died on 13th January 2010, aged 90. He was the last man to leave the sinking **Ark Royal** and was an unsung hero of a turning point in the war against Japan.

Attached to 273 Squadron RAF in China Bay, Ceylon, Bailey was scrambled when a "large number of Japs" were reported off the coast of Ceylon. Flying a [Fairey] Fulmar stripped of all unnecessary gear (no parachute was available anyway), he climbed as he headed out over the sea, and came across the "**Hermes**" which was under attack from Japanese Zeros, Navy 96s, and 70 torpedo bombers, and she was sinking. Bailey managed to destroy a couple of 96s, and although the British lost 48 aircraft in the air, and many more on the ground in Ceylon, Admiral Nagumo was alerted to the risks of venturing further into the Indian Ocean, and this raid marked the limits of Japanese expansion westwards.

BOOKS.

"IN ORIENTE PRIMUS. A History of the Volunteer Forces in Malaya and Singapore". By Jonathan Moffatt and Paul Riches. ISBN 978-0-9536470-5-7. Price: £25 + £6 P & P to Mainland UK. Airmail at cost. **SEE OVER PAGE FOR MORE DETAILS.**

Here, at last, is a long overdue publication about the Volunteer Forces of Malaya and Singapore. It sets out clearly and concisely the origins of the Volunteer Movement, leading to the enrolment of both European and local races during WW1. The 1930s saw a grand reorganization and gradual build up of these forces, as war clouds gathered in Europe. This was based on the complex colonial administrative areas in the Malay peninsula, which differed from the Crown Colony of the Straits Settlements. The political differences between the Federated and Unfederated States within the peninsula meant that each state raised its own Volunteer Force – mainly for defensive purposes. However, shortly before Japan invaded northern Malaya, the Volunteer forces of all races were mobilized to fight alongside the allied forces during the Malayan Campaign in WW2. The section on the Volunteers in captivity is certainly very important in explaining the role they played in the camps, often at great personal danger. This has been largely overlooked in other literature. On the Thailand-Burma Railway, in particular, current research indicates that the Volunteers were very much involved with liaising with local Thai traders – known as the "V" scheme – to obtain food and medicines for the camps. Evidence also points to the fact that the Japanese Engineers used the **Volunteers to deal with specific problems on the railway, due to their tropical knowledge, proven organizational skills and familiarity with the local population, their languages and dialects.**

This book sets out to present the Malayan Volunteers as a Force which achieved much during the Malayan Campaign and in captivity, as its medal role demonstrates, but which has not been given the credit or acclaim due to it for its contribution to the allied cause.

There is also a detailed section on medals and medal rolls for those who are collectors and interested in this topic.

Despite the fact that some historians may query why Appendix A contains the biographical details of only European and Eurasian Volunteers, nevertheless this book provides a wealth of detailed information for anyone wishing to research the Malayan Volunteers.

The answer to an often raised question "And who are the Malayan Volunteers?" must surely be, "Read '**In Oriente Primus**' and find out". **R.F.**

New MVG member, **Romen Bose**, is an award-winning journalist, war historian and author of Malayan Campaign books. Currently he has written 5 books on the subject – these are:

- 1). Fortress Singapore: The Battlefield Guide. (1992)
- 2). A Will for Freedom: Netaji and the Indian Independence Movement in Singapore and Southeast Asia 1942-45. (1993)
- 3). The End of the War: Singapore's Liberation and the Aftermath of the Second World War. (2005)
- 4). Secrets of the Battlebox. (2005)
- 5). Kranji: The Commonwealth War Cemetery and the Politics of the Dead. (2006)

PRESS RELEASE

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In Oriente Primus



A History of the Volunteer Forces in Malaya & Singapore
By
Jonathan Moffatt & Paul Riches

“In Oriente Primus”, Latin for “First in the East,” was the motto adopted by some of the Volunteer units in Singapore. Military volunteering was a concept not wholly restricted to the mother country. It was actively encouraged in the Far East by the establishment and the many colonial employers situated in Malaya & Singapore. Whilst primarily a defensive force the Volunteers acted as a social network for many of its members employed as rubber planters and tin miners in the remote countryside. Volunteers from Malaya and Singapore actively served in both the First and Second World Wars, suffered with the other Allied forces in Japanese prisoner of war camps in the Far East and gained honour and accolades for their service.

This is a history of the Volunteers from their 19th century inception to 1945. It includes a comprehensive biographical roll of European World War 2 Volunteers and a roll of awards of the Efficiency Decoration & Medal, The Colonial Auxiliary Forces Decoration & Long Service Medal, Orders & Decorations, Mention in Despatches (WW1 & WW2), Jubilee & Coronation medals, supplemented by previously unpublished period photographs.

Specification: 496 pages, Case bound, 250 x 198 cm, sewn, printed paper cover.

Price £25.00 + £6.00 Post & Packing to Mainland UK
Airmail at cost.

Jonathan Moffatt, 49 Coombe Drive, Binley Woods, Coventry, CV3 2QU
Email: JonathanMoffatt@aol.com Mobile: 07719 979 275

"PRISONER'S BASE AND HOME AGAIN". By James Benson. Published by Robert Hale Ltd. 1957

The story of missionary James Benson of Gona Village, Papua, who became a POW in Papua New Guinea and Port Moresby. Here the POWs were not treated as harshly as on the Burma Railway, but his story also details the ill-treatment of the Japanese soldiers by their own superior officers – a side which is barely heard of. He is a fine writer, detailing his experiences which, as well as being self-effacing, were clearly those of a remarkable and courageous man. His information about the martyred women missionaries of Gona who were caught trying to escape, is in the Australian War Memorial at Canberra, along with his book. But for an illness preventing him escaping with the women, Benson himself would also have been killed – since escape was a crime punishable by death, in the eyes of the Japanese. He also describes the appalling conditions under which the Japanese shipped their own soldiers – including Benson himself as their prisoner – shut below decks in suffocating darkness, not dissimilar to the way in which our own POWs were transported to Japan. His larger achievement came later when he quietly arranged the removal of his entire POW camp to a safer site beyond Port Moresby, hidden from Allied bombers which were bombing the camp unaware that it contained POWs. It is a book which shows a different "face" of the Japanese, and of their inhumanity to each other, contrasting so strongly with Benson's own humanity and his remarkable survival of life and faith throughout, and the visible effect this had at times on his enemy.

Audrey Holmes McCormick – April 2009.

"THAT'S HOW IT GOES". By F.A.C. 'Jack' Oehlers. Autobiography of a Singapore Eurasian. ISBN 9789814022392

Available at Amazon.com

This book by a member of one of Singapore's leading Eurasian families, describes his wartime and subsequent experiences. A dental student at the time of the Japanese Occupation, he was sent, with the family piano, to the notorious Bahau Settlement where he formed a 4 piece jazz band.

"THE HOUSE AT AMPASJET". By Paula Kogel. Price £9.99 Available from publishers' online bookshop:

<http://www.troubador.co.uk/shop.asp>

The experiences of 30 year old Paula, interned with her two children at Tjideng, Batavia, described as the most atrocious of women's camps.

"STORY IN FOUR CENTURIES". By Sylvia Webber. Details at: www.authorsonline.co.uk Sylvia writes, 'Only one eighth of the book is about my family's life in Malaya, where my father served with the Johore Volunteer Engineers.'

Congratulation to MVG member **Anton Rippon** on his latest, highly readable book: "**Gunther Pluschow: Airman, Escaper, Explorer**". Pen & Sword Books Ltd. ISBN 1848841 32-9 Cover Price £19.99

Pluschow was a daring Imperial German Navy pilot sent to Tsingtao China Station in 1914. Later captured, he was the only German POW to successfully escape from the UK. After the war he set out for South America and made exploratory flights in Patagonia where in 1931 he lost his life.

There is much of historical interest in this book especially, if like me, you just thought Tsingtao was a Chinese beer! The shortlived history of this German colony is particularly interesting as are the details of aircraft such as the Rumpier Taube. Pluschow's escape from captivity is also reconstructed in detail. **J.M.**

New member **Ian Richardson** writes about a book called, "**Cover my Defenceless Head**" written by **Daphne Davidson**, whose daughter, **Jennifer**, was born in Changi on 1/7/42 and whose husband was **James Davidson** (Signals Unit 1/SSVF). This book relates to her early days in Changi – not to the horrible things which time has mercifully drawn a veil over – but to some things which are contrary to what is generally believed of conditions there.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SUNDAY - 9TH MAY 2010

Annual Service of Remembrance at the FEPOW Church of Our Lady and St, Thomas of Canterbury. For details write to:- The FEPOW Secretary, 1, Norwich Road, Wymondham, Norfolk NR18 0QE. You will need to book, if attending.

SUNDAY – 15TH AUGUST 2010 – V-J DAY SERVICE AT THE NMA.

Details of the Service and for the day are given on Page 2. Please let Rosemary know if you wish to attend this event – **if you have not already done so**. If you have any queries, please get in touch.

Lunch and tea have been booked, and the NMA need to know the numbers to cater for. We have booked POD 1 of the PAVILION MARQUEE for the afternoon, where the lunch and tea will be served.

The cost is £15 per person, which includes a £1 donation to the NMA as requested by them. Cheques should be made payable to: MRS. R. FELL MALAYAN VOLUNTEERS GROUP

and sent to:- Millbrook House, Axminster, Devon EX15 5EE by 1st July 2010.

Thank you to all those who have already said that they will attend this important date in MVG's calendar.

SATURDAY – 2ND OCTOBER 2010 – ANNUAL LUNCH and REUNION, RAF CLUB, PICCADILLY, LONDON.

Plans for the Lunch and Reunion are already taking shape. The Ballroom at the RAF Club will, once again, be the venue. Although it is still early days, nevertheless Hugh writes to say that he has only received 12 bookings to date. Please think about putting this date in your diaries now, and let Hugh know if you plan to attend this very popular event in one of London's most prestigious clubs. Guests are very welcome to attend with members, but we need to have some idea of numbers fairly soon. A provisional booking does not commit you to attending – but we do request confirmation by 1st September. Cancellation after that date should only be made under unavoidable circumstances, and your cheque will be returned. The menu for this year is steak, kidney and mushroom pie with seasonal vegetables, followed by sherry trifle, coffee and Petit Fours. For vegetarians – who should advise Hugh when booking – the chosen dish is Herb Polenta Cakes. The cost this year is **£27.50 p.p.** Drinks/wine can be bought at the bar in the Ballroom. If anyone is willing to give the after lunch talk – or knows someone who would come – please let Hugh know. We plan to run a raffle again, for MVG funds. The prizes were all donated by members, and we had an excellent selection. If you can bring something with you this time, it would be much appreciated. As last year, cheques should be sent to Rosemary BY 1st SEPTEMBER – and made payable to:-
Mrs. R. Fell, Malayan Volunteers Group – and sent to Millbrook House, Axminster, Devon EX13 5EE.

SATURDAY & SUNDAY – 9TH-10TH OCTOBER 2010 – 3RD RESEARCHING FEPOW HISTORY CONFERENCE at the NMA.

“Internees, Evacuees and FEPOW: Far East Captivity Explored.”

International Speakers: Rod Beattie of the TBRC on “The ‘V’ Scheme”
Tony Banham of the HK War Diary Website on “Hong Kong FEPOWs.”

Guest Lecturers: Dr. Geoff Gill on “Medical Aspects of Camp Life on the Thailand Burma Railway.”
Dr. Bernice Archer on “Men, Women and Child Internees.”
Dr. Rob Havers from Missouri on “Changi POW Camp, Singapore 1942 – 1945.”
Julie Summers, author, on “The Effect of Returning Men on Family Life” & “Evacuees.”

Special Guests: Roger Mansell – US Centre for Research on Allied POWs under the Japanese.
Mr. Jeyathurai A – Director of Changi Museum, Singapore.
Roderick Suddaby - Keeper of Department of Documents at the IWM.
A Speaker from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission – tba.

Cost: £100 per delegate – A FEW PLACES STILL LEFT, SO HURRY!

Registration: Log on to: www.researchingfepowhistory.org.uk

SUNDAY – 14TH NOVEMBER 2010 – REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY SERVICE AT THE CENOTAPH IN WHITEHALL.

Details will be given later in the year. We have a regular number of marchers, but you are very welcome to join us – and for lunch afterwards at the “All Bar One” wine bar on the South Bank. We all enjoy the occasion and the chance to meet.

MVG SUBSCRIPTIONS 2010 – 2011.

A VERY BIG THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO HAS SENT IN THEIR SUBSCRIPTION SO PROMPTLY.

Subscriptions are **NOW DUE for 2010 -2011**, and remain at **£15 PER HOUSEHOLD**. Please let Rosemary know if you do not wish to continue your membership. **Please don't forget – subscriptions should be made payable to:-**

Mrs. R. Fell – Malayan Volunteers Group, and sent to the address below.

Australian Members should send their subscriptions to **John Pollock MVG Australia** – unless you have already sent Rosemary a cheque in sterling. (For John's details see below). John will advise the cost in Australian Dollars.

Malaysian Members should send their subscriptions to **Andrew Hwang MVG Malaysia** – unless you have already sent Rosemary your payment in sterling. (For Andrew's details see below). Andrew will advise you the cost in Malaysian Ringgit. For our other overseas members, you may pay in your own currency provided it converts into £15 sterling. Small amounts do not incur bank charges here. If you are having difficulties due to high bank charges, please let me know – there may be a member with a UK bank account who can send a sterling cheque for you.

Receipts for subscriptions will not be sent unless requested. Donations will be acknowledged to the best of my ability!

N.B. Newsletters are posted on the website – accessed using the password “**kampar**” – and e-mailed to overseas members unless a printed copy is requested.

OVERSEAS CONTACTS.

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ANDREW HWANG – MVG MALAYSIA

28, Jalan Batu Laut, Taman Bukit Seputeh, 58000 Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA. E-mail: mvg.malaysia@gmail.com

U.K. CONTACTS.

JONATHAN MOFFATT. Historian and Archivist on British Malayan/Volunteer Forces/Argyll & Royal Marines.

49, Coombe Drive, Binley Woods, Coventry CV3 2QU. Tel: 02476 545013 E-mail: JonathanMoffatt@aol.com

HUGH CHAPLIN. For the London Lunch and Reunion. Tel: 01865 881664 Mobile: 07740 797124

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

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MALAYAN VOLUNTEERS GROUP NEW MEMBERS – January to April 2010

BOSE, Romen.

Unit 66-1, Seri Duta 1, Jalan Gallagher, Taman Duta, 50480 KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

Tel: +6012-208-3335 E-mail: romen@hotmail.com

War historian and author of Malayan Campaign books:

1. Fortress Singapore: The Battlefield Guide. (1992)
2. A Will for Freedom: Netaji and the Indian Movement in Singapore and Southeast Asia, 1942-1945. (1993)
3. The End of the War: Singapore's Liberation and the Aftermath of the Second World War (2005)
4. Secrets of the Battlebox (2005)
5. Kranji: The Commonwealth War Cemetery and the Politics of the Dead. (2006)

GODBER, Frances Merryn Candy. (nee BRETHERTON). Evacuated on the "Ulysses"

Staverton Acres, Staverton, Nr. Daventry, Northants NN11 6JY.

Tel: 013278 71223 E-mail: christophergodber@btinternet.com

Daughter of **Edward Howard Stanley BREHERTON, Lt.FMSVF** to **1st Batt. Malay Regiment. (M.C.)** Escaped to Sumatra then Ceylon. Pre-war European Master in various schools in Perak and Pahang and Assistant Inspector, becoming Acting Principal of Sultan Idris Training College, Tanjong Malim by 1941. (His photo is still on the wall.) Mother, Mary Elaine (Molly) with baby Merryn evacuated on the "Ulysses".

LEWIN, Patricia. (nee COUTTS MILNE).

333, Las Casas Avenue, Pacific Palisades, California 90272, USA.

Tel: 1-310-459-3955 E-mail: patricialewin@verizon.net

Daughter of **Dr. John Coutts Milne, Malayan Medical Service. Lt. Col. No.3 Field Ambulance FMSVF.** POW Singapore. He married Catherine (Rena) Hannah BAXTER 1929, Penang. 1940 Health Officer, Selangor. Returned to Malaya in 1946. Deputy Director of Medical Services, Singapore. Retired to England in 1953 where he worked afterwards. Died in 1985.

Self: Evacuated with mother to Australia, aged 18 months, and lived in Brisbane for the rest of the war. I was told we were on the second last ship out of Singapore. Post-war, I went to boarding school in the Cameron Highlands until closed due to guerilla activity. Then went to school in Singapore until I was sent to school in England aged 10.

McCORMICK, Audrey Holmes.

30, Kirk Brae, Kincardine, Clackmannanshire FK10 4PX, Scotland.

Tel: 01259 739080 E-mail: audrey.mccormick@dsl.pipex.com

Daughter of Civilian Volunteer. Researcher, Historian and Author. Co-author of "Moon over Malaya".

PARRINI, Tony and Anne.

Hamthwaite, Lonning Foot, Rockcliffe, Carlisle, Cumbria CA6 4AB.

Tel: 01228 674553 E-mail: tony@parrini.freeserve.co.uk

Grandson of **Raph Colin GOULD (0(d.Malacca 1923)** and Mrs. **Edith Emily GOULD.** The latter evacuated from Malacca to Fremantle on "Aorangi", 23/1/42. She taught the piano in Malacca before and after the war.

Nephew of **John Brookfield GOULD (b.1908) Sapper 681 JVE** enlisted 2/12/41 captured in Singapore 15/2/42. POW at Changi, Siam and Ube Japan. Returned to Malacca in 1946 and died there 18/8/48. My mother **Margaret Evelyn GOULD (b.1911).** came to UK c.1924 and never returned to the Far East.

Self: RAF Supply Officer 1966 to 1990; serve at RAF Butterworth and RAF Penang 1968 to 1971. Eldest son born Penang 1970. Founded the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association in 1996 and remain Founder Chairman. Established the Far East Air Force Grove and Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum.

RICHARDSON, Ian Logan.

Evacuated on the "SS Orion"

34, Jalan SS 3/47, 47300 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, MALAYSIA.

Home Tel: (603) 7876 5609 E-mail: ilogonr@yahoo.com

Son of **Louis Alexander Logan RICHARDSON (1907 – 1989), Sapper 13953 2/FMSVF – Selangor Batt. 1st Engineers Detachment.** Superintendent Sultan of Johore's Palace Gardens & Zoo, Parks & Gardens. (May 1936 – Aug 1941) Asst. Manager, Prang Besar Rubber Estate, Kajang, Selangor. (Aug 1941 – 1st Dec. 1941) POW Robert's Camp, Changi till May 1944 then Kranji Camp till liberation.

Self: Evacuated with mother **Kathleen (nee DAVIS) (1913 – 1953)** on the SS Orion to Melbourne with 2 brothers, and pregnant.

ROBERTSON, Dr. G.D. and Mrs. J.F.

Evacuated on the "Aorangi"

76, Hillpark Avenue, Edinburgh EH4 7AL, Scotland.

Tel: 0131 336 1911 E-mail: gduncanrobertson@tiscali.co.uk

Son of **Sgt. 5613 G.C. ROBERTSON 'B' Coy 1/FMSVF Perak Batt.** Captured Singapore 15/2/42 POW to Thailand 4/10/42 with 'D' Battalion. Died of cholera Konyu 3 12/7/43. Pre-war - Planter Gula Estate, Perak. Mother and self evacuated from Singapore on the "Aorangi" arriving in Fremantle WA 23/1/42.

SPELDEWINDE, Harold.

VETERAN VOLUNTEER

232, Solok Perमार, Bikit Gelugor, 11700 Gelugor, Penang, MALAYSIA.

Tel: +04 6577 199 E-mail: h.v.speldewinde@gmail.com

Son of **Clair Alexander John SPELDEWINDE (South East Asia Command, Ceylon, Earl Mountbatten's HQ).** Joined 'E' Coy, 3/SSVF in Dec.1941, aged 19. Served in Volunteer Police, Penang (16-23 December 1941) before the Japanese took over. Left for Cameron Highlands to be a planter. Joined a guerilla resistance force made out of **Orang Asli** (aboriginals) at Gunung Batu Puteh near Tapah, Perak and linked up with the MPAJA (Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army) and Force 136. Wanted by the Japanese - \$500 rewards for his capture.

WILLIAMS, Alison. (nee WEBBER)

Evacuated on the "Narkunda"

Farriers, High Street, Hadlow, Kent TN11 0EF.

Tel: 01732 850 562 E-mail: aawilliams@dsl.pipex.com

Daughter of **Max Lear WEBBER** and **Vi Webber**. Father Malayan Forestry Service and **2nd Lt. FMSVF (1937) to Lt. 3/SSVF to Capt. 2nd Loyals (8/41) to HQ 1st Malayan Infantry Brigade.** POW Singapore to Thailand 10.42 with brother Donald operated a secret radio.

Self: Evacuated with mother Violet ("Vi") on the Narkunda. I was at Tanglin School, Cameron Highlands and later Ashford School in Kent.

Membership pending for:

Zafrani bin Mohd ARIFIN

Lot 837, off Jalan Serindit, Taman Guru, 15100 Kota Bahru, Kelantan, MALAYSIA.

E-Mail: napoleon371@hotmail.com

Member of "The Malaysian History Group" (MHG) which focuses on military archaeology in Malaysia, particularly on memorials in the jungles.

AMENDMENTS/CHANGE OF ADDRESS.

BUNNEY, Elizabeth.

New e-mail address: ebunney@aapt.net.au

CONNOR, George Rt. Revd.

New address: 47, Pacific Parade, Surfdale, Waiheke Island 1081, NEW ZEALAND.

Tel: (09) 372-5435 Mobile: (021) 655-744 E-mail: seoirse@connor.net.nz

DUNNETT, June. (nee Grindlay)

New e-mail address: junedunnett@btinternet.com

GIUDICE, Patricia.

New e-mail address: pgiudice2@bigpond.com

HWANG, Andrew.

Please amend details as follows:

Grandnephew of **Captain Cho Seow Lim** (KIA at Cluny Hill, 13th February 1942) and **CQMS Tan Kim Tee** (Murdered at Farrar Park, Feb. 1942), **both of 4/SSVF.**

POTTER, Ann.

New address: 10, Barney's Close, Charmouth, Dorset DT6 6SE

Tel: 01297 561056

MEMBERSHIP LISTS FOR 2010 - 2011

These will be sent out with the JULY newsletter. Please let Rosemary know of any changes of address/telephone numbers/e-mails or any amendments you would like to make to your entry in the list. Every effort is made to make the list as accurate and detailed as possible.



SPECIAL NOTICE

For Singapore, Malaya and Thailand Veterans and Relatives and Members of the Malay Volunteers, FEPOW and COFEPOW Associations

Poppy Travel is very pleased to announce two tours in September 2010 that commemorate the endeavours and sacrifice in the Far East from all three services; as well as the annual FEPOW Tour to Singapore and Thailand in November. There will be ample time to sample the food, life-style and culture of these remarkable countries, that were joined in the hard days of 1941/42. Those who died in Malaya but were never found are commemorated at Kranji, Singapore; those who fought in Malaya brought time for those in Singapore. Many were to endure years of privation and cruelty on the infamous Burma-Siam Railway. The unconditional Japanese surrender was taken at Singapore on 12 September 1945.

Malaya Dates: 7-18 September 2010 Cost: £1,895

In December 1941 the Japanese armada was spotted en route to Malaysia; HMS Prince of Wales and Repulse, heading back to Singapore, turned about to engage this threat. With a lack of air superiority and outnumbered these two fine ships were sunk in Eastern Malaysian waters. The RAF meanwhile fought desperate battles in the air; the pilot of a Blenheim from RAF Butterworth was awarded the VC. The Japanese land forces, with enormous drive, struck in the North of Malaya in early December 1941. Those soldiers in the British, Malayan, Indian and Australian forces fought a series of desperate but often hopeless battles at such places as Alor Star, Kelantan, River Perak, Ipoh, Slim River, Malacca. By the end of January 1942 it was over and those who could spilled across the Causeway into Singapore. They had indeed bought time, but sadly to no avail and those who were captured were to endure years of captivity. The Malay Volunteers were in the thick of all this fighting and those who died are buried in numerous small cemeteries that follow the desperate events. Those who have No Known Grave are commemorated on the Kranji Memorial, Singapore, which was unveiled at 08:30 on 2nd March 1957. The Governor Sir Robert Black said: 'this is one of a chain of memorials ...stretching half way round the world...' Malaya shared in the Japanese surrender in September 1945

War however returned to Malaya in June 1948. It was the beginning of a 12 year guerrilla campaign. The Terrorists called it The Campaign of the Running Dogs. This campaign saw the creation of the Special Air Service from the Malay Scouts; and such characters as Sir Henry Gurney who was assassinated but not before he had established the secret of the political answer to this war; and the new Army Commander General Sir Gerald Templer, who said: 'Rhodesians, Ghurkhas, Africans, Fijians are risking their lives side by side with British, Malay, Chinese and Indians'.

The tour swings from Kuala Lumpur with its China Town and incredibly tall buildings, to the cool Cameron Highlands and the Fraser Hill Colonial Station where we stay for 2 nights; and there is even time for shopping in Penang where we stay for 4 nights.

There will be services at both Cheras Road and Taiping War Cemeteries honouring those who died in the Second World War and in The Emergency.

Guide: Colonel Mike Bradley OBE

Tour price is based on: Flights, de luxe Hotel twin room sharing, all breakfasts plus 4 lunches and 4 dinners, local taxes, excursions, service of remembrance, entrance fees, doctor and support team.

Singapore Dates: 8-15 September 2010 Cost £1,449

Singapore was the jewel in the British Empire's Imperial Crown; the impregnable fortress. Following the war in Malaya the Japanese shelled the City Centre, fought for the fresh water reservoirs and seized the crucial landing sites on the Island. The East Anglian Division arrived in time to enter almost immediate captivity. General Percival was under pressure to surrender and did so on the 15 February 1942. It was a humiliating blow to those who had fought so bravely. Those who were captured endured cruelty and illness on a scale not known before. Some were locked inside Chanji Gaol, others worked on what became known as the infamous Burma-Siam Railway. These events however were avenged by those who fought in Burma to ensure final victory in the East.
We Remember Them All.

The tour centres around the International Service to Commemorate the official end of hostilities in the Far East and the enormous sacrifice made. The itinerary includes Kranji Cemetery and memorial commemorating nearly 30,000 dead, the Changi Murals painted by a POW, General Percival's HQ at Fort Canning, the daunting walls of Changi Gaol and a chance to go to the remarkable wax museum on Sentosa Island, a former British base. There will of course be time to shop; and time to take an optional cruise around the harbour, an experience in itself.

There will be historical presentations about the background to the disaster of 1942; a brave sacrifice but bitter surrender. This is also a story about The Commonwealth fighting together.

Tour price is based on: flights, de luxe Hotel, all breakfasts, plus one lunch and the Farewell Dinner, local taxes, excursions, service of remembrance, entrance fees, doctor and support team.

Support Staff: Peter Cleminson, Current RBL National Chairman, Standard Bearer and Doctor

Guides: Neil Whitaker and Piers Storie-Pugh.

FEPOW Tour – Singapore and Thailand over Armistice 5-18 November 2010 Cost: £2,249

This annually popular tour enables veterans and relatives to cover both countries where many laboured 1942-1945. The Singapore leg includes all that is outlined for the September Tour above. The Thailand Tour, commemorating those who suffered on the infamous Burma-Siam Railway, is a chance to recognise incredible endeavour, self-sacrifice, endurance and ingenuity in the face of appalling circumstances. The group will stay in Bangkok at the famous Montien Hotel and then move up to the River Kwai Hotel; there will be personal visits and services in the Cemeteries at Chungkai and Kanchanburi; as well as an invitation to join The British Embassy for their Armistice Service. One of the excursion days includes the Thai-Burma Railway Centre founded and run by Rod Beattie, who has just been awarded the honour of 'Knight in the Order of Orange-Nassau' for his outstanding work in commemorating the ordeals of the POW on the railway and in the camps. Another moving experience is the train journey along the railway for 2 hours and a walk through Hell-Fire Pass.

The tour is supported by the very experienced FEPOW Tour Manager Neil Whitaker, a doctor and Legion Staff. It includes all breakfasts, some lunches and dinners. There will of course be time for shopping in the gem factory, along Bangkok's Canals or in Pat Pong.

The tour cost is based on: Flights, de luxe Hotel, all breakfasts, 3 lunches and 3 dinners, excursions, local taxes, entrance fees, doctor and support team.

Those who wish just to visit Thailand or Singapore in November can do so – just request the brochure.

For further details, brochure, terms and conditions and itineraries on any of these tours please contact:

**Poppy Travel, RBL Village Aylesford, Kent ME20 7NX 01622 716729
email poppytravel@britishlegion.org.uk**