

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk

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EVENTS FOR 2013 ARE
TAKING SHAPE

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

The MVG looks forward to building on the various events and achievements of 2012, by branching out into new areas of remembrance and embracing an educational theme in 2013. We are planning to link up with the Researching FEPOW History Group for a weekend in October, with a concert in Chichester on **Saturday 26th October**, featuring a Vocal Orchestra, followed by the unveiling in Southampton on **Sunday 27th October, 2013**, of a Repatriation Memorial to the ships bringing home the FEPOW and civilian internees from the Far East. Both events are still in the initial stages of planning, and need the support of you all if they are to succeed. Thanks to the tireless efforts of **Margie Caldicott** in Chichester, the idea of a "Vocal Orchestra", as created by **Missionary Margaret Dryburgh** in Muntok Camp, Bangka Island, Sumatra, is to be re-created. The idea was first mooted by MVG and RFH member **Dr. Bernice Archer**, and developed by **Margie**, whose mother, **Shelagh Brown**, was in the camps and a member of the vocal orchestra. **Meg Parkes**, Chairman of the Researching FEPOW History Group and an MVG member, has approached Southampton City Council for permission to place the Repatriation Memorial close to the waterfront. Please make sure that you note these dates in your diaries, and try to attend both events to make it a truly memorable week-end. Further details about these two events can be read on P.5.

Following the very wet and difficult day we experienced on V-J Day in 2012, when we had to re-locate to the FEPOW Memorial Building at the NMA for our Annual Service, instead of holding it in the MVG Memorial Garden, we plan to hire one of the Pods in the Marquee in 2013. If wet, the Service can either be held there, or in the FEPOW Building, and we can spread out our picnic lunch in the dry, instead of trying to eat under the cloister arches, as we did in 2012. With very few tables and benches available, and a stream of people walking through, it was not easy to enjoy a convivial afternoon out of the pouring rain with limited undercover facilities. We were lucky to be able to make alternative arrangements for the service at short notice, but with greater numbers attending each year, we feel we have outlived the "pot-luck" element of the day. Tea, coffee and fruit juices will be available in the marquee, and provided the cost is not too great, the MVG will cover all these expenses.

With most of our regular annual events taking place in the autumn, and in the southern part of the U.K., and with the Chichester/Southampton week-end as well, we feel that a social meeting in May at the NMA may appeal to those who live in the northern part of the country? If anyone has any ideas about such an event or a different venue, and is willing to organize it, please let Rosemary or Jonathan know.

Let us not forget why we still seek to remember those lost in the Far East between 1941 and 1945 and record stories, previously untold, of the heroism and courage displayed by men, women and children caught up in the fighting and subsequent imprisonment by the Japanese Imperial Army.

The headline in the Daily Telegraph of **8th December, 1942**, the anniversary of the Japanese attack on Hong Kong and Malaya, stated:-

NO SOFTNESS OR RESPITE FOR JAPAN – Mr. Churchill

"Retribution is growing near."

Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, addressed a message to the peoples of British Far East territories occupied by the Japanese, saying,

"A year ago to-day we saw committed one of the most wanton acts of aggression recorded in history. Japan, made reckless by her ambitions and audacious by our difficulties, assaulted Hong Kong and Malaya.

We had long been struggling, for a time alone, with two great Powers in Europe, who had carefully prepared for the war they desired.

Japan coldly, greedily, treacherously, calculated that we should not have the forces available to save our British territories and the states in Malaya and Borneo, for whose defence we were responsible.

Those territories and states were over-run, their defenders killed or imprisoned, their inhabitants enslaved.

For a year our thoughts have gone out to all of you, **Malays, Indians, Burmans, Chinese, Dutch and British** who are suffering so cruelly..... The storm which now lowers over Germany and Italy is spreading to Japan; **there will be no softness or respite for her.....** Retribution was always sure; it is now growing near.

Our progress is only interrupted. When Japanese aggression is broken, as broken it will be, we shall go forward again and find together even closer comradeship, even surer paths to happiness for each and all.

Keep up your hearts. We shall not fail you."

THE MVG'S ANNUAL REUNION and LUNCHEON held on Saturday 20th October 2012 at the RAF Club, Piccadilly.

51 members and guests assembled from noon onwards in the Ballroom at the RAF Club in Piccadilly for the annual reunion and luncheon on Saturday 20th October, 2012. Regular attendees were joined by several new members, and we hope they enjoyed the afternoon as much as we did. The bar was available for pre-prandial drinks, and soon there was a good buzz of conversation as new and regular members exchanged news and information, and made acquaintance with one another.

Sadly there were 6 members who were unable to attend for various reasons on the day – transport difficulties were the main problems, not only in getting to London, but the underground as also not working at full capacity, and some stations were closed. A few members had to walk quite a long way to get to Piccadilly. The TUC march also caused some disruption to transport because their members marched down Piccadilly and past the doors of the RAF Club on their way to Hyde Park.

An excellent lunch was served and, after coffee with petit fours, **Yvonne Wurtzburg & Imogen Holmes** gave a most interesting talk about their trip to Sumatra, which they had undertaken in February after attending the events in Singapore to mark the 70th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore. The talk was accompanied by a power point slide show of their trip.

Yvonne started the presentation by giving a brief background to her early life in Singapore and subsequent evacuation on the **Lye-ee-Moon** to Ceylon with her mother, and how she had recently met up with three other children who had also been evacuated on the same ship. **Yvonne** went on to describe the boat trip which she and **Imogen** had made with **Liz Moggie** and 4 other friends, from **Pulau Bintan** in modern-day Indonesia down through the **Riau-Lingga Archipelago** to **Muntok** on **Pulau Bangka** and finally on to **Palembang** on the mainland of **Sumatra**.

The purpose of their boat trip was to follow the escape route, as far as they were able to, which had been taken by the many small boats which had fled from Singapore in the final few days before the Surrender. Most of the boats had subsequently been bombed and sunk by the Japanese in those dangerous waters, with appalling loss of life and injury to survivors, with only 2 small ships making it through to safety. They visited some of the islands where survivors of the shipwrecks had landed and from where some were rescued only to be sunk again and killed or captured by the Japanese.

Imogen then took up the story by describing how she left the other boat members and went off on her own to try to find and follow the route of the **Sumatra** Railway, which ended at **Pakan Baroe**. From **Padang** she travelled by mini-bus to **Bukittinggi** and then by train to **Sawahlunto**, from where she was taken by taxi (driven by the hotel desk boy and accompanied by a local guide) to **Muaro**, where she saw some of the original railway track. Details of the state of the roads and the bridges crossing the numerous small rivers over which they drove, made the journey sound quite hair-raising. However, they did find an old war-time locomotive and a Memorial Plaque to the men who had worked on the Railway at a place called **Silokek**. Her photographs of the countryside and the **Indragiri River**, along which many of the men who had escaped from Singapore travelled across Sumatra to the port of **Padang**, were most interesting, and made her adventurous and eventful journey come to life.

The talks were much appreciated and warmly applauded by everyone. A vote of thanks was given by **Jonathan Moffatt** and seconded by **John Evans**. After the toast to the Volunteers, the raffle took place. Numerous interesting prizes had been donated by members and we thank them for their generosity. The raffle raised £196 for MVG funds and we thank **Mary Harris** and **June Jackson** for kindly giving up their time to sell the tickets, and **Anthony Jackson** and **Donald Fell** for folding the tickets and picking out the winning tickets in record time!

Our thanks also go to **Hugh Chaplin** for organizing the luncheon once again and to **June Jackson** for her help with arranging the flower vases, which gave a colourful display of roses on each table.

The luncheon was reported on the Court page of the Daily Telegraph on Monday 22nd October 2012.

[N.B. Please note - the date of next year's luncheon is Saturday 19th October 2013].

WEBSITES TO VISIT

<http://malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk/node/468> - The J.L. Gray home movie is now operational on the MVG website.

With thanks to Peter Gray for giving the MVG permission to use it.

<http://www.aircrewremembrancesociety.com/raf1945/4/wattsjohn.html> – Details of the crew members of a crashed WW2 aircraft, which has been found in the jungle in Malaysia.



REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 11th NOVEMBER 2012

Falling on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, Remembrance Sunday had a special significance this year, and it was pleasing that for the first time since the MVG started marching, more members asked for tickets than had been allocated to us. Two of our regular marchers generously stood down to allow other members to experience the extraordinary atmosphere of the day.

Despite a cold and frosty start to the day, Remembrance Sunday will also be remembered for warm, sunny weather and a cloudless blue sky. The many plane trees in the parks, along the Mall and in Whitehall were still leafy and green. It was only the angle of the sun, which shone down Whitehall and straight into our eyes that indicated this was not summer but late autumn.

This was the 8th time that the MVG has taken part in the Service of Remembrance in Whitehall and the March Past the Cenotaph afterwards. As usual, the marker board bearing the MVG's number in Column M was picked up from the Royal British Legion van on Horse Guards Parade at 9 a.m. The area was already busy with military personnel looking for their letter numbers and marching positions. We left Horse Guards and made our way back to the Mall and into Trafalgar Square through Admiralty Arch, before making our way down Whitehall. We were directed left through the security controls in Whitehall Place, before finding our place in Column M outside the old War Office. My companion that morning was **June Jackson** who was marching with her husband **Anthony** for the first time. He followed later at a more leisurely pace with **Donald (Fell)**.

By 10 a.m. we had our full contingent of 12 MVG members ready to move into our final marching position. Regular marchers **Graeme & Nikki Archer-Waring; Yvonne Wurtzburg; Merilyn Hywel-Jones; Pat Wilson** and **Karen Harney** joined us, together with 2 other new marchers, **Stephen** and **Margie Caldicott**, to make up 12. With the usual precision just before 11 o'clock, as the military bands played solemn music, the Clergy and Choirboys from the Chapel Royal took their places, followed by the Ambassadors and Politicians. At precisely 2 minutes to eleven, Her Majesty The Queen and other members of the Royal Family emerged from the Foreign Office and took their places to the east of the Cenotaph. The huge crowd fell silent and as Big Ben sounded the first stroke of 11, the guns boomed out making us all jump with the echoing noise. The two minutes silence throughout that normally busy, noisy corner of London is one of the most poignant moments of the whole ceremony. It symbolizes a nation deep in remembrance and in grateful thanks to those who gave their lives to defend this country, or fell in distant parts of the world defending freedom in foreign lands, and who now lie in peace many hundreds or thousands of miles away. Many thoughts may also have turned to the new Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park which was unveiled earlier this year by Her Majesty. 55,573 young men are commemorated on this memorial with its larger than life statues of the 7 crew members from a Lancaster bomber returning from a mission.

The BBC was aware that this year marked the 70th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore, and it has been reported that MVG marchers were seen on the "red button" after the BBC1 broadcast had finished.

The crowds were as large and enthusiastic as ever, clapping every group however large or small as it passed the Cenotaph and handed in a poppy wreath. By the time the MVG reached the Cenotaph, the sea of red poppy wreaths appeared to stretch right down Whitehall. The bandsmen were still playing their marching music, but one detected a slight air of desperation as they looked along Column M wondering when it would come to an end! The salute at the end of the march in Horse Guards Square was taken by HRH The Duke of Wessex this year. We didn't have to line up long before the parade came to an end, the National Anthem was played and we were able to disperse. 9 of us made our way to the "All Bar One" for an enjoyable and lengthy lunch. It had been another successful and rewarding Remembrance Sunday.

Lining up in Whitehall



Left to right:
Anthony Jackson; Stephen Caldicott;
June Jackson; Nikki Archer-Waring;
Yvonne Wurtzburg; Graeme Archer-Waring;
Donald Fell; Margie Caldicott; Pat Wilson;
Karen Harney; Rosemary Fell

MVG Cross in the FEPOW Plot



We are very grateful to Merilyn Hywel-Jones for arranging the planting of the MVG Cross in the Field of Remembrance, and for applying for the tickets for members who attended the ceremony on Thursday, 8th November 2012. We also thank her for acting as Photographer for both the Cross Planting and Remembrance Sunday Ceremonies. The 8" cross was planted for the first time. It will be kept by the RBL and used again next year.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAYS IN MALAYSIA

BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION RESIDENCE - KUALA LUMPUR

The Remembrance Sunday Service on Sunday 11th November 2012 was conducted at the Cenotaph as in other years. However, it was decided to make the service a Christian one rather than a multi-faith service. This precluded people of other faiths who have attended before. The service was taken by the **Revd. Richard Tok** of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church K.L. He is a former teacher at the Victoria Institution and interested in Military History.

The MVG poppy wreath was laid by **Andrew Hwang**, and **Dato' Anthony Cooper** laid a wreath on behalf of the British Malaysian Society.

The Union Flag owned by **Ivan Ho's** mother's family (mentioned in Apa Khabar Edition's 24 & 32) and used at the Japanese surrender at the Victoria Institution in K.L. was displayed at the British High Commission's Residency, together with an information board about it. Breakfast was served at the Residency by kind invitation of the High Commissioner, H.E. Simon Featherstone.

Dato' Anthony Cooper laying a wreath on behalf of the British Malaysian Society
(Second Right).



The Union Flag with **Revd. Richard Tok**, **Andrew Hwang**, RN Reserve Officer, & **Ian Richardson**. (L to R)



GEORGE TOWN – PENANG

The service was held on Sunday, 18th November, not on 11th November. Unfortunately **Leslie James**, who normally lays a wreath on behalf of the MVG, was unwell and unable to attend the service at the Cenotaph on the Esplanade. It was, however, well attended by some 60 people including **H.E. Simon Featherstone**, the British High Commissioner, and representatives from High Commissioners of other Commonwealth countries; the Penang Veterans Association (PVA) and other armed forces personnel.

Kenneth Speldewinde the younger son of the late **Harold Speldewinde** founder of the PVA (and MVG member), who died in October, read a poem to honour the PVA members. WW2 Veteran **Bob Simmons** travelled from France to attend the ceremony. He had been involved with Operation Zipper to liberate Malaya in 1945, including the repatriation of British POWs from Changi Jail in Singapore.

The Chief Minister **Lim Guan Eng** gave the address and thanked the ex-servicemen for their sacrifices.

INFORMATION FOR AUSTRALIAN MVG MEMBERS

Some of you may not know of the **Australian Ex-Prisoner of War Memorial at Ballarat, Victoria 3353**, which can be found in the Botanical Gardens and is the First Military Memorial of National Significance outside Canberra. It covers the Boer War, WW1, WW2 and the Korean War, and was opened in 2004. Services are held annually on the Sunday nearest to 6th February (the date the War Memorial was opened), ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day. The names of the POWs are etched into a black granite wall running alongside the pathway of paving stones, shaped like railway sleepers and broken only by stone obelisks bearing the names of the countries where Australians were held as Prisoners of War. At the end of the pathway there is a large stone resting on a small granite wall, bearing the timeless words "Lest We Forget." Water springs from beneath this stone, and flows into a reflective pool before returning to the stone again.

Within the Memorial area there is a special memorial to the **Montevideo Maru** – a Japanese ship which carried Australian Prisoners of War and members of the Salvation Army Band. It was sunk with the loss of all on board, and remains the largest maritime disaster in Australia's history.

The Australian Prisoners of War are recorded as follows:-

Boer War – 183; WW1 – 4149; WW2 – 31,404; Korean War – 31; Military Nurses – 60; Merchant Navy – 238

LET US NOT FORGET – Written in 1966 by **Shelagh Lea (nee Brown), Internee, Sumatra 1942 – 1945.**
By kind permission of **Margie Caldicott – Shelagh Lea's daughter.**

"Volunteers to dig a grave." So the word went round. XX has died, her body no longer able to withstand the great demands made upon it, her Spirit ready for her master. Her last words were, "I will pray for you all in Heaven."
She had had typhus and then there was no food to build up her strength. In the so-called Hospital, there was only enough water to allow one cupful per person per day for washing purposes. This in the tropics in sweltering fever heat and those nursing the sick, themselves in need of rest and care.
And now the call for "Volunteers to dig a grave." When will the rough coffin be sent or will the body have to lie in the open for 24 hours and quiet vigil be kept, as on a previous occasion? Out of the barbed wire they go, those able at the time and with the strength for digging. Peace? Quietness at any rate. No longer the noisy, dusty, dirty squalor behind the barbed wire. Human bodies, skin and bones, struggling for existence, struggling to help each other – orphaned children in a bewildered small world – sad sights – only silent happier memories of a past existence.
The task is finished. Back they come weary, silent, no water to wash off the dirt, the sweat, but triumph only that a need has been met, a task accomplished. A rough box is brought: will the boards hold?
The small procession forms, how heavy the load, how slow the pace. The camp is silenced, another body laid to rest. The way was steep, the clay heavy, the service simple, the prayers sincere. The hymn "O God our Help in Ages Past" never more appropriate, and the favourite scripture more inspiring. One broken body now triumphant – for her Faith was Sure and her Life of Service and Witness Supreme in her Death. Women honoured woman.
There is no-one now to care for her Grave, no-one is responsible for her last resting place. The end came soon for her, but there are many more like her, both men and women. Is she Chinese, is she English, Eurasian, or Scottish? Is she Roman Catholic, Presbyterian or Church of England or a Plymouth Brethren? She had loved Malaya, in her work or in her home. It is only the sad fate of War that caused her to die so soon and in such hardship in an Allied Territory, now Indonesia. She was proud to be British in 1943.
No tombstone or cross now marks the spot of her last resting place. No neat mown grass covers the site. No, for all she did, all she was – only the tropical growth of twenty-three years covers the grave. The birds will be singing and the sunsets will lighten the spot, and the sun give warmth. Will there be buildings erected here in years to come or more battles fought? She was just one of God's children, but let us not forget.....
[Houses and a petrol station were built over these graves in 1981. It is hoped that there will be a Roll of Honour and a Memorial for those British Civilians whose graves were abandoned in Muntok, Bangka Island, Indonesia.
Note: In February 2012 a plaque was placed at the site of the Women's Camp.]

TWINNED EVENTS FOR OCTOBER 2013
Organized by the Researching FEPOW History Group
and the Malayan Volunteers Group

Concert to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Vocal Orchestra – Chichester, Saturday, 26th October 2013

Margie Caldicott – Organizer of the Concert – writes:

The Concert is to take place on Saturday evening, 26th October, 2013, at St. Paul's Church, Chichester. The Choir will be singing music without words, as arranged by Norah Chambers with the help of Margaret Dryburgh in the women's camp in Sumatra in 1943. It will include the Largo from Dvorak's "New World" Symphony and the Captives' Hymn. This is the first time a British Choir performs the beautiful music which gave the internees hope and freedom from their surroundings.
The Church holds 300 – 350 and will be a paid ticketed event, sponsored by the MVG.

Southampton Repatriation Memorial – Sunday, 27th October 2013

Message from Meg Parkes – Chairman, Researching FEPOW History Group.

The Researching FEPOW History Group is pleased to announce that permission has been granted by Southampton City Council for a Repatriation Memorial to be sited close to the waterfront. Like the one unveiled in Liverpool in October 2011, the memorial will be dedicated to the memory of Far Eastern POW and Civilian Internees who returned from captivity in the autumn of 1945. A fundraising appeal will be launched in the New Year and anyone wishing to support this initiative and make a donation should visit the website at www.researchingfepowhistory.org.uk for further information. Please help us to spread the word and ensure that this memorial is created.

Donations should be made out to:- **Researching FEPOW History Group**

and sent to:- **Mike Parkes, Kranji, 34, Queens Road, Hoylake, Wirral CH47 2AJ.**

[N.B. Please will all MVG members note these dates and make a special effort to support the events. Further details will be given as soon as they are known.]

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ELIZABETH ALEXANDER

By her daughter Mary Harris

Elizabeth Alexander's Diary

Elizabeth died in October 1958 at the age of 49. At the time, she was a lecturer in soil science at University College, Ibadan, Nigeria where her husband, my father **Norman**, was a Professor of Physics and where I was a chemistry student. The day after she died, **Norman** showed me the diary **Elizabeth** had kept during her war-time years in New Zealand, where she had arrived with her three small children, about three weeks before Singapore fell. **Norman** had remained in Singapore, expecting her to return with radars that were being manufactured in New Zealand and Australia for installation at the Singapore Naval Base. But we were overtaken by events, he was stranded in Singapore, and she began to keep a diary so that he would know what had happened to his family until we met again. For 9 months (until November 1942) she had no news of him. She was then told what she called *unofficially*, but incorrectly, that he was dead, so she destroyed the diary. Then, in June 1943, after 7 months of widowhood, she was told officially through the Red Cross, that **Norman** was a civilian internee in Changi, so she soon started the diary again, re-writing the first part from memory. By chance, the note book in which the diary is written runs out of pages on the last day of the Pacific War.

After he showed me the diary, **Norman** took it away again and, about a year before he died in 1997, my step-mother sent it to me. **Norman** was failing and I did not have time to re-read it properly. By then my own husband, **John**, who had also been a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese, was also failing and again I did not have time to re-read the diary properly until after his death in December 2000.

By then I was winding up my own career in research at the low achieving end of school mathematics education, where there is a large literature on gendering in mathematics and the sciences, including their histories. I was thus tuned to reading below the surface of what **Elizabeth** had written. As she had intended, the diary is an extended love letter with accounts of how we children were growing. At the same time, it is a social, military and science history written by a single, refugee mother of three small children. And until we address the gender issue in the historiographies of both science and war, their histories will remain half written.

The diary called out to be published in the context of her times, but both my obvious sources of information about the people named in it were dead, and although **Elizabeth** wrote copiously to her family, only one letter has survived. Not long before he died, **Norman** wrote some notes for his family about his experience of the war in Singapore, but by then **Elizabeth** had been dead for 40 years, and he had remarried twice. As I soon learned, family records are full of tricks of memory. I therefore set about researching the full context of **Elizabeth's** life and work of which her diary is a significant, but not the only significant part. My work is constantly interrupted by the conditions of the life of my daughter who has disabilities, which may or may not be related to **John's** prisoner-of-war experience, so my progress is slow. The effects of wars carry on long after the fighting has ceased.

Researching Elizabeth's Life.

Because of the times she lived in, where she worked, the work she did and the facts of two world wars, the context is very wide. **Elizabeth** was both a research geologist in England, Singapore and Nigeria, and a physicist working in Singapore and New Zealand. Because this latter work took place in times of wartime secrecy, the business of finding records has earned almost a book of its own. Large quantities of war records have been censored, destroyed, scattered or kept classified in government archives until way past my lifetime, or have just been forgotten, or more actively 'disappeared' in ways to which nobody will admit. Sometimes a copy turns up in another archive, in another service or government department or in another country. And sometimes individuals who have sweated blood over a piece of work only pretended to destroy their report, while concealing it and often forgetting about it until a researcher turns up 50 years later. And finally, it is ironic that it was part of **Norman's** job in the last days before Singapore fell, to destroy Navy records and, as the invading army approached our house, he also destroyed all the documents in it that could be used to link him and **Elizabeth** to their secret work with the Navy.

In trying to condense **Elizabeth's** life into one paper, I apologize for the fact that I have over-simplified just about everything: the science; the history; the politics; the gender issues. In addition, I have tried to write without acronyms and without big numbers. During **Elizabeth's** war-time life, each armed service and each secret service

of each country involved not only grew its own collection of acronyms for the various organizations affecting her work, but the organizations themselves frequently changed internally, were discontinued or were amalgamated, so that my own acronym buster is now a sizeable file. The only acronym I actually like is that of the 'Y' Services, the secret radio intercept services, where 'Y' is short for **Wireless** – which begins with a 'W'!

So far as big numbers go, 440 millions is a significant one in **Elizabeth's** life as a geologist. For her life as a physicist there are all those large numbers that the physical sciences need, best handled by prefixes or indices, but there are also large quantities of them attached to a wide range of different units, and just when you get used to one set of units, an international body changes them. Even geologists change their time periods from time to time. They are currently arguing about whether or not we should have a whole new epoch, the Anthropocene, the one in which recently arrived mankind is destroying the planet. Radio astronomy, of course, has the biggest numbers of the lot, making the big numbers of geology that I grew up with, very small indeed by comparison. I believe that for most people, unless they are working in a specialist field, the handy measure of the speed of light as about $7\frac{1}{2}$ times around the world in one second is mind-boggling enough, as is the range of wavelengths (or frequencies depending on where you work) of the rest of the electromagnetic spectrum. Most of **Elizabeth's** work took place with the size of wavelength that you can demonstrate by waving your hands around.

Elizabeth's Life.

Elizabeth's life can be placed in its wider scientific context by a few dates. She was born in 1908, the year in which **Ernest Rutherford** was awarded the Nobel Prize in chemistry for his work in unravelling the complex processes of natural radioactivity. That was about 14 years after he had made his sensitive detector of **Hertzian** (electromagnetic) waves while he was a student of physics in the labs at Christchurch University College. It always amused him that his Nobel Prize was in chemistry. **Rutherford** never lost his interest in electromagnetic waves and had taken an active interest in radar research for the war effort, ever since radar research began. When WW2 broke out, soon after his death, many of the people active in radar were his past students. It was only 37 years after his Nobel Prize work on radioactive decay that WW2 ended with the energy released by two atomic bombs. There is nothing like war to push academic science to extremes of cold efficiency.

1908 also has local significance in radio history. It was the year in which New Zealand sent its first overseas radio message – to Australia. New Zealand was one of the first countries to exploit the potential of the new wireless technologies formally by law.

Elizabeth Caldwell spent all but two years of her first 12 in Patna, India where her father was Principal of the Science College and contemporary with **Jagdish Chandra Bose**, a polymath well ahead of his time and one of the early pioneers of **Hertzian** wave reception. He was still working at Patna's sister College in Calcutta, then capital of British India and just down the river from Patna, and I like to think that **Elizabeth's** father had met the great man at meetings of the Indian Academy of Science. **Hertz** himself had died very young, but his widow was still living in Cambridge when **Elizabeth** was a student at the Cavendish in the late 1920s. **Frau Hertz** lived on until after the start of WW2. **Bose** lived on until 1937, two years before **Elizabeth** began work on Radio Direction Finding at Singapore Naval Base.

By the time **Elizabeth** was born, **Marconi** had been sending his wire-less messages by **Hertzian** waves across the Atlantic, and his good friend and colleague **Henry Jackson**, later Admiral and First Sea Lord, had equipped most of the Royal Navy with wireless to his own and **Marconi's** designs. By the time she was at university **Elizabeth** and **Frau Hertz** could both listen to the same Beethoven concert, broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation, in the privacy of their own rooms.

Childhood, Youth and University.

Elizabeth was fortunate in her parents who were both university graduates at a time when it was impossible for a woman in England to take a degree. The same did not apply to Wales however, and it was there that they met, he a chemist, and she a linguist with the added qualification of teacher. When she was one year old, **Elizabeth** was introduced to the barbaric British habit of colonial orphanage which her mother had gone through herself, and which she was to endure more of later, while circumstances also forced her in turn to inflict a similar fate to her own children. Under conditions of employment in the Indian Education Service, which was then offering good salaries for well qualified scientists, her father had to endure his first two years in Patna without a wife, so that

one-year old **Elizabeth** returned with her mother to live with the same aunt as her mother's colonial orphanage. This redoubtable lady was a quiet pioneer of women's education and needs a biography of her own. Apart from the first two fatherless years, **Elizabeth** had a longer than usual period with both parents in India because all passenger liners to England had been requisitioned to take Indian and Dominion troops to the slaughter of WW1. Her post-war secondary education in England was a success, after one false start. The school encouraged her interest in physics to the extent of putting her in for scholarships to Cambridge, on the grounds that, although Cambridge was still not awarding women full membership of the university, **Rutherford's Cavendish** was the best place for budding physicists. She arrived in 1928, the year of the eclipse of the sun which had revealed much information to physicists studying the ionosphere, and which she had observed on a sixth form trip and recorded in her school magazine. This was her second publication, the first being a lengthy piece of adoring doggerel on the subject of cricket. An item in a Newnham College magazine entitled "*Who's who in the Third Year*" described **Elizabeth** as a "*conscientious scientific worker. Looks rather fierce when she is wearing her horn spectacles and is sometimes very earnest, but not always. Was efficient secretary of Amalgamated Games Club. Plays cricket in the Long.*" The article doesn't say that it was at Cambridge that **Elizabeth** also learned the art of telling shaggy dog stories and developed her dry wit.

As it is well known, **Rutherford** was a keen supporter of Dominion students and one of the New Zealanders who arrived for post graduate work in the year that **Elizabeth** arrived for undergraduate lectures was **Fred White** from Wellington, who was to feature in her life later on. After graduating with her first degree, **Elizabeth** changed from physics to geology, and as a new graduate went job hunting while waiting nervously to hear if she had earned scholarships enough to pay for a PhD. Her extreme nervousness was because of her interest in another New Zealand research student who had recently arrived at the Cavendish. His name was **Norman Alexander** and he came from Auckland University College where he had taken his first degree and an MSc in physics with **Professor Percy Burbridge**. **Norman** had stayed on in the department for two more years after graduating, working as an assistant lecturer. His university friends were from a remarkable generation. They were very close to and caring of the land on which many of their families worked for a living, and they carried a sense of freedom and hope for a better world following the appalling loss of life in WW1. As members or friends of the University Field Club, they built a hut, carefully sited on the promontory (but out of the wind) at Anawhata, just north of Piha, with views over the vast expanse of the Tasman Sea. The hut was only accessible by a long tramp, but they were New Zealanders. Two of the friends, **Lucy Moore** and **Lucy Cranwell** became botanists, named in their obituaries as New Zealand's first ecologists. They were staunch friends to **Elizabeth** later on, as was fellow student **Olive Lloyd** who ran Auckland Museum's Education Department in the war. **Olive** was the strongest of them all and the one who could out-tramp everyone else except **Lucy Cranwell**.

Letters written by **Norman** in 1933 to his sister **Flora** contain the only description that I have of **Elizabeth** at that time. *You needn't be alarmed at the thought of an English sister-in-law, he wrote, she's very much our type of person ... Fair, about my height (an inch or so less) moderate build, not strikingly beautiful (said he with cold, scientific judgement) smokes cigarettes though not to excess, doesn't paint or powder except the odd touch to the nose, nor use lipstick – has been known to drink beer. Rides a motor bike, or did, and drives the car moderately, is doing research in geology for a PhD ... she'll be a worthy member of the Anawhata crowd, than which no praise is higher ...*

Elizabeth's PhD mapped the whole of the main Aymestrey limestone outcrop in Shropshire and Herefordshire, describing in detail and sometimes re-classifying its defining fossils, the Brachiopods, which had lived in the shallow, tropical seas of the Silurian Period. The second half of her PhD consists of 8 draft papers on her Brachiopods, to which she kept returning in spite of the war that was to change her life completely, and for ever. **Norman** was able to take time now and then from his own PhD '*to carry rocks*' as he put it, and back in Cambridge **Elizabeth**, the physicist, stayed in close contact with **Norman's** PhD. They became their closest friends-in-science. Like fellow New Zealander **Fred White**, **Norman** was perennially short of funds. **Fred's** scholarship to the Cavendish had run out before he finished his PhD and in a practical piece of co-operation between **Rutherford** and his past assistant demonstrator **Edward Appleton**, by then Professor at King's College, London, **Fred** took up the post of demonstrator in **Appleton's** labs in the Strand, while he finished his PhD. When **Rutherford** opened

Appleton's new Halley Stewart Laboratory in Hampstead, north London, **Fred** was awarded the lectureship there, leaving the post of demonstrator available to **Norman**.

At King's and at the Cavendish at that time were a number of New Zealand and Australian students and they got to know each other well. **Elizabeth** had known several of them before she became **Norman's** girl-friend, in other words they knew her firstly as a scientist. Many of them were back in Wellington or Sydney by the time **Elizabeth** was job hunting in 1942. Included in the group were **Joe Pawsey**, and **Owen Pulley** with whom **Norman** shared a flat for a while. Doing his PhD with **Appleton** was Welshman **Taffy Bowen**, one of those early radar people who had grown a youthful passion for radio. As part of his PhD, **Appleton** had arranged for **Taffy** to spend time on the new cathode ray direction finder at the Radio Research Station at Slough, to the west of London. In his book, "*Radar Days*," [P.199] **Taffy** remembered fondly the close links at university level between London, Australia and New Zealand and the good friends he made: **Barnett [Miles]** and **White [Fred]** from New Zealand; **Builder [Geoffrey]** and **Pulley [Owen]** from Australia. "*I worked with them*," he wrote, "*dallied with them in London pubs and was present at more than one wedding when they finally decided to take the plunge and marry their English girl friends*." In Cambridge, the **Rutherford** household was hospitable to all of them and **Lady Rutherford** welcomed their help in the garden because, as she told **Norman**, "*Englishmen don't know how to wield an axe*." No doubt many of them attended **Norman's** and **Elizabeth's** wedding at her recently-retired parent's home in Burnham Beeches, just up the road from Slough where **Taffy Bowen** was working. Among **Norman's** friends who made the trip from New Zealand, the formal reason being necessary attendance at a botanical conference, were several of his Anawhata friends. The night before the wedding they stayed in a pub in Henley-on-Thames whence they walked to the wedding, 12 miles as the crow flies, but they were not crows! The pleasanter route along the Thames towing path before heading inland a bit at the end is, according to the British National Trail website, just under 23 miles or 36.8 km, a pleasant morning tramp for the Anawhata folk.

At the time of the wedding, **Taffy** was travelling a lot between Slough and Orford in Suffolk. He had been recruited into the radar research work set up by **Watson-Watt** but stuck to his cover story of ionosphere research. He had a key to **Norman's** and **Elizabeth's** flat in Clapham, South London where he could break his journey, but all three were working so they communicated mostly by notes on the kitchen table or by eating the pies cooked by **Taffy's** mother, who was convinced that those young things were probably not feeding themselves properly. **Norman** was still demonstrating at King's where he was paid quarterly in arrears. It was barely enough for one, let alone two, so when he saw the advertised post for Professor of Physics at Raffles College in Singapore, he applied with **Rutherford** and **Appleton** as supporters and, to nobody's surprise with that level of support, was successful.

Singapore.

The **Alexanders** arrived in Singapore in time for the start of the new term and academic year, in October 1936.

Norman's job was to re-establish a moribund physics department, which meant setting up workshop and library as well as refreshing the curriculum. His department was also responsible for teaching science to the medical students of its sister Medical College, so he had a heavy teaching and administrative load.

Within days of arriving, **Elizabeth** was out with her geological hammer in countryside on the edge of shallow, tropical seas where she knew some of the Brachiopods of her Aymestrey limestone were still living. **Norman** was happy to go with her when he could, as he had done in their Cambridge days. **Elizabeth's** pregnancy that resulted in the birth of my brother in June 1937 did not seem to hold her back much and she was fortunate indeed to be in Singapore in the days of those very special women, the black and white-clad Chinese Amahs. They were the best nannies in the world and, I want to add, the first great personal loss to my generation of small children when Singapore fell. Naturally **Elizabeth** was soon in touch with the Raffles Museum, where she made friends who are still maintained in my generation, and the Geological Survey of Malaya based then at Batu Gajah in the middle of the Malay Peninsula. Literature searches and correspondence with the Geological Survey encouraged her observation that aspects in the erosion of Singapore's rocks needed to be looked at more closely. Some of the products of weathering were re-depositing so rapidly that new, hard rock was forming, some of it a very hard, natural, silica cement which was so new that it contained embedded in it crown bottle tops. The weathering effect seemed to be quickest in tidal mangrove swamps, so she set about devising a means of burying rock samples there.

The houses of the professors of Raffles College had been designed by architects sensitive to the requirements of the complex social hierarchies of colonial status. They were ridiculously large and, even when adequately furnished for two people with a baby on the way, looked empty. **Elizabeth** took over one of the huge downstairs rooms, made one end of it into a sewing area and the other into a geology lab where she could forward her research and store her experimental controls.

The **Alexanders** had long wanted a globe, a good one, and now they had plenty of room for one, but the cost of buying one was prohibitive, so they decided to make one. They found a Chinese basket maker in town, who made them a couple of 4 foot diameter hemispheres, which they wired together, covered them in plaster of Paris, and smoothed them off with tools which **Norman** made to the right curvature in his lab workshop. They marked out the meridians and degrees of longitude and, during **Norman's** training weekends as a member of the Singapore Volunteers, **Elizabeth** did most of the work on marking the coastlines. The globe was almost finished when, just before Christmas 1938 **Elizabeth**, pregnant again this time with me, met an old school friend, **Janet Coates**, while she was shopping in town. **Jan** had married a naval officer, **Bobby Griffiths**, in the Royal Navy Hydrographic Service and they had just been posted to Singapore. So naturally the **Alexanders** invited the **Griffiths** to dinner, where they could not fail to notice the 4' diameter globe.

At the time the Navy was setting up a network of long-range, high-frequency, radio direction-finding stations, *Huff Duff* stations in Navy slang, with Singapore as the operating and control centre. Part of **Griffith's** job was to work out the paths of the great circles at every 10 degrees of bearing for all these stations so they could plot them on the standard Admiralty Mercator charts. They were tackling the job by solving thousands of spherical triangles, a tedious job in the days when there were no electrical calculators and precious few hand ones. It did not take **Griffiths** long to realize that they could take direct readings from the **Alexanders' globe**, so **Norman** made them a flexible straight edge with a bit of elastic round the back, so that a plotter could put one end on the required station and the other on its antipodal point, set it to the appropriate angle with the meridian and read off latitudes and longitudes along the edge. The degree of accuracy was good enough at the time when direction-finding stations couldn't fix directions better than five degrees. For a few days the **Alexanders** played host to Naval officers taking readings from the globe, until it became more convenient for the Navy to requisition both the globe and **Elizabeth** and take them to the Naval Base. That would have been in about February or March 1939. In spite of her excellent Chinese Amahs, **Elizabeth** was a hands-on mother and would have nursed me, born in January, for a while. She was given a pass to the Singapore Naval Base and the rank of Intelligence Officer in the Royal Navy, signed the Official Secrets' Act and entered the Y service world of Radio Direction Finding. The science and skills of locating the source of wireless signals had developed in the first world war as the necessary adjunct to radio communication. This was the era in which the widespread scatter of the multitude of wavelengths of the early transmitters had been narrowed down and the equipment literally fine-tuned so that operators could send through designated bandwidths. The improved technologies of receivers and the skills of radio hams had been major factors in sorting out weak signals from noise and interference. The propagation of radio waves was always known to be much affected by the medium through which they travel, but research on atmospheric and other problems had been held up by the necessities of war. They were to be revived very quickly after it.

What was also developing fast in both military and civilian areas was the other main use of radio direction finding, the covert business of locating, intercepting, listening to and decoding other people's signals, as well as the whole business of analyzing origins and volume of signals that is the art and science of traffic analysis. By the time **Elizabeth** started work at the Naval Base, the network of radio direction finding and radio intercept stations covered the Pacific, the Indian Ocean and beyond. The inter-war period was also the one in which the covert aspects of radio direction finding was rationalized, with many changes in organization and much contention about who should pay for it, into the carefully, meaninglessly named Government Code and Cipher School. This was to be moved to Bletchley Park just before the second world war broke out.

I have not found it possible to identify where the globe and **Elizabeth** were located because much of the enormous area of the Naval Base and its Dockyard was still a building site, in spite of the publicity given to its

recent formal opening. Decisions as to whether the base should be built at all had been held up during the period of austerity and disarmament after WW1. The main engineering contract was not let until 1928, the year in which **Elizabeth** went to university, and building was still going on when war broke out. About 7 miles to the west, and well away from the big cranes of the Dockyard which could interfere with its work, was the Admiralty Wireless Station at Kranji, and building was going on there too. There was additional urgent activity in preparation for the expected arrival in the autumn of a whole new unit from Hong Kong. This was the Far East Combined Bureau, the carefully meaningless title of the Far East branch of the Government Code and Cipher School. The Bureau dealt with intelligence from all sources and though officially a unit of the combined services was, in effect, run by the Navy. **Elizabeth's** work was at first concerned with plotting and the statistics of finding the most probable point of a vessel within the area defined by 3 or more bearings never meeting at a point, which the Navy calls a 'cocked hat.' I was told very recently by experts at the Admiralty Hydrographic Office, where I was working in the archives, that they still mostly guess, but it is, of course, informed guessing, aided by satellite capabilities. **Elizabeth's** work soon developed into checking signal accuracies, that is the calibration of the networked stations, both the equipment and the performance of the operators. She started a fine collection of anecdotes, like the anomalous signals which came from Kuching station in Borneo only during periods of full moon. A courting couple regularly parked their car rather near the installation!

Meanwhile, the **Alexanders** continued to think about better ways of plotting that used neither the standard Admiralty Mercator charts nor the globe. The model they came up with used a quite different projection from Mercator's, so that the great circles by which radio signals travel come out as straight lines. They were still working on it as they planned the long leave that was due to them after 4 years of service. They would go to New Zealand, where **Norman** would introduce **Elizabeth** and their children to his family.

Meanwhile **Bobby Griffiths** had taken an interest in **Elizabeth's** geology. The survey department which he had recently joined had been surveying the coasts of Singapore, Malaya and way beyond, for many years. There had been a recent survey of the swampy south-west coastal area of Lurong, where **Elizabeth** wanted to bury her rock samples and it was not very accessible by land. So it came about that **Elizabeth's** two sets of rock samples were buried in stainless steel baskets, probably knocked up in the Naval Dockyard workshops by a Royal Navy Survey Party who took bearings on suitable prominent points inland, including a trig point set up by the land survey people.

Elizabeth knew them too, of course, because they had the best maps. Before they left in March 1940, **Elizabeth** wrote a detailed account of her geological research to date and mailed it to the Geological Survey Office giving the exact location of the buried baskets, as surveyed by the Royal Navy. By extraordinary chance, the letter was the only part of her research to survive the war. After she left Singapore for good, one of the baskets was found by her good friend from Raffles Museum, **Michael Tweedie**.

Michael was a naturalist very much at home in mangrove swamps. [To be continued in April]
[Mary is happy to supply copies of the photo]



Government Research Geologist F.E.S. Alexander, working in Singapore in 1949 on the availability of granite for building

TRANSCRIPTS OF LETTERS FROM T.R.W. ALLIN – EX-POW, CHANGI GAOL, SINGAPORE, TO HIS WIFE ANNE IN ENGLAND.

By kind permission of his daughters Lady Penelope Thompson and Jane Manley.

Letter No: 4 ex Changi Gaol, 12th September 1945

We cannot quite understand here why we don't hear anything from home: surely a month ago they could have arranged for you to write, or at any rate cable. R.A.P.W.I. is queer in some ways, though individuals are most obliging and nothing is too much trouble if it will help us. (This is supposed to stand for "Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees," but we have naturally decided that it must stand for "Retain All Prisoners of War Indefinitely." Similarly S.E.A.C. is not "South-East Asia Command" but "Supreme Example of Absolute Chaos.") However, it will work no doubt. One thing that must have puzzled you was exactly where we were – you were given the address "Malay Camps" apparently, which I think covered everywhere on the Peninsula. Changi, where we were first sent on 7th January 1942, has all along been a kind of depot: sick and disabled have been here all the time, also nearly all officers. About May 1942 the Nips started calling for working parties: 250 Australians and 250 Volunteers, of which I was one, also **Murray Scouler** and **Peter Lucy** went to Blakan Mati. I came back on 21st December after 7 months, **Murray** a month or so later. **Peter** is still there. About the end of 1942 all the parties scattered over Singapore Island (except Blakan Mati, which has never moved) returned to Changi and a pleasant respite was had by all: lots of bridge, theatres, and various pastimes. Then in April 1943, until early May, they started sending large parties up North: no-one could find out where or what for, but of course it was to build their blasted railway between Siam and Burma, and while some were lucky, in base camps where food was plentiful, the most pessimistic could not have foretold anything worse than the fate of two large parties (called 'F' and 'H'). I won't go into that now – you wouldn't know many of the casualties, but poor old **Joe Ferriday** was one, and **R.L. Moir**, whom you remember, I expect. One other party left early in May for Japan, and this included both the **Scoulers**. We don't know what has happened to them, but **Murray** usually has any luck that's going. **F & H** came back in December 1943, but there were lots of people still knocking round up there: probably most are on their way home by now from Rangoon or Bangkok. I can't recall much movement in 1944. We were wanted here building an aerodrome, which was pretty hard work, and if you weren't fit enough you would probably be working in our own gardens, which were of course absolutely essential for supplementing our green veg. supply. Parties started going away again about March '45. I haven't discovered what they did: some have returned here but others will probably leave for home direct. It will probably be found that we in Changi were lucky as regards mail and the rare Red + amenities etc. because the stuff would have come here in the first place and the Nips might find it too much trouble to distribute it anywhere else. It may not have been so, however – there is lots we don't know yet. The Nips are queer too – they may take a hell of a lot of trouble to give us something that causes quite a lot of difficulty and refuse flatly to do something which is no trouble at all. Oh, I forgot to mention what are called the "October-November Parties" – 1942 – these accounted for a lot of junior officers, including **Charles** and **Barrett**. They seem to have disappeared completely into the unknown, but rumours have come through that they are at a good camp and fairly well off.

Previously all officers above Lt.-Col. were whisked off to Japan (crowded up in the hold of a ship, we hear.) **Bobby Moir** was one of these – we haven't heard of him, but **Gen. Percival** turned up as you know at the Tokyo surrender ceremony.

13th Sept.

A great treat last night: the Navy brought out a cinema show, of which the highlight was 4 Gaumont news reels: landings in Ochinowa (sic), shelling of Tarakan, Berlin in occupation. V2s (I hope these missed you) – it was most exciting to us, because although we have been kept abreast of the news by people who risked their lives keeping secret wireless sets going, it all seemed a bit unreal in our cut-off state, and so many false rumours were circulating at the same time that we were never really sure what to believe, at any rate for several days after the alleged occurrences. The films made us feel we were really in on things again, instead of sort of pariahs with no right to know anything. We think it would be very popular if a sequence of these news reels was put on in London for ex-P.O.W. Another pleasure today is that bread is to be supplied – the first for 3 ½ years, except for an occasional small piece by a bit of luck – and I like bread. Any biscuits are damned good too, of course, after all this time. Quaker Oats for breakfast today!! Rice off the menu completely now. **Eric** [his brother] got me some eggs in Singapore – another unheard of luxury. I didn't mean to switch back on to food, but these half-forgotten flavours mean a lot now: we shall soon get blasé, I suppose. I really think the nicest meal yet was lunch yesterday: herrings, mashed potatoes, fried onions, biscuits and cheese. It is expected that I shall embark for home on Saturday, 15th September, or it may be Monday – home end of

October??!!? **Eric** will probably be on the same ship.

Saturday 15/9. It seems we are really off today, per **HMS "ALMANZURA."**(sic) I must try to get this letter posted. Yesterday evening we had an address from Linger Longer Louis, as he is affectionately called by us who seemed to be waiting aeons for him to come from somewhere near Malaya. Actually our scepticism was somewhat shaken, as he is clearly a fine fellow, strong personality etc. and made a great impression on us. Lady Louis is a fizzer too – they are a good-looking pair. It was hard to realize that after all the time we've been waiting and hearing of him thousands of miles off, he was really here within a few feet of us.

Well darling, I must get moving. This is also hard to realize.

Lots of love to you all

Trevor.

Eric had a letter last night and says they are coming out in alphabetical order so I have been hoping, but no luck yet.

!! ABOARD H.M TROOPSHIP "ALMANZORA",(sic) SINGAPORE 17TH SEPTEMBER

My darling one,

I decided I wouldn't write that I was on my way home until this confounded ship showed some sign of life – and at last it has. I began to think it was incapable of it. It was just like our departure from Southampton in 1940, do you remember? We got on board on Sat. afternoon, moved out into the roads yesterday morning, and then stuck dead for a whole day: it is now about 3pm Monday. The reason is that a convoy was being collected. There are still mines about, naturally. Never travel on a troopship, darling: not as a trooper anyway: the accommodation has to be seen to be believed, and even so, in accordance with **Mountbatten's** order, we are only 60% full. All the time I've never really regretted not having a commission, but I've come pretty near it now. However, I can stick it for the last month, the food is delicious (to us) and a very decent lot of chaps at the table with me (though there are, of course, rumours of another complete reshuffle, in the usual style.) At night practically everyone goes on deck with mattress etc. and apart from the usual mysterious stream of water that runs from nowhere under your bed in the small hours, I find it fairly successful. I'd like to describe to you all the new sensations we've had in the last few weeks, but it would take pages. In the last few days alone, taking food for example, there has been oatmeal porridge, kidney soup, liver, steamed pudding, marmalade, bread, butter, scrambled eggs(!), Virginia cigarettes, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, bacon (!!!) – things almost completely forgotten in the course of years. Then there's the sensation of sitting in a padded chair at a real table, as I'm doing now, of new clothes, pyjamas, even sheets, of going to a counter and buying anything you can see and happen to fancy, of getting a drink (strictly non-alcoholic on a troopship) from a steward who says "sir" to you, of striking a match for your cigarette instead of getting up and looking for a bit of cinder or someone who is smoking – there is really no end to it, and it is probably just as well that I still have some discomfort to put up with or it might affect my brain. My first purchases (not counting the extraordinary marketing that went on during the Japanese era, of which more anon) were: cigarettes, matches, a tin of "Ideal" milk, 2 tins of sardines (which may surprise you, but I've got several new tastes, though they may not be permanent), some chocolate (this is rationed, to my chagrin, but I expect it is scarce everywhere, it was in England even in 1940), a packet of needles and a bottle of ink. Of course, we've had a lot of necessary stuff, toilet articles etc. free from the Red Cross. I've resurrected my old pen, which writes but you can't fill it now: I thought of selling it once but knew I wouldn't get much for it, as it is merely called "The Seal" and the Nips, though they might give you something for a Swan, Onoto etc. were not really interested in anything but a Parker, for which you could get \$120-150 a few months ago.

By a great stroke of luck I got your letter of 25th August just before starting to catch the ship. I had closed up the one I had written to you, and was wondering what to do with it: then I found **Nobby Clarke** in an office marked "Enquiries" and he, also not knowing what to do with it, gave his personal guarantee that it would go. He also sent his love to you and hopes we shall all meet again. So I hope you will get it, but I may have done something wrong in writing on ordinary paper. They will not give us clear instructions about that sort of thing: now we are quite in the dark about any mailing arrangements from Colombo, or whether we shall be allowed ashore. Relations are to be allowed on board, I'm told, and I have a cousin who is a planter there – anyway, I hope to get a letter off somehow. I expect they will give us one of those official letter cards and say it must be completed and handed in in 10 minutes' time. Yes, I was thrilled to get your letter, and very glad you still want me back. I expect we shall be chivvied around a lot when we land, going to camps and demobilization centres – what a prospect, I wish it were all over.

No, I haven't been beaten or starved or anything like that. I became one of the showpieces as regards emaciation, but though constantly hungry I wasn't starving, and many people managed to keep up a reasonable weight on the diet – presumably it was less my "cup of tea" than some others'. Actually, when I was in hospital I sometimes watched the