

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



37TH EDITION
JANUARY 2014



Rod Beattie wearing his MBE with his Australian medal (left) and his Dutch medal (right).

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A MEMORABLE 10TH ANNIVERSARY FOR THE MVG IN 2013 ROD BEATTIE RECEIVES HIS MBE FROM HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES A CONCERT TO REMEMBER IN CHICHESTER AND EMOTIONAL SERVICE OF DEDICATION IN SOUTHAMPTON

It has been a great privilege to have been associated with and involved in the running of the Malayan Volunteers Group for the past ten years. It has been an even greater privilege to have worked with **Jonathan Moffatt** during this time, and I would like to pay tribute to the enormous contribution he has made to recording the history of members of the Malayan Volunteer Forces and to building up formidable archival records. His enormous depth of knowledge about the Malayan Volunteer Forces has been the rock on which the Group has been built. His wise judgement and invaluable advice over the years has kept the MVG together, and helped many people learn more about their Volunteer relatives, where and how they were captured and where they were taken as prisoners of war by the Japanese. Many of the people he has helped have now become members of the MVG. They have been re-introduced to other Volunteer and Malayan families with whom they had lost contact, and they have re-established good friendships with their parents' former friends. He has enabled them to carry out their own research and fully supported all requests to present new memorials and restore existing ones to the Volunteers, civilian internees, evacuees and members of the auxiliary services. His book, "**In Oriente Primus. A History of the Volunteer Forces in Malaya and Singapore**" written in collaboration with **Paul Riches** whose interest and expertise lie in the medals awarded to Volunteers, is an extremely comprehensive 'Who's Who' of the Volunteer units and the men and women who served during the Malayan Campaign, and is a very valuable reference book for collectors of medals, researchers and historians as well as ordinary members of the public looking for information.

Jonathan, the MVG thanks you wholeheartedly and salutes you warmly for your research; your impressive collection of data and infinite patience in dealing with requests for information about Malayan Volunteers or Argylls.

Jonathan's interest in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and the Plymouth Argyll Royal Marines has also helped those with relatives from these battalions, which played such a prominent part in the fighting in the Malayan peninsula during the Malayan Campaign. The involvement of the Argylls, from the start of the campaign, is brilliantly described and evaluated in the book, "**Moon over Malaya. A tale of Argylls and Marines**", which **Jonathan** wrote with his co-author **Audrey Holmes McCormick**. A fourth edition of this book is now being reprinted after an extensive update of the information.

Finally, I owe a personal debt of gratitude to **Jonathan**, not only for his expertise and help with running the MVG, but for helping me discover more about my own father, and my mother's and my escape from Singapore. I also have **Jonathan** to thank for collecting from MVG members, the extraordinary and most generous gift which was presented to me at the annual luncheon in London on 19th October for my part in the running of the MVG over the past 10 years. It was a very humbling moment, quite overwhelming and I am very touched and grateful to everyone for their contribution. The cheque has been put to very good use – an updated computer and a suitable outfit to attend the Buckingham Palace Investiture as one of **Rod Beattie's** guests. I have added a gold chain to the beautiful mother-of-pearl RAF Pendant which accompanied the cheque, and enjoyed wearing it. **A very big thank you to MVG members for your generosity.**

Secondly, it was a great privilege to have been involved with the Vocal Orchestra Concert in Chichester, as a member of the organizing committee. The initial discussions about the concert took place in London in December 2012, and from a low-key start the concert came to fruition on 26th October on a dark, wet and windy autumnal night in a burst of unexpected emotion. It was an outstanding success, beyond the committee's wildest dreams. The MVG can feel justly proud to have sponsored this historic event to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the women's Vocal Orchestra by the recreation of the choir which first sang in the women's camp in Palembang, Sumatra. It was a very special and unique evening.

A full report of the concert, its beginnings, development, performance and post-concert possibilities for further involvement, is enclosed as a supplement to this newsletter.

The Service in Southampton on 27th October to dedicate the Repatriation Memorial in the Town Quay Park was a fitting and emotional conclusion to a very successful and well organized week-end of events. [See P.7 for the report.]

And finally, it was my very great privilege to be invited by **Rod Beattie** to accompany him, with 2 other guests, to Buckingham Palace to receive his award as a **Member of the most excellent Order of the British Empire [MBE]** from **HRH The Prince of Wales** at an Investiture held on Friday 6th December 2013.

In July 2010, the Malayan Volunteers Group completed and sent in Nomination Papers to the Cabinet Office for a United Kingdom Honour for **Rod Beattie**. This followed the personal award of "**Knight in the Order of Orange-Nassau**" which he received from **Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands** in January 2010 for his work in researching and helping all

families connected with the Burma-Thailand Railway, including 17,000 Dutch POWs of whom 2,700 died; and the award of the **Order of Australia Medal** in HM The Queen's Birthday Honours in June 2011. It was felt on both occasions that an award for a British Honour for Rod's work was long overdue. Initiated by **David Wingate**, the MVG put together a strong case for a British award in acknowledgement of Rod's outstanding work on clearing the rail bed from the jungle which had grown over the route of the railway where the rails had been torn up post-war, and in researching the true history of the Burma-Thailand Railway – how it was built and why expendable slave labour was used.

It may be that other Far East Groups, with an interest in the Burma-Thailand Railway, sent in Nomination Papers as well as the MVG for an award for Rod, but I was absolutely amazed and felt enormously privileged when I received Rod's invitation to attend his Investiture, which I accepted with personal thanks and on behalf of the MVG. [Report on P. 3.]

Congratulations, Rod, for this well deserved recognition of your outstanding work.

For the MVG, the next 10 years will be equally as challenging as the first decade, and we cannot be complacent about our achievements to date. There are other commemorations to be considered – the first of these is already planned and we only await the final details from **Julian Wan** at the Changi Museum. On 22nd February 2014, the MVG is presenting a plaque to the Museum in memory of the civilian men, women and children and Allied Servicemen and women who were held on Bangka Island, Palembang and Loeboek Linggau in Sumatra as POWs of the Japanese during WW2.

We look ahead to the 70th anniversary of V-J Day in 2015 and our Service at noon in the Chapel at the National Memorial Arboretum, followed by the laying of wreaths on the Memorial Stone in the Memorial Garden. A buffet lunch will be available afterwards. Please put this important date in your diaries.

We plan to attend the various events in Singapore to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the signing of the surrender by the Japanese in Singapore in September 2015 – another date to remember.

The Annual Reunion and Luncheon is now in the capable hands of **Merilyn Hywel-Jones**. We thank her for taking on this important job. The lunch will continue to be held at the RAF Club in Piccadilly for logistical reasons – the Ballroom can seat up to 120 people; the venue is easily accessible; the Ballroom is free of charge; the food is good; we are provided with a silver service and, for London's West End, the cost of lunch is very reasonable.

Jane Nielsen has offered to help with the website and we are very grateful to her for this.

WISHING YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR.

**A DAY TO REMEMBER
THE INVESTITURE OF ROD BEATTIE AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE.
A personal account by Rosemary Fell**



Rod Beattie with his guests after the Investiture
Left to right: Philip Noakes, Rosemary Fell, Rod Beattie and Sibylla Jane Flower

In July 2010, the MVG nominated Rod for a U.K. Honour, for his untiring work on the Thailand-Burma Railway, and with former POWs and their relatives. We hoped that he would receive an award during the 65th anniversary year of V-J Day. However, when no award was forthcoming, we felt unable to let members know

about our nomination. Each time the Queen's Birthday and New Year Honours were announced, we searched through the lists, only to be disappointed, until in June this year. There in the column headed **Member of the most Excellent Order of the British Empire** was **Rod's** name, with the commendation reading: **"For services to the Commonwealth War Graves and to the history of the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre in Thailand."**

Imagine my even greater surprise when in September I received an e-mail from Rod asking me to accompany him to the Palace to receive his award, together with 2 other guests, historian **Sibylla Jane Flower** whose father commanded the 9th Battalion Royal Northumberland Fusiliers on the Railway and throughout captivity, and **Philip Noakes** former Director, Commonwealth War Graves (Asia). It was an honour and privilege which I was absolutely delighted to accepted.

Rod chose to attend the Investiture which was held on 6th December, and arrangements were made for the day. **Sibylla Jane Flower** kindly invited **Rod's** guests to meet for coffee before the Investiture at the Army and Navy Club in St. James's Square, and to return there as her guests for a celebration lunch for **Rod** afterwards.

It was a cold winter's day as we walked from the Club, past St James's Palace and into the Mall, but the sun came out as we arrived at the gates of Buckingham Palace. We were requested to arrive between 10.00 and 10.15 a.m. and we had time for a few photographs to be taken outside the gates. Then our tickets and identities were checked before we entered the courtyard in front of the Palace. We walked through to the inner courtyard and entered the Palace through the south entrance. We left our coats before going up the stairs on the left side of the entrance. Half way up, **Rod** was directed to go up another staircase to the right, to be briefed, while we continued straight up and into the long picture gallery which leads into the Ballroom. All the early comers sat on tiered benches along both sides of the Ballroom, but as we were among the later arrivals, we sat on chairs in the main body of the Ballroom facing the throne dais from where the awards were made. As we waited, an orchestra played a selection of traditional, classical and modern music before, during and after the Investiture. Seated in the gallery behind us, the orchestra was drawn from the Bands of the Household Division and conducted by Major Jason Griffiths, Director of Music The Blue and Royals. At precisely 11a.m. five Beefeaters entered the Ballroom from the Gallery and took their places at the back of the throne dais. HRH The Prince of Wales entered from the front right side entrance accompanied by 2 Gurkhas who also stood behind the Prince on the dais. Other Officers on duty that day took up their positions and the Investiture began. It was such an elegant yet very simple ceremony, carried out with absolute precision but with the minimum of pomp. Each person came into the Ballroom through the left hand entrance nearest the dais and waited to be announced while the previous person was being given an award by Prince Charles. Walking forward after being announced, the recipient turned towards the Prince, bowed or curtsied and took 3 steps to the dais where each had the award pinned on. Then after a few words with the Prince, he shook their hand and they stepped back 3 paces, bowed or curtsied, turned right and walked out through the right hand entrance. The Prince spent longer chatting with **Rod** than with almost every other person. He congratulated **Rod** on his work tracing and clearing the track of the Railway and setting up the Museum in Kanchanaburi, and his final remark was "only an Aussie could do that sort of thing!" - which we thought very relevant and extremely pertinent, knowing **Rod's** drive and determination.

A friend of **Jane** took photos of **Rod** in the courtyard outside the south entrance with his MBE medal, and then with his other 2 medals - the Australian medal and the Dutch Order of Orange-Nassau. More photos were taken outside the Palace, and in front of the Victoria Monument, before we walked back to the Army and Navy Club for lunch. We celebrated **Rod's** award with champagne before and during lunch. We sat and chatted until about 3.30 p.m. when **Philip** had to leave to catch his train, and we all said our goodbyes. It was a fitting finale to a memorable day.



Rod with his MBE

3.



Rod with his 3 medals

ANNUAL REUNION and LUNCHEON – held at the RAF Club, Piccadilly on Saturday 19th October 2013.

Report by Jonathan Moffatt

Forty-six MVG members attended our very enjoyable 10th Anniversary Lunch at the RAF Club, Piccadilly. We were pleased to welcome **Liz Moggie** from Malaysia and several new members for the first time. After drinks and a good, substantial three course lunch, we listened to a most interesting talk by MVG member **Michael Thompson** on his impressions of Malaysia since 1963.

Michael, in 1942 a child evacuee from Malaya, served with the Foreign & Colonial Office in KL in 1964 and was FCO Counsellor KL from 1979 to 1982. He was also 2i/c British Land Forces, Hong Kong 1982-1985, then Counsellor for the Colonial Office. He was awarded the OBE then CBE for his distinguished service. Michael spoke of how the Malaysia of today had developed since Independence. Relations had been strained in the early 1980s when

Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the first Malaysian Prime Minister not to have been educated in Britain, encouraged a policy of 'Buy British Last'. Many negative perceptions of Britain then existed and it was widely felt that Britain took Malaysia for granted. This was reinforced by the observation that no British Prime Minister visited Malaysia in these years. British Diplomats had to re-learn their approach, perhaps taking their lead from the more chilled out French diplomats. The talk was very well received and was followed by a short question and answer session.

Following the talk, there came an 'additional' surprise item, or at least for one person present: the presentation of a gift from our global membership to our MVG Secretary, **Rosemary**, in appreciation of her ten years of leadership, example and excellent newsletter. Rosemary was presented with a cheque to spend on 'something enjoyable' and an enamel RAF brooch.

Thanks go to **Becca Kenneison** and **June Jackson** for selling raffle tickets, which raised £176 for MVG funds, and their helpers for running the raffle, and we did have some very good prizes!



THE BALLROOM AT THE RAF CLUB

PRESENTATION OF THE PLAQUE TO THE CHANGI MUSEUM, SINGAPORE.



The Sumatra Plaque is now ready to be presented to the Changi Museum on 22nd February 2014. The presentation is due to take place at 1.30 p.m. in the Museum, preceded by a buffet lunch in the Bark Café at noon for all those attending the presentation.

We have received an invitation jointly from MVG Australia in association with MBV WA Inc to attend the dedication of the Plaque at a Service at the Wesley Chapel, Guildford, Perth, WA on Sunday 9th February 2014 at 9.15 for 9.30 a.m. **Robert Gray** is to speak about the hardships his Grandparents and others experienced as POWs in the camps.

Bill and Elizabeth Adamson have generously said that they will cover the cost of this service of dedication, and we are very grateful to them.

Please let **Elizabeth Adamson** know in Australia, or **Rosemary Fell** know in the U.K. if you plan to attend, so that we can give numbers to the Bark Café for the buffet lunch. We hope members from Malaysia and Singapore will also attend – please let **Andrew Hwang** know.

We look forward to seeing you all at the Changi Museum, Singapore, in February.

CONCERT, St. PAUL'S CHURCH, CHICHESTER, "Singing to Survive."
By Judy Balcombe

26th October 2013

We sit quietly in St. Paul's Church, Chichester, waiting for the audience to assemble and for the concert to begin. The plaster walls and simple décor make a fitting venue for this humble and peaceful occasion. We are gathered to hear choral music first performed 70 years ago by the Women's Vocal Orchestra in a Japanese prison camp in Palembang, Sumatra.

Two women captives, Margaret Dryburgh and Norah Chambers, transcribed classical music to be sung by the 30 women internees who joined the prison camp choir. The women were of many nationalities and spoke different languages. The music was thus arranged so choir members could make sounds with their voices, rather than singing with words.

The concerts performed in the prison camp offered beauty and consolation to the otherwise distraught and degraded internees. Already weakened, the choir members sat on boxes or small stools as they sang. Even harsh guards were stunned into silence at the wonder of the music.

Later, when their living conditions deteriorated and many died from disease and starvation, the memory of the Vocal Orchestra offered the women some ease and comfort.

We have come to listen to wonderful music but it is fitting to remember the men and women who suffered in the camps, the many who did not survive and the thousands fleeing Singapore whose boats were bombed and who died at sea.

The words of 2 Corinthians 1:8 were written 2,000 years ago but so aptly describe the trial of the internees:

We think you ought to know, dear brothers and sisters, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia.

We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it.

And indeed, many did not survive.

Glancing round the body of the church to night, we see the many families and friends of the internees, who each had a different voyage and a different story.

Life has somehow brought us together to remember the internees, their struggles and the care they both gave to their friends in camp and also received. Even in times of most extreme hardship, no internee ever died alone.

We think of ourselves, their descendents, of how ancestors' lives affected us and how we may seek to heal memories and our own wounds.

William McDougall, the American journalist who was interned in the Men's Camps, seeing half of his friends die, became a Catholic Priest after the war. He wrote the following in his book 'By Eastern Windows':

The first job is to stop hating. But hate does not cease because it is willed to cease. Something else just as solid and powerful has to push out hate and fill the place it occupied. That is the biggest and hardest job - filling the vacancy with positive action.

There has certainly been much positive action associated with the preparations for this concert. Many of us in the audience are now lifelong friends and there are new friends in Palembang and Muntok. Projects are afoot to place a memorial to the internees who died and remain buried in Muntok. Donations have helped provide a new well for the people living in Kampong Menjelang, the village standing where the women were interned. There are plans to help a local school and to assist a student to train as a nurse, in memory of the Australian nurses killed at Radji beach on 14/2/1942 and the other nurses who suffered and died in and near the camps.

It is not possible to change the past but maybe we can try to heal it.



3 graves in Muntok Chinese cemetery, believed to contain 25 English women, found during construction of Pertamina Petrol station, 1981.



Pertamina petrol station, site of former Muntok Town Cemetery. Male internees are believed to remain buried under houses behind petrol station.



New well, Kampong Menjelang, Muntok, site of former Women's internment camp

Judy also writes:

The Tinwinning Museum in Muntok is now opened. It was inaugurated on Thursday 7th November 2013. It tells the history of the tin mining industry in Muntok, and there is an area dedicated to the second world war. It has been named the Vivian Bullwinkel gallery, in memory of the Australian nurse who survived the Bangka Island massacre and the other nurses and internees.

I plan to go to Muntok with Neal Hobbs and my aunt after the presentation at Changi Museum in February of the Sumatra Plaque which is dedicated to the POWs both military and civilian who were in the camps in this area.

[Editor: Judy sent some photos of the opening ceremony, and of the galleries describing the history of WW2. Lack of space prevents them from being included here.]

**DEDICATION OF THE SOUTHAMPTON REPATRIATION MEMORIAL
REPORT BY MEG PARKES**

At 2 p.m. on Sunday 27th October 2013, under the lowering clouds of a gathering storm, 250 people gathered from far and wide to take part in the dedication and unveiling of the Southampton Repatriation Memorial. The Researching FEPOW History Group (www.researchingfepowhistorygroup.org.uk) had installed the first of two such memorials in 2011 in Liverpool. Dedicated to the survivors of Far East captivity, they also mark the role that these two great ports played in the repatriation of thousands of British FEPOW and civilian internees during the autumn of 1945.

As the site of the Southampton Memorial (in Town Quay Park on French Street) offered no protection from the elements, the service of dedication took place nearby at the ancient church of St. Michael the Archangel in Bugle Street. Founded by the Normans in the 12th century, and nestling in the mediaeval heart of the city just a short walk from the quayside, it is the oldest building in Southampton. It is also a survivor, being one of the few undamaged buildings left standing during the ferocious bombing raids on the docks during 1940.

The church was full. The service was led by team vicar **Tim Daykin** who was assisted by FEPOW chaplain **Pauline Simpson**. The church choir, the University of Southampton's Choral Scholars *Cantores Michaelis*, led by **Keith Davies** their Director of Music, provided a glorious and beautiful backdrop to the service. Guests of honour were the 15 FEPOW and two former internees who had travelled from all over the UK to be there. Some of them had disembarked at Southampton 68 years ago and their presence brought the congregation closer to the history being commemorated.

The civic dignitaries attending included the Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire, **General James Balfour**, the Mayor and Mayoress of Southampton and both the Chief Executive and Leader of the City Council who joined over 200 relatives and friends of FEPOW. Also assisting in the service and at the memorial site were over 40 cadets from Southampton's Army and Air Training Corps.

The service remembered and paid respects to all former Far East captives and in particular those who had survived. Their captivity was poignantly represented by the ceremonial placing on the altar of two British Union flags. These were kept hidden and were finally raised on the day of liberation, one in Thailand (at Kanchanaburi's officers' camp) and the other in China (at the Lungwha internment camp). The former was lent by the family of **Lieutenant Lawrence Gormley** and the latter by **Joan Bulley**, a former child internee.

Readings were given by FEPOW **Maurice Naylor**, **Commander (retired) Tony Herdman RN**, the nephew of an internee held in Sumatra and **Martin Percival** of the Researching FEPOW History Group. The Group's chairman, **Meg Parkes**, whose father had returned via Southampton on the *Queen Mary*, gave the address, one of the cadets read the Kohima Epitaph and FEPOW **Stan Vickerstaffe** said the FEPOW prayer. Wreaths from organizations and individuals were laid before the altar. A bugler from the Royal Marines' Band sounded the Last Post and Reveille during the Act of Remembrance and they, following the handing over of the folded flags to two cadets, **Revd. Daykin** and the FEPOW chaplain led flag bearers, FEPOW, dignitaries and the congregation in a procession down to the Town Quay Park. Luckily the rain, which had been audible during the service, abated just long enough for the procession and Walk Past the memorial to take place. Afterwards, during tea organized by the church and Friends of Town Quay Park, veterans and cadets gathered in huddles each with questions for the other. It was a truly memorable occasion for all concerned.



REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY – 10TH NOVEMBER 2013

A report by Rosemary Fell

A visit to the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey on a dank and rainy Saturday afternoon to see the MVG Cross planted in the FEPOW Plot proved to be a very poignant moment. It was just before 3 p.m. when I arrived, and as I was about to plant a cross for my father in the Plot, the Westminster Abbey clock struck the hour, and a short ceremony started in one of the plots further along. Veterans of a Tank Regiment removed their headgear while the Last Post was played by buglers, followed by a few prayers and then Reveille was sounded. Everyone in the Field of Remembrance stopped and this gave each of us in that sea of red poppies a few minutes for private and personal reflection.

In the FEPOW Plot, the 8" black MVG Cross stood out clearly on the right side of the plot, carefully planted by **Merilyn Hywel-Jones**, who was present at the Cross Planting Ceremony on Thursday, 7th November, attended by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh and HRH The Prince Harry.

We thank her for organizing the tickets for that occasion, and for ensuring that the missing SSVF Badge in the centre of the cross was replaced in time for Remembrance Sunday. It is sad to note that there were only 4 smaller crosses planted in front of the large MVG Cross.

Anyone visiting the Garden can plant a cross in the FEPOW Plot or any other plot for their relative. The FEPOW Plot can be found very easily. It is always in the same place and the plots are numbered very clearly. A list of plots in alphabetical order, with their numbers, appears on a large board near the entrance to the Garden. Next year is the 100th anniversary of the beginning of WW1 and 2015 is the 70th anniversary of V-J Day. Crosses can be obtained for a donation to the RBL in an alcove near the entrance to the Abbey.

After the grey Saturday afternoon, Remembrance Sunday dawned bright and sunny, but cold and frosty. The crowds were already gathering to claim their positions near the Cenotaph as I walked to Horse Guards Parade to collect the marker board well before 9 a.m. A steward took pity on me, and escorted me into Whitehall through Horse Guards, thus saving a long walk back into the Mall and through Admiralty Arch into Whitehall via Trafalgar Square.

This year we only had 10 marchers instead of our usual 12. Regular marchers **Christine Cavender** and her friend **Gwen, Karen Harney, Merilyn Hywel-Jones, Sandy Lincoln, Pat Wilson, Donald & Rosemary Fell** were joined this year by **Merilyn's** sister **Jane Nielsen** and her son **Thomas** from Denmark. We were very pleased to have the **Nielsens** with us. **Jane** designed the map of Java showing the civilian women's prison camps for the "Singing to Survive" concert, which is enclosed with the newsletter.

As the tallest marcher, we gave **Thomas** one of the MVG identification arm bands to wear – which he put on his wrist! He was delighted when HRH The Princess Royal looked directly at him and at the wrist band from the saluting dais on Horse Guards at the end of the march past.

The long wait for our turn to march after the Service, which was taken as usual by the Bishop of London, was rewarded by an even bigger crowd of on-lookers watching the column of marchers. The MVG wreath was handed in to join the hundreds of others around the Cenotaph, as we proudly marched with over 10,000 other military and civilian personnel down Whitehall, into Great George Street and then into Horse Guards.

It may have been a coincidence, but after 9 years of asking the BBC to extend their coverage of Remembrance Sunday so that the civilian column M, in which the MVG marches, is shown, the broadcast did go on until 12.30 p.m. Not only did the Malayan Volunteers get a mention, but several members could be clearly seen on the recorded coverage on the BBC iPlayer as we passed the Cenotaph.

At the end of the march past the National Anthem is played, and the marchers are free to disperse. As usual, we made our way back across Westminster Bridge to the "All Bar One" where we had a long and convivial lunch before saying our goodbyes for another year.

REMEMBRANCE DAY, PENANG 2013

Report by Leslie A.K. James

Organised annually for the past twelve years by the Penang Veterans' Association (PVA), Penang's Remembrance Day ceremony this year was held on Sunday, 24th November. The ceremony took place at the Cenotaph on the Esplanade and began at 7.30 a.m. with the mounting of the guard by the catafalque party and the arrival of Executive Council (Exco) Member the **Hon. Chow Kon Yeow**, representing Penang Chief Minister **Lim Guan Eng** who was leading a trade mission to Taiwan. The catafalque party and trumpeters were provided by 9 Battalion, Royal Malaysian Rangers, with two Royal Malaysian Navy ratings providing the colour party.

The ceremony began with recorded renditions of the Malaysian National Anthem and the Penang State Anthem followed by prayers, first a 'doa' said in Malay by a Muslim mufti from the PVA and then several prayers appropriate to the occasion said by the Venerable Archdeacon **Charles Samuel**, Vicar of St. George's Anglican Church, Penang. There



Merilyn Hywel-Jones, Thomas Nielsen and Rosemary Fell wait in Whitehall before the Cenotaph Service.

was a short address by the Hon. **Chow Kon Yeow** followed by a reading from John Chapter 15 ('Greater love hath no man than this...') by the British Acting High Commissioner, **Ray Kyles**. Lawrence Binyon's Ode ('They shall grow not old...') was recited by **Kenneth Speldewinde**, son of the late **Harold Speldewinde**, founder of the PVA. There then followed the two minutes silence with the playing of the Last Post and Reveille by trumpeters from 9 Battalion Royal Malaysian Rangers.

The ceremony concluded with wreath-laying by the **Hon. Chow Kon Yeow** "on behalf of the people of Penang," diplomatic and consular officials (e.g. India, Nepal, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore), a senior police officer representing the Chief Police Officer Penang, and other dignitaries, including **Air Vice Marshal W.J. Ludwig**, Commander IADS (Integrated Air Defence System, RMAF Station Butterworth) and British and New Zealand IADS officers. MVG member **Leslie A.K. James** laid a wreath on behalf of the Malayan Volunteers Group. The Governor of Penang was not represented nor was the Malaysian Federal Government.

The ceremony was attended by about 100 people, including PVA members and a large contingent of uniformed reserve officers and personnel of **KD Sri Pinang**, the shore establishment of the Royal Malaysian Navy at Penang. Refreshments were served under canvas on the Esplanade following the ceremony.

At the end of the communion service at St. George's Church later the same morning, Archdeacon **Charles Samuel** drew attention to the two memorial plaques in the church commemorating the fallen of the Manchester Regiment and the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry who were killed during the Malayan Emergency. He offered prayers of thanksgiving for their sacrifice in the service of the people of Malaysia.

Every year at 11 a.m. on 11th November, a special remembrance ceremony is held at the Chinese Anti-War memorial at Ayer Itam to commemorate both the Penang Chinese Volunteers who went to China to help with China's resistance to Japan's 1930s aggression and the Chinese victims of the Japanese occupation of Penang. This ceremony was held again this year and was attended by the Penang Chief Minister and representatives of local Chinese community and political organizations.

REPORT ON REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY (10 NOVEMBER 2013) IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA – by Andrew Hwang.

It was a very wet Remembrance Sunday, possibly the wettest in recent memory. The service was led by **The Revd. Dr. Andrew Cheah** of St. Mary's Anglican Cathedral and opened with the singing of "I Vow To Thee My Country." The MVG contingent consisted of **Andrew and Lisa Hwang, Ian Richardson and Dato Anthony Cooper**. The turnout was very good, higher than in previous years despite the inclement weather.

The Acting British High Commissioner to Malaysia, **Mr. Ray Kyles**, read the Lesson contained in John 15: 12-17, followed by prayers by **The Revd. Dr. Cheah**. "In Flander's Fields" and "To the Fallen" were then recited by the Defence Advisors of South Africa and New Zealand respectively.

Unusually, a trumpet rather than a bugle was used to sound the last Post and Reveille.

Forty-two wreaths were laid in all, representing the various Commonwealth High Commissioners, Embassies, MVG, the ex-British Army Association Malaysia, NMBVA, the various British loyal societies, British Schools in Kuala Lumpur, the British Malaysian Society, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, and St. Mary' Anglican Cathedral.

The service concluded with the spirited singing of "Abide With Me" which the weather failed to dampen.

Some of the assembled participants then adjourned to the British High Commissioner's Residence for a traditional cooked English breakfast and a chat. It was also a time of farewell for several of the long serving personnel of the Defence Section who would be leaving for other postings in 2014.



COPY OF A LETTER RECEIVED BY MAJOR BERNARD FOSS FROM MISS JOSEPHINE FOSS
By kind permission of her niece Diana Sparkes

August 24th 1945

My dear Family and Friends,

All these three and a half years, we have not dared to write diaries etc. because of constant searches and internees done to death for quite innocent documents. So now I thought I'd write a general survey of my adventures! I had a really marvellous holiday in Australia, but for that I doubt if I could have stood up physically to the hardships we have had to undergo. I think almost the last real connection I had with you were the parcels I sent from Sydney for your Christmas 1941. I never heard from England for that Christmas. Well, KL was well organized, plenty of air raid shelters, ARP and St. John's well planned, and we felt fairly safe. We had anti-aircraft guns in the Pudu English School (PES) compound. On Dec 26th Nip planes flew over Padang, and tho' bombs were small, a lot of damage was done to the Post Office, Club, Chartered Bank and Police Barracks, where Local Defence Corps (LDC) were quartered. I then send **Bibik (Besar)** our matron with small boarders (**Dorothy Lim, Ruth Ironsides, Ee Pin and Pansy**) (later **Kwai Lan**) to Singapore on night mail and sent several big girls who were helping at first aid centres to their homes. I kept **Jesse (McGregor)** and another big orphan Singhalese **Mary (Pereira)** with me. And they were marvellous - (fearless under fire!). **Miss Sprenger** insisted on staying, tho' she was only at canteen, not at St. John's. On Dec 27th, I found that nearly all European women had fled and I, instead of being the lowest underling, turned into the Head of St. J's with a special cap! Then a miner from Rawang turned up with a little English girl aged 12 - **June (Crichton)** - and said 'What shall I do with her?' I took her, and she had to follow me to Casualty and help in the canteen or sleep there if I was on night duty. We had few civilian casualties but wounded being brought in incessantly from front lines - Argylls, Manchesters, Sikhs, Gurkhas - in v. bad conditions - better cases were sent at once on hospital trains to Singapore and then shipped off. Every day we were told the Nips would never take KL, until Monday Jan 5th - when I was called after being 11 hours on duty and told that the medical unit would go in convoy to Singapore - I would have to drive my own car and take **Miss Sprenger, June (Crichton), Jessie (McGregor) and Mary (Pereira)**. I knew I could not drive that night, so I appealed to **Mr. Adrian Clark** and he gave me a house to go to and told me to stay. Pudu was then being shelled and the Staff bungalow, a wooden one. I actually left KL Thursday afternoon with the Local Defence Corps convoy under **d'Augustin**, having watched the military miners etc. do the scorched earth stunt and give out rice to the population. I was able to save quite a lot of essential drugs, syringes, etc. left behind by the medical unit. We were to fix a camp on the estates outside Seremban, but the Nips came on so quickly and infiltrated from the coast so that they were nearly on us on Saturday morning, and we all moved on. With my precious burden (**June** etc. in the car) I did not care to go to Gemas, for the Nips were bombing the line, so I went via Jasin and had a very tiring tho' eventless journey - only twice we had to stop for planes overheard and no bombs. We made for the CEZ School and I was there or at the new Cathay flats all the time. The Zs had a bomb right through the side of the house over my bed, but I was out at the casualty clearing centre. The bombing here was horrible; there was no preparation made in Singapore, and we seemed to have no fighters. The Nips seemed to swoop down on such areas as Beach Road Market and hundreds, nay thousands of Chinese coolies were killed or maimed or shocked. I certainly saw life, and **Jessie** and **Mary** were wonderful - never flinched. Poor old **Jessie** got hit once and had a V. nasty shrapnel wound in her thigh.

June was packed off to England, and **Miss Sprenger** went to the YWCA. I never saw her again and I have never heard of her. Then the Head of the Government Federal Home said she must go, so I was sent there - 280 girls of all types, diseased, prostitutes, raped, not wanted - and 60 babies under 1. Amahs all wanting to leave, no cooks etc. Some men came to help at night, a 'Times' correspondent was disappeared safely one day before the end, and the protectors of Chinese from up country. It was really a nightmare as we were being shelled most of the time and the house is built in three layers on the side of a hill. No water after a bit; no lavatories could be used, the kitchens constantly shelled, the girls and I cooked in between and dived under the cement tables as the shells came. Then last, the fires - then I was frightened. I have waited on the exposed steps wondering whether I'd be hit as I ran up to the babies, but I wasn't really scared. Only when the fires came closer and closer. We were on a hill with only one exit and that way the fires were coming. We decided to break down the wall on the other side and get the girls away if necessary, but the wind changed and the flames blew the other way. I thought of **Bernard (Foss)** her brother and his 'burns' for the clearings. One night under heavy shellfire, a young Chinese boy drove up to our place in a small car to fetch me to help with a dreadful batch of casualties nearby. All through, the Chinese showed conspicuous gallantry and forgetfulness of self. There were only a European middle-aged doctor (Sultan of Selangor's private doctor), myself, scouts and some Tamil bank clerks, and you can imagine the rest as you have seen worse in England in a bad raid! If we could rest, there were only a few places for us adults to go, as we had

the children, teachers and amahs in shelters, and several nights I shared a double mattress on the ground with a man, without turning a hair. That awful night when firing ceased and we'd been through that and then surrendered! We all collapsed a bit. I had a nasty turn of cystitis through getting damp and now got gastric 'flu but had to keep about. All water we had to fetch and then the Nips came and took away our cars, the girls' jewels, anything they fancied, and I was told to reorganize the place. 143 shell holes in our roofs, a great hole in the garden etc. 4 men were still with us, though we now had our proper rooms. 2 Chinese secretariat and 2 who were working each day for Nips clearing up the town. Then 10 days later the Protectorate were told to go into internment and I with them. We were to take one suitcase and bedding. We were first interned at Katong - many Asiatics were among the internees. I was put into the third house newly taken over, with **Mrs. Graham White**, and was made to sleep on the floor - oh the bugs!! I wish you could have seen me the next day dressed in some RAF shorts and tunic left behind, without one single place on my legs, below the knee, not bitten by bugs! We all tried to clear the place, it was pretty hopeless - over 100 people in a small house. San(itary) arrangements were 6 commodes, which we had to empty and dig holes in the grounds of a tiny garden and bury daily! Food: very little - nothing except one cup of tea till 12, then one small bowl of rice and possibly some tinned stuff and a light meal at night. My one 'saving grace' was the sea - tho' very much hemmed in by barbed wire entanglements - we were allowed to bathe once a day. N.B. the food was largely the fault of the so-called Britishers in charge of Camp!

About three weeks later we were moved to a convict prison at Changi and made to walk there - 12 miles on that diet and thro' the hottest part of the day! Many fainted by the wayside. Others pleaded delicacy and were taken in ambulances and lorries. I walked every step. The prison was built for 600 and when all the men and women were collected, we were 4,000. It had two great assets - v. good showers and a proper pull and push lav(atory) in every cell. I was in a store at first, later when **Pansy** came in, she and I had a Chinese convict's cell between us, and later **Mrs. Graham White**, **Pansy** and I shared. Men did cooking. Food not too bad at first. No (social) intercourse allowed between men and women except through elected officials. I was quarter-master of women's camp for over a year, and then all the rest of the time until a few months from the end, head of sew-sew girls. We were responsible for men's sewing - under a certified tailor on men's side (**Winter** of Singapore, **Bernard [Foss]** may remember). We patched, darned, knitted and made. I can make shirts, pyjamas, bajus, sarongs, loincloths, BDVs, fatigue shirts, shorts with flies. I can let out or take in with the best. I can make trousers (improvised), bed jackets. Every day I went to the men's camp under Nip or Sikh supervision and was given a special armband to wear (*now in the possession of Josephine's niece Diana Sparkes, nee Foss*). Quite fun tho' strenuous. I was also OC garbage - the women had to carry the bins to the men and without speaking the men carried them away to the incinerator or elsewhere for disposal. **Jarrett**, late B(ritish) R(esident) Selangor was a great sport. I gave him a list of wives on garbage on different days so that he could arrange husbands to come and take the bins from them, so that at least they could see each other - then Jap sentries left us and Sikhs came in under Jap officers, and then October 10 1943 the Gestapo (Kempe Tai) [sic] came. [This was the Day of the Double Tenth.] Then hell broke loose. About 57 men and 3 women [including **Freddie Bloom**] were taken out for third degree and many died under it. **Hugh Fraser**, dear old **Adrian (Clark)**, so good to me, **Middlebrook** of Protectorate, **Rendle (Bernard)** will remember at Lipis) and numbers more - **Richard Sydney**, **Bishop Wilson** of Singapore, **Worsley**, all out - all returned and soon got fit. Of all the men in the camp **Arthur Worsley** has been the bravest and best they say - no blots on his escutcheon. The Ministers of Religion have not shown up so well. Gestapo quite good to me, allowed the sewing to go on tho' I have had to put up with searching of mending and me etc. and go thro' much bowing and scraping. Then May 6 1944 we were moved to huts in Sime Road - accommodation much worse but much more freedom and no walls around us. I've been quite poorly here, because I could not stand always being in the wet! I was on a verandah which leaked! 4 times high fever 104 and 105 degrees - not malaria, constant tummy trouble, for food v bad, only rice given us and salted ginger and tea. We cultivated the gardens, acres of them, and thus got vegetables. I was over 3 months in hospital last time and now weigh 5 stone 12 (lbs). I was 10 stone exactly when I came in. And then the deaths in the camps, some because they gave up, some from dysentery or tropical typhus, many from undernourishment. **Archdeacon** and **Mrs. Graham White** among them. Red Cross parcels in 4 years, tho' thousands came in, we received 1/6, then after a series of many deaths 1 each, then 1/2 each, then 1/13 each!! The parcel **Muriel** and **Agnes** sent me early on was emptied by the Nips. I had one vest sewn into lining, and one little tube of aspirins they missed in their search. We've had a library. I've read lots of old books; first I did some Dutch, for we have many here. I am quite a bridge expert and have played chess and mahjong quite a lot. At one time we had lectures and concerts, then stopped by the Gestapo. I've done a fair amount of Maths coaching. Sunday, relations were all allowed to meet. Now we hear we are relieved and may possibly be able to send letters at once, so I'm scribbling this. Many letters you all sent me must have been lost. I have had at first lots of PCs from **Marion [Foss, cousin]**, then some from **Frances [Foss, niece]**, 2 or 3 letters and a PC from **Bernard [Foss, brother]**, 1 from **Re(nee) [Foss,**

sister], 4 from **Margaret [Foss, sister-in-law]**, 1 from **Rose [Foss, sister]**, 2 from **Harry [Foss, brother]** and about 3 from South Africa [where **Agnes** and **Muriel Foss**, her sisters lived], and odds from India – 1 from **Mrs. Clement** and several people asking me to write about lost relatives. How could I? Last letter tells me of poor old **Harvey's** passing. [She was **Dorcas Harvey**, the **Foss** family's Nanny]. I heard **Marion, Kitty, Lena** had gone. We wrote all together 4 PCs each and sent 3 radios I think in 3½ years!! If I am flown home, I shall go straight to Notting Hill Road to **Beth [Moss]** unless someone meets me. I don't know if **Hubert [Foss, my father]** is still in Golders Green. Will Beth have me for the night? I definitely can't work in this diocese again – under the new regime. If I come back it will be at the wish of the Chinese. At present I need spoiling and feeding up, a clean bed, some proper undies, etc. 3½ years on one suitcase difficult, especially as we sold our good things to buy food. Sugar \$1 a pound instead of 11 cents. Eggs \$18 instead of 3 cents. I personally feel the need of comfort more than food. But I am still very cheerful – full of beans. I want you to know all this before I see you so that you can tell me all your news and I can forget this life. The blow of losing all one's work for over 20 years is over now. Someone else must carry on!

Longing everyday now for release and home.
Much love from Jo.

SINGAPORE CAPITULATION – PART 2

By Audrey Holmes McCormick

[Editor: With apologies to Mason Nelson – in Part 1 of the printed copy of *Apa Khabar* No: 36 on P.19, 8 lines up, David Nelson (Mason's father) was not a 'free' man as stated. He marched to Changi with the other POWs and remained there.]

When the Officer in charge was enlightened about what had been happening at the Museum and Gardens, two armed police arrived to guard the Museum. And **Dr. Futardo** (who had not been imprisoned at any time as he was Goanese) came with the Botanic Lorry to collect his colleagues. This time **Professor Kwan Koriba**, another of the Japanese scientists, gave **Corner** his own scientific notes and a manuscript for safe keeping in the Gardens and was interned on 11th September.

As the library had filled, **Corner** arranged for the lighter reading to be sent to the internees' camp. They were supposed to restrict numbers to one per person but got in two, plus bibles and music sheets. He was hiding toys in cupboards, and later these and some educational books went to the children's camp arriving in time for Christmas 1943. Government art materials were also dispersed into the civil internment camp. **Corner** was asked in 1942 to put some suggestions in writing for amelioration on internees' conditions. One he recommended was for husbands and wives to meet, once weekly but at least at Christmas. The latter at least began to happen.

In **Corner's** own house at Cluny Road, a friend had stayed in November and December 1941, **Frank Kingdon-Ward**, a botanical explorer in Burma, then engaged on a secret mission in Singapore. He was ordered to leave at such short notice, he left behind on his desk diaries, maps and manuscripts. Whether it was incriminating military material or not, **Corner** did not know (he had been burning military documents himself when Singapore fell, to keep them from the Japanese). **Corner** confessed his dilemma to **Tanakadate**. And so it was the Professor who declared: "We say nothing." Into the herbarium went the package. It was returned to **Kingdon-Ward** after the war. Also stowed in the herbarium was a record of the Occupation in all the copies of the main Japanese newspapers published – in English, Malay Jawi script, Chinese and Indian scripts – transferred to the Archives in due course and now in the National Library.

But for all the scientists' delight, more human endeavors were achieved. **John** appreciated to an extent others, he thought, never had, the extent of starvation soon apparent in Singapore generally, after the ending of 120 years of British rule, and the pogrom of the Chinese. Nor were the Japanese keen to employ former house-servants of the British. His own Chinese houseboy was already in trouble as well as his son, and **Corner** sold the last of his possessions to help them. When the family re-settled, eggs began to arrive.

Starving dogs were also soon gathering at the Museum gates, barking, presumably having traced the presence of Europeans there. Attempts to feed them were made. Staff were thankful when Japanese officers seemed glad to have them. They would select one which the staff then caught and it would depart on the rear seat of a chauffeur-driven military car. The pets noticeably diminished in numbers however, when general hunger set in later. But then, so did some of the Museum's exhibits. These included a large collection of snakes, pickled in bottles. And they began to diminish. It turned out a Sikh night watchman had developed the taste.

Former employees could lose their jobs to malice-mongering. A respected clerk from the Treasury was selling cigarette butts from a tray in the street. He too received money. The Chinese began to make cigarettes very soon after the surrender. They had "Double Stork" and "Double Lion." They were made of papaya leaves and a local shrub, sendudok, and

were "revolting." A little better were the smokes made by one prisoner-of-war from the hairs he pulled out of an old horse saddle he'd found. Marginally better than cigarettes made out of strips of cement bags, although I doubt if anyone could beat the cigarette story of **Duncan Ferguson** of the Argylls, who collected elephant dung to dry as a cigarette filler. Meanwhile the Raffles duo set out to promote work for the populace.

To save the dissipation of the collected libraries, an Information Bureau had been set up in the Museum, intended to serve the Food Controller, **Mr. Hironaga**, but it supplied information to the new officials and also to incoming Japanese businessmen.

The Museum already housed the Enemy Aliens Bureau under **Mr. Asahi** – "**Count Asahi**" – at the Municipal Offices. "He is not a Count", **Professor Tanakadate** said: "He is a common man." But as **Count Asahi** carried the weight of the Municipality behind him and the Professor did not, he was still **Count Asahi** to the Museum staff. Meanwhile, the new Japanese arrivals came to the bureau for whatever information was required – but if it had a military connotation the Professor would extricate '**Mr. Birt**' or **John** and whisk them off on an errand elsewhere. And the Asian staff hid important Chinese books among the piles of unsorted Chinese bibles.

This advisory work gave an opportunity to promote Chinese people back into employment. The men could recommend individuals or firms: recommend how and who might achieve the results desired: and sometimes nudge the Municipality into providing more jobs – hence the work as a warden of Pandung Forest first given to **Chuah Ho Ann**.

One important whole scale return to work resulted from **Corner's** earlier work as Food Production Officer. It allowed the market gardeners to revive their gardens again. **Corner** had collected a store of agricultural implements at the General Clerical Recreation Club on Kampong Java Road. **Hironaga**, the Korean Food Controller, ordered 2,000 of these. **Corner** said he would undertake the delivery, which gave him the use of the gardens' lorry. *He got the remaining 2,000 changkuls and forks and 300 bags of fertilizer and bags of vegetable seed transferred to the Botanical Gardens.* Then he transferred these to the Chinese vegetable gardens, as originally intended. The Professor then escorted a lorry load to a Prisoner-of-War Camp – where he got through because a former student of his was on sentry duty. The misfortune was that tools and seeds would have done more good in the internees' camp with its more static population. Few, if any soldiers' memoirs refer to vegetable growing anywhere: they were labouring too long and hard already. The internees, however, were struggling to try to grow food as starvation set in. **Hironaga**, unacquainted with the tropics, employed **Corner** and **Birtwistle** part-time and this gave them rations money for a couple of months.

Meantime, anything rare or secret was hidden in the Botanic Gardens Herbarium. The Herbarium of the Hong Kong Botanic gardens had been sent late in 1941 to the Waterfall Gardens in Penang for safety – the Hong Kong curator having been curator at Penang. Via **Professor Koriba**, who'd been sent by the Science Council of Japan to be Head of the Botanic Gardens, and acting on the advice of **Lt. Watanabe**, who was in charge of the Penang Gardens, the Hong Kong Herbarium was loaded in six large crates on to a Japanese destroyer bound for Singapore, and was incorporated into the Singapore Herbarium. As the trays could be differentiated, the whole lot was able to be returned to Hong Kong after the war. Around a hundred Europeans were 'out' after the surrender, for varying periods into 1943. **Norman Coulson** and **Bill Ross** still ran the Municipal Workshops. In the Analysts Laboratory were **Clark** and **Wilgress**. **Williamson**, the ophthalmic surgeon, was at the Tan Tock Seng Hospital. **Gater** ran the Malaria Research Laboratory. Three men were Health Officers. Two engineers, **Sloan** and **Hylton**, ran the power station at the Alexandra Hospital. A further three, **Auten**, **Wilbraham** and **Salter** were at the Opium Packing Plant. Customs officers helped the Japanese take over Food Control. Two more engineers **Borehill** and **Turnbull**, worked at the Power Station. Others were keeping Gas, Electricity and Water supplies functioning as they awaited their replacements from Japan (of whom the first, believed to number 700, were sunk en route). Also "seen on a bicycle in Singapore", was **Dr. R.T.B Green**, senior bacteriologist from the Institute of Medical Research in Kuala Lumpur. He was responsible for the anti-typhoid and dysentery serums later given by British MOs. Men who were free, were among the first suspects when Commandos attacked shipping in Singapore harbour on 10th October 1943, and well known citizens like **Norman Coulson** died in agony in the hands of the Kempeitai because of it.

Also free were **Bishop J. Leonard Wilson** and his assistant chaplain, **Canon John Hayter**, with the **Revd. R.K. Sorby Adams**, 14 years in Singapore and principal of St. Andrew's School. Many of these men channelled money into Changi, and acted as postmen between camps – an illicit occupation, for which **Mervyn Sheppard** withstood prolonged torture without admitting the connivance of anyone else, and lived, both to tell the tale and, later, to rescue the regimental silver for the Argylls and the Royal Scots which had been hidden away for future gain on an island south of Singapore.

Corner raised \$30,000 for **Bishop Wilson** through the help of a Chinese friend **Chua Ho Ann**, who had arrived as a penniless coolie in 1922 from China, and made good. He had been imprisoned by the Japanese for three months, and when released and starving with his family, **Corner** got him a job after introducing him to the Professor. **Corner** also got back **Ho Ann's** prawn farming license for him. Throughout the rest of the occupation **Ho Ann** helped when needed, contacted by **Corner** through a "safe" telephone and slipping a thousand or so dollars at a time into **Corner's** pocket.

However, come Independence for Singapore, **Chua Ho Ann** seems to have been imprisoned – for he had vanished. **Chua Ho Ann** made a mistake one night when he followed **Corner** home. An armed Japanese detective had followed him in turn. **Ho Ann** grabbed the man, shouting at him for interfering when he – **Ho Ann** - had been ordered by the Kempeitai to watch the *orang puteh*. He got away with it. After that they met stealthily. **Ho Ann's** brother had got his fishing boat re-licensed on the promise of providing information on submarine sightings – which he did, falsely. He was actually smuggling guns to Johore guerrillas. Then he was arrested by the British for collaboration, but was rescued by a furious **John Corner**. **Brigadier McKerron** of the BMA visited **Ho Ann** (postwar) to offer him a reward and honour, both of which he refused. **Corner** was intensely proud to call him a friend.

Nor were the **Chua** men the only ones involved in resistance. **Ho Ann's** wife told of the Chinese woman after the fall, upset at the sight of the British soldiers working as coolies in Singapore, who organized the cutting up of food into small pieces which their children could distribute and the soldiers could put into their mouths unseen. There were many such instances e.g. Eurasian families calling the men to slip into their houses to be given a plate of curry.

None of these were the activities of hatred towards imperialist oppressors as had been a criticism laid against the Europeans of Malaya and Singapore. However, there were some. **Dr. Pavillard** was turned down with insults when he was trying to obtain medicines to take north with him for prisoners, by a group of Eurasian doctors who jeered at his request. But everywhere, the general populace was as helpful as they dared to be. Where the Japanese army thought to humiliate the Allied soldiers by sending them to clean streets, to undertake hard labour of some menial kind in Kuala Lumpur or Singapore or elsewhere, it was surprising how many friendly moves were made to give them food, drink, cigarettes, money and news.

In September 1942, the Japanese suddenly realised the arch villain of imperialist tyranny was still amongst them in his accustomed position in Victoria Place.....**Sir Stamford Raffles**. This would not do. It was an offence. He must be got rid of. The mayor went to the Professor. The professor went to **Corner**, who suggested that the statue of **Sir Stamford Raffles** should be moved into the entrance hall of the Museum. One of the British engineers came and measured the statue and the hall, prepared the foundations to carry the bronze figure and plinth, and collected a gang of Tamils to hoist up **Sir Stamford** by a derrick.

The statue was gashed by bomb splinters, however, and water had collected in the legs. As he was being raised amidst the chant of the labourers and was slowly tipped, a spurt of water poured out of the lower part of his body. The labourers' chant changed to shrieks of joy. "*Raffles is pissing on Syonan-to!*"

By September 22nd 1942, **Raffles** as standing in the Museum – his head reaching to the top gallery where **John Corner** worked and greeted him each morning. **The Marquis** had an explanatory note put at the base of the statue written in Japanese, Malay and English, which said that he was the founder of Syonan-to. Japanese officers brought their troops into the Museum and told them this was the founder of their new possession, and the Museum would ring with cheers.

But when **Sir Stamford** was returned to his position and unveiled again on 6th July 1946, neither an invitation was sent nor any explanation given about the part played by **Corner** to preserve the statue. When I spoke to **Professor Corner** in 1993, he made his bitterness plain.

Corner was accused of treachery, and the internees did not feel inclined to believe otherwise. The rumour certainly gained ground after **Dr. A.C. Gibson-Hill** was interned. He had been appointed Assistant Curator at the Museum, but had fallen out with **Tanakadate** who promptly had him imprisoned. The Camp Committee had certainly refused to allow any more scientists to be released to join the Professor's efforts at conservation.

The Kempeitai did search the Museum after the 10th October raid - fortunately not thoroughly. They did not find the rifle which was discovered by staff later – thought to have been hidden by **Gibson-Hill** without warning them.

Meanwhile **Chua Ho Ann** was keeping money coming in. This was assisting members of staff and removing the temptation for pilfering at a time when waste paper was fetching \$10 a kilo. One of the Japanese clerks was happily accepting bribes, using the Museum's seal of office to produce false documents to save Chinese men from being sent north with the "free labour force." In 1944, the Japanese were rounding up labour in the Dutch East Indies and sending them to Thailand via Singapore. They were dying on the streets on their way to the transit camps near the Botanic Gardens. Their route took them past the Museum where they had access to one tap for water. The corpses remained unburied, and became a healthy hazard. Through **Dr. Hanada**, the head of the Museum, the staff engaged municipal help to clear away the bodies and refuse, but had no help from the IJA.

After the war, accusations of collaboration with the enemy were made against **John Corner** in front of **Col. Gilbert Archey CBE**, of the BMA; Director of the Auckland Museum in New Zealand, and present as Officer i/c Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives. No case against him was found, but the slur against him stayed. However, he remained as **Col. Archey's A.D.C.** until 11th November 1945.

[Editor: **John Corner (jnr.)** has written a book about his father's life – now published in Singapore. See P. 19/20].



George Laub in uniform as a Lieutenant of the JVE ca. 1937

Captain George Christian Haae Laub (14.9.1886 - 19.12.41) of the Johore Volunteer Engineers



Johore Volunteer Engineers Company badge

Pre-war medals



HM King George V's Silver Jubilee Medal



Territorial Efficiency 'Malaya' Medal

World War II medals



Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Military Division



1939-45 Star



Pacific Star



1939-45 War Medal



HM King Christian X's Medal for Allied War Service 1940-45

George C H Laub was a Danish citizen, who graduated as a chemical and production engineer in 1910. As a student he had travelled to Greenland in summer 1908 as part of a geological expedition to the Josva cryolite mine at Inatsiak. He travelled to the Far East in 1912 and started work as a chemical engineer at the Poewoasri Sugar Refinery at Kertosono in Java. He later became manager of the Soemberdadie Sugar Refinery at Halte Kras. In 1916, he became chemical manager at Mount Austin Rubber Estates in Singapore and, in 1921, he started his own rubber plantation at Muar, Johore¹. In 1921, he patented² 'the manufacture of a coagulum from latex' and, in 1926, 'an ebonite or vulcanite veneer', the Laub Compounded Latex process³. In 1929, George was commissioned as Second Lieutenant in the Johore Volunteer Engineers⁴, and was promoted Lieutenant in 1931. By 1930, he had become an official of the Muar Planters' Association⁵.

He was secretary of the Muar Rifle Club for many years, and won the Federated Malay States rifle shooting championship in 1932⁶. He travelled to England in 1937 to represent the Malay States at the Imperial Meeting at Bisley, where he reached the final stage of the King's Hundred competition⁷.

By 1941, George was an independent rubber-production consultant and had been promoted Captain in the Johore Volunteer Engineers. Too old (then aged 54) for active service when the JVE were mobilized in mid 1941, George answered the Special Operations Executive call for volunteers and received training at Penang.

¹ Dansk Biografisk Leksikon (Danish Biographical Lexicon): Georg Christian Haae Laub.

² The Straits Times, 23 July 1921, p. 8; The Straits Times, 12 March 1926, p. 12.

³ The Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser, 26 June 1934, p. 1.

⁴ The Straits Times, 20 May 1929, p. 8.

⁵ The Straits Times, 5 July 1930, p. 9.

⁶ The Straits Times, 29 March 1932, p. 13; Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser, 30 March 1932, p. 5.

⁷ The Straits Times, 17 July 1937, p. 14; Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser, 17 July 1937, p. 15.

Promoted Temporary Major⁸, he was selected for one of the six SOE 'Tin Mine Denial' and sabotage parties⁹ (many of those selected were non-British citizens) that were infiltrated north from Malaya into southern Thailand ahead of the anticipated Japanese invasion. The Japanese landed at Singora (Songkhla) and Patani (Pattani) in Thailand, and at Kota Bharu in north-east Malaya on 7 and 8 December 1941.

However, soon after receiving their activation signal, his party was stopped, disarmed and arrested¹⁰ by Thai Police - they were then imprisoned with other Europeans at the Pinyok¹¹ tin mine. When Japanese troops arrived on 10 December, the prisoners were taken by truck to Kampong Toh (today, possibly: Than To, Yala Province) and locked into two bungalows. On 13 December, more Japanese troops arrived with eight captured Indian Army soldiers. These were locked into the bungalow with the British prisoners. Several hours later, the door was thrown open and grenades lobbed into this hut followed by machine-gun fire. Some of the prisoners died instantly and some were butchered by bayonet. After the massacre at Kampong Toh¹² (13 were killed), the Japanese troops left. Major Laub and eight other survivors attempted to escape and evade southwards. However, they were again surprised at dawn several days later in a small Chinese village by Thai fifth-columnists supporting the Japanese. Major Laub and four others, all unarmed, were shot dead in the surprise attack¹³. Major Laub's death was confirmed by Lieutenant Horace T Cummins, who had survived the massacre, in a memorandum dated 7 December 1945 in SOE files, now at the National Archives at Kew.

Sadly, there is no known grave, but George Laub is remembered and his name is recorded on the Singapore Memorial¹⁴ at the Kranji War Cemetery, Singapore. In Denmark, his name is inscribed along with those of his brother and nephew, who also lost their lives in the cause of freedom during WW2, on the Akademisk Skytteforening (Academic Shooting Association) War Memorial at Høje Sandbjerg and on the Memorial Plaques¹⁵ at the 4e Maj Kollegium (4th of May College) at Frederiksberg. There is a memorial stone raised in his honour at the Laub family grave in Hellerup cemetery. George was awarded the MBE (Military Division) in the New Year Honours List for 1942¹⁶. His sister received his MBE medal on 1 May 1947 at a reception¹⁷ at the British Embassy in Copenhagen. His brother's family received his Danish medal for Allied War Service. His British war medal entitlements are recorded in his military service records at the National Archives at Kew.



Singapore Memorial,
Kranji War Cemetery



George Laub's memorial stone,
Hellerup Cemetery

⁸ Dansk Biografisk Leksicon (Danish Biographical Lexicon): Georg Christian Haae Laub.

⁹ 'SOE in the Far East' by Charles Cruikshank, published by Oxford University Press 1983, pp. 62, 192.

¹⁰ 'SOE Singapore 1941-42' by Richard Gough, published by William Kimber 1985, p. 55.

¹¹ Report (in Danish) on the 'Danish colony in Siam during WW2' by C F Schjøpffe, dated 1 January 1955, p. 6.

¹² 'The Sarong and the Kris' by H L H (Bill) Harrison, published by Nautical Publishing Ltd 1969, pp. 130-137.

¹³ Report of the Kampong Toh Massacre by Lloyd S Jones, Mining Engineer. Major Laub's name is misspelt and mentioned under 'Neutrals' as 'No 24 - Lobe, a metallurgist of TTM (Thailand Tin Mines Ltd)', pp. 1-3.

¹⁴ http://www.roll-of-honour.org.uk/Cemeteries/Singapore_Memorial/L/html/la.htm

¹⁵ <http://www.dsr.kvl.dk/~olesen/4mh/mb/mindeplader.html> No 47.

¹⁶ The London Gazette (Supplement), 1 January 1942, p. 11; The Straits Times, 1 January 1942, p. 6.

¹⁷ Ordenshistorisk Tidsskrift, published by Orders & Medals Society of Denmark, Vol.16, nr.27, 2005, p. 21.

AN HISTORICAL VISIT TO SINGAPORE

By HENRY LANGLEY

To research his family's evacuation from Singapore in 1941 & visit battlefield sites & other places of interest.

Part 1 – Evacuation from Singapore.

I had always known that my parents – **Herbert Leslie** and **Marjorie May Langley** – had spent quite a bit of their younger lives in the Far East and that while they had been in Singapore the house in which they lived had been bombed and that they and my sisters, **Rosemary**, **Veronica** and **Margaret Lesley**, had had to get out quickly & return to the U.K.

However, in connection with a possible presentation to a local museum, I had been asked to bring together information on my father's career and background. So, I needed to find out more about their earlier life, and in particular to find out more information with regard to their involvement in Singapore and Hong Kong.

Visit to Singapore in December 2011.

With friends living in Singapore and with the offer to visit them before their return to the U.K., I willingly took up their kind offer to visit them in December 2011. Though my visit was relatively brief, nevertheless, I was able to see some of the many sights of Singapore and pay a visit to the Changi Museum, which was a very moving experience.

The highlight, though, of my visit was to be given a personal tour of Raffles Hotel. My mother and I, together with my sister **Margaret Lesley**, had briefly visited Singapore on a stopover on the way back from visiting relatives in Australia in 1989 and her one wish was to see Raffles Hotel again, where she recalled dancing in the ballroom – unfortunately, though, at the time of our visit the hotel was being refurbished and was closed to visitors, so all we could see was a distant view of the hotel. However, being shown round the hotel in 2011 (including being treated to a free Singapore Sling) helped to make up for the disappointment of 22 years earlier.

I also went to the National Museum and saw one of the curators and explained my parents' background. In particular, I mentioned that my father, who had worked in the Hong Kong Dockyard as an Inspector of Shipwrights since July 1937, had been transferred in October 1941 to work in the Singapore Naval Base. Meanwhile, my mother and sisters had been evacuated from Hong Kong in July 1940 and had spent a year or so in Melbourne before moving in late November 1941 to join my father in Singapore in December 1941, just at the time that the Japanese had started to bomb Singapore! I asked the curator why my mother and sisters had made the journey and he said that Singapore was still considered an impregnable fortress. But he also said that my family was the first example he had come across of a family who had been evacuated twice i.e. from both Hong Kong and Singapore.

Incidentally, my sister recalls my mother mentioning that while the ship from Melbourne was approaching Singapore and she was ironing dresses for the three girls in preparation for meeting their father at the Harbour, she suddenly noticed that the ship had changed course. So it did not, after all, enter Singapore but went elsewhere and then entered Singapore a few days later. The reason for the change of course could possibly have been as a result of the Harbour being bombed (which the Japanese had just started) or maybe as a result of the sinking of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*.

Further Research

On returning home, I determined to try to find out more to add to my fairly basic knowledge of my parents' experiences, especially in connection with their evacuation from Singapore. Before the age of the Internet I doubt that this would have been possible. But speaking to my sisters, delving through the relatively small amount of personal material that my parents had had, and then searching on the Internet, I was able to make some progress.

My sisters mentioned that the ship on which they had been evacuated from Singapore was the *USS West Point*. Initially I wasn't sure whether this ship took them all the way to England. But by chance I made contact with **Bill Lee** [Ed: See also **Henry's report in A.K. No: 31 July 2012 p. 20**], official historian for the crew who were on that ship, and he gave me an enormous amount of useful information, and in return I have agreed to supply him with as much information as I can about my parents' background so that he can write up for the members of his society a summary of my family's experience, concentrating on my father's career. Unfortunately, there is no passenger list for that ship and the people who were evacuated from Singapore, and **Bill Lee** only has details of about 20 people on that voyage. Still, at least as a result of contacting him, he has been able to add five new names to his list! He also confirmed that the *USS West Point* would only have taken them to Colombo – I subsequently found out that it was the *SS Reina del Pacifico* that took them back to England, arriving in Liverpool in March 1942.

And during 2012 I was also able to make some modest progress on other aspects, most notably through making contact with **Tony Banham** in Hong Kong, who is an expert on the military history of Hong Kong and has written a number of books on the subject and has a very interesting website (www.hongkongwardiary.com). He is currently engaged on a research project concerning the evacuation of around 3,000 wives and children from Hong Kong to Australia in 1940 and kindly provided me with the names of the ships on which my mother and sisters were evacuated, initially to Manila (on the *Empress of Japan*) and then to Melbourne (on the *Zealandia*). In turn, I have given him some information about my family and also one of the few things that have survived from that time: an inventory of all items that my parents had lost when they had to be evacuated from Singapore – basically their furniture and personal belongings that were being kept at the Singapore Naval Base. [To be continued].

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Ian Richardson writes:

"Alexandra Military Hospital Massacres"

I am compiling all known information on the Alexandra Military Hospital (also referred to as B.M.H. – British Military Hospital) in Singapore from its inception in 1938 till after the war, including the War Crimes Investigations concerning the atrocities. In the two massacres that happened at AMH on the 14th & 15th February 1942, there were 350 to 360 medical staff and patients ruthlessly killed. At this time there were about 1,000 staff and patients in the hospital of which I have compiled the names of only 226. The hospital records were destroyed as per orders prior to the attack. This means there were over 700 in the hospital who remain unnamed. I have collected many accounts written by those who survived the ordeal with more coming to light as the years go by. But still there have to be many other accounts yet to surface.

I am, therefore, asking for anyone who has any information on the AMH occupants to please forward it to me – no matter how trivial it may seem or even vague recollections of oral family stories.

Please contact me at: ilognor@yahoo.com All communications will be responded to and enquiries are welcomed.

Ian adds – I will be posting the above message to as many websites as possible in the hope of trawling for more information. I would say that I have at least 95% of what is readily available. Much information is erroneous and has been repetitively repeated to become accepted as historical fact – Wikipedia is an example of this. I plan to produce the definitive account, hence my reason to leave no stone unturned. [Ed: We hope we can help Ian with his research.]

Patricia Giudice writes:

"The enclosed photograph shows some children, including myself, at a "Gaities of 1940s" show in aid of The Children's Aid Society, held at the Raffles Hotel. Does anyone know who they are?"

Jonathan Moffatt did some research into the photograph, and came up with a report in The Straits Times dated 28th March 1940.

The children are named as:

L to R

Back: Ann Braga; Norah Doral;
Joan Asmus; Pat Folliott.

Middle: Marlene Golder; Ronald
Golder; Pat Edwards.
(now Giudice)

Front: Maureen Matthews; Pat
Matthews; Myrna Braga.

The Adam Park Project Team
Meet former Sime Road Internees.



Hut Mates Revisit Sime Road

Vilma Howe (nee Stubbs) had a bit of a surprise when we met to go around Sime Road. Among the Singapore veterans invited to the site was Louise Branson, her old hut mate. Meeting for the first time since their release in 1945 the two ladies spent the hours reminiscing over their shared days of captivity.

The veterans toured the Women's Camp and were able to confirm the location of many of the facilities including the hospital and their own hut!



WEBSITES TO VISIT

<http://www.straitstimes.com/breaking-news/singapore/story/historian-appeals-stories-adam-park-wwii-20131104> - Adam Park Article

<http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Community/2013/11/27/Solemn-tribute-to-the-fallen-soldiers.aspx> - Report on the Penang Remembrance Day Ceremony

<http://www.straitstimes.com/breaking-news/singapore/story/new-e-book-singapore-pre-independence-legal-history-launched-20131101> - New e-book

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-25490322> - Colin Firth interview about the film, "The Railway Man."

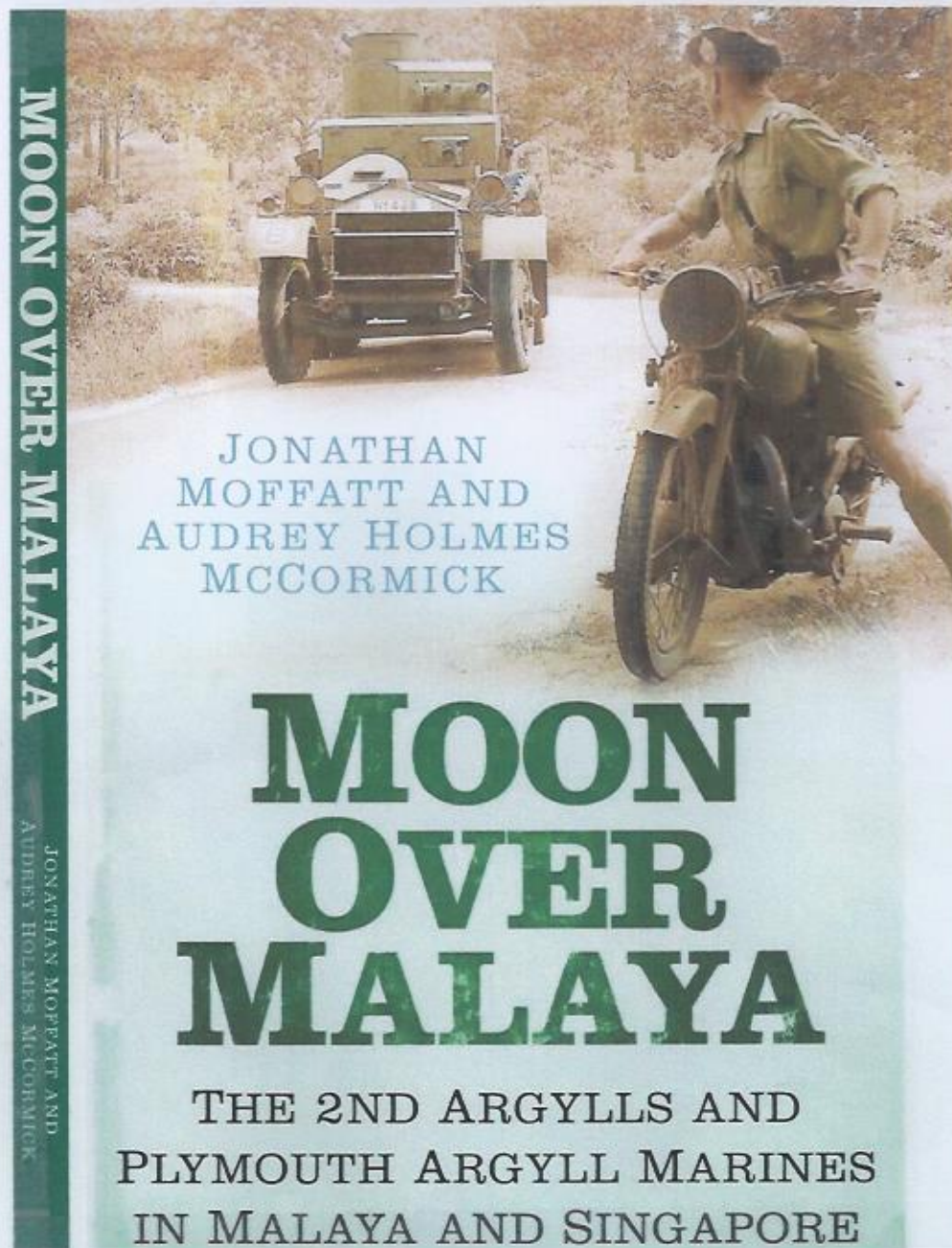
<http://www.researchingfepowhistorygroup.org.uk> - for the report on the Repatriation Memorial in Southampton

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01jk55n

Jenni Murray interviewed Margie Caldicott & Louise Jamieson on Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* on 25th October about the Vocal Orchestra Concert.

BOOKS

“MOON OVER MALAYA. The 2nd Argylls and Plymouth Argyll Marines in Malaya and Singapore.” By Jonathan Moffatt and Audrey Holmes McCormick. Published by the History Press. ISBN 978-0-7524-9972-7 Price £12.99
This is a **new edition** of ‘Moon Over Malaya’ and will be published on 1st February 2014. It is the 4th edition of the book, and has been much updated with some interesting new stories and characters. It has the added subtitle of ‘The 2nd Argylls and Plymouth Argyll Marines in Malaya and Singapore.’ The book will be available from Amazon Co.UK and from good bookshops.



“MY FATHER IN HIS SUITCASE. In Search of E.J.H. Corner – the Relentless Botanist.” By John K. Comer. Published by Landmark Books. To order a copy from Singapore, go online at:

<http://www.nogstore.asia/product/MY-FATHER-IN-HIS-SUITCASE> or
<http://www.selectbooks.com.sg/>

The nogstore site gives more information about the book. If you order from these 2 sites for the U.K. the postal/shipping charges are high because the book weighs 741gms.

Another internet site has recently listed John's book, and they ship orders by airmail:

www.penangbookshelf.com

John says he was delighted with the launch – a full house for his presentation at the Function Centre, Singapore Botanic Gardens, & the Writer's Festival was well attended. TV interview on Singapore Asia AM; radio interviews, including one with the Straits Times near his father's house in the Botanic Gardens at Cluny Road.

JOHN K. CORNER



MY FATHER IN HIS SUITCASE

In Search of E.J.H. CORNER
the Relentless Botanist



Foreword by Douglas Hurd, Rt. Hon. Lord Hurd of Westwell, C.H., C.B.E.

John (Kay) Corner left home in 1960, aged 19. He would never see his father, E. J. H. Corner, again.

Edred John Henry Corner was one of the most colourful and productive biologists and mycologists of the 20th century. His career began in 1929 as Assistant Director of the Straits Settlements Singapore Botanic Gardens, where he trained monkeys to collect specimens from the treetops of the rainforest, and published *Wayside Trees of Malaya*, a classic field guide interspersed with his delightful and idiosyncratic observations on plant life. He was key in the creation of Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, a 163- hectare plot that contains more tree species than the whole of North America.

When war came, he considered it his responsibility to safeguard the scientific and cultural collections of Singapore during the Japanese Occupation, but was branded by some as a collaborator.

Post-war, after heading the ambitious UNESCO Hylean Amazon Project, he returned to Cambridge University and was appointed Professor of Tropical Botany in 1965. There he propounded his theory that the Durian represented an ancestral type of angiosperm tree. He was elected a Fellow of The Royal Society, where he promoted the conservation of tropical forests and led expeditions to the British Solomon Islands and Mount Kinabalu. For the latter, he proposed Kinabalu Park which led to its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

After 46 years, John Corner faced his estranged father in a suitcase marked: 'For Kay, wherever he might be.' The letters, pictures and other memorabilia that spilled out led him to search for the father he hardly knew, resulting in an engaging and frank biography of an eminent scientist who put science above all, including his family.

"NAVAL RESERVISTS IN ACTION. World War II (Far East) & Confrontation(1963 – 1966)." By Adrian Villanueva. Printed by the Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, and launched on 27th November 2013 in Kuala Lumpur by 1st Malaysian Chief of the RMN, Tan Sri K. Thanabalasingam in the presence of the current Chief of the RMN and retired veteran Malaysian Military & Naval Officers, and Defence Advisors of the UK, Australia and NZ.

All Royalties from sales of the book will be donated to the RN and RMN charities.

Part 1. This deals with the accounts of the Colonial Royal Naval Reservists from Australia, Britain, Burma, Hong Kong, India, Straits Settlements who were engaged in operations against the Japanese during World War II in the Far East.

Part 2. This deals with the Indonesian Confrontation.



Paying tribute:
The book, edited by Villanueva, contains memoirs of reservists during World War II.

Two other new books just published are:

"EAST INDIES: The Story of the Struggle for Supremacy of the Eastern Seas." By Ian Burnett.

"DOWN TO BEDROCK." By Revd. Eric Cordingley. This is the launch of his memoirs, about building the Changi Chapel.

OBITUARIES

LIONEL EDGAR CHARLES LETTS – born 16th August 1918, died 27th October 2013

We were very sorry to hear of the death of MVG's Honorary Life Member **Charles Letts** in Singapore on Sunday 27th October 2013, and extend our sincere condolences to his widow **Cecilia Choo-Letts**, daughter **Billie Choo-Letts** and son-in-law **Rohaizat Yusof**. Many of you will have seen obituaries to **Charles Letts** in November in The Times and Telegraph newspapers, written by **Major General Michael Tillotsen** and **Martin Vander Weyer** of the Spectator, respectively. **Sibylla Jane Flower** and **Jonathan Moffatt** contributed to the Times obituary and **Jonathan** briefly to the Telegraph obituary. Some of you will have noticed omissions in these obituaries regarding **Charles's** business career which will now be given in more detail.

Charles Letts was a remarkable man known to many MVG members. He first came to Singapore in 1938 and was employed as an Assistant with Henry Waugh & Co. A keen yachtsman, he received a commission as a Sub. Lt. in the Straits Settlements Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, but was soon posted to H. Waugh & Co.'s Bankok Branch in the Nai Lert Buildings. He quickly learnt fluent Thai and fell in love with the country and its people.

Wartime recollections of Charles.

Returning to Singapore in 1941, he enlisted as a Private in the 1st Battalion, Straits Settlements Volunteer Force. He was among those captured at the Fall of Singapore, and marched to Changi POW Camp. Two of our MVG veterans **Tom Evans** [Singapore Royal Artillery Volunteer battery] and **Ron Mitchell** [1/SSVF] recall him in captivity. **Tom Evans** writes about how they left Changi together in March 1943:

*"We were to form part of Y No: 16 Nipponese Working Battalion under none other than **Major Marsh**. When we assembled it looked a huge bunch: **McCall, Lancaster, Letts....** all 6 foot or over. We were vaccinated and injected, all at the same time with serums for prevention against typhoid, cholera, plaque and dysentery."*

A few months later at Kanyu, Thailand, **Tom** recalled: *"When the cholera came the Corporal forbade even boiled eggs to be consumed. **Marsh** ran a little band to smuggle in eggs and tinned fish from the Thais. **Charles Letts**, who spoke fluent Thai assisted him."*

Tom, in his memoirs, describes the disaster which overtook **Charles** while returning from one of his many night time expeditions out of Tha Muang Camp: *"He had been breaking bounds regularly at night, with the cognisance of **Colonels Knights** and **Lily** in order to negotiate with the Thais for money, drugs and newspapers.... On his return one night he fell into the 10 foot trench, his companion on top of him, as a result of which he fractured his thigh though the bottle of hooch he was carrying [Thai Mekong Whisky] remained intact."*

Ron Mitchell remembered the entry of **Charles Letts** into his camp hospital at Tha Muang:

*"A well built Singapore Volunteer hobbled into the hut and was given a bed space next but two from mine. This was **Charles Letts**. **Doc Pavillard** instructed the orderly to give **Charles** an injection in the bad leg. The orderly accidentally filled the syringe with paraffin and injected this instead of whatever the doctor had ordered. The result was disastrous, the leg swelled up like a balloon and was very puffy.... He was an outstanding personality.... He was a kindly person who carried a torch for those who were being oppressed. When the Spanish Civil War broke out, **Charles** took exception to their bombing of women and children and, indeed, objected to their Fascist ideals. He volunteered to fight in the International Brigade and was almost at the stage of being shipped to Spain when the Civil War ended.... He did a fantastic job in the camps...."*

In September 1945 **Lt. Col. Harold Lilly** of the Sherwood Foresters, himself tortured by the Kempeitai in January 1945, recommended **Charles Letts** for a gallantry decoration:

*"**Pte Letts** was known to me from the time I arrived at Kinsayoke in August 1943 until I left Tamuan in January 1945.... During this period he acted as Thai interpreter and was largely responsible for outside well-wishers supply of dugs and money which made it possible to give more effective treatment to the sick.... He continually broke out of camp.... He incurred great personal risk.... But for the broken leg he would have been subject to the brutal treatment meted out to the men who were unfortunate enough to fall into the Kempei's clutches."*

The medical officer in Tha Muang camp hospital managed to keep **Charles's** broken leg concealed from the Kempeitai for as long as possible. When he was finally transferred to Kempeitai Headquarters in Bangkok, he was beaten daily and told he would be returned to Singapore for execution. In the end, **Charles** was sentenced to 12 or 15 months 'solitary' – he never remembered which – but the war ended well before and this no doubt saved his life. **Charles** was awarded the British Empire Medal for his services to fellow prisoners in acquiring medicines and supplies, but declined it because it had also been awarded to one of the King's gardeners.

He remained in Thailand in September 1945 employed as an Intelligence Officer with the rank of Captain based at the British Embassy in Bangkok. In December 1945 he married **Cecilia ("Sissi") Monro** daughter of a British father and a Thai mother and great granddaughter of an Irish earl. But the marriage was brief.

Charles the Businessman.

It is difficult to give a clear-cut account of **Charles's** many achievements as a business man, but he was almost certainly the last *tuan besar* (expatriate boss) in Singapore to have begun his career before the second world war and continued to run his own business until he died. He was an entrepreneur, networker and fixer in South-East Asia for over 75 years, with a sideline



in intelligence work.

He started his career as an assistant with Henry Waugh & Co. in Singapore before being transferred to the Bangkok offices. After the war, under the umbrella of the British Embassy in Bangkok, he probably worked for MI6 for about 2 years in an attempt to restore goodwill and diplomatic relations with the Thais. He rejoined Henry Waugh & Co. in Singapore and became Managing Director in the 1950s. During this period, he worked for the British Security Service MI5, to counter internal threats to security from the spread of communism, and the Malayan Emergency led by the anti-Japanese leader **Chin Peng**. He oversaw the sale of Henry Waugh & Co. (retaining his position as MD of Jardine Waugh Ltd. in Singapore) to Jardine Matheson Holdings of Hong Kong in 1961 and became a director for 15 years, but never achieved his goal of becoming *taipan* (resident head) of the latter.

He left Jardines in 1970 and became a business partner of **Lee Loy Seng** a *towkay* (Chinese business man) from Ipoh who controlled Kuala Lumpur Kepong Berhad, which owned vast estates of rubber and palm oil. He worked tirelessly to persuade **Margaret Thatcher's** government to work with the Malaysian government in the aftermath of the "Buy British Last" policy of **Dr. Mahathir** in 1981 which had serious economic consequences for the UK. He formed with Investico of London his own company/merchant bank ILCO, which he controlled for the rest of his life. He accepted a number of directorships and maintained close links with shipping and trading organizations in the Far East. He had a knack of knowing on whom he could depend. As a board member of NKF (the National Kidney Foundation) his gift of \$1 million to its former chief **T.T. Durai** in 2007, saved **Durai** from bankruptcy. The debt was repaid within 4 years, but they remained lifelong friends. **Mr. Durai** wrote in a letter recently.... "It is not just the unsolicited gift and loans, but the undying affection, respect, love and faith that you gave me which is immeasurable and surpasses all the monetary help you extended to me."

In Singapore, he took the role of Honorary Consul of Brazil in 1955, and later of Portugal. He represented many Norwegian interests which gave him access to diplomatic circles – with its useful inside information. He was a close friend of **Sir William Goode** (a fellow POW) the last British Governor in Singapore, but was not an intimate of **Lee Kuan Yew**.

He was Chevalier of the Brazilian Order of the Southern Cross and a Knight of the Norwegian Order of Merit.

Late in life he married his long-time companion, **Cecilia Choo**, who survives him together with their daughter, **Billie**.

Compiled by **Jonathan Moffatt**.

Personal recollections by Rosemary Fell.

In February 2012, **Liz Moggie** invited **Donald** and I to tea at the Tanglin Club to meet **Charles**, his wife, **Cecilia** and daughter **Billie**. Unfortunately, **Charles** was unable to come having been rushed into hospital that morning. We were able to meet him in his office later that week. Although in a wheelchair, **Charles** made us feel very welcome, and we chatted about various matters. Towards the end of our visit, I invited **Charles** to become an Honorary Life Member of the MVG, and we were delighted when he accepted, knowing that he did not like to dwell on memories of his wartime exploits. It was with great sadness that we learnt of his death at the end of October. He was one of our few remaining Volunteer Veterans, and his distinguished record on the Thailand-Burma Railway as part of the "V" Scheme is one of which we are justly proud.

PROFESSOR HUGH de WARDENER – born 8th October 1915 and died 29th September 2013 aged 97

The death of **Hugh de Wardener** was announced just as the October newsletter was being printed, and it was only possible to add a small announcement.

As a child, **Hugh de Wardener** had an unusual upbringing in France, but was sent to Malvern College and St Thomas's Hospital Medical School and became a British citizen. His first job as a qualified doctor was in Scunthorpe, where he found himself in charge of all medical and paediatric beds when his senior consultant was killed. He later joined the RAMC and was sent to Singapore, just one month before it fell to the Japanese. As a POW doctor, he worked in Changi before being sent up to the Burma-Siam Railway, where he was put in charge of the camp's diphtheria ward. Later he ran the cholera ward in another camp, where his observations of cerebral beriberi led to a clearer understanding of the disease known as Wernicke's encephalopathy. He obtained some supplies of Vitamin B1 which cured some of those with the disease, leading **de Wardener** to conclude that it was caused by Vitamin B1 deficiency & not due to alcohol as currently thought. The Japanese were systematically destroying evidence of their maltreatment of POWs, and so the notes on Wernicke's Disease were hidden in a 4-gallon tin and buried in a grave – to be retrieved after the war and published in *The Lancet*.

Post-war he was awarded the MBE (Military) and became medical registrar at St. Thomas's, where he became interested in patients with kidney failure, and became a clinical researcher *par excellence* into how the kidney works. In 1961 he moved to Charing Cross Hospital where he was Professor of Medicine for the next 20 years, but continued to come to his room at the hospital until in his nineties. He was President of the International Society of Nephrology & helped found the National Kidney Research Fund (Kidney Research UK) and wrote the first clinical textbook, *The Kidney* in 1958. He was the recipient of many awards in nephrology, and after retirement continued to study hypertension.

He was acutely aware of the difficulties faced by people on dialysis, and established a charity to fund holidays for them in an former convent on the south coast.

He was appointed CBE in 1981.

We also pay tribute to other men with Malayan or Far Eastern wartime connections, who have died recently.

Major Rex Carr, who has died aged 90, was an outstanding Gurkha Rifles company commander awarded 2 Military Crosses for operations in the Malayan Jungle during the Malayan Emergency.

James Noble, aged 92, was a POW on the Burma-Siam Railway. As a young officer with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, it was his unenviable task to negotiate the daily work plan with the Japanese. He kept a diary at great personal

risk to himself, but finally buried it. Friends found it post-war and returned it to him – the ink slightly faded and parts eaten by ants. Post-war he became an investment manager of Kleinwort Sons, and later financial manager of HM Tennant the theatre management agency.

Jeremy Gotch was interned aged 9 in Shanghai, where he had been born, at Lunghwa Camp. Post war he pioneered the use of containers in the transport of bulk freight, and on retirement spent time in charitable work in Dulwich where he lived.

Ron Burton died in August this year aged 91. He was serving with 125 Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery when he embarked for India and then on the *Empress of Asia* for Singapore. The 125 ATR lost most of its equipment in the bombing & sinking of the ship, and the Regiment was deployed as infantry. He managed to escape to Java but was captured and sent to Changi and then Japan where he worked in a coal mine. As a sergeant, **Burton** stood up for his men but was beaten harshly for his efforts. Post-war he worked for the UK Atomic Energy Authority & campaigned for pensions for former POWs and won disability awards for over 400 cases. He was appointed MBE in 1990 for his work.

Major Clive de Paula served with SOE in WW2, and specialized in intelligence and deception and was thus deployed in several parts of the world in the early years of the war. In 1943 he was asked to form 12 (East African) Observation Unit with 2 British officers & 50 African soldiers. After training in Ceylon, they moved to Burma in 1944 with the aim of pushing back the Jap advance from the Imphal Plain. They successfully duped the Japs into moving troops down the Chindwin River so that the Allies could cross the river unopposed. Postwar he joined Robson Morrow, management consultants & forecast the impact of computers on accountancy & was appointed CBE in 1970. A founder member of 21 SAS Regiment (Artists) Volunteers.

John Nunneley also served in Africa in the early years of the war with the 3/6 (Tanganyika Territory) Battalion of the Kings African Rifles (KAR). His Battalion was responsible for guarding Italian POWs. In 1943 he was sent on attachment to 25 (East African) Brigade in Ceylon, but rejoined 36 (TT) KAR as they went to spearhead the 14th Army's pursuit of the Japanese down the Kabaw Valley in Burma. Postwar he determined to persuade Burma veterans to seek reconciliation & was appointed MBE for his work. He edited *Tales from the Burma Campaign 1942 – 45* & published *Tales from the KAR*.

RON MITCHELL

The death of MVG member, Volunteer Veteran **Ron Mitchell** on Sunday 29th December, has just been announced. A full and detailed obituary will be printed in April.

We send our very sincere sympathies to his wife **Bea**, his son **Brian** and daughter-in-law **Vivien** and all the other members of his family – our thoughts and prayers are with them at this sad time.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

IN AUSTRALIA

SUNDAY – 9TH FEBRUARY 2014. Service of Dedication of the Sumatra Plaque for the Changi Museum.

This is to be held jointly by MVG Australia and Malaya Borneo veterans WA Inc. at the Wesley Chapel in James Street, Guildford, WA at 9.15 a.m. Officiating is the **Revd. Bill Jenkins**. Please let **Elizabeth & Bill Adamson** know if you can attend. **Robert Gray** will give an address about the hardships experienced by his grandparents and other civilian POWs.

FRIDAY – 14TH FEBRUARY 2014. Service at Point Walter Reserve, Perth WA.

Annual Service at the Australian Army Nurses Memorial – the anniversary of the sinking of the *SS Vyner Brooke* and massacre of the nurses on Radji Beach, Bangka Island. For details contact **Robert Gray** on rgraywa@bigpond.com

SATURDAY – 15TH FEBRUARY 2014. Commemoration Day 2014 at the City of Stirling Memorial Gardens, Perth WA.

This is the third annual service. Master of Ceremonies is **Col. Geoff Simpson**, RFD Ret'd, and Chaplain **Revd. Barry May OAM JP**. The service will start at 10.45 a.m. – meet from 10.30 a.m. alongside Stirling Gardens in Cedric Street. For details please contact **Elizabeth Adamson** on bunnevelizabeth5@gmail.com

IN SINGAPORE

SATURDAY – 22ND FEBRUARY 2014. Presentation of the Sumatra Plaque to the Changi Museum, Singapore.

Time: 1.30 p.m.

Buffet lunch at the Bark Café, Changi Museum: 12 noon

Cost: approx S\$12-15 payable on the day.

We need to be able to give numbers to the Bark Café for the buffet lunch. If you wish to come, to meet members of the MVG from Australia, Malaysia, Singapore and the U.K. (and possibly elsewhere!) please let us know – **Rosemary** on rosemaryfell11@gmail.com or **Elizabeth** on bunnevelizabeth5@gmail.com or **Andrew** on ayl.hwang@gmail.com

IN THE UK

TUESDAY - 6TH MAY 2014. Spring Meeting at the NMA to tidy up the Memorial Garden.

We plan to meet at about 10.30 a.m. at the NMA for coffee. Please bring gardening equipment and a picnic lunch – weather permitting. We usually have an enjoyable day – a little gardening mixed with lots of chatting! Please let **Rosemary** know if you are planning to come, so that I tell the Duty Manager how many of us there may be.

SUNDAY – 18TH MAY 2014. FEPOW Memorial Service, Wymondham, Norfolk.

We hope that the MVG will be represented at the Service this year. If you would like to go, please book with the Administrator – administrator@wymondham-rc-church.org.uk or write to:

The FEPOW Secretary, 1, Norwich Road, Wymondham, Norfolk NR18 0QE.

The Church of Our Lady and St. Thomas of Canterbury was built by **Father Malcolm Cowin** who was a FEPOW, and on his return home he made a promise to build a Church in memory of all those who died in POW or civilian internment camps.

Within the Church stands a small FEPOW Chapel in which can be found the Books of Remembrance housed in a glass-

THE WARTIME ESCAPE OF COLONEL JOHN NICHOLSON O.B.E. FROM SINGAPORE – PART4
by kind permission of his son Michael Nicholson

We paid the Malays for an excellent meal at midday, two sorts of fish, eggs, chicken and rice. It was not until eating it that I realised how much I had grown to dislike the taste of coconut oil in food. When three weeks before I had been eating it regularly I had become inured to it, but to come back to it again brought back all the old feelings of revulsion.

The sails were finished in the afternoon and we all returned to the boat and got ready to sail to **Pulau Teloe** next morning. **Pulau Teloe** was said to be about a day's sail. It was now that the Gods began to laugh at us. For the last two days there had been a strong N.E. wind which would have blown us to **Pulau Teloe** without difficulty but we had not been ready to go. Now that we were ready we had two days of south-west winds which prevented much progress being made. Then we had a magnificent breeze which would have taken us right out past **Nias** and **Semoek**, out into the open sea, but we wanted to go to **Pulau Teloe** and so used only 3½ hours of it. Finally we were held in **Pulau Teloe** one day by the wind and took three more days before we finally beat west of **Semoek**.

But on the morning of the 21st we had no knowledge of these vicissitudes and got up expectantly only to find a flat calm. About 9.00 there was a slight breeze off the island and we got under way. Shortly afterwards this dropped and we got a fitful breeze from the south-west. There was a wide stretch of water between **Pini** and the next island to the west but as it was full of reefs, shoals and strong currents the recognized route was along the coast of **Pini** and then through a very deep channel about 200 yards wide between **Pini** and a small island named **Pulau Ayer Massin**. Just beyond this channel there was a narrow gap in the reef about 30 yards wide which had to be negotiated and then it was easy sailing to **Pulau Teloe**. We reached **Pulau Ayer Massin** about 12 o'clock but had to anchor as the wind was blowing dead down the channel through the reef.

Pulau Ayer Massin was a most attractive spot, a real picture-book tropical island; clean white sand, a mass of coconut trees, clear blue water, a house, a well of good drinking water, a few cows and surprisingly as they are rare in Malaya, one or two sheep. As we could not go any further, we took the mizzen sail ashore and mended it. Unfortunately, it took us until evening and we were very badly bitten by mosquitoes. The natives gave us some strange vegetables which were a kind of yam. Our first attempts at cooking them were not very successful as the outside layers had a very bitter taste, but we found that disappeared after prolonged boiling and that boiling first and then fried, they were very like potatoes. Next day was a perfect day for sailing except that in spite of all 'One-eye's' cajoling or abuse, the wind was very fitful and we were forced to put in to **Pulau Pini** again, a little further up the coast. The water was beautifully clear and it was easy to see the fish swimming about among the coral. All types, sorts, kinds and sizes of fish from small minnows up to 10-15 pounders. There were sheer vertical pillars of coral standing up from the bottom, which caused a certain amount of alarm as they appeared to finish only just below the surface although actually well clear of the keel.

At last on the 23rd there was a strong N.E. wind and we bowled along to **Pulau Teloe** in 3½ hours leaving the **amir** far behind. He had quite a lot of difficulty as there was a fairly heavy sea running and one of his crew had to sit on the end of the out-rigger keeping it down in the water. We took the mainsail down before we rounded the last point before the town and left 'One-eye' to sail her in, in case there were Japanese ships there. But as the coast was clear, we ran in and anchored about 10.00 a.m.

Ivor and the Colonel went ashore and were welcomed by an oldish-looking European, who was a missionary who had lived 20 years in the islands. He spoke quite good English and told us odd fragments of news, all of which seemed fairly satisfactory. He was the only European on the island as the controleur had gone to **Nias** with a party from a steamer that had been wrecked on **Samoek**, an island about 15 miles to the west. We never succeeded in discovering if the ship was wrecked or torpedoed. It was apparently a British India Line boat and was sailing to **Padang**. It had been wrecked about ten days before and so there was a strong possibility that it was on its way to **Padang** to collect the remaining evacuees. It would have just about fitted the date of the cable that we could not decipher. The missionary and the **Malay Dernan** (native magistrate) both promised to give us all the help they could and started by giving us the sails from the ship's boat. But otherwise they were not very successful. The Chinese shop-keepers felt they had us in a tight corner and demanded outrageous prices for their articles. We got some food and tools and a little clothing but sails and rope and other gear were prohibitively expensive. It looked as if we would have to put to sea again without getting as much gear as we required, but the next day the whole position changed.

We were putting planks down on top of the water tins in the cabin so as to give ourselves a little more comfort when the **Dernan** arrived on board in considerable agitation. We had noticed a certain amount of disturbance ashore but had not thought much about it. The **Dernan** had come to ask for our help to put down a riot. Apparently there was a permanent feud between two groups of kampongs and fighting had broken out between them. The police were afraid to interfere and he thought the fighting might spread to the town. We agreed to go and stop it and eight of us went ashore armed with revolvers and sticks.

We walked for about a mile along the shore collecting a few police on the way. The fighting was all over and all that was left on the battlefield were a few rags, one or two parangs and a lot of blood. We went on to the furthest kampong, overtaking one or two Malays who had fairly bad cuts and wounds from parangs, and went in to see the **Penghulu**.

It was a most remarkable kampong. It was defended by a low coral wall about 5 to 6 feet high (all kampongs on the island had a similar wall), outside which was a width of pointed bamboo sunk in the ground. The entrance was a complicated one, through a narrow gate, then about 30 yards along a narrow alley between 6' high walls to a second gate which was raised about 3' above ground level and set on a platform. The gate consisted of two narrow passages on either side of a central stone pillar which just fitted into the width of the alley leading to it. The entrance opened about half-way along the side of a square on either side of which were the houses, much neater and in better repair than the normal Malay houses, and at the far end the house of the **Penghulu**. We were to find that all kampongs on the island followed the same plan but this one had two remarkable features, the first was the **Penghulu's** house and the second was a set of small standing stones in the centre of the square. These were arranged round two stone chairs on which some crude hieroglyphics were carved.

The **Penghulu's** house was amazing. It was at least 100' high, built on stilts made of whole trunks of forest trees, the first floor being about 20' above the ground. We went up to the first floor up a narrow stairway in the midst of the tree trunks and found ourselves in a room about 60' x 40'. The floor was made of whole slabs of the tree trunks all neatly fitted together; the roof towered up another 70' the beams getting gradually smaller. There were no pillars in the room except one on the village side of the house. On the outside of this pillar there was a platform about 10' wide cantilevered out of the square, with a window rather like the stern windows of an old ship. On either side of the room were doors leading to the rooms of the **Penghulu** and his family.

The **Penghulu** came in, chairs were produced and we were regaled with tea and coconuts while the **Dernan** and **Colonel Dillon** talked to the **Penghulu**. He was a fine looking old man, a very different type from his retainers and villagers who were rather a decadent, in-bred looking people. As a result of the conversation he agreed to meet the **Penghulu** of the other villages. We were told that the house had been built and the stoned set up about 100-150 years before but that the chairs had been found in the forest and their age was unknown.

The **Penghulu** came with us to the other kampong which was on the way back to the town. It was built on exactly the same plan but the houses were dirtier, the square was not as clean and sandy but needed weeding and it had not got the distinguished appearance of the other one. The **Penghulu** was an old man who might have stepped out of a picture of Malay pirates attacking a ship. His eyes still had a flash and his white beard a savage jut, but all the real power had passed to his son.

A long conversation followed between the **Dernan, Colonel Dillon** and the two **Penghulus** with the old pirate making disparaging and contemptuous noises at times. Eventually everyone shook hands except the two old men who spat at one another and it was agreed to postpone the continuation of the fighting, until the controleur returned from **Nias**. The two **Penghulus** agreed that the feud had never done either of them any good but when asked the question, their look of contempt quite obviously conveyed the impression that they were both in agreement in thinking that it might do no good, but that it was "damn good fun."

As a result of this incident, the **Dernan** was only too willing to help us. The Chinese traders were beaten down in price and everything we wanted was produced, but it used up all our money and we had to stop eating in the rest house much to the disappointment of the resthouse keeper who had appeared paddling round the **Setia Berganti** just after dawn with a steaming bowl of porridge. A good business-man!

"One-eye" had had a magnificent time walking round the town with us and displaying us to all his acquaintances. He had been very useful to us and we gave him a fairly substantial present and what pleased him much more, a bottle of medicine for his foot. Several years before he had cut his foot on a coral reef when fishing, and it had never healed, because he suffered from incipient beri-beri and scurvy brought on by a deficiency of green vegetables in his diet. The Malays as a race all tend to suffer from beri-beri as they are too lazy to grow green vegetables and like eating white rice.

"One-eye" was returning to his brother's house with the **Amir** who had most nobly seconded the **Dernan's** efforts to get us stores. The **Amir** was pleased as we had got him his rice although **Pulau Teloe** was apparently not the town from which he should have drawn it.

About 3.30 in the morning a policeman came off from the island and said that a suspicious-looking steamer without lights had anchored off the north of the island. They thought it was Japanese and offered to take us to a cove where we could lie up and hide. There was no wind but fortunately the tide was slack or with us and we rowed slowly down the coast - oh! How slowly it seemed - and we were out of sight of **Pulau Teloe** by daylight but didn't reach our anchorage on another small island until nearly 9.00 o'clock. **Ivor** immediately went back to **Pulau Teloe** with the guide to find out what had happened and keep us informed.

He came back at 12.30 and said that the steamer had left.

[To be continued in April 2014.]

topped cabinet. These books contain the names of all those who died. In the year 2000 a new Addendum Book was started to include the names of those who survived and returned home but have subsequently died.

A light lunch is served in the Church hall at 12.30 p.m. before the Service at 2 p.m. for those who have booked seats.

FRIDAY – 15TH AUGUST 2014. V-J Day Service at the NMA in the MVG Memorial Garden.

Please note the day and date of our annual service which takes place in the MVG Memorial Garden - weather permitting – followed by a picnic lunch in the NMA grounds. It is a good chance to meet other members and keep up to date with the developments at the NMA. More details in April

IN AUSTRALIA - SUNDAY 31ST AUGUST 2014. MERDEKA DAYSERVICE.

Details to be announced later by **Bill & Elizabeth Adamson.**

IN THE UK.

SATURDAY – 11TH OCTOBER 2014. Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club, Piccadilly, London. 12-4 p.m.

We are pleased that **Merilyn Hywel-Jones** has kindly agreed to help with this event. Further information about booking and the cost will be given in April. As this is the major reunion of the year, it is felt that the venue needs to be large enough for us to meet without being crowded into a small room in a restaurant. For this reason, and despite reservations from some members, it is felt that the RAF Club still represents the best option as a venue. It is good value and easily accessible by public transport. Please give **Merilyn** your support this year, so that we can continue to build on **Hugh's** valuable contribution in making this one of the MVG's main events of the year. The proposed menu and Speaker will be announced in April.

THURSDAY – 6TH NOVEMBER 2014. Cross Planting Ceremony and Service at Westminster Abbey.

Merilyn Hywel-Jones has kindly agreed to organize this again. Details about applications for tickets will be given later in the year.

SUNDAY – 9TH NOVEMBER 2014. Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph, Whitehall, London, and March Past.

For many MVG members, 2014 will be a poignant reminder of the beginning of the First World War, in which several of their fathers and other relatives served, as well as in the Second World War, many enduring the deprivations of becoming FEPOWs. We are only allocated 12 tickets to take part in the Service and March Past, and if you wish to come, please think about it early and let **Rosemary** know in good time.

IN SINGAPORE

SEPTEMBER 2015 - 70th Anniversary of the signing of the Japanese surrender in Singapore.

Plans are already taking shape for an MVG contingent to take part in the events in Singapore over the week of 12th September 2015, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the signing of the surrender by the Japanese in Singapore. If you are thinking of attending this important occasion, you may be well advised to book in good time. As more details emerge of the events taking place in Singapore, we will keep you informed, including those the MVG is planning.

FOR SALE

TANDJONG PINANG PRINTS

Signed prints of the painting of the ship by **David Wingate** are still available from **David** (panmaule@aol.com) or **Rosemary** (rosemaryfell11@gmail.com). Each print costs £40 plus postage, and **David** is donating all proceeds to MVG funds. We thank him for his generous offer.

BOOKS

“The Amonohasidate or The Gate of Heaven.” By Richard Yardley FMSVF

Softback new book. Price £7 including postage and packing. All proceeds to MVG funds. Please contact **Rosemary** (as above) for details.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please note that the annual subscriptions fall due in April regardless of when you joined the MVG. Due to the increase in postal and printing costs, the annual subscription is being raised to **£20**. We consider that this still represents good value for money, and the subscription has not gone up since April 2008. The subscription is payable **per household** regardless of how many members wish to share their membership at that one address. **Jonathan** will e-mail copies of the newsletter and other information to all members who have opted to receive electronic copies. Please let **Rosemary** know if you wish to change back to receiving a printed copy. Australian members will receive their printed copies from **Elizabeth Adamson**, and will be notified of their subscription charges. Malaysian members will be notified of their subscription charges by **Andrew Hwang**. For UK and other worldwide members, payment can be made by cheque/standing order/bank draft, made payable to:-

Mrs. R. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group

Please let **Rosemary** know if you no longer wish to remain a member.

BRITISH WW2 PILL BOX NEAR CORNER'S JETTY ON THE SEDILI RIVER, JOHORE



With thanks to **David Wingate** who sent this photograph.

John Corner writes in connection with his book, "**My Father in His Suitcase**," that he visited an Eco Centre on the Sedili River at Mawai north of Johore Bahru. On the way he stopped at a rest stop at Galang Patah on the North/South Highway where his father visited a pineapple plantation – as mentioned in his book on page 135. He saw the plateau of Gunung Pantii the mountain which his father often visited and climbed when botanising (the tale of the frock in his book originates from there). At Mawai he saw the jetty from where his father departed on many of his trips, including the fateful trip on which he contracted swamp fever (also related in the book). **John** also said that he saw the very same fig tree, named *Corner's Fig* *Ficus microcarpa*, which his father saw in 1929 and which is still by the jetty. The tree is mentioned again in his father's book "**The Freshwater Swamp Forests of Singapore and Johore**," published in 1978, as still standing on the opposite bank of the Sedili River from where he left on his pre-war river expeditions. This tree still has over 100 years of life left!

DISTURBING REPORTS IN MALAYSIAN & BRITISH NEWSPAPERS ABOUT JAPAN'S PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS

Reports of increased tensions in the Far East during 2013 have continued. The recent Boxing Day visit of Japanese Prime Minister **Shinzo Abe** to the Yasukuni Shrine, where several "Class A" war criminals are buried, has caused a furious reaction from China. The visit came on top of the dispute with China over the Senkaku Islands and Japan's expansion of her military budget. South Korea and the United States have both voiced their dismay at **Abe's** actions.

OVERSEAS CONTACTS

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ROSEMARY FELL – SECRETARY/EDITOR OF APA KHBAR – MEMBERSHIP, SUBSCRIPTIONS & DONATIONS

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