

APA KHABAR

Patron: The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk

27TH EDITION
JULY 2011



AUSTRALIA HONOURS ROD BEATTIE

INTRODUCING "ANAK APA KHABAR" TO
OUR AUSTRALIAN MEMBERS

NEW MVG MEMBERSHIP CARDS

The Malayan Volunteers Group is delighted to report that **Rod Beattie**, Director of the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre Museum and Curator of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries in Kanchanaburi and Chungkai, has been awarded the **Order of Australia Medal** in H M The Queen's Birthday Honours list in June. The MVG congratulates him warmly on this award, which it feels is so well deserved and long overdue. With our Australian membership growing under the guidance of our new MVG Australia Secretary **Elizabeth Bunney** and assistant **Veteran George Hess'e**, we are pleased to announce the introduction of "**Anak Apa Khabar**" (Child of Apa Khabar) for our Australian membership. It will contain news specifically aimed at Australian members, and also be available to members in other countries via our website. Thanks to **Elizabeth** for all her work.

Introduction of Membership Cards. It has been suggested that we should introduce Membership Cards this year. These will be issued as a one-off to all current members and be sent to new members as they join. The cards will be named and numbered for each family/household membership of the Group, and supplied in a laminated pouch. Those members who normally have their newsletters e-mailed to them will receive them in this way, but the Membership Cards and Membership Lists will be sent by post. We hope you will like the new Membership Cards.

Subscriptions. Next January, we plan to introduce the payment of subscriptions by Standing Order as well as by cheque or BAC transfer if preferred. While most members are very good about paying their subscriptions promptly, and we thank them very much (and for the donations included), nevertheless rounding up the final few has become very time consuming. Unfortunately, this leaves us with no alternative but to say that, unless there is a special reason for non-payment, **next year** members will be assumed to have forfeited their membership if subscriptions are not received by the end of **June 2012**.

Bob Paterson has informed us that **Singapore National Library** has started digitalising their historical collection of books. Go to:- <http://sgebooks.nl.sg/index.htm> **Jonathan** writes, "This is a tremendous resource, particularly on 19th century Singapore. I guess they will continue adding to it with more Directories etc. I downloaded J.H.M. Robson's 'Records & recollections 1889 – 1934' which include an account of the MSVF in the 1912 KL riots. I also read that The British Library has just done a deal with Google to do a similar project with their old books – hopefully including some of their Malaya Collection". We send our congratulations to **Jean Gilmour**, **Bob Paterson's** mother, on celebrating her 100th Birthday in March this year. **Jean** is the daughter of **Dr. A.E. Bedell**, a medical officer in Malaya and Siam (as it was then known), and sister of **Flying Officer Patrick Bedell**. He was a member of the Kuala Lumpur Flying Club based at Sungei Besi which, in 1940, became "C" Flight of the newly formed Malayan Volunteer Air Force. Later **Bedell** was attached to the RAF 205 Squadron, and became the first Allied casualty of the Pacific War while flying a Catalina Flying Boat over the Gulf of Siam on 7th December 1941, searching for the Japanese Invasion Convoy. He and his crew were shot down by Japanese aircraft. **Jean's** husband, **James Campbell Paterson**, was a car salesman for Wearne Motors, K.L. and a Sergeant in the FMSVF. Sent to work on the Railway as a POW, he was killed by an Allied bombing raid on Tamarkan Camp in Thailand. **Jean** and **Bob**, then just a baby, escaped from Singapore, but were captured in Sumatra and interned at Palembang and Muntok.

Merilyn Hywel-Jones has advised us that she is applying for tickets for the Service in Westminster Abbey and Cross Planting Ceremony in the Field of Remembrance on the Thursday prior to Remembrance Sunday (10/11/11). If anyone wishes to have a ticket for the Abbey Service, please let **Merilyn** or **Rosemary** know before the end of August. This year, as reported in April, we are ordering an 8" cross for **Merilyn** to plant in the FEPOW Plot. During the planting the FEPOW prayer is said by one of the FEPOWs attending. The Duke of Edinburgh usually takes part in this ceremony.

Clarissa Tan's article in the "Telegraph" on 25th June 2011 gave a nostalgic look-back at the history of **Tanjong Pagar Station** in Singapore before its closure on 30th June (as reported in April). In the article she urged readers and friends to join her for the last trip. It is hoped that the Singapore Government will not only preserve the Art Deco station building, but also the "Green Corridor" along which the railway line snakes its way northwards through Singapore Island. The Nature Society of Singapore has set out proposals for its preservation, and supporters of this project can be contacted on Facebook. Trains into Singapore will now stop at Woodlands Station on the northern tip of the island.

Our thanks also go to **Andrew Hwang** for his untiring work on identifying the headquarters and Drill Halls of the Volunteer Forces in Malacca, K.L. and Penang, as well as other investigative work he has done to uncover WW 2 fortifications. We also thank him for his efforts to encourage more Malaysians to join the MVG. Our continuing relationship with **Badan Warisan Malaysia** and the **Penang Heritage Trust** are thanks to **Liz Moggie** and **Leslie James**.

MVG AUSTRALIA – LUNCHEON IN PERTH WA, ON 11TH APRIL 2011 – Report by Elizabeth Bunney

Twenty eight people forgathered at "The Mighty Quinn" here in Perth and enjoyed a lunch function. ~~Those attending were:-~~ Bill Adamson, Elizabeth Bunney, Joan Forman, Karl & Caroline Furchtenicht, George & Hyacinth Hess's, Bob Paterson, Dick & Marcia Talalla, Patricia Wood, Des & Jill Woodford, Rosemary Schulstad, Jean Leesebrogan, Derek Koch, Carmen Williams, Becca & Elfreda Kenneison, Jim, Wendy & Pam Cropley, Margaret Puzey, Michael Doncaster, Mary Hogan, Garry & Sushila Burgoyne and Lorna Raeburn. Apologies were received from ~~Sharon & Geoff Wheeler and Ian Peek.~~

George Hess'e welcomed all present and spoke for a few minutes about the WW 2 Malayan Volunteers, ~~that we receive~~ quarterly newsletters and a full membership list. He introduced me as the new MVG Secretary for Australia ~~following the~~ resignation of John Pollock in Victoria, who has done so much for us over the last couple of years. I shall ~~try my best to~~ follow in his footsteps.

George welcomed and introduced Becca Kenneison, who then spoke at some length about the wartime Japanese occupation of Malaya, Singapore, Thailand and Burma. Her talk was interesting in relating examples of many acts of kindness to prisoners by local people that required great courage and involved enormous risk. We hope she and her daughter Elfreda have a good trip north and then home.

Greetings to all MVG members from Perth.

ANAK APA KHABAR (CHILD OF APA KHABAR)

Introducing an addition to our main newsletter, Elizabeth Bunney writes:-

"This newsletter we expect to be a small one, issued quarterly, and will contain news and information of interest to Australian members. We hope for contributions from members in all States.

The aim is to foster interest in this national group. We also hope to be able to put people in touch with one another in their home state, and, perhaps, to organize social gatherings. It should be easier to extract names of co-members from a much smaller list than the world-wide one, with local functions in mind. Because of vast distances, it is necessary for members to be able to contact one another, facilitated by using 'Anak Apa Khabar' as a hub for Australian enquiries.

[Editor: We wish MVG Australia every success with their newsletter, and thank Elizabeth and George for their efforts in promoting MVG to Australians everywhere.]

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL – AWARDED TO ROD BEATTIE

Following the announcement of the Award of the Order of Australia Medal to Rod in the 2011 Queen's Birthday Honours list in Australia, Michael Doncaster, Lieutenant Commander, CSM, RAN, paid fulsome tribute to Rod's achievement:

"Greetings from Perth. While my son Shannon and I met you only briefly during a very short visit to Kanchanaburi over the 2011 Anzac Day period, I am aware of the contribution you have made to preserving the story of the Thailand Burma Railway and the Prisoners of War over many years of dedication and hard work. The Thailand Burma Railway Centre is the physical demonstration of your life's work and I am so pleased that you have been honoured for this dedication through the Award of the Order of Australia Medal in this year's Honours List.

It is a fitting acknowledgement from the Australian community for your hard work, passion and dedication to keep the stories of the Prisoners of War from Australia, Great Britain, The Netherlands, India and several other countries, as well as the often forgotten labourers from within Asia, alive. Your dedication to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has also been acknowledged through this award and because of people like you, there are beautiful and peaceful memorials to those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice all over the world.

On behalf of my family, particularly my mother and her sisters who have had to live with the fallout of my grandfather's internment, thank you and congratulations on your award.

With heartiest congratulations."

Michael is a relative of Anthony Fitzsimon, FMSVF.

For information on the Order of Australia Medal see:-

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_Australia

For information on Rod's Award see:-

http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/honours/honour_roll/search.cfm?aus_award_id+1144360&search_type+advanced&showInd+true

[Editor: On behalf of the MVG I would like to endorse these remarks which, I am sure, we all feel. Thank you, Rod].

MVG MEMORIAL GARDEN

We thank Simon and Lynda Moss who, together with MVG members Anthony and June Jackson, spent a day at the National Memorial Arboretum on Saturday 9th July working in the Memorial Garden, tidying, weeding and repairing the benches which we were told were wobbly. They report that the trees and bamboo shrubs are growing well, but that the molehills are still disfiguring the grassy areas. We have contacted the Grounds Officer over this matter and they state that they cannot trap and remove the moles or deal with them in any other ways. Photographs of the day can be seen on the Website Picture Gallery – and as a result of their labours the Garden looks immaculate, and is ready for V-J Day in August.

"WHERE OUR NATION REMEMBERS"

NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM STAKEHOLDERS MEETING ON MAY 17TH 2011 – Report by Jonathan Moffatt

MVG members **Keith Andrews, Mike & Meg Parkes**, and **Jonathan Moffatt** were among 200 attending a Stakeholders celebratory gathering and presentation by **Charlie Bagot-Jewitt**, Chief Executive of the NMA. This was part of the NMA's 10th Anniversary celebrations, with much to celebrate with the transformation, over 10 years, from a muddy field and gravel pit to a 150 acre wooded parkland site containing some 200 memorials, including the National Memorial, with another 40 memorials in development.

Charlie reflected on what the Arboretum had achieved with funding from the Millennium Commission, explained the current status of the £8m NMA Appeal and landscape plans. He also explored the vision for the Arboretum as a world renowned centre for Remembrance.

The NMA, which had received considerable support from the Royal Family, particularly Prince William, now attracted some 300,000 visitors a year, and had realistic plans for 500,000.

Plans for the future included moving and improving the entrance, changes to the Visitors' Centre, with extended cafeteria and shop; replacing the pods [marquees] with permanent Services Buildings for functions and the creation of an Education Building and a Heroes Square, ideally with a canopy and paved with memorial pavings, for remembrance services. The NMA had always been influenced by fine design and good practice elsewhere e.g. Arlington Memorial USA, and the grand design planners for the future NMA were impressed by the good practice of the Culloden Building and the Saville Garden Visitors' Centre at Windsor Park.

The appeal was at its half-way point with building work to start 'sometime next year'. A short question time was curtailed by the demands of TV interviews. While little of substance was said about the Education building, it may provide our best hope of a Malayan Volunteers Archive/Display area and we need to pursue this possibility.

MEMORIAL TO THE AUSTRALIAN MEMBERS OF THE MALAYAN VOLUNTEER FORCES

In January we reported on the proposed Memorial to the Australian Volunteers, and the letter received from **Major-General Steve Gower** turning down our application. Early in May, a letter was sent to the **Hon. Warren Snowdon MP** Minister for Veterans' Affairs seeking permission through his Office for this Memorial. Included in the package was a 17 page spreadsheet document listing the names of 247 Australian Volunteers, together with a great deal of information about their place of birth, jobs in Malaya and membership of the Volunteer Forces; where they were captured and where they were sent as POWs, and whether they survived the war or were buried in war grave cemeteries. This application has also been turned down because our Australian Volunteers do not fit into the categories laid down in their guidelines. According to these:- **"All Australian unit associations whose service is such that any deaths of its members would have qualified for inclusion on the Roll of Honour are eligible to request the installation of a plaque. A unit is considered to be an RAN ship, Army battalion or an RAAF squadron"**.

However, the Minister did suggest that we approach the **National Capital Authority (NCA)** which looks after other memorials in Canberra which are not based within the Australian War Memorial's grounds. This we will do, but failing this, we now have a specific contact in Perth Western Australia.

We are very grateful to **Merilyn Hywel-Jones** for making enquiries on behalf of the MVG while she was in Perth recently. Her findings are as follows:-

1. The Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority (incorporating Kings Park).

According to their 2008 Memorials Policy, there are clear guidelines laid down for granting permission for new memorials within the park. Kings Park and Botanic Gardens is recognized as a significant place of commemoration. *"Kings Park is one of the State's cultural icons with particularly high social, aesthetic and historic values. It is a symbol of sacrifice and one of those places which truly gives Western Australians a sense of place"*. (Ref: Conservation). The first formal memorial was installed in 1902 to those lost in the Boer War of 1899-1902. Now there are 53 formal memorials, plus 1175 memorial plaques on trees which are living memorials to those who have represented and died while serving in the Australian (or British) forces in wartime.

There are 2 stages in applying for a new memorial within the park:-

Stage 1 The Board must give "in Principle" support for the proposed memorial – its purpose, location and design.

Stage 2 Detailed designs must be submitted to the BGPA Executive for their approval of various factors.

Merilyn was shown round the Park by **Martyn Thompson**, RSL Chairman for his area, and associated with the Park memorials. She was very impressed with the site of the Park which overlooks the Swan River, and the atmosphere.

2. St. Georges Cathedral, Perth.

The Cathedral is situated in St Georges Terrace, within the heart of Perth's heritage precinct, surrounded by the Old Treasury Buildings, The Perth Town Hall, Government House, Council House and St. Andrew's Uniting Church. Within the Cathedral is the 'Soldiers' Chapel' which was built as a War memorial after the 1914 – 18 War. It contains various military memorabilia, and the flags of local associations and regiments. It would only be possible to have a flat memorial plaque attached to the wall of the Chapel, and although the clergyman, **Revd. Tim Harrison**, representing the Cathedral authorities, was very keen for us to site our memorial within the Chapel, we would be unable to have one the size and shape of our choice.

In conclusion: the MVG feels that it would be best to pursue the Kings Park venue as a site for the Australian Memorial. Unless members feel strongly to the contrary, a letter will be sent off to the relevant authority shortiv.

LIVERPOOL PIER HEAD REPATRIATION MEMORIAL APPEAL

The Researching FEPOW History Group has sent the following information about the Appeal:-

"Thank you for your generous support of the appeal, which has reached the revised target. The stone has now been commissioned. It will be silver grey granite with black letters, and is being prepared by the Birkenhead Monumental Ltd. It is dedicated to the FEPOW and civilians who survived and returned home from Far East captivity, disembarking at Liverpool in the autumn of 1945.

The unveiling of the memorial will take place on **Saturday 15th October 2011 at 11 a.m.** on the waterfront of Liverpool's Pier Head. This date is the 66th anniversary of the arrival into Liverpool of the *Nieuw Holland*, a ship with particular significance to Liverpool. To quote an article from the *Liverpool Daily Post*, Tuesday 16th October, announcing the arrival of the ship the day before:

"In all the Nieuw Holland carries 951 Army, Navy, Air Force and merchant Navy personnel, among the latter are most of the survivors of the Empress of Asia".

We would like as many as possible to be present on the day. For more information and to register your interest in attending the service of dedication, please go to: www.researchingfepowhistory.org.uk

If any MVG member wishes to attend this Service, but needs some help with getting to Liverpool, please let **Jonathan** or **Rosemary** know, and we will do our best to find you a lift. **Meg Parkes** says that they hope to offer a cup of tea to all those who attend, after the ceremony. Once the arrangements have been finalized, they will be posted on the RFH website – address as above.

THE FEPOW BAMBOO GARDEN IN WIRRAL

On 22nd June the University of Liverpool's Botanical Garden at **Ness** in South Wirral (Ness Gardens) will officially open the FEPOW Bamboo garden in the conservatory.

The Garden is the result of a unique collaboration between the Botanical Gardens, the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and Pensby High School for Girls in Wirral. The design is based on the award-winning entry to the 2010 RHS Show at Tatton Park in Cheshire last July.

While inspired to highlight the extensive Bamboo collection at Ness in his show design, curator **Paul Cook** was also fascinated to learn about a project, run by the Liverpool Tropical School at the girls' High School, where pupils were learning about Far East prisoner of war (FEPOW) history and in particular the significance of bamboo to survival.

The design and the planting scheme reflect the myriad ways in which bamboo proved to be life-enhancing as well as life-saving and featured in the garden are references to its uses in both nutrition and medicine. There is also evidence of a cross-curricular English, History and Art project done by Year 7 girls at Pensby last year. A creative writing exercise, based on their introduction to FEPOW history, produced bamboo "leaves" which feature extracts from the girls' work – thoughts on what it must have been like for animals in the jungle to view the influx of the prisoners of war – and which are scattered around the floor of the "jungle" garden. A booklet entitled, *Taking a Leaf...from History*, and featuring the leaves is on sale at **Ness**.

The Botanical Gardens has also created its first audio trail for the FEPOW Bamboo garden. Visitors can listen to a commentary as they walk round the conservatory, which is adjacent to the café in the Visitor Centre and is free to view.

Go to: www.captivememories.org.uk for more information about this innovative FEPOW history education project.

WEBSITE GOES LIVE - LATEST FROM THE FEPOW EDUCATION PROJECT

On 4th July, **Meg Parkes** wrote:-

"The FEPOW history education project's website has gone live today (4th July) on the Guardian Teachers Network home page:- <http://teachers.guardian.co.uk/Homepage.aspx>

Bottom right corner go to: Twitter Guardian Teach – second item down will take you to the sound file resources. There will also be a feature about the FEPOW education project in tomorrow's Guardian Education supplement (5th July).

The Guardian Teachers Network has made 7 FEPOW interview extracts available to teachers, as well as the 7 tracks of the new FEPOW Bamboo Garden audio trail at Ness Botanical Gardens. See "captive memories" website as above, under **Education section** – left hand column, under **Partnership Activities**. **For teachers** – see also under **Curriculum Resources**, (box bottom right) **"Additional Resources"** with contributions and ideas from other teachers to use with different age groups. If you know of any teachers who may be interested in using this material, please circulate the websites. I would also be interested in having any feed back in due course".

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT – YMBVA FORGOTTEN CONFLICTS OF THE FAR EAST

Cathy Pugh (former Gen. Manager of WW 2 Experience Centre in Leeds & editor of their journal "Everyone's War") writes:- "The Yorkshire and Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association has asked me to raise funds for an **Oral History Project**. They have a wide membership with very varied experiences and feel their wars have been neglected and forgotten. I have put together an application for **Your Heritage** funding to record digital interviews with 40 veterans of post-war conflicts in the Far East, to make digital copies of their photographs, diaries, letters etc. and to train some of these veterans so that they can make outreach visits to schools, museums, universities, veterans' associations and other establishments in order to share their experiences and create awareness of an aspect of the Cold War often overlooked in military history".

Details of the project are as follows:-

Background – In 2010 before the Leeds Armed Forces Day, some members of the YMBVA (from all the Armed Services) made 'mini' interviews about their involvement in post-war conflicts which were included in a souvenir booklet. These conflicts are often overlooked, but many suffered from ill health and lost comrades as a result of being sent to fight in them. YMBVA members believe that their memories need to be recorded before they are lost and these conflicts are forgotten. Currently Key Stage 3 children (11-14 yr olds) study the Cold War as part of their History syllabus, but the conflicts of the Far East are not covered e.g. opposition to communism and terrorism in the Far East.

The Project – the aims are:-

1. To record digital interviews with 40 veterans and scan documents.
2. To structure interviews to include recollections of military service; emotional responses to experiences; relationships made while serving as a young man in the Far East; how this has affected the rest of his life.
3. To produce a 'virtual' archive from the recordings & documents, which will be offered to museums, including the IWM.
4. To produce PowerPoint presentations from each interview, both verbal and scanned documents/images.
5. To offer "outreach" training to some members, to give talks relating to their experiences and those of their comrades.

Funding – an application is being made to **Your Heritage** for funding – one of the **Heritage Lottery** funding programmes.

Other possible sources include the MOD's Veteran's Challenge Scheme.

Support is required for this scheme – the **Heritage Lottery Fund** requires evidence that there is a need for this project. If any MVG members feel that they can interest other associations or clubs in supporting this project, please contact **Jonathan** or **Rosemary** who will put you in touch with **Cathy Pugh**.

[N.B. The MVG has already written in support of this project which we feel is very worthwhile. It will cover aspects of the post war Malayan Emergency as well as other conflicts in the Far East].

THE NOT FORGOTTEN ASSOCIATION

Colonel Piers Storie Pugh OBE TD DL has been appointed the new Chief Executive of **The Not Forgotten Association**. He joins the Association after 26 years with the Royal British Legion, during which time he set up and then ran its worldwide war grave and memorial operation.

He made seven films in this time, featuring Burma, Colditz Castle and the War Cemeteries worldwide. His grandfather was invalided out of the First World War having been severely wounded at the Battle of Loos in 1915 and his father was severely wounded at the Battle of Doullens in 1940. He specialized in visits to the Far East including Malaya.

Piers Storie Pugh writes:-

"I feel enormously privileged to join the Not Forgotten Association whose activities I have known for several years having arranged their Battlefield Tours overseas. One of the striking things about this unique and hugely honourable tri-service charity is that ideals laid down by its founder **Marta Cunningham** in 1920 still remain relevant and at the heart of the service provision. I recently returned from visiting some of the Not Forgotten Association's beneficiaries skiing in Scotland; the injuries of some of the participants were extremely serious, but everyone was deriving enormous benefit from what they managed to achieve and the sense of mutual supportiveness was very evident. The relationship between those beneficiaries who had disabilities and those still serving who came to support was strong and highly therapeutic.

The individual holidays for those in need of our services gives them a much needed and welcome break.

The considerable demand for televisions continues and helps to relieve loneliness; the concert tours and outings also right at the centre of the service provided give the guests something to look forward to. These activities are only possible by the support from the various charities, individuals and organizations.

My hope is that more beneficiaries are directed to us in the next year".

[Editor: **Piers was guest speaker at the MVG Annual Lunch in 2009. We wish him every success in his new post**].

SINGAPORE HERITAGE SOCIETY – PASSIVE DEFENCE: THE ROLE OF CIVILIANS IN THE DEFENCE OF MALAYA AND SINGAPORE IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR – a talk by Dr. Liew Kai Khiun

Dr. Liew obtained his BA (Hons) and MA from the National University of Singapore, and his doctorate from the Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at University College, London.

On 4th June 2011, Dr. Liew, (part of whose postgraduate research work has been to study the legacies of civil society groups in British Malaya) gave a talk on the subject of Passive Defence by civilians in Malaya and Singapore in WW2 – a topic which has not been well covered amongst all the written accounts and testimonies of the fighting leading to the fall of Singapore.

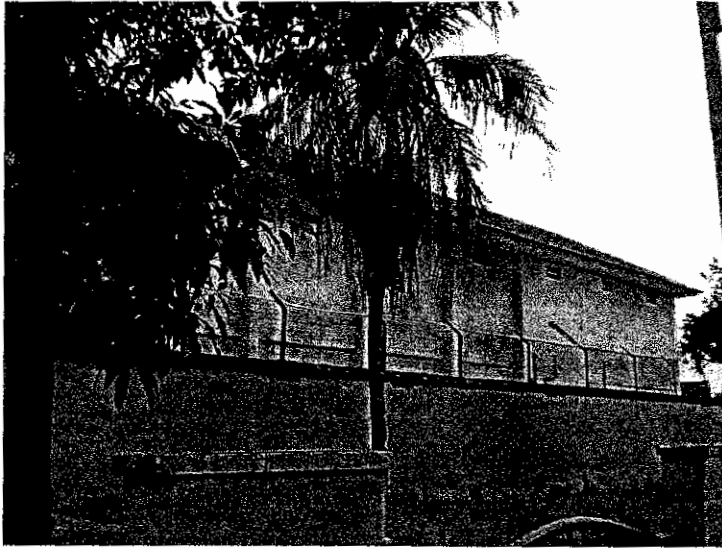
The leaflet advertising his talk said:

"The Japanese invasion and subsequent military occupation of Malaya remain significant in the personal memories and historical consciousness of Singaporeans. Like most wars, accounts of the Malayan Campaign have been dominated by mainly male combatants, leaving an impression of (female) civilians as merely passive bystanders and victims of history. Deviating from standard narratives of military strategies and battles, this talk focuses on the contributions of civilians in the defence of the "impregnable fortress" of Singapore during the Second World War. From manning radio control stations and air raid sirens to first-aid stations, many of these participants took part in what was termed "passive defence". They comprised a cosmopolitan mix of persons ranging from European housewives to Asian lorry drivers serving in the various auxiliary services. Drawing upon a range of sources from testimonies to documentary records, this talk argues that those involved in "Passive Defence" were exposed to the frontline fighting as much as their military counterparts".

VISIT TO MUNTOK ON BANGKA ISLAND – APRIL 2011

MVG Australia member Judy Balcombe, whose grandfather Colin Campbell died in captivity at Muntok [today Mentok] visited Indonesia in April 2011 with Anthony Pratt whose father Donald also died in captivity there. Judy reports:

We had a very interesting and productive trip to Palembang and Bangka Island. We flew to Palembang from Singapore. Palembang is a busy city with a lot of cars and motor bikes and a scarcity of traffic lights, making it quite hazardous to cross the road. We were very lucky to meet with a guide from the Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin Museum, near the Kuto Besak fort on the Moesi River. He took us to view the Palembang jail where the male internees spent their first year. It is still in use, a great high-walled and grim building.



We next visited the Indonesian Independence memorial. In the grounds there was a large relief mural, showing the privations of the internees under the Japanese.



Our guide helped us to buy a large-scale city map of Palembang. We were able to compare the streetscape with maps from the East Indies Camp Archives website and from this, we were able to pinpoint the locations of the Boekit Besar camp, Irenelaan Women's camp and the Men's Atap Barrack camp. For readers who are familiar with the internee William McDougall's books, 'Six Bells off Java Head' and 'By Eastern Windows' as well as the writings of internee Helen Colijn and the Australian nurses, many landmarks were familiar, leading to a sobering walk through the suburbs.

We were able to see the road where the men would have walked on the working camp from the jail to the site where they built their next camp, the Men's Barrack camp. The route took them past the Women's camp and some women would stand on the camp wall, calling out and waving to their husbands, fathers and sons as they passed by. We recalled one Christmas when the women were quiet as the men approached, then began to sing English and Dutch Christmas carols. The Japanese guards let the men stop and listen for a while before ordering them on to work.

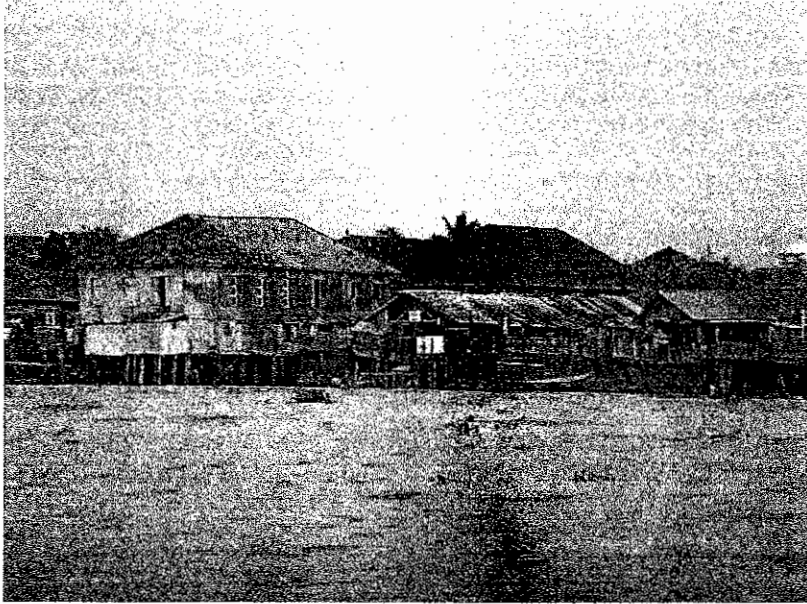
We also visited the Charitas hospital in Palembang, now a large and modern hospital. This is where some internees were allowed to be treated in the early days of the camps. At times and with great risk and co-ordination, it was possible for husbands and wives each to be admitted to hospital at the same time and meet for a few minutes, although such meetings were rare. Nuns and some internees took a great risks in smuggling letters and medicines from the hospital back into camp - sometimes these notes were the only way husbands and wives could know each other was alive.

The Japanese closed the hospital quite early. There is a grassy knoll in the hospital grounds that the Japanese used as a lookout and a fort.



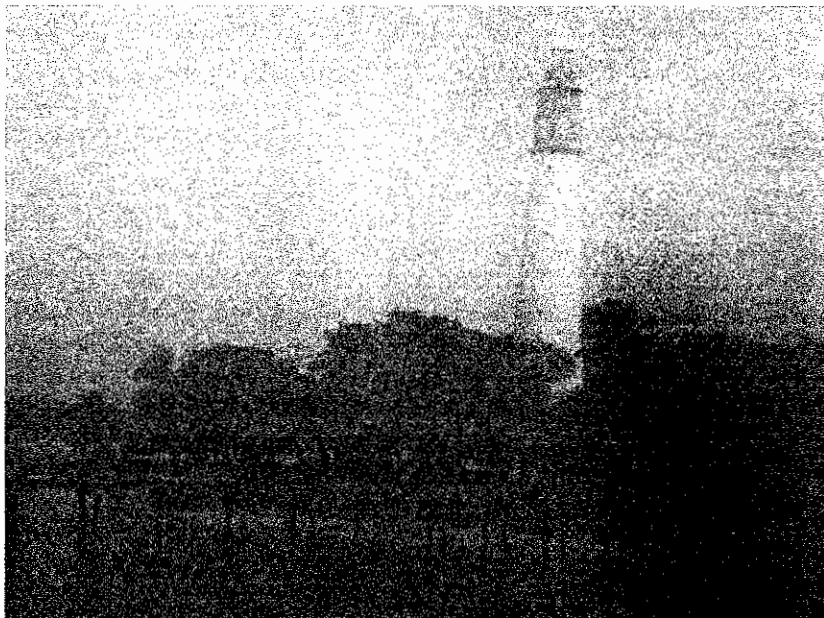
We were able to travel downstream on the Moesi river in a small wooden boat to view the oil refineries of Pladjoe. These were a major cause of the Battle of Palembang, with the Japanese fighting for control of Sumatran oil.

Communication with Singapore had been interrupted in February 1942 meaning that vessels which evacuated just before the Fall of Singapore did not know the Japanese had taken Sumatra. There were many Japanese planes and boats in and around the Bangka Straits, leading to the bombing and sinking of many evacuating vessels. It is estimated that about 5000 evacuees from Singapore lost their lives between 13th to 17th February 1942.



We caught a jetfoil boat from Palembang to Muntok (which is now known as Mentok). The journey took 3 hours - 2 hours on the Moesi River and an hour on the sea to Bangka Island. The trip with a VIP was comfortable, air-conditioned with a wash-room, refreshments and even TV - certainly a far cry from the trips endured by the internees as they were moved backwards and forwards from Bangka Island, often with no water and with a journey lasting between 12 and 26 hours.

I think we were apprehensive about visiting the island where our families died in such sad circumstances but surprisingly were left with some very positive images. We were met at the ferry by a friend of our host and were taken to a beach where the town was engaged in a mangrove - planting community day.



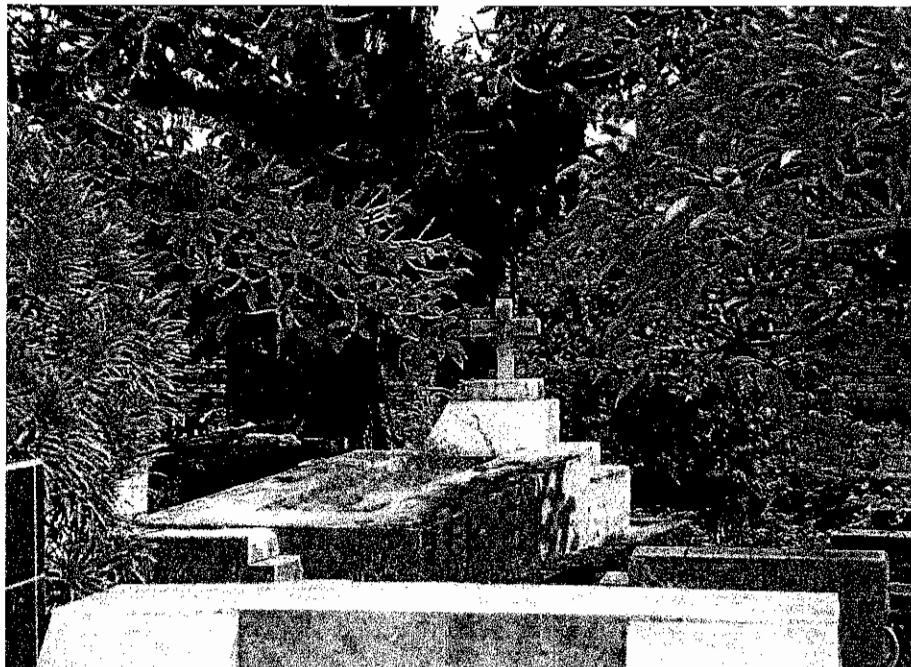
We spent 3 days on the island and met with exceptional friendliness and kindness as well as interest in our quest every minute of each day.

The main reason for our visit was to see if we could establish where our relatives had been buried after dying in the Muntok jail in 1944 and 1945 and to learn what had become of their graves. Both Anthony Pratt and I and several other people have in our possession a photograph of our relatives' graves, marked with a cross and very neatly and regularly presented. These photos came into our families' possession about 1948 and we believe the Dutch prepared the graves after the war and also offered photos to relatives.

It had been suggested by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission that civilian graves from Muntok had been moved to the War Cemetery in Bandung, Java in the early 1960s. The Dutch War Graves Foundation, however wrote to us that whereas the Dutch Military and civilian graves and the British Military graves had been moved to Bandung, they believed the British civilian graves had been left behind in Muntok. The DWGF visited Muntok in the 1980s and found the grave area had been covered over by a petrol station and housing, built in the 1980s..

This view that the graves had not been moved to Java in the early 1960s was upheld by correspondence we had seen between Shelagh Lea (nee Brown) and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, now held in the National Archives in Kew. Shelagh Brown had been interned in the Palembang, Muntok and Belalau camps and her mother had died in Muntok Women's camp. Shelagh wrote to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for over 20 years, requesting that the cemetery at Muntok be maintained, or at least, as it deteriorated, that a permanent memorial be placed there. The replies from CWGC initially sounded hopeful that the graves may be preserved but concluded in 1967 and 1968 by saying that the CWGC had 'no responsibility for civilian graves' and would not be contributing financially to their care. It was suggested to Shelagh Lea that she try to raise funds herself or through local churches to pay for a memorial at Muntok.

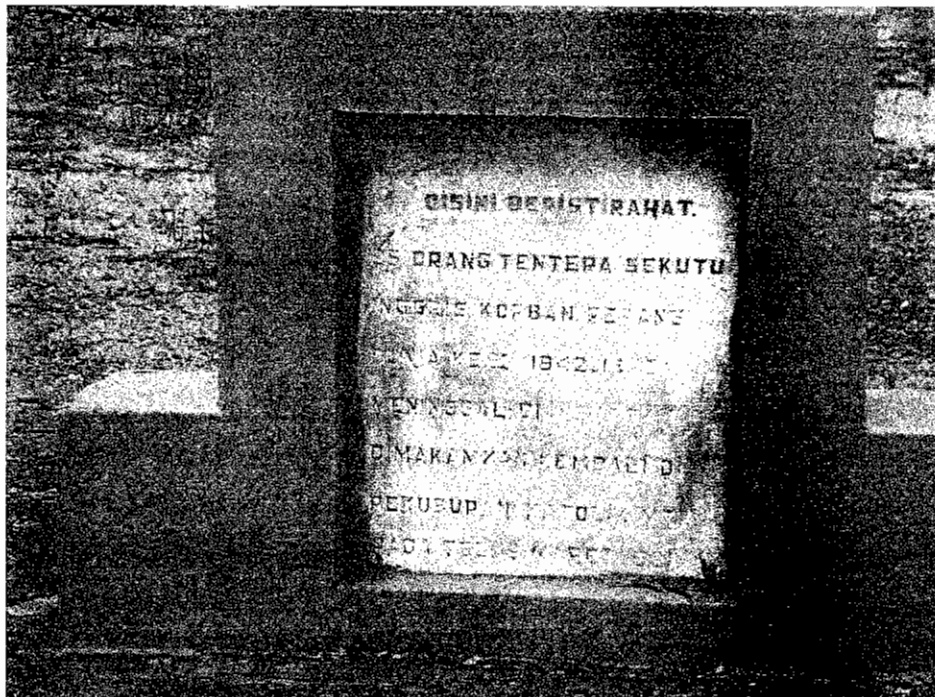
We were taken to the Pertamina Petrol station, situated on the main road through Muntok, which is how the cemetery location was described in Shelagh Lea's letters. The petrol station is next to an existing local cemetery - it is described in Shelagh Lea's letters that the civilian cemetery was down a short path from the local cemetery. Local residents in houses surrounding the petrol station showed us some much older graves in their garden area, one for Isabella Inkster who died at sea in 1881.



A resident told us he had played in the previous cemetery when he was a child in the early 1960s and showed us where the boundary walls had been. He agreed that the graves had appeared as in our photographs and indeed the Heritage Community had a photograph of matching graves, taken by one resident's father. The man

who had played in the cemetery described seeing some graves exhumed in the early 1960s, being placed in bags with metal name plates - certainly a military-sounding exercise and not the care that was declined to British civilians by the CWGC!

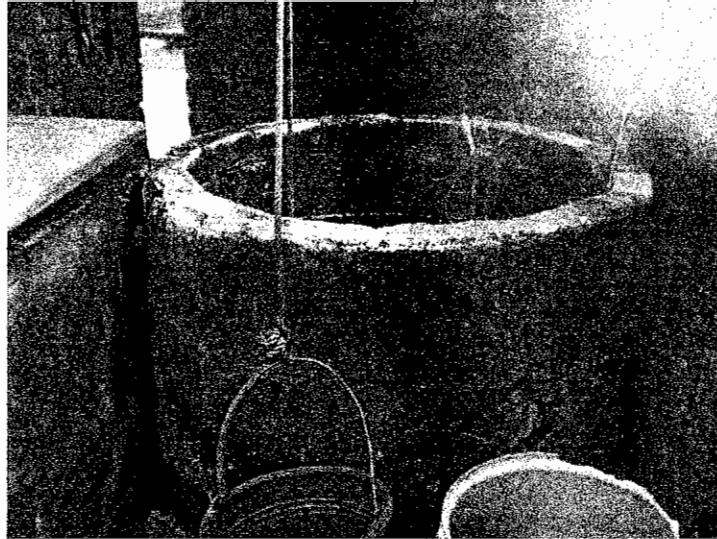
From the old cemetery site, we visited a Catholic Cemetery at Kampong Menjelang nearby. Here there was a grave with an engraved headstone which translated to read that 'Herein lie the remains of 25 English people who died at the hands of the Japanese between 1942 and 1945, buried here in March 1981'. We were told these remains had been recovered during the building of the Pertamina petrol station, adding further weight to our conviction that the remains were never moved to Java. A house is soon to be built on the vacant land behind the petrol station and it will be interesting to learn if any remains are found there.



In Muntok, we visited the jail which is still in use. Although the care of the prisoners now is good, the physical description by William McDougall, telling of high walls and dormitories with concrete sleeping slabs could still be recognised. The jail has the capacity for 250 men - it was hard to envisage over 700 internees inside. It was from here that the burial parties would carry the dead to the cemetery, with up to 4 deaths daily during the later months of 1944 and early 1945.



We visited the site of the Women's camp, now a playing field and with only the well left to tell of the 100's of women who lived and died in cramped atap huts. Here we were introduced to an older lady who still has in her possession a ring given to her father in return for food given to a lady internee and her children.



A portion of stone used as part of the Women's camp kitchen and latrines was used to create the memorial to the Australian Nurses who drowned after the sinking of their ship, the Vynar Brooke and those who were shot by the Japanese on the beach on February 14th 1942. After trying to surrender, two groups of men were bayoneted and shot and then 22 nurses and a civilian woman were marched into the sea and shot. Vivian Bullwinkel was the only survivor of the nurses - although shot, she lay in the sea until the Japanese left and was able to hide in the jungle for 12 days, caring for an injured soldier, Kingsley. They received food from villagers but surrendered as Kingsley's condition worsened. The Australian nurses already captured swore not to discuss Vivian's experiences, to protect her execution by the Japanese.

The nurses' memorial was built in 1992 and Nurse Vivian Bullwinkel was present, wearing her same uniform with the bullet holes.

We were taken to the site of the massacres, accessible by boat and met a man whose Father had helped Vivian Bullwinkel and Kingsley. The place is still known as 'English Bay and the locals refused to eat fish from this area for some time after the killings. It was hard to know that such a peaceful and lovely bay had been the site of such atrocities.

We were also introduced to other older residents who had experienced the war years - a lady of mixed Dutch-Indonesian parentage who had to dye her hair black as a teenager to avoid being assault by the Japanese; another lady who now lives in a house which had been commandeered by the Japanese as their headquarters and a man who lived in Muntok as a boy. He observed that the Japanese officers were often well-educated, having been educated in England or America, and were more civil and with better ethics than the regular soldiers and guards.

There were many impressions and new information gained in Muntok through the help of our kind and very helpful local friends. One very unexpected benefit comes in the fact that the local Heritage Community is in the process of creating a museum in the old Tinwinning building, opposite the jail.



The Tinwinning Building

This will cover the history of Bangka Island and include the war years. We have asked the Community if it will be possible to place a plaque to remember our families who died in the jail - it will be heartening to know that visitors may know what happened in this place.

The local people are sincerely interested in the events of the past and I would like to ask if any members of the Malayan Volunteer Group may have items which they would like to donate or to have photographed for the museum or any memories to share to help with the planned exhibits. I am sure the museum will be a place where the events of the past and especially the war years will be treated with great honour and respect.

See Mentok 2011 website at <http://mentok.posterous.com/> for more information about the Tinwinning Building.

MAIL BOX – Chowkidar Vol .12. No. 3 Spring 2010

It would be good to think that once the dead are laid to rest they will remain undisturbed. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, particularly in some countries in South East Asia where new regimes seem anxious to obliterate reminders of a colonial past. Last year BACSA (British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia) was able to solve a long-standing mystery with the help of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). The story begins with the death of **Donald Frederick Pratt**, aged 37, on May 1st 1945 in the Muntok prison camp on Bangka Island, off the coast of Sumatra. We do not know how he got there, but it is likely that he was captured by the Japanese after the fall of Singapore in 1942 and held as a civilian prisoner-of-war. Conditions were grim in the prison camp, and many prisoners died of malnutrition and disease. The dead were however, decently buried, with a Christian service, in Muntok cemetery and there they remained until the 1960s. **Donald Pratt's** son, **Antony**, had long wanted to visit his father's grave and had a photograph of it too, which was sent to his mother in 1949, when it was 'surrounded by others in an immaculate setting'. However, his enquiries over the last two years established that the graves at Muntok had disappeared, and that no-one knew where they had gone. Because the area had been under Dutch Administration, the Netherlands War Graves Foundation (the equivalent of our CWGC) was approached, and unfortunately was less than helpful, robustly denying that it had any knowledge of **Donald Pratt's** grave, or the many others in Muntok cemetery. Only when **Richard Kellaway**, the Director General of the CWGC was approached by a BACSA Council member, and promised to take a personal interest in the problem, could it be resolved. After making a number of enquiries, he sent BACSA a letter found in the files of the Office of Australian War Graves, dated 1996, which revealed that 'in 1964, at the insistence of the Indonesians, the remains of British civilians had been removed from Muntok and transferred to the Indonesian General Cemetery at Bandung'. The British remains were put together in unmarked graves, and the area was said to be 'unkempt'. The Bandung Cemetery is presently under the care of the Netherlands War Cemeteries, Indonesia. Now **Antony Pratt** is planning a visit to the Bandung cemetery and the possibility of a memorial to those who died at Muntok during World War Two is being raised.

Due to the poor quality of the reproduction of some of the photos, this article can be viewed with colour photos on the website: <http://www.malayanvolunteersgroup.uk/files/PalembangMuntok%20report.pdf>

CONTINUING THE HISTORY OF THE 'ULYSSES' – an interesting account of her early life

In Edition 14 of Apa Khabar, an article by MVG member **Capt. John Bax** gave the story of the “**Ulysses**” in WW 2, followed by **Kathleen Reeve's** account of what happened when she was torpedoed. This was read on the website by **Robin Sanderson**, who writes:-

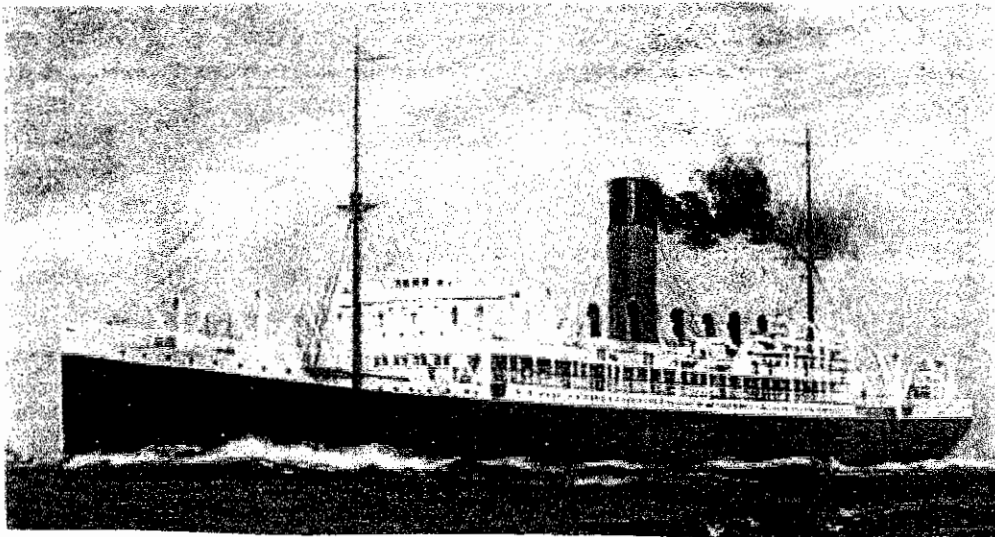
*“I was fascinated to read your Malayan Volunteers Group web story about the **Ulysses**. I am writing a book about my grandfather **Major Alexander Sanderson DSO MC bar** who was the O/C of the 3rd Australian Tunnelling Company and sailed on the **Ulysses** to Europe in 1916 to fight on the Western front. This is an extract from an interview he gave to the **Battye Library**, Perth WA in 1967:*

There was a rather interesting experience concerning the Mining Contingent. We left for Melbourne in the liner “**Ulysses**”, a 30,000 ton ship. [Ed: the tonnage given by **Capt. Bax** was 14, 499grt]. We had the whole Contingent aboard and we called into Fremantle to pick up the Western Australian half. They were camped near Midland Junction and waiting for the boat to come in. Going into Fremantle Harbour we ran onto a reef. She was drawing a lot of water, a lot more water than our average ships take and somehow the Captain got the ship too far out towards Garden Island and too far south. He ran against the reef and stripped the plates of the ship where he just grazed alongside a rock and for about 40 feet it put a gap on the outside plate but the inner bilge plates, that was the second lot of plates in the ship, were not punctured.

We got into Fremantle Harbour alongside the quay and they sent telegrams to the Defence Department there and they said they couldn't get another ship for perhaps three months and we'd be locked up for three months. Well, I'd been the technical advisor for a mining company and I was called in, having engineering knowledge. I suggested that we put 250 tons of reinforced concrete in and I actually, although I'd never been down in a diving suit, went down in a diving suit and examined the great rent in the side of the ship. The Captain didn't like the scheme, he was a bit nervous. He was a chap who didn't impress me at all. He was rather scared. Anyway, they decided to let us try putting the 250 tons in. We unloaded the “**Ulysses**” and turned her over as much as we could in the Harbour, and we covered the gash with tarpaulins and timber from the outside, and put 250 tons of reinforced concrete in the ship. Then we gave it a few weeks to harden, about 3 weeks, and we pumped the water out.

Robin Sanderson concludes with: Incidentally, my father was an 152 Para Officer about to retake Singapore at Elephant Point when the Hiroshima Bomb went off. He said it saved his life as there were ten times the Japanese soldiers in situ waiting to greet their parachute landing.

Peter Windsor sent this illustration of the “**Ulysses**” – sister ship to the “**Nestor**”.



NESTOR – A Blue Funnel Liner.

Built by Workman, Clark & Co., Belfast. Tonnage 14,501 gross. 580 ft. long x 68 ft.

Both ships were notable for their funnels which rose 75 ft above the boat deck. Launched on 7/12/1912 she departed for her maiden voyage to Australia on 19/5/1913 from Liverpool via South Africa. She had a huge cargo capacity & accommodation for 275 1st class passengers- later increased to 338. In September 1915 she was converted into a troopship to carry Australian troops to Britain, & took part in the Gallipoli campaign. In 1917 she returned to the Australian trade, still under government control, to carry desperately needed supplies to Britain. Released in 1919 she underwent a complete refit, and returned to commercial passenger service. When war broke out in 1939 she remained on the Australia route and was used to evacuate children from Britain to Australia and late in 1941 made a special voyage to the Far East. “**Nestor**” survived the war unlike her sister ship, and resumed her Australia trade. In 1949 she left Liverpool on her final voyage and was scrapped in 1950.

EXTRACTS OF LETTERS FROM RICHARD PEALL contd.
DECEMBER 1941 – FEBRUARY 1942

In memory of Richard ('Dick') Peall – 23/9/1907 – 15/2/1942 – by kind permission of Elizabeth Bunney

Monday 1st December

I am now a fully mobilized soldier. They started calling us up and I reported to camp at 2pm. I was then told to get busy on my own phone and call in all my platoon, so I have just spent a couple of hours ringing 'em all up with orders to report at camp by 2.30pm tomorrow. I gather that we then move to our appointed places as soon as we are ready. It's not on account of any worsening of the situation, but just a general precaution. Probably be back home in a day or two.

Have got a lot to do but thought I would hurry and get this posted before it goes through Camp Censorship. Will write again as soon as poss.

These 'ere crises don't 'alf take your mind off the war, don't they? Not 'alf they don't.

Friday Dec. 5th

I finished my last letter in a bit of a hurry and you will doubtless be wondering "where is my wandering boy tonight". The answer is, back home with a stengah* and a cigarette, once again (temporarily) a civilian! **Wallis** got busy with the "high heid yins" on Tuesday and 3 H.B. men and myself were released on Tuesday night. In my case, I have leave until Sunday night 14th, but am subject to immediate recall if anything startling happens – which I think is unlikely. There was a bit of chaos in business generally for a couple of days, but now that a number of firms and banks, etc. have had a certain number of men allowed back to them, business is settling down again, though at a reduced tempo, as the Cairo communiqués put it. As you can guess there is a hell of a lot to do as this is normally a busy time for Insurance, and now **Parkinson** in Singapore has been mobilized, there is even more to look after. Not much good commenting on current news, as it is no longer "current" by the time letters reach you. Meanwhile the rain continues to pour down day and night, and I am not sorry to be out of camp, even though I have a dry room of my own.

I had long letter from **Turner** on Wed. telling me of his staffing difficulties [at the Medical Hall in Singapore] with everyone called up. He is trying to get **Welsh** back, or one of the others. The whole lot were called, of course, even **Duthie** is doing all night stuff with the L.D.C. two or three nights a week.

Since **Henry's** death the firm have circularised all European staff asking for name and address of next of kin, if a will has been made, where deposited, name of solicitor etc. Very wise precaution as we could find no trace of a will in **Henry's** case and quite a job to find his parents!

* stengah – whisky and soda

Monday 8th Dec

Well, at last it's come and we now know where we are. Reported at camp straight away and am now off to join my crowd at our appointed place. Not much I can say, I've said it all hundreds of times and it holds good for ever.

Christmas Eve 1941

The only available time I seem to have these days for writing letters is in the middle of the night or early morning between "doing the rounds". I am very fit and well and safe and really remarkably comfortable – still doing the same job as mentioned in my last letter, i.e. near our seaside honeymoon place. I received your cable dated 19th – which presumably you sent when you heard that my original "war station" had been bombed. "**Lucky Peall**" had, of course, been shifted before then, but those that were still there were all also unhurt and no casualties.

We see planes buzzing about here every now and again and get "alerts" and "all clears" – sometimes. I always play safe and make everyone climb into their "funk-holes", but we have had no bombing or m.gunning here. Our troops up North seem to be holding the little bastards the last couple of days and there is no doubt that the Jap. is suffering pretty heavy casualties. B-dy good job, too, after what the swines did to Penang. I only hope we eventually get a chance to do likewise in Tokio (sic).

The news from Europe and N. Africa continues to be extremely encouraging, and Hong Kong still holds on. Am so tremendously relieved that you and **Liz** are still safely parked in Perth.

Obviously I can't write much about what is going on in this part of the world (even if I knew myself), I might as well skip the war and write a "social" letter. You mention that a **Mrs. Blythe** is shortly returning to K.L. and will be asking me round for pahits. I shall be delighted to go – especially if she can dig up some decent Scotch. I have come down to Canadian Rye, and am developing a throat like Lemmy Caution's! However, any port in a storm, and any hooch in a war. Give **Elizabeth** my love and say that I undoubtedly would have liked the pretty sky she admired recently, and that I,

too, have lately been seeing some lovely sunsets and **sunrises** that she would like.

Later 11.30 am

Another quiet night has passed, but we have had a couple of "alerts" since breakfast, tho' have sighted no planes. The troops are getting pretty nippy at hopping into the "lobongs", and I always make a dash for my mounted Lewis Gun hoping to get a smack at something. I should dearly like to make **Winston** a Christmas present of a Jap plane, but it would be amazing luck and a terrific fluke if I did score a **birdie**. My horoscope for this week (What the stars foretell, Sunday Times) says "excitement and good fortune on Friday" – here's hoping!

Christmas Day 4am.

A very Merry Christmas to you Sweetheart, and to our little **Elizabeth** and also to your Mother. Hope you all got nice presents in your stockings – what I would most like in all the world in mine would be you!

This letter is developing into a sort of diary, a paragraph at a time at all sorts of odd moments. But that's partly because I'm thinking of you in all my spare moments and consequently just come back to the letter and add a bit more. Still no excitement of any sort here.

Later 3pm. Just emerging from my bath, all dripping wet at 7am when our first "Christmas alert" sounded. Grabbed my towel and tin hat and dashed to the old gun feeling extraordinarily vulnerable somehow. Amazing what a difference a pair of trousers makes – in umpteen ways. Think I shall write an essay on "Trousers, and their effects on the Human Race". Anyway, no planes appeared so I was shortly able to go and complete my toilet. Two more alerts during the morning kept us on the hop, but in each case "no incidents were reported" as the communiqués so neatly put it. A case of beer from the N.A.A.F.I. arrived from camp this a.m. and has made a welcome addition to our Christmas menu.

The only incident for the War Diary.

Boxing Day 26th

No Jap planes for **Winston's** Christmas present. Most disappointed. Have not even seen one for two days, tho' apparently they had a crack at Seremban yesterday. Got a nice big scorpion in my bathroom – a real beauty, about the size of a double portion of a Coconut Grove dressed crayfish!

Rang up H.B. & Co. Accountant yesterday (**Thomson**) and asked him if poss. to pay Cooky and the syce their Dec. Salaries and to debit my account. Don't know if they are still there, of course.

Communications not too easy these days. Am afraid the house will just have to stay put for the time being as everyone is in the same boat, so to speak. No good trying to move everyone's stuff South as it would block the rlys. etc. and have the same effect as the refugees in France and Belgium. Hope for the best and see what happens. The lucky fellows these days – in one way – are bachelors who have no belongings and no family cares.

So Hong Kong has had to pack up. They certainly put up a grand fight for as long as they could; I hope that Malaya acquits itself as well.

Later 8pm. I believe K.L. and Seremban had a crack today but I have no details. Quiet day for us here, but am beginning to develop a fatherly interest in the place, and if anything happens I should like to be here when it does. The tide seems to be gradually moving South. My quarters here are pretty comfortable on the whole but at night – being rigorously blacked-out – everything is shut up and it gets so confoundedly hot. I now propose to get a spot of shuteye before doing my spell from 10-2 tonight. Will probably add a few reflections and musings later.

11pm.

In your letter you suggest that I am probably itching to use my revolver: not much, Sweetheart – too close for my liking, but I would like to let fly at something with the old rifle or L.G. (hereafter referred to as my Lloyd George). I think the blokes here with me consider me quite *gila* (*mad*). We have a lot of fireflies (*clip-clips* as the Malays call them) and I was telling one post the story of the Irishman who thought that they were mosquitoes looking for him with lanterns. There was a deathly silence while it sank in and then (to my great relief) two blokes laughed quite heartily and started to explain it to the others. Life is very hard, is it not? I got involved in one of those cross-talk "lost his soap, sunk his boat, cut his throat" incidents last night with one of our not-so-bright sentries. He had made no attempt to challenge me when I approached him, so I grabbed his rifle and shirt front and said "**Siapa ini?**" (*Who goes there*) "**Sahya**" came the squeaky reply (in a sort of "please it's me" voice) "**Siapa sahya?**" (*who is 'me'?*) I asked somewhat testily, peering into his face. "**Sahya Sinty**" came the reply. I gave up and walked rapidly off into the night, thinking dark thoughts of "**Peall and Mustafa**, cross talk comedians". He is the same chap who always steps off with the right foot instead of the left and does about half a dozen little hops and skips to get into step with the others; he also invariably turns left when you say "right", and right when you say "left". In fact a perfect Godsend on a dull day and I hope to sign him up for the Holborn Empire next Wednesday!

29th Dec. '41 Am still at the same place on the same job and still have seen nothing of the actual war. In other words,

we continue our little "sitzykrieg" altho' the tide of battle appears to be moving slowly south. With my gallant band of men, I am looking after the interests of the firm that provided bread and butter to **Joyce, Elaine** and **Roma** before they all married.

As I have already mentioned, we have had no excitement here yet, bar umpteen "alerts", but as we cannot always tell whether the planes we see are ours or theirs, we no doubt often climb into our funk-holes when we could safely be waving flags! However, better to climb in 20 times unnecessarily than to stay out once and find out too late that we should have gone to earth. Since my last letter K.L. has had a dusting, bombed and M-gunned, but don't know the extent of the damage or casualties. I believe all the bombs so far used by the Japs in Malaya have been comparatively small ones, so our towns have not been knocked flat like places in Europe and at Home. But of course, being just a "teeny weeny bit pregnant" as the girl said, is really sufficient!

Don't seem to have much to write about apart from the war, and not a great deal to say about that either. **Winston** made another fine speech to Congress in Washington the other day, didn't he? He certainly knows how to put it over. Until recently, ants have been the chief bane of my life here. So I got my orderly bloke to stand the table and dressing table legs in cig. tins filled with water, but they proved too small and the ants clambered across somehow. So I then told him to get bigger tins, and he produced empty "tinned herring" cans from the cook-house. They were duly put in position and looked most effective, but half an hour later fifteen fresh divisions of ants had arrived and were busy on the little bits of herring that had been left around the edges of the tins!! However, they have now been "picked clean" and only a few roaming guerrilla bands of ants remain.

This letter is being written in the still small hours of night, in between visits to the sentries and posts etc. With the place all closed up for the blackout it's b-dy hot and sticky, but outside tonight are a brilliant moon and millions of stars. "Bombers' Moon" alright, but a quiet night so far. "Target for Tonight" must be elsewhere again -- I hope. The news from Russia and Libya makes excellent reading and must be warming the hearts of the people at Home, tho' people with relatives and friends in Hong Kong will be having an anxious time until details of casualties filter through. I should imagine the Yanks must have been startled out of their skins by the sudden turn of events in the Pacific. Let's hope they get into their full war stride quicker than we did. I also hope that old **Lindberg** has taken a running jump into a lake some where.

Next Night 31.12.'41 3.30am.

Here we are again and still with nothing of interest to report: the usual crop of alerts but no planes low enough or near enough to identify them. Have managed to scrounge about ten tons of nice new cement in bags which I can make very good use of here. Seem to spend my waking hours thinking in terms of sandbags, wire, pits, and suchlike. Amazing how quickly and completely one can drop right out of civilian life into a totally different world in which golf clubs, cinemas, insurance premiums (and claims) and gin and tonics have no place whatsoever. Three weeks ago, "cement" to me was simply stuff one saw advertised on the screen, and which contractors could only get by applying to about 15 different "Proper Authorities". Today, I am positively gloating over my ten tons, and if any "Proper Authority" asks me where I got it, I should bung him in my Guard Room under close arrest!

Tomorrow will be 1942 and we shall be due for leave in August. I wonder what the year will have in store for us? Am only making one New Year's resolution and that is -- in **Churchill's** words -- to do everything possible to "teach Japan a lesson that she and the world will never forget". So that this will be my last 1941 letter to you and **Elizabeth**.

2nd January 1942

Yesterday we had a bit of excitement when we received a message that four unidentified high-speed launches were approaching rapidly from the S.E. Sure enough, shortly afterwards I spotted them through my glasses and they appeared to be coming straight in towards us. They were powerful, efficient-looking craft, and I was glad they were not destroyers or cruisers! I felt exactly like the bloke whose orderly "translated" his carefully worded report to H.Q. into "Bill speaking. Alf, ring all them bloody bells, the b-s are 'ere"! However, they curved away North and shortly afterwards I got another message confirming that they were "ours" out doing a patrol. A somewhat "disappointing relief" if you follow what I mean. "Alerts" continue to exercise a considerable nuisance value, but the planes seem to ignore us -- or be unaware of us -- and as soon as their backs are turned, so to speak, we get on with the day's washing. If you have seen **Mrs. Parsons** lately you will probably have heard that her husband lost his leg in the recent air-raid on K.L. He was on L.D.C. duty at the time. Pretty tough luck. I'm hoping to be relieved here to be able to get up to K.L. to see to some things. It is getting a bit dull here now that I have got a daily routine running smoothly and (more or less) efficiently. We get an occasional swim in our own private pagar* and have rigged up a floating target that we can tow out to sea and practice firing at it. The only real snag is the spell of night duty (6-10, 10-2, 2-6) which seriously interferes with my accustomed nine or ten hours steady snoozing, as naturally no chance of making up on it during the day time. The other night, owing to particular circumstances I had to do from 10-6 which was definitely not so good!

But I still feel that I am not yet doing as much as the average civilian at Home, so I'm not complaining.

*pagar – fenced in bathing area

4th Jan 1942 11.45pm

Am glad to hear that you are all well and hope you managed to get a cheery Xmas for **Elizabeth's** sake. Still no war around here altho' we had plenty of excitement yesterday. A bit too soon to write about it just yet but will give you details later. Not much news available of the position on Perak, but what news there is sounds not too bad. I have now applied for 12 hours' leave to go to K.L. as we seem to be stuck here for some time.

20th January 1942

No doubt you will have received my cable saying that we have arrived safely in the town in which we were married. The pencil is merely because I can't lay my hands on any pens or ink. It's a long story between my last letter written at P.D. and arrival, but altho' I have been under fire from the air, I still have not seen, heard, or had any contact with Jap ground troops.

You will have heard that the "scorched earth policy" is being applied here, and my last job at P.D. came to an end when we were ordered to "deny the stocks" to the enemy. This we did, and **Pa Venning's** firm lost a few hundred thousand dollar's worth of stuff! We then had to start moving South and joined the rest of the battalion, who had in the meantime got mixed up in a scrap with the enemy. They had a few casualties, **John Anderson** killed, **Tetley** missing, and one or two wounded including **Bob White** who has a bullet through the pelvis and groin; he is going on O.K. and I saw him in Alexandra Hospital yesterday, quite chirpy and safe. Malacca was our next stop and we lay up for a day just North of the town and watched the Jap planes bombing the place, trying for the two bridges we were hoping to cross! Then one must have spotted our H.Q. and a couple came circling low round us and dropped a few bombs nearby – started machine gunning. Fortunately they fell in sand in the next compound and did no damage. We, of course, were flat on the ground, and altho' I didn't mind the bombs so much, I felt a distinct dislike of the m.gunning. A nasty feeling lying on your tummy waiting for a crack in the back! However, they pushed off and left us in peace and we continued our journey South that night and the next day, undisturbed by any more "incidents".

We are now in quarters not far from where we used to "count the lighthouses" in our courting days – no lighthouses now, of course, only searchlights. Yesterday morning I went along to the Swimming Club and found about a dozen men there. In the middle of my second Tiger beer a raid started and we watched the b-s drop a few in the harbour before being chased off by ack-ack and fighters. A curious Sunday morning.

You will be relieved to hear that I managed to get a day off from P.D. and went up to K.L. before the debacle. I railed two trunks and two wooden boxes containing the silverware and lots of linen, but a lot of stuff just had to be left. It (linen) is now in G.L.* so we are much luckier than most people. I also have the car here and all our papers, certificates and P.O. books etc. I even got the wireless set as far as P.D., but had to abandon it there. Our home and furniture and lots of clothes etc. are, of course, now the property of **Tojo and Pogo** – or possibly **Hinode** my late hairdresser! But, as I say, we are very much more fortunate than many who merely got away with what they were wearing at the time they had to clear. I will send off at odd intervals one of these \$1 E.M.F. *cables; as the standard phrases are not always suitable you can take it that any cable from me saying "Greetings", or "Congratulations on your decoration" "Many happy returns" or "Baby girl born today" will mean I am O.K. and going strong. Never mind the words.

What happens to us now down here nobody quite knows. I have applied to go to any British Army Unit, I don't give a dam (sic) which, but they keep asking us to go to Indian Army etc. which is a bit useless as far as I am concerned as I can speak no Indian languages. And I have recently developed a strong preference to do my bit in the company of my own race! (or even Scots if necessary!)

Today and yesterday I received four letters from you, all very, very welcome, and I am delighted to hear that you and **Liz** are going strong. My word, you have got a household of K.L. wives and kids. Actually it should be a good thing at it will keep you all cheery and busy and one will get news of the others' menfolk perhaps and pass it round. You have no idea how often I take a quick look at the snap of you, **Liz** and **Margaret Brisbane** on the beach. I carry it in my identity passbook, with your last letter.

*GL – Grafton Laboratories, behind the Medical Hall, Singapore. *EMF – Empire Military Forces

Wed 21st Jan

Still pottering about but hope to get a move tomorrow. Last night I popped into Raffles and ran into **Dunlop** – the R.A.A.F. tennis player who stayed with **Bob** and me at the flat last August during the Malayan Championships. Had quite a cheery evening. Practically everyone in uniform, of course, and not very many women, but dancing still continues. It is all enclosed, so that the blackout does not affect the fun and games inside.

Am keeping amazingly fit and well, feet showing no signs of S'pore foot *tinea which is a good thing. The last few days have been a rest cure for all of us – very welcome too.

Padre Webb (now Capt.) is here and sends his regards.

When I got to K.L. Cooky was still there but *Dollah has pushed off. I had managed to contact the office previously to pay them their Dec. wages, so in addition I gave Cooky \$70 and the bicycle! He had hung on and got a lot of our stuff packed up, altho' all his pals had fled, so he served us well. You will realize that I had to bung off what I could in the few hours I had available. Poor **Elizabeth's** basket of toys and little clothes looked very forlorn, and I just hated leaving our comfortable little home. I'll get my own back on the little yellow bastards some day. The people in Singapore still don't realize the war is so close, I suppose it's difficult to realize what it's like if you haven't yet had your home looted and abandoned.

Sunday 25th

Am now amongst pineapples a few miles from where we once spent a day with **Stan** and **Gladys** before we were married. Still going strong and pretty comfortably quartered. Pineapple soup, pineapple cocktails, pineapple jam, pineapple stew, and pineapple smells! Never, ever dare bring a pineapple into our home in the future – I'm sure I'm beginning to look like one!

All my love to you both, and keep cheerful and don't worry as we are all doing fine.

Au revoir, Beautiful. – Yr loving Richard.

*S'pore foot - tinea *Dollah – the syce or driver

5th Feb. 1942

E.M.F. Cable.

Telegram and parcels received. Many thanks. All well and safe. Fondest love darling. Dick Peall.

This was the last communication Isabel Peall received from her husband, but she did receive the following:-

17th Sept. 1945

Trincomalee (Ceylon)

Regret **Dick** killed Singapore 15 Feb 1942. **Alastair Gibson** (cousin).

Malayan Government Agency, 61, Hunter St., Sydney.

Dear Madam,

I deeply regret to have to inform you that official notification of your husband's death has now been received from the Colonial Office. The Telegram states that **Lieutenant R.H. Peall, FMSVF**, is reported by the Bureau of Records and Inquiries, Singapore, to be missing believed killed on the 15th February, 1942. **Lieutenant Peall's** death has been presumed by the Colonial Office and the death certificate issued to his father. The Secretary of State for the Colonies asks me to convey to you an expression of his deep sympathy in the sad loss of your husband.

Yours faithfully, **E.T. Williams.**

October 10th 1945. Chatswood, N.S.W.

Dear Isabel,

Your letter to **Dawn** arrived yesterday. I am so sorry I haven't written to you before. I think your cousin gave me your address, but in the chaos in Singapore, I'm afraid one omitted to do many things.

I don't know the full details regarding **Dick** but I am very sorry to say that I do understand there is no doubt about his death in action. I heard about **Dick** on Feb 15th/42. We were patrolling the Geylang-Kallang area in our armoured cars that day, and I heard the news from some Volunteers who were stationed on machine gun posts there. I understand he was killed instantly, I believe by bombing. If it had to be, it's much better that way, **Isabel**. It always seems that in war the best fellows get it, and **Dick** certainly came under that category.

You might be interested to know that whilst in Changi a European Association of Malaysians was formed to watch more closely the interests of Europeans in Malaya. It must have (had) a membership of over 2,000, most of them somewhat angry. It is considered that Volunteers have had a pretty raw deal and, although it's too late to do much regarding that, we are all determined there shall be no nonsense regarding the treatment of those whose husbands lost their lives.

Due to malaria I am now a rather yellow-looking object, but under **Dawn's** watchful eye plus excellent cooking, I am busy putting back the 2 ½ stones in weight I lost as a guest of the yellow apes. How I loathe them!

I do wish I could have given you happier news. I'll close now with best wishes to you and your little daughter,

Yours sincerely, **Nobby.**

c/o Bank of New South Wales, Perth, W.A. 1.12.45

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Peall,

I am writing a short letter to you because I think you might like to know what little I can tell you about your son during the war in Malaya.

He was always a keen Volunteer and for long had been C.S.M. to "B" Coy. of my battalion. He was commissioned shortly before the war in the East and carried out his duties as an officer in a diligent and conscientious manner. We had platoons comprised of both European and Malay personnel. His was a Malay platoon and I recollect how well he instructed them and how well they reacted to his leadership.

Towards the end, by the time the fighting was confined to Singapore Island, the four F.M.S. battalions were combined to form one unit. Your son was in the only Asiatic Coy. of the new unit, and again I noticed how well he controlled them and they followed him.

During the last few days things became very confused and I saw little of him. His Coy. was put in to counterattack on the afternoon of 14th Feb. (Saturday), which stabilized the position, and again on Sunday forenoon. At about midday, the whole position was heavily attacked by the Japanese, and the left flank of my unit was overrun. The Asiatic Coy's position formed a part of the left. By the time the front was again stabilized, we received the order to cease fire, and on the following day all Europeans and Asiatics were separated. The only information I could get of the situation at the time was that the Coy. Cmdr. – **Major Cockman** and another officer, **Crosbie-Hill** – had been killed and that your son had been wounded slightly, in the arm, I think. The only officer of the Coy. to survive the action was somewhat detached from the main portion of the Coy. and could give me no information except in his own particular front. He unfortunately died later as a prisoner of war. I have never had an opportunity of contacting any of the Asiatic survivors, if indeed, there are any. Later when we became prisoners, there were many stories concerning the fate of this Coy., and finally I formed the conclusion that those who stood their ground – and your son certainly did this – were the victims of intense machine gun and mortar fire which the Japanese brought to bear on the position, which was all too weakly held by us, considering the preponderating numbers of Japanese.

Padre Webb (our Bn. Padre) and I made two attempts to revisit the position on the day following the capitulation, but the Japanese turned us back and flatly refused to listen to our appeals. The part occupied by my unit was some 6,000 yards from flank to flank, and you will appreciate therefore I had some difficulty in keeping in touch with the junior command. May I offer my deepest sympathy in your great loss.

Yours sincerely, **W.M. James (Lt. Col.)**.

THE WARTIME EXPERIENCES OF JAMES CARLISLE – by kind permission of his son Hamish Carlisle

My father, **James Carlisle** (b. 17/5/1907 Johnstone, Renfrewshire; d. 9/7/1963 Edinburgh) trained as an engineer and became an Engineering Officer with the Merchant Navy. Having travelled all over the world in this capacity, he was offered a position managing a tin dredge in **Kota Tinggi, Johore**, sometime in the mid 1930s.

He features in two photographs of the Johore Volunteer Engineers Musketry Cup. After the Japanese invasion of Burma he was asked to join an "air force" unit to carry out a mission not long before the Japanese invasion of Malaya. This involved concealing explosives in barrels of grease, driving across neutral Siam into Burma, destroying an airfield, and returning. All objectives were accomplished and the party were returning south through the Malay peninsula when they realized there were Japanese army groups heading south by road simultaneously. Using minor roads they managed to reach Singapore safely. Here he was placed in a squad round the docks to dig slit trenches in preparation for the imminent Japanese assault. A very desperate sea captain appeared asking whether any of those present was a qualified ship's engineer. My father put his hand up, was given permission to leave and took the man's ship out of Singapore successfully. The original engineer had been killed by Japanese fighter bullets. On the way out of the harbour several oil tankers were bombed and burst into flames. My father described this as the biggest firework display he had ever seen.

After some days they arrived in Java. He was replaced by an engineer from the company and became a guest of the Dutch Consul until all Europeans decided to evacuate. Eventually he arrived in Australia where he found work in Adelaide.

On his return to the U.K. he visited the head office of the tin company. They insisted on paying him for the entire intervening period, despite his protests, and then informed him that they would have to let him go. He found work in Caithness, where he met and married my mother. He was asked to return to Malaya after the war but decided against it.

After some years in the south of England the family, now with four children, returned to Scotland in 1959. Here we bought a substantial house in the Grange area of Edinburgh to run as a guest house. The vendor was selling some of the artifacts and my father expressed interest in a lithograph of a tiger. This was not for sale as it had been sold to a **Mr. Strath**, who had been "out east". **Mr. Strath** was in fact **Alistair Strath**, an old colleague of my father from the JVE. He had been less fortunate than my father and had spent the war in captivity, but had still survived. My father was shocked at how much smaller he had become.

My father died in 1963.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Neill Aitken writes re:- The re-development of the SSVF HQ in Beach Road, Singapore.

"I am still trying to obtain further information for StudioLapis, with the emphasis on colour photography, but so far without success. I took with me to Singapore a rebound copy of the history of the Volunteer Corps to lend to Mr. Ho. However, due to one thing and another, we could not meet and I have left it with our son to be collected and will await developments. I was able to point him to a couple of other sources of photographic material and hope he may have some success with them. Not much progress I'm afraid, but will keep you advised of developments.

Former MVG member Velvet Douglas writes:-

I noticed on the MVG website under Enquiries a Drew Davidson wanting information on Robert Guy Young, who is also my great uncle. My e-mail sent to Drew Davidson using the contact e-mail address given was returned as undeliverable. Does anyone have a postal address or can give me his new e-mail address, please?

Contact Velvet on :- The Glebe House, Holebrook Lane, Lydlinch, Sturminster Newton, Dorset DT10 2JA.

Sheila Ellis (nee Vanrenen) writes:-

My grandfather, Walter Campbell Vanrenen, uncle Donald, and father Frank Campbell Vanrenen were all rubber planters in Malaya. My father Frank managed the Lowin Estate in Kuala Kangsar, Perak. My aunt Anne and her daughter Pippa were evacuated to Australia where they were eventually joined by my uncle Donald. My pregnant mother, Margaret, was determined to return to the U.K. I was born in the British Family Hospital, Bombay, in April 1942. The date of our arrival back in the U.K. is unknown to me.

The Wellington School Roll of Honour 1939-1945 states the following about my father:-

Lieutenant Frank Campbell Vanrenen, resigned his commission with the Somerset Light Infantry when he became a rubber planter in Malayan in 1926, where he joined the Malayan Volunteer Force. Just before the outbreak of war in the Far East he joined the British Army General List & volunteered to go into enemy occupied Malaya for sabotage and to obtain information. He was three times captured by the Japanese. The first occasion was before the fall of Singapore, when he escaped, reached the coast and sailed to Sumatra in a small open boat, and from there returned to Singapore. After the fall of Singapore he returned to Malaya and was again captured. He escaped from Pudu Prison, and was free for about 18 days, but was recaptured and killed by the Japanese in September 1942. He received a mention in dispatches and was awarded the 1939-45 Star, Pacific Star & War medal 1939-45, posthumously.

I should be delighted to hear from anyone who knew of our family in Malaya.

[Editor: The story of Sheila's aunt and uncle - Donald and Anne Vanrenen - will be included in the October newsletter].

David Duncan writes:-

I live in Canada - now aged 75 - and as time passes one feels the need to contribute a bit to the family history for our only son (as I was). Scottish people didn't talk much about WW2 - my father took part in the British Army, and my uncle was in the RCAF. My grandfather was C.W. Duncan. On the MVG website I have just discovered that my Grandfather's two sisters were listed on the "Evacuees" list on the 'Tanjong Pinang'. One of my grandfather's sisters was Ruby (Rubina) Duncan and she was headmistress at Wellesley School (in Penang?). She wrote 3 school books for her pupils, called "Look and Read" which were thought to have been illustrated by her sister Lizzie who was an Art teacher at a Methodist Mission in Penang.

Art ran in my grandparent's family with my grandmother being art-design orientated and my grandfather a writer, poet, and author of children's books in Scotland, besides being a linguist in Gaelic teaching and Spanish.

Yvonne Wurtzburg (nee Dymond) writes:-

I have just read the welcome pack and saw the query about the Lyeemoon (in the April newsletter). I have in notes from my mother that we left Singapore on the Lyeemoon for Colombo on 31st December 1941.

Research on the Lyeemoon has been forwarded by Michael and Sue Dewe to Yvonne. It came via Liz Moggie who raised the query in the April edition of A.K. when telling the story of Michael's and his brother Roddy's evacuation on the Lyeemoon. Originally called the Gorgon (1), she was built in 1908 by Scotts Shipbuilding & Engineering Co. Ltd. at Greenock for the Ocean Steam Ship Company, and deployed on the Singapore-Batavia-Fremantle service alongside the Charon. In 1917 she was requisitioned by the British Government and used in the Mediterranean to carry motor transport and troops as an Expeditionary Force Transport. She was sold to the Cheong Hing Steamship Co.Ltd., of Hong Kong and renamed Lyeemoon. Used as an emigrant ship in Chinese & South East Asian waters, she apparently avoided Japanese control during WW2 and was supposedly wrecked at Benghazi on 4th January 1943.

Evidence from the Admiralty War Diaries of World War 2 clearly shows that the Lyeemoon left Singapore, unescorted, on 31st December 1941 and arrived in Colombo on 13th January 1942, carrying 75 personnel.

[100]

The man has white hair because he is old. The boy has black hair because he is young.

Some lanterns are made of paper. The lanterns hanging from the bamboo pole are made of cloth. The cloth covers a bamboo frame. The old man will paint a Chinese name or a picture on one of the lanterns.

Chinese lanterns hang in front of Chinese houses. People light them on feast days and on prayer days. Then they look very pretty.

When a Chinese wedding takes place, only red lanterns are used.

When do you light lanterns? Who paints Chinese lanterns?

[101]



Lesson 49.—A Procession

This is a picture of part of a Chingay procession. When men walk along the street carrying banners, lanterns, and scrolls, we call that a procession.

Two beautiful banners are being carried along the street. One is purple and yellow. The other is green and red. Both are made of silk, and are fixed to long bamboo poles.

BOOKS

The Editor apologizes to Jonathan Moffatt and Julie Summers for the typing error in the first line of Jonathan's review of Julie's book "When the Children Came Home", in the April Newsletter. This line should have read:- "Following her exploration in "Stranger in the House" of the theme of returning WW2 servicemen"

"THE KOTAL ROUTE SKETCHES: Royal Society Kinabalu Expedition 1964".

John Corner has informed MVG that 2 years ago he donated his father's (E.J.H Corner) sketches, made during an Expedition to Mount Kota Kinabalu, to the Royal Society. The sketches have been put together into a book of the Expedition and John attended the launch of the book in Kota Kinabalu, on 19th April, at the Sabah Secretariat.

"THE BARBED-WIRE UNIVERSITY. The Real Lives of Prisoners of War in the Second World War". By Midge Gillies. Published by Aurum Press Ltd. 2011. ISBN 978-1-84513-629-1 RRP £25 but shop around. 486 pages, photos & illustrations. Reviewed by Jonathan Moffatt:-

The author Midge Gillies is known to some MVG members as a speaker and committee member for the Researching FEPOW History Conference. She is a Cambridge lecturer and journalist whose father was captured by the Germans in Italy. His experiences provide an interesting, affectionate but unsentimental way into various themes.

This extremely well written, impressive book is a POW history with a difference: instead of revisiting the usual themes of POW escapes in Europe and POW suffering in the Far East, the focus is a detailed exploration, indeed celebration, of POW creativity, ingenuity and inventiveness with the brutal realities of war and captivity never far from the surface.

Red Cross parcels provide a surprisingly interesting analysis which includes the ingenious use of string and empty tins and the importance of cigarettes. Deprived of any certainty of such parcels, Far East POWs needed to seek practical solutions to combat vitamin deficiency: they became 'skilled farm hands, ingenious cooks and wily thieves'.

POWs in Europe include the future actors Clive Dunn, Sam Kydd and Denholm Elliott. Ambitious dramatic productions, plays, concerts and reviews raised morale and gave some relief to the tedium of POW camps in Europe and the terrible deprivation of Far East camps. It seems that the worse the camp, the more ambitious the production.

There are good sections on bird watching, art and photography and sport. Professional footballers, cricketers and rugby internationals were among the POWs.

The contribution of Malayan Volunteer POWs in the area of disease avoidance, medical treatment, knowledge of local languages and the setting up of rubber factories is acknowledged with mention of John Clemetson, planter Duncan Paterson, Freemason Harry Wylie and the Raffles lecturers of 'Changi University'. Libraries, book swaps and 'brains trusts' provided much needed mental stimulus. Frank Bell set up the 'Kuching University' in the unpromising location of Batu Lintang camp.

Among those extensively interviewed is Nowell Peach, an RAF medical officer who worked in Java with 'Weary' Dunlop. He memorized Gray's Anatomy in 3 months and became a great surgical improviser, saving lives using such apparently unpromising material as bamboo and scraps of rubber.

Other FEPOW contributors include a number of friends of the Researching FEPOW History Conference: magician Fergus Anckorn, engineer James Wakefield and artist Jack Chalker whose drawings reflect compassion for the suffering of others and an awareness of how illness invades the human body. The work of Ronald Searle is also explored.

A fascinating, substantial book and an important contribution to POW history.

"THE ROAD TO SINGAPORE. The Diary of Basil Walker-Taylor December 1941 – February 1942". Edited by his son Paddy Walker-Taylor. ISBN 978-0-9561930-0-1 152 pages including photos and illustrations.

Reviewed by Jonathan Moffatt:-

Basil Walker-Taylor was born and educated in Sydney and came to Malaya in 1926 to join the Surveys Department FMS and SS. By 1941 he was Superintendent of Surveys in Kedah with 12 years service in the Malayan Volunteers including the Kedah Volunteer Force. In 1941, as an Assistant Food Controller, he was responsible for keeping the rice mills running and food shops open.

From their house, the Walker-Taylors heard and observed the bombing of Alor Star aerodrome. Pongo Scarfe's shot-up Blenheim crashed nearby.

Basil enlisted in the Perak Volunteers [1/FMSVF], not an entirely happy experience. He participated in the Battle of Kampar and the orderly withdrawal that followed. Shortly afterwards he received a commission in 22 Mountain Regiment RA.

As the narrative reaches Singapore and the final catastrophic weeks in Singapore we are introduced to members of his wife Patricia's family: the Barrs, the Gordons, the Manessahs and Vivien Bath and their family home of Eden Hall, familiar to many who have lived in post war Singapore.

The diary concludes with fruitless efforts to find a suitable escape boat and preparations to march to Changi with 6,000 Gold Flake cigarettes, 'liberated' from the Polo Club, in his kitbag. A very interesting, frank account.

A few copies of this book are still available from Paddy Walker-Taylor for £10 including postage. Contact Paddy by e-mail at p.walkertaylor@btinternet.com Payment by cheque payable to P. Walker-Taylor at 15, Upper Hill Rise, Rickmansworth WD3 7NU

[Editor: N.B. I have a few copies of "The Amonohasidate or The Gate of Heaven" by the late MVG member Veteran Volunteer Richard Yardley. Generously donated to the MVG by Richard's family, at a cost of £7 including postage. Payment to 'Mrs. R. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group' & sent to the address shown on P.26. Sales are for MVG funds].

"MALAYAN SPYMASTER". Boris Hembry's Memoirs. Publisher Monsoon Books, Singapore: www.monsoonbooks.com.sg
Reviewed by Bill Adamson, Parkerville, Western Australia.

During his twilight years, **Boris Hembry** asked two of his family members to record his memoirs for the family. They were never intended for open publication.

John, his son, and his family have quite understandably been proud of and enthralled by all they know about their personal 'father figure'. **Boris** was indeed a strong willed, trusted, intelligent and forthright person who generally left his mark wherever destiny moved him around the South East Asian region, mostly within the expanse of the Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements - and in Perak in particular.

John's family graciously believe the memoirs left in their keeping (written for them under the title "In Lands beyond the Sea") should be opened to a wider audience, especially those expatriates who, for much of their lives, considered themselves to be Malayan! There are fewer and fewer of us left on the planet, but later generations now have the opportunity to read and understand what daily life was like within the Peninsular of Malaya from 1920 to 1956.

The memoirs have been published in an abridged format, and re-named "Malayan Spymaster". Anyone with Colonial blood, who was also involved with the development of the Malayan nation and its defence against aggression, should read this book.

Boris has a great gift in the manner he writes and presents his subjects. You can actually live through the narrative. My family and I have certainly lived through much of what he writes about, and know many of the people mentioned.

Boris Hembry worked as a rubber planter for a period of over 35 years. During that time he gained a wide experience not only in planting, but also in military and civilian administration due to living through the War and the Malayan Emergency. There are various reports in his memoirs, of historical events in which he was involved, some of which took place while he was living in Perak - one of these being the event which took place on 16th June 1948 in the Sungei Siput district. He was a true friend to many in the rubber plantation industry, including myself.

I enjoyed all sections of the book – the details of his planting experience pre- and post-war – his wartime service – and his dealings with the post-war Emergency. Indeed, **Boris Hembry** was a dominant figure during this important period in Malaya's formative years leading to the emergence of the modern country we know today as Malaysia.

I suggest you purchase "Malayan Spymaster" and enjoy reading about **Boris Hembry's** exciting life for yourselves.

"STOLEN CHILDHOODS: The Untold Story of the Children Interned by the Japanese in the Second World War". By **Nicola Tyrer**. Published by Orion. Bookshop price £16.50 e/book £20

An inspirational and moving tribute to the thousands of British children who spent World War 2 in the appalling, sometimes barbaric, conditions of Japanese prison camps.

This is a comprehensive tribute to nearly 4,000 British children who were imprisoned in China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, the Dutch East Indies and even in Japan itself. **Tyrer's** triumph is to capture the full breadth of the internment experience for children, from black comedy and adventure to bitter tragedy. The camps varied tremendously, but by far the worst were those run by the Japanese army in the Dutch East Indies, where all manner of brutal regimes were put in place for the most minor transgressions. Those camps under civilian guard, although unpleasant, were not as barbaric. To a degree, "normal" childhoods were preserved in some of the British camps, with the introduction of classrooms where teachers taught from memory and the children scratched their Latin verbs in sand with sticks & wrote exams on lavatory paper & soup labels. Scout groups, sports days and plays were organized. In other camps, such as Stanley Camp in Hong Kong, the children became "feral and amoral" as food stocks dwindled and life became more and more a question of the survival of the fittest. School work and other group activities petered out as the energy to participate vanished.

The sacrifices made by parents to keep their children alive, are still tearfully remembered by those children who survived to tell their stories to **Tyrer**. Yet many of these children did survive to live happy lives into an old age.

Written in 1982, "**Women beyond the Wire. A Story of Prisoners of the Japanese 1942 – 45**", by **Lavinia Warner** and **John Sandilands**, this book tells the story of the women who fled from Singapore as the island fell to the Japanese. The fleet of small ships ferrying them away was systematically destroyed by Japanese warships, planes and submarines, leaving their cargo of humanity washed up on the shores of Sumatra where they were captured and imprisoned. The book was conceived as a result of a "This is your Life" programme featuring Dame Margot Turner – one of the inmates of the camps. In 1979, **Lavinia Warner** wrote the acclaimed documentary "Women in Captivity" for the BBC-TV, and as a result of this created the fictional TV drama series "Tenko".

Also worth reading are two other books. "**My Life. Chronicles of a wartime pilot and other stories**", by **Lim Kean Chong** – an autobiography – and "**A Cloistered War**", by **Maisie Duncan**, which details her memoirs of pre and post-war Malaya.

OBITUARIES

INGLIS GOODFELLOW – born 25/10/1937 – died 11/4/2011

Master baker, TA major, business man, voluntary worker in Arbroath and Bon Viveur.

The MVG is sad to report the death of **Inglis Goodfellow**, husband of **Rhona (nee McLeod)**. We send our very sincere sympathies to **Rhona (daughter of Aden McLeod 4/SSVF from Malacca)** her daughter **Louise**, & her son **Andrew** for their tragic loss.

Inglis was born in Broughty Ferry and, following training in Bakery Schools in Glasgow and Switzerland, joined the family bakery business. As the business expanded he became marketing Director. In 1965 he married **Rhona** and they settled in Cotton of Gardyne, Arbroath. A bon viveur and raconteur, **Inglis** lived life to the full.

PENNY BREWIS – born 31st October 1946 and died 21st April 2011

It is with great sadness that we report the death of MVG member **Penny Brewis**. **Penny** was a very supportive member of the Group, and attended the Researching FEPOW History Conferences at Alrewas, with her husband **Bob**.

Penny's mother's first husband, **Thomas D. Turner RAF** was sent to work on the Burma-Siam Railway. He was in the same camp as the late **Veteran Volunteer Geoff Mowat**, who worked as a camp medical orderly, and tended to **Thomas** before he died. **Penny** always had the greatest respect for **Geoff** and the selfless way in which he looked after the sick and dying.

The Service of Thanksgiving for **Penny's** life was held in St. Paul's Church in Preston, Paignton on 4th May. The Church was packed full of people whose lives had been enriched by coming into contact with **Penny** in so many ways. She had lived a full and very varied life with her three daughters and her husband **Bob**,

whose military career had taken them all over the world, including Singapore for a couple of years. The Eulogy was given by Revd. Pauline Lewis MBE a family friend. Our thoughts and prayers are with **Bob**, his daughters **Jennie, Sallie and Lucie**, and their families at this sad time. We are extremely grateful for the most generous legacy which **Penny** left for the MVG in her will. We have said that this will be put towards the Memorial we plan to present to the women and children civilians who were imprisoned in Muntok on Banka Island, as reported in Judy Balcome's article. For anyone wishing to contact **Bob Brewis** – his new address is:-
Apartment 7, Belvedere Court., 37, Marine Drive, Paignton, Devon TQ3 2NS



Ian Johnston wrote to inform us of the death of his mother on 4th June in the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital. We send our sincere condolences for her loss to **Ian** and his family. **Ian** says that his mother was born in Exeter and spent the war years with the A.T.S. at various locations before leaving for Singapore in 1946/7 to work for the Joint Intelligence Bureau. She met **Ian's** father in Singapore and they were married there before returning home. After the death of **Ian's** father she lived in Exmouth. We know how much she will be missed by her family

The deaths of two other British Malaysians have been announced. **John** and **Ann Evans** attended the funeral of **Dorothy Alexander** who died in June in Newick aged 98. She was the widow of **Norman Alexander** of Scottish Malay Estates and Manager of Ulu Buloh & Strathmore Estates, Sungei Buloh, Selangor. He served in the LDC and was a Changi & Sime Road internee. **Dorothy** was evacuated to Fremantle, WA on the **Narkunda**. The family returned to Malaya in 1946 and to Elmina Estate in 1951. He died in 1961. We send our condolences to their three sons, James, Norman and Douglas. **Norman's** brother was a Volunteer, who died as a POW. His name was on the Kuala Selangor Memorial.

Also we report the death of **Arthur Stanley Dunstan, 4/FMSVF** who was a POW in Singapore [Blakang Mati & Changi] Born in Camborne, Cornwall in 1917, he died on 26th March 2011 aged 93 at Long Rock in Cornwall. He went to Malaya in 1937 as a mining engineer – working for Pahang Consolidated. His wife **Beryl Rosina** predeceased him, but they had 2 children **Roy & Rosemary** and we send our sympathies to them & their families

Reported in the Telegraph on 14th May was the death of **Professor Leslie Audus**, aged 99. He was a Professor of Botany and a world authority on the hormones which control plant growth. As a POW he used his expertise to culture yeast and soya which saved the lives of many of his fellow POWs. He obtained his degree at Cambridge and did postgraduate work for another 3 years before moving to Cardiff University to do research into plant physiology & teach. He joined the RAFVR in 1940 & was posted to Malaya. He explored the rainforest of Johore with **John Corner**. On the Fall of Singapore he escaped with his unit by ship to Jakarta, but was later captured by the Japanese. Senior captive officers, knowing his expertise as a botanist, asked **Audus** to produce yeast. With help of Dutch POWs at **Jaarmarkt** camp at **Surabaya**, he produced yeast using maize grain as a raw ingredient. However, when he was transferred to **Haruku** island maize was not available. He managed to isolate a mould fungus which he used for yeast production and by fermenting soya beans he produced an easily digestible protein. In his book "**Spice Island Slaves**" he records the horrors of being forced to work in blinding sunshine to build an airstrip from coral – many POWs suffering from beriberi and malnutrition which affected their eyesight. One of the last men to leave **Haruku** he discovered that he, too, was suffering from irreversible retinal damage, but overcame his disability to follow a distinguished botanical career.

An interesting anecdote about **Audus's** time in captivity centres on a collection of gramophone records which he managed to take with him to **Jakarta**, and into captivity. When sent to **Haruku**, he scratched his initials on each one, and left them behind. A fellow POW saved 36 of the records and was playing them when **Audus** was liberated. Pointing to the scratched initials, **Audus** claimed them as his, and kept them for the rest of his life. On 6th July, the death of New Zealander **Geoff Fiskien**, aged 95, was reported. He was the most successful British Commonwealth fighter pilot to have flown against the Japanese, credited with destroying at least 10 enemy aircraft. He joined No. 243 Squadron in Singapore in early 1941 to fly the American built Brewster Buffalo fighter. **Fiskien** was flying one of the two Buffalos which witnessed the aftermath of the sinkings of the **Prince of Wales** and **Repulse**. It soon became clear that the Buffalo was no match for the Zero fighter used by

the Japanese, but on 12th January he shot down his first Bomber, followed by several more in the next few days. By the end of January 242 Squadron was virtually wiped out, and on 1st Feb he was wounded as he engaged a Zero fighter & was attacked by 2 others. He was evacuated before the fall of Singapore back to New Zealand, and after recovering from his wounds, joined No.14 Squadron to fly Kittyhawks. His unit moved to Guadalcanal in 1943 and he continued to destroy enemy aircraft becoming the first New Zealander to achieve "ace" status in the Pacific theatre. In September 1943 he was awarded a DFC but later that year was invalidated out by troublesome war wounds.

Lieutenant Tul Bahadur Pun, VC died on 20th April 2011 aged 88. His distinguished career while serving with the Second Chindit Expedition in Burma in 1944, won him the Victoria Cross. In the face of incredible odds, Pun seized an enemy position called The Red House which enabled the 3rd Battalion 6th Gurkha Rifles to reach their objective of capturing the railway bridge at Morgaung and the Japanese supply centre there. Among the lives saved by his action was that of **Major James Lumley** whose daughter **Joanna** has become one of the Gurkha Welfare Trust's staunchest supporters. Post-war he saw action in Malaya and Hong Kong and retired in 1959. He returned to his village in Nepal where he farmed and also opened 2 schools, but settled in England in 2007. He died back in his home country while visiting to open a new secondary school.

The citation for **Pun's VC** reads: "Rifleman **Pun's** courage and superb gallantry in the face of odds which meant almost certain death were most inspiring to all ranks and were beyond praise".

The obituary of **Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach**, who died on 26th April, was given in the Telegraph on 27th April 2011. His father was **Captain J.C. Leach MVO, DSO** commander of the **Prince of Wales** when she was sunk on December 10th in the South China Sea by the Japanese. At the time **Leach** was in Singapore working as a plotting officer in the war room while his ship, the cruiser **Mauritius**, was having a refit. He learned of the torpedoing of his father's ship while at his post. Then a midshipman, **Leach** went on to have a distinguished naval career - seeing action again in the Far East at the end of the Korean War, and in 1955 he took part in the Malayan Emergency when his ship, **Newcastle** supported the Army and Royal Marines.

SINGAPORE – 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SURRENDER ON 15TH FEBRUARY 2012 – Editor's report

Despite several requests to be given an outline of the events and timings of the Memorial Services which are planned for the period covering the Fall of Singapore in February 1942, I have not yet had a reply from the Changi Museum. **Liz Moggie** telephoned **Robin Blackburn** at the Museum on 7th July, to seek information, and reports that the Museum is in the final stages of planning and that a definite schedule should be out in 2 weeks time. To date we have not received any confirmation of events, but we have been advised that members planning to visit Singapore to attend ceremonies, should leave a week on either side of the 15th February 2012 if they wish to attend all events. The main Service which the Changi Museum is organizing will take place on **14th February 2012** (the day before the actual surrender).

I am very sorry that, at the time of going to copy, I am unable to give all those who have contacted me more information about this event. We thank **Liz** for her efforts on behalf of the MVG.

THE LONDON REUNION AND LUNCH – SATURDAY 29TH OCTOBER 2011

As announced in the **April 2011** edition of *Apa Khabar*, please note that the date of the London Reunion and Lunch has been changed to **29th October**. This means that we can again have the Ballroom at the RAF Club, which has suited our purposes very well for the last 2 years. **Hugh** asks that you let him know as soon as possible if you wish to attend the lunch, together with the number and names of guests you wish to bring with you – even if only provisional numbers. Guests do not need to belong to the MVG, if you have family members or friends who wish to attend with you.

There will be a bar for the purchase of pre-lunch drinks. Wine can also be bought to have with your meal if wished. The set menu chosen for this year is a chicken dish with seasonal vegetables, followed by fruit salad and coffee or tea with petit fours. A vegetarian option is available, but please advise **Hugh** of your preference when booking.

The cost this year is £31.50 per person. Please send your cheques to **Rosemary by 1st October 2011**, made out to:-

Mrs. R. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group

We are fortunate that **Dato' Anthony Cooper** has agreed to give the talk this year. Entitled "**Malayan Memoirs from Yesteryear and Malaysia today**", it will be a nostalgic mix of memories from the Malaya of our childhoods contrasted with the modern, high-tech. country of today, in which **Anthony** is a senior partner at Price Waterhouse in K.L.

Please remember to bring something with you as a raffle prize. Without the services of **Daniel** this year, we are looking for a volunteer to sell the tickets – and extract from us all a good sum to add to the Group's funds!

This is a wonderful opportunity to keep in touch, meet new members, talk about old memories of Malaya, re-new friendships and generally have a good afternoon.

We look forward to seeing you between **noon and 4 p.m.** on 29th October at the RAF Club, Piccadilly.

NEW MEMBERSHIP CARDS AND UP-TO-DATE LIST OF MEMBERS – JULY 2011 TO JULY 2012

Please retain your Membership Cards for the duration of your membership of the MVG. These are **NOT** renewable each year. Also, please let **Rosemary** know if there are any corrections or additions you would like to make to your entry in the Members' List. I have tried to make this as comprehensive as possible – with Evacuation ships where known.

* MVG SUBSCRIPTIONS*

This is a plea about payment of subscriptions- including overseas members

There is a notice in the Editorial about the payment of subscriptions. It has become an onerous and time consuming task collecting subscriptions **NOT FROM THE MAJORITY BUT FROM THE MINORITY**. Reminders about the payment of subscriptions were put in the January and April 2011 newsletters. In May, letters were sent out by e-mail or post to those who still had not paid or tendered their notice about not re-joining. Further letters were sent out by post asking for an answer about renewing subscriptions.

Next year, we have decided that, unless advised about the reason for non-payment of subscriptions, membership will be deemed to have lapsed unless subscriptions are received **BY 30TH JUNE 2012**. We also remind Australian members to pay **Elizabeth Bunney** promptly and Malaysian members to pay **Andrew Hwang**. Other overseas members may pay **Rosemary Fell** in their own currency or by a BAC transfer directly to the MVG Account.

We do thank everyone, who has paid promptly and added kind donations to their cheques, very much indeed.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

MONDAY – 15TH AUGUST 2011 – V-J DAY SERVICE IN THE MEMORIAL GARDEN AT THE NMA AT NOON.

An informal service to celebrate the 66th anniversary of V-J Day will be held in the MVG Memorial Garden at noon. We hope it will be well attended, but please let **Jonathan** or **Rosemary** know if you plan to come, because we are required to notify the Arboretum of the numbers anticipated. The Service is being taken by ourselves with **Jonathan** linking the readings and prayers. I will shortly be inviting members who have indicated that they will be there, to participate in the readings. After the service, we meet outside the Visitor Centre for a picnic lunch and a good get-together. Please bring something which we can all share. There are several outlets where soft drinks may be bought, and benches with tables and umbrellas on the paved area. In the event of inclement weather, we can use the benches underneath the cloistered side of the War Widows' Garden in front of the Chapel.

We plan to play a recording of **Lisa Ho's** 4-part arrangement of the hymn, "Abide with me", sung by the Chagford Singers and conducted by **Christopher Fletcher** who is Director of Music and Organist at Plymouth Roman Catholic Cathedral, and also Conductor of the Plymouth Philharmonic Choir. If anyone has a good quality battery-operated CD/tape player, please bring it with you. Our portable one is very cheap and tinny, and may not do justice to the recording in the open air.

We look forward to seeing as many members as possible at this service.

SATURDAY – 29TH OCTOBER 2011 – ANNUAL REUNION AND LUNCH AT THE RAF CLUB, PICCADILLY, LONDON.

See page 25 for details. Names to **Hugh** and cheques to **Rosemary** by 1st October, please, as given overleaf.

This is the last reminder for the Lunch.

THURSDAY – 10TH NOVEMBER 2011 – SERVICE AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY AND CROSS PLANTING CEREMONY

Our thanks go to **Merilyn Hywel-Jones** who has designed a large cross for the MVG to be planted in the FEPOW Plot. The black wooden cross will be 24" x 12" with a white 8" disc attached to the cross bar, on which the **SSVF badge** is printed. Below the disc on the wooden upright, there will be a square black plaque on which there will be the wording in white:-

"Including -/- The Federated Malay States & -/- The Unfederated Malay States -/- 1941 – 1942"

Merilyn has put a great deal of work into this project, including a visit to the R.B.L. Poppy Factory in Richmond, where these crosses are made, to order the Cross and make sure that the details are correct. **Merilyn** always attends the Cross Planting Ceremony and will plant this cross on behalf of the MVG. As mentioned in the Editorial, if anyone wishes to attend with **Merilyn**, entry to the Abbey for the Service is by ticket ONLY. Please let **Merilyn** or **Rosemary** know if you wish FOR one.

SUNDAY – 13TH NOVEMBER 2011 – REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY SERVICE & MARCH PAST AT THE CENOTAPH

Details for the Service and March Past have just been received from the Royal British Legion which organizes the event. We have been allocated our usual 12 tickets. If you wish to attend and have not yet given your name to **Rosemary**, please do so asap. You will be sent the tickets, information about timings and where to assemble, plus the MVG number in the Civilian Column nearer the time. Please be aware that it is a long wait before the Service and March, if weather conditions are inclement but it is a most rewarding experience, and we have time to chat while waiting and later at lunch at the "All Bar One".

TUESDAY – 14TH FEBRUARY 2012 – SERVICE TO MARK THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

See page 25 for details – as far as known

NEWSLETTERS

The new password for access to the newsletters on the website is "swettenham". It will replace "dindings" on 16th August. Both **Apa Khabar** and **Anak Apa Khabar** can be read online by members using the same password.

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UK – ROSEMARY FELL – Editor/Secretary – membership, subscriptions and donations

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