

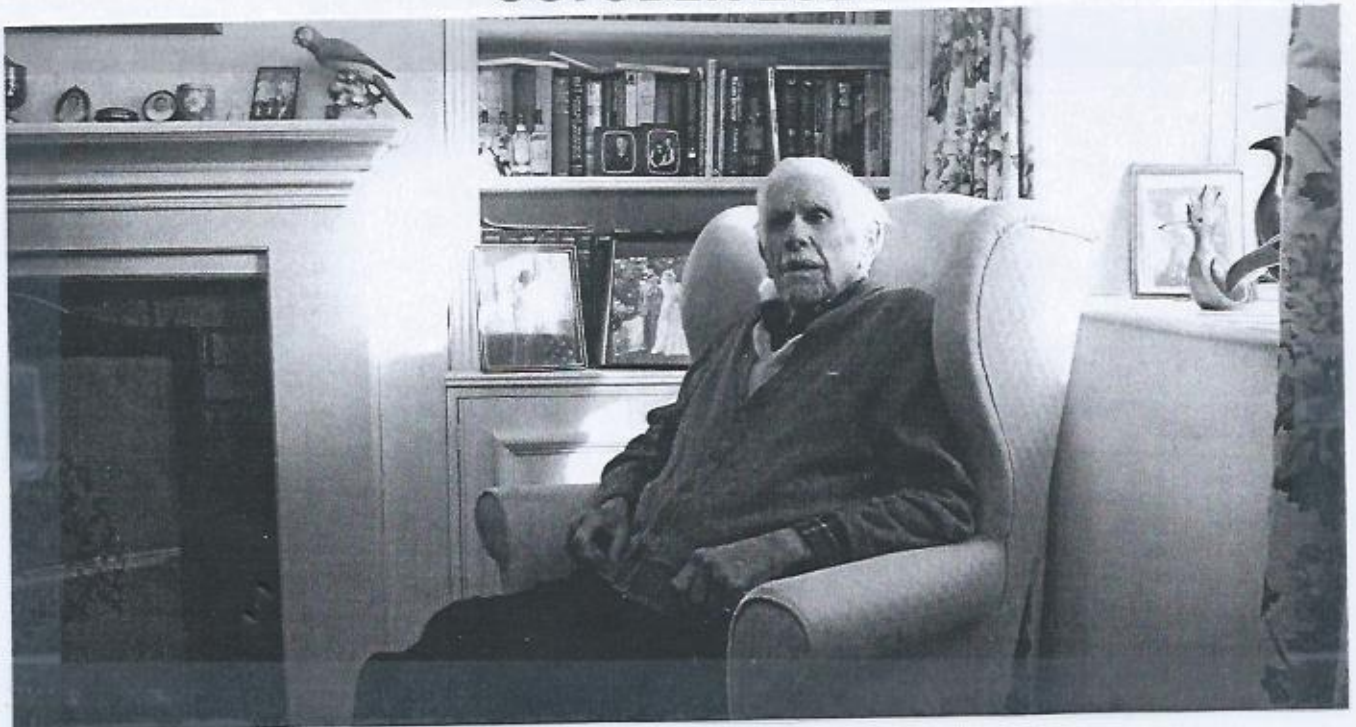
APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



**40TH EDITION
OCTOBER 2014**



**VETERAN VOLUNTEER SIR ROGER MOON Bt. JVE,
WHO REACHES HIS CENTURY IN NOVEMBER 2014**

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PROPOSED SIME ROAD MEMORIAL TAKES SHAPE NEW WW2 MUSEUM PLANNED IN MUNTOK CONGRATULATIONS TO SIR ROGER MOON ON HIS FORTHCOMING 100TH BIRTHDAY

The summer months have been busy as usual, and now that the holidays are over, it is time to proceed with the various projects which are in the pipeline and view those which have come to fruition. On V-J Day in August, we were delighted to see the new stone wall in our Memorial Garden at the NMA. It was finished just in time on the day before the ceremony, after a few last minute problems with finishing the top layer of flat stones, which can act as additional seating to the benches. The new wall has enhanced the plot enormously, and the paved "V" has been upgraded and some of the paving stones repositioned. Once the bamboos have been dug up and contained in large tubs to curtail the invasive growth of their new shoots, we will have an up-to-date Garden for the next decade. The ground staff at the Arboretum have promised to deal with the problems of replanting the bamboo for us, and we hope that this will be done during the winter months. The two original Australian plaques, which **Elizabeth Adamson** sent us last year, have been mounted on grey Cornish granite tablets to match the three Memorial Stones in the Garden. These plaques were originally dedicated in February 2012 in the City of Stirling Memorial Gardens in Perth WA, but they were replaced last year with new ones made of bronze. On V-J Day, the mounted plaques were placed in the Garden, one at each end, and on top of the new stone wall, where they fit perfectly. One plaque is dedicated to the Australian members of the Malayan Volunteer Forces and the other to the people of Western Australia who took in and cared for the Evacuees from Singapore in WW2.

The weather for the 69th anniversary of V-J Day on Friday, the 15th August, was sunny and warm, although very windy. It made a welcome change from the last 2 years which were very wet, cold and grey. We were joined at the service this year by members of the public as well as several members of the Kidderminster Branch of the Royal British Legion, including 2 standard bearers and a bugler. They served to make the service really special and we are grateful to them for giving up part of their visit to the NMA to attend the service. [See the full report on P. 2].

Messages have been flying to and from Singapore about the proposed Sime Road Memorial which the Malayan Volunteers Group would like to present and unveil in Singapore in September 2015. It has taken all summer to find a suitable plaque maker who can make the 2 plaques in the preferred material. Again the NMA came to our rescue and gave us the name of Anwick Forge, in Lincolnshire, which has made some elegant and beautiful memorials for the Arboretum recently, including the RAF Globe and Eagle in polished stainless steel. [See www.anwickforge.co.uk and the report on P. 27]. We are again indebted to **Jane Nielsen** for designing the map of Sime Road for the top of the plinth; to **Jonathan Moffatt** for the text on the front; and to **Jon Cooper** of TAPP for liaising with **Jeya** at the Changi Museum, and for keeping the project moving.

We have heard from **Judy Balcombe** in Australia that the authorities in Muntok are planning to build a new museum which will tell the story of the POWs, both military and civilian, who were imprisoned on Banka Island in WW2. Donations towards this project, which is not being sponsored by the MVG, are being sought. If members in the U.K. or other parts of the world, wish to donate to this museum, they can send it to **Rosemary Fell** – MVG account – or donate directly to the Muntok Cares Foundation account in Sumatra. In Australia, donations can be sent to **Elizabeth Adamson**. [See Judy's report Ps. 23-24]. Still ongoing are discussions about the restoration of the Kuala Selangor War Memorial in Malaysia.

There has only been a limited response to the notices sent out in July about the Service in the Chapel at the NMA next year on V-J Day Saturday 15th August, and to the planned visit to Singapore in September 2015. Please would members let **Rosemary** know of their intentions to attend either or both of these events, even if only provisionally, so that plans can be made accordingly. Further notices with details of the itinerary in Singapore will be sent out in January.

Sir Roger Moon Bt., former **Johore Volunteer Engineer**, reaches his century in November and joins **Bill Pearson**, **Brenda Macduff** and **Nola Hudson** as our fourth centenarian member, and second Veteran Volunteer to reach 100 years. We congratulate him on his forthcoming birthday on 17th November, and send him our very best wishes for a wonderful day of celebrations surrounded by his family and friends. **Sir Roger's** story is a really remarkable one – as with so many of our other Volunteers – and is told in his own words in the Shropshire Magazine, which the MVG has been given permission to use. We are delighted that **Anton Rippon** has agreed to take on the task of organizing the annual London reunion and lunch from 2015, and we thank him very much. **Anton** and his family have attended the lunches regularly and many members will already know him well.

The up-to-date list of members is included with this newsletter, with apologies for the 3 month delay in sending it out. Please would you check that your details are correct, particularly your e-mail addresses. It was as accurate as possible at the time of going to press.

REPORT ON THE V-J DAY SERVICE ON FRIDAY 15TH AUGUST 2014

By JONATHAN MOFFATT

Over 70 attended the annual MVG V-J Day Service at our Memorial Garden at the NMA. They included MVG members, relatives of other FEPOWs and members of the Kidderminster branch of the Royal British Legion who kindly provided two standards and a bugler. There was sunshine and we were able to view the rebuilt stone wall to our Memorial and the newly placed Malayan Volunteer and Evacuee Plaques from Western Australia. In use for the first time, was the wall hanging, embroidered with our logo, and made for us by Australian Secretary **Elizabeth Adamson**. This was placed over the new stone wall to hang down behind the Memorial Stone as a backdrop.

We all listened to a vocal orchestra rendition of Chopin's 'Funeral March' then **Jonathan** made the welcoming remarks on this, the 69th Anniversary of V-J Day and of the end of World War 2. We were reminded, too, of this being the 100th Anniversary of the start of World War 1 in which just over 1,000 planters, miners and other British Malaysians returned home from Malaya to join up and fight. 400 of these lost their lives in the Great War. The names of many of these are inscribed on the War Memorial at Ipoh, where wreaths were laid during the Memorial Service this year by our Australian Secretary **Elizabeth Adamson** and her husband **Bill**. Local forces raised in Malaya also saw active service and sustained casualties in World War 1, including the Malaya States Guides who served in Singapore in 1915 then in Aden.

The wreath laying was performed by **June Jackson** and her grandchildren **Harry** and **Tabitha**. **June's** father, **Edward Hebditch**, was a civilian internee in Changi Gaol. He was arrested and tortured in the notorious Double Tenth roundup. After a 2 minutes' silence, we sang "Abide with Me" to an arrangement composed by **Lisa Ho**, wife of our MVG Malaysian Secretary, **Andrew Hwang**, and dedicated to the Malayan Volunteers of both World Wars. **Anthony Jackson** then read Psalm 102 v.1-12.

John Evans, who served in the post war Singapore Volunteer Corps, read "A Soldier's Sonnet" by John Jarman of the 51st Highland Division and **Rosemary Fell** read an extract from "Down to Bedrock" – the diary and secret notes of Revd. Eric Cordingley, a Chaplain to the 18th Division/F Force and later Suffragan Bishop of Thetford. **Alison Brierley** then led us in the prayers and told us of her father's [**Geoffrey Mowat** MCS, and SSVF FEPOW] visit long after the war to the Changi Chapel. There were further readings with strong family connections: **Ken Wright** read from John Hayter's "Priest in Prison," an account of the civilians' move in May 1944 from Changi Gaol to Sime Road Camp. This was in memory of his grandfather, **Charles Hopkins**, an FMS Police Officer among the internees. **Eileen Wright** read from Penny Stearns' book "Surviving Tenko," an account of the survival at sea of Queen Alexandra Nursing Sister Dame Margo Turner who became a Sumatra internee. This reading was in memory of all the military nurses who served in World War 2 in the Far East, especially the QARANCs, and was on behalf of her daughter-in-law **Beverley Wright**, a reservist in the British Army QARANC 306 Field Army Hospital [V].

We sang Margaret Dryburgh's "The Captives' Hymn" composed in captivity at Muntok, Sumatra and sung every Sunday in the camp. **Imogen Holmes**, whose father **Dr. Kirkwood** was a POW Medical Officer in Sumatra, then read "The Vigil," a commemorative poem by Margaret Dryburgh. This tells how, on the death of Mary Anderson at Muntok in 1944, it was a Japanese holiday and the guards would not move the body or provide a coffin. The body was placed in an open-sided shed for a day and a night, covered over only by a sheet, with pairs of women watching over it all night to keep away hungry dogs and rats.

Anne Hinam read an address by Sir Percy McNeice MCS, given in 1989 at the dedication of the memorial tablet in St. Andrew's Cathedral, Singapore, to 40 members of the MCS who died in World War 2, among them **Kenneth Dohoo**, father of **Anne** and her sister **Jean**. In his address, Sir Percy said that Singapore's Prime Minister at that time had dismissed the plaque as 'a small statement of Singapore's past' but, said Sir Percy, "What these men gave ... was all they had to give." **Keith Andrews**, son of a Royal Artillery FEPOW, then read Queenie Spink's poem "What is a FEPOW?"

The service concluded with the Exhortation, FEPOW Prayer and the Kohima Epitaph read by **Stephen Caldicott**. Standards were lowered and the Last Post then Reveille sounded.

After the service, we enjoyed a good picnic lunch, lively conversation and exchanges of information. Next August 15th, the Chapel at the NMA has been booked, and the service is to be taken by **Canon Christopher Samuels** one of The Queen's Chaplains and Chaplain to the Dunkirk Veterans' Association. The service will be followed by lunch in one of the marquees at the NMA. We hope members will attend this service to mark the 70th anniversary of V-J Day and the end of WW2.

MERDEKA DAY ANNUAL COMMEMORATION SERVICE – Kings Park, Perth WA

Organised by the MBVA WA Inc, the service took place on Saturday 30th August around the "Flame of Remembrance" in Kings Park, on a damp and windy day. 38 Commemorative Wreaths were laid including 4 wreaths by relatives of men who had died as FEPOWS during WW2 or during the post-war Malayan Emergency. One of these wreaths was laid by **Elizabeth Adamson** for her father **Lt. Richard Peall** who was KIA on 15th February 1942.

The service was attended by a representative from the Premier of Western Australia, the Consul General of Malaysia and a representative from Singapore Western Australia Network as well as dignitaries from the Australian Military Services, Government personnel and other invited guests. After the bugler brought the congregation together, National flags were raised and lowered and a minute's silence observed. Readings and prayers were followed by addresses from a representative of the Warden of the State War Memorial, **Bill Adamson** President of the MBVA WA who welcomed the assembled congregation, and the State Treasurer who gave the Remembrance Day Address. The Malaysian Consul-General gave the "Malaysian Address" followed by a bible reading and an "Address for the Fallen" by Gary Burgoyne. After joining in the "Lord's Prayer" the congregation stood for the national anthems of Malaysia and Australia, followed by the Benediction. After the service over 100 people retired to the Wildflower Marquee for an Asian cuisine lunch provided by the committee ladies.

THE SINGAPORE AND PENANG HARBOUR BOARDS EVACUATION OF STAFF FROM SINGAPORE, FEBRUARY 1942

A report by H.K. Rodgers – the Chairman, Harbour Boards, Straits Settlements – continued from July 2014

THE EVACUATION BY THE “TENGARROH” – contd.

On Friday (20th February) we caught a special train for Emmahaven and boarded H.M.S. Danae at 6 p.m. After a crowded and uncomfortable passage we reached Tjilichap, South Java, at noon on Sunday 22nd February.

A number of civilians were with the Military party being members of what was known as the Dalforce (Guerrilla Warfare) in Malaya and others who were employed to evacuate them from Singapore. These civilians were left behind when the Military party left for an up-country station and were put on board H.M.S. Kedah for the night. Mr. Wiggs and I also went on board that ship with the Naval party.

The Dutch Emigration Officer refused us permission to go ashore even to buy clothes of which many of us were in great need. We sent word to the British Consul (Mr. Ross) and received no assistance of any kind from him. We stayed on the “Kedah” until Tuesday 24th February when we were transferred to the Dutch Steamer “Zaandam” expecting to sail the following morning. I appealed to the Captain of the vessel to obtain permission for me to go ashore to the telegraph office and he kindly took me ashore on his own responsibility. I was thus able to dispatch information to the Crown Agents for the Colonies regarding the evacuation of the Harbour Boards Staff and for measures to be taken in regard to salaries and other matters.

On Thursday the 26th February the whole party was transferred to the K.P.M. Steamer “HOON HOOA” and a number of the A.I.F. brought from Batavia was embarked on the following afternoon. Alongside us was the “Wu Chang” which left at 6p.m. on Friday 27th for Colombo, with a large Military party on board, including Colonel Treays and Major Woolridge. This ship expected to take at least 14 days to reach Colombo.

We left Tjilichap at 6 p.m. on the same day as the “Wu Chang” and were followed out by a large number of ships, it having been decided to clear the port of shipping in view of the probability of an air attack.

The “City of Manchester” was sunk by submarines 25 miles astern of us on the following (Saturday) night and the gun flashes could be seen but beyond this we saw no sign of enemy activity. Instead, however, of completing the journey in six or seven days we did not reach Fremantle until Monday, the 9th March. Only a pint of water a day was available for each for all purposes and this coupled with the monotony of bully beef and biscuit added to our privations. This ship was not designed to trade in tropical waters or the Indian Ocean and it was a great relief to all on board when we entered the sheltered waters of Fremantle Harbour.

On our arrival we were met by the Evacuation Branch of the Lands Department. We were given every facility and assistance by them and there is no praise too high for the warmth and cordiality of the welcome that Western Australians extended to us on the conclusion of a strange and adventurous journey.

Signed:

H.K. Rodgers.

SINGAPORE By Express War Reporter Henry Keys MELBOURNE, MONDAY

Astounding disclosures of ignorance in the highest places of the progress of the lightning Japanese advance across Singapore Island have been made to me by Mr. H.K. Rodgers, Chairman of the Singapore and Penang Harbour Boards, who has just reached Melbourne.

In the most factual official document of the campaign I have yet seen Rodgers declares that apparently neither Sir Shenton Thomas nor General Percival knew on Feb. 11 that the enemy had reached Pasir Panjang and were pressing inexorably on Singapore's very important dock area – Keppel Harbour – through where Imperial troops were then retiring.

The document, which Rodgers prepared for circulation among the Board's Staff and families, also denies the allegation that Malaya's British civil administration collapsed and ran in the moment of crisis.

Instead, it is an unimpassioned record of the heroic attention to duty of men whose opportunities of escape were very great.

OFFICIAL VIEW

The following information was given to me during my interview with Mr. H.K. Rodgers.

He declared that he was first aware of Singapore's danger on January 25 when he ordered the fitting out of the ferry “Bagan” for a 1,000 mile voyage for the evacuation of 200 of the staff.

Mr. Rodgers went on to say that the greatest secrecy was necessary as the official view was that Singapore must not, and shall not fall. As a result it was often necessary to assure the officers that all was well even when the news was most depressing. On February 10 the Harbour Board Staff were given six hours notice to board the “Bagan.” Next day, February 11, the battle-front had reached Pasir Panjang. Troops in disorder were seen retreating through Keppel Harbour village. From dawn onwards military lorries were being sabotaged on the Keppel Road, and there was a fear that the Japanese would be in Keppel Harbour before the day was out.

Mr. Rodgers said, “The “Bagan” was ready to leave at 1 p.m. when I managed to see Sir Shenton Thomas. To my surprise he not only knew nothing of the situation at Pasir Panjang but said that the General was also unaware of the position there. Permission was given for the “Bagan” to sail provided some one remained to look after the Asiatic Staff. I agreed to accept this duty, and other officers volunteered to remain with me and came ashore with their baggage. After the departure of the “Bagan” at 2 p.m. Keppel Harbour was continuously raided and shelled. At 5 p.m. Wiggs and I were ordered by the Naval Office to board the “Mata Hari” but on the following day we went ashore where we learned that the order had been given without the knowledge and consent of the Civil Government. We landed our baggage and proceeded to pay off such Asiatic

staff as we could find. We then interviewed Rear-Admiral Spooner, who frankly told us that the position was rapidly deteriorating and that capitulation was inevitable. He advised us to leave. At 6 p.m. the Telok Ayer railway godowns were blazing owing to the terrific bombing. The road was impassable owing to the large numbers of cars on fire. While we were there another heavy raid was carried out. We had a very narrow escape and were badly shaken by blast. In our judgment the end of Singapore was close at hand, and we decided to accept the offer of Naval Officers on the spot to leave with them aboard the "Tengarroh," the Sultan of Johore's yacht, with less than a 200 miles range.

No sooner were we aboard than the Japanese started to shell Telok Ayer area. Arrangements had been made for all the remaining small naval craft to embark the troops selected for evacuation, but the shelling caused a large number of casualties and disorganized the plan. But the ships came alongside in perfect order and left according to the time table, carrying considerable numbers of troops.

The "Tengarroh" left at 1 a.m. on February 14, but returned to pick up a few troops who had run the gauntlet of the barrage. We anchored near the Raffles Light and at dawn saw a small naval craft with Rear-Admiral Spooner aboard. The vessel had grounded."

Mr. Rodgers went on to describe the perilous voyage to Sumatra with bombers continually overhead, through waters littered with wreckage of all manner of craft, lifeboats, rafts and mattresses. He said that the "Tengarroh" picked up 100 men after one vessel was sunk by bombers. He continued by saying that he had unsuccessfully attempted to borrow money from the British consular officials in order to cable for funds, and concluded by paying a glowing tribute to his staff who played their part as a grand united team in the defence of Malaya.

MEMORIES OF A TRUE SURVIVOR

Sir Roger Moon Bt. reveals his experiences of The Death Railway to Neil Thomas of the Shropshire Magazine

Could you imagine 3 years 6 months without a proper lavatory? No toilet paper? No hot bath or shower? 3 years and 6 months of never brushing your teeth? Could you imagine 3 years 6 months of eating nothing but boiled rice ... when you have any food at all. Or of drinking nothing but water? Could you visualize wearing the same clothing day after day, watching and feeling it slowly disintegrate to rags until it falls away completely and all you have is a thong? Could you imagine hour upon hour of intense physical labour until your bones and muscles ache and your mind inwardly screams with the repetitive boredom of it? Will you imagine working like this at the height of a scorching sun, where temperatures soar to 120 degrees and sweat fills your eyes as your skin slowly burns? Could you imagine trying to sleep when all that is separating you from the earth is a makeshift bamboo mattress, with no pillow or blanket to warm and comfort you? Just you, your thong and temperatures dipping towards zero. Why not escape, you ask? Ah, but the terrain is mainly jungle, strange and dangerous. The odds on recapture are short, the likely result imprisonment, torture, death. Death, the only escape. And many, sadly, went unwillingly down that route.

This was once the world of Shropshire baronet Sir Roger Moon.

Sir Roger was a prisoner of the Japanese during WW2. Like thousands of Commonwealth captives, he was a slave labourer forced to work on the building of the Burma Railway, which came to be known as 'The Death Railway.' His story is a dramatic and harrowing one.

Of the 240,000 labourers on the railway, more than 100,000 died, the majority Asian workers. More than 6,300 British POWs lost their lives. The atrocities carried out by the Japanese guards are well-documented, and Sir Roger witnessed his fair share. He has remained silent about his experiences for decades, declining to open up even to his closest family members. Now, aged almost 100 and as the shadows close in at the end of a long and remarkable life, he has started to reveal his story.

I had the privilege of sitting with him at his home in the small hamlet of Wykey, near Ruyton-XI-Towns as he talked, with great animation and strong emotion, about the fall of Singapore in 1942 and the hell that followed. The physical and psychological hardships must have seemed all the more gruelling against the comfortable life that preceded them.

Born in November 1914 at The Wirral, Cheshire, the family moved to near Baschurch when he was three. There was an early separation from his father who fought in France in WW1.

One of Sir Roger's earliest memories is of his Nanny, who slipped in the snow and broke her leg on the way to Church at Christmas. And in 1918 he recalls a tea party for invalid soldiers at the hospital camp at Baschurch.

Life at public school was followed by an early career as a stockbroker's attaché with Pilkington and Dunlop in Liverpool. He enjoyed flying and driving - learning to pilot a Tiger Moth and acting, once, as a co-driver in the Monte Carlo Rally. Other pastimes were shooting, racing and dancing. He recalls a trip to Ascot; an invitation to a party hosted by the then Prince of Wales for the presentation of young gentlemen; dinners; Point-to-Point meetings and Hunt Balls. He proposed at one of the Cheshire Hunt Balls at the Grosvenor to beautiful Pauline, telling her that he had a job abroad but that he would come home to marry her when he could afford it. It never happened. When he set off from Southampton in 1939 for Malaya, little could he have dreamed it would be nearly 7 years before he returned, a changed man.

Sir Roger's post in Malaya was with Dunlop Malayan Estates in the rubber industry – having already worked abroad in Kenya from 1933 – 1935 gaining valuable experience there. He often spent his leisure time driving the 170 miles to Singapore in his open-topped MG sports car, to see the sights and staying at The Adelphi - one of Singapore's best hotels. Other Sunday pastimes were flying a Tiger Moth out of the Royal Singapore Flying Club at Kallang Airfield, and when war started in Britain, he applied to join the RAF. Sadly, he was turned down due to his short-sight, but undeterred he wrote to Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham (Chief of the British Far East Command) asking him to intervene, which he was unable to do. In July 1940, all able-bodied British men of 18 to 41 were required to be enlisted, as ruled by the Governor Sir Shenton Thomas and the State Assembly. In November 1941, Sir Roger went to Muar for his medical test.

Despite being listed as 'technically blind' he was ruled as fit for service and joined the Johore Volunteer Engineers as Sapper R. Moon 965. Just one month later, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour and declared war on the USA and Britain.

In February came the news that shook the British Empire – after a battle of 7 days on the island – that Singapore had fallen to the Japanese. It resulted in the largest surrender of British-led military personnel in history. About 80,000 British, Indian and Australian troops in Singapore became prisoners of war, joining 50,000 taken earlier in the Malayan peninsula by the Japanese during the Malayan campaign. The ignominious fall of Singapore was described by Sir Winston Churchill as the "worst disaster" and "largest capitulation" in British military history.

Sir Roger clearly recalls that fateful day, the 15th February, 1942. He said that the news did not register at first. They were in the grounds of a large mansion, dug in. When their Sergeant Major gave them the news, they were shattered, followed by a sense of fury and then fear of the future – having been assured for years that Singapore was impregnable. They were told to hand in their arms in an orderly fashion. Sir Roger said he placed his bayonet on the pile but raised his rifle above his head and crashed it down on the driveway, smashing the butt to pieces.

The Allied forces were ordered to march the 12 miles to Changi barracks, which became a POW camp, and the captured civilians, including women and children, were sent to Changi prison.

The appalling treatment of civilians, particularly the Chinese, has stayed with Sir Roger all his life. And conditions for Sapper Moon and his comrades was also extremely tough, with very little food, mainly rice, cooked in an oil which left a revolting taste. Sir Roger was sent to work in Hindhede Quarry on Bukit Timah, where the conditions in the tropical Singapore sun were terrible. At this stage, he still had a shirt, a pair of tatty trousers, socks and boots and so was able to cope with the stony ground. They had to load rocks, blasted from the hillside at night, into trolleys and wheel them away to be loaded into lorries. Hard as this was, it proved to be relatively light compared with the years and months spent on the Burma Railway. They worked in temperatures of 120 degrees, coping with sweat, bugs, extreme fatigue and as well as this, their hammers kept breaking. Later, on the Death Railway, Sir Roger found himself working in a group of 4 men cutting timber, something he had never done before. Back in the main camp, they had to load rails at night, lifting them between 8 men.

In charge of the POWs was a brutal Japanese Corporal nicknamed 'Dr. Death', and the camp commander was a young Japanese Captain who was completely unstable and a real swine. Punishment included being put in a bamboo cage the size of a chicken cage without room to stand, or lie stretched out, so sleep was impossible. Other cruel punishments were also inflicted on the POWs and they had to bow to passing Japanese guards.

Sir Roger suffered several illnesses during his time in captivity – a poisoned thumb nail, dysentery, beriberi, tropical ulcers and bouts of malaria. There were psychological effects as well, and hours of boredom with nothing to do except talk.

The first inkling that the war was coming to an end was the sight of an RAF Mosquito flying over the camp. News gradually started to filter through of the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the war was over. The POWs were evacuated to a base camp at Tamuang where they were issued with toothbrushes, soap, improved rations as well as Red Cross food.

Their morale was boosted by the arrival of a group of American and British officers who took control of the camp. They were told about the Japanese surrender, VE Day and all the other details of the last year of the war.

One of the worries felt by the prisoners as the Japanese surrender came closer, was that they would all be killed, but the dropping of the atomic bombs not only hastened the end of the war, but saved their lives.

Sir Roger said that his memory of these final days is a blur, with so much going on for which they were totally unprepared. They were transferred to Bangkok, given medicines, tobacco and clothing (Japanese, but better than a G-string!) and their families were advised of their survival. Then they were flown to Rangoon (arriving in torrential rain) and given a lunch of stew, peaches and cream and fresh bread – the most wonderful meal, Sir Roger said. Looked after by lovely Red Cross nurses, they were transferred to Rangoon University, their "foul Japanese clothing" was taken away and replaced by pyjamas in which they strolled round Rangoon for 10 days! Then it was home to Liverpool and hospital in Chester and an emotional reunion with his family, including his younger brother who had survived the war in Europe.

Once recovered, Sir Roger returned to Malaya, and in 1950 he was lunching with friends at the Port Dickson Club, when he met a beautiful Australian girl. 3 weeks later, he and Meg were engaged, and they were married for more than 40 years, living near Ruyton-XI-Towns until her death. A final word from Sir Roger was about his Rolex watch, a much-loved present from his grandmother, which he reluctantly sold while on the Railway to buy extra rations for survival. "I lost my watch but kept my life" he said.

THE STORY OF 'STAY BEHIND' PARTY No. 2 by Bill Pearson

The last survivor of the 'Stay Behind' Parties, Bill Pearson celebrated his 100th birthday with his family in St. Albans in February 2014. His story is one of great determination and courage with a lifelong ability to adapt to and accept the circumstances he was in. He puts his survival down to "a belief in oneself and in the presence of our Creator."

Background.

Cyril William 'Bill' Pearson was born in Brighton in 1914. At the age of 14 he emigrated to Canada and during the harsh years of the Depression, under the supervision of the Church Army, he travelled the country working as a farmhand. In 1934, he enlisted in the Royal Engineers and as Sapper 1870646 he served in Aden, then at Changi Barracks, Singapore. Leaving the Army in Singapore in 1938, he was employed as Malayan Representative & Service Engineer, Western Electrical Company, Ipoh branch, then as a tin mine dredging engineer with Anglo-Oriental Mining Company Ltd. working on the Penawat dredging rig south east of Batu Gajah, Perak. "Wet, mucky and extremely noisy work," he recalled. He quickly learnt the Malay then Thai languages.

In late 1939, Bill applied for RAF flying training, but when nothing materialized he enlisted in the Malayan Volunteers. Bill was a Sergeant in HQ Company 1/FMSVF [Perak Volunteers] before being promoted Company Sergeant Major. In early December 1941, he volunteered for Special Operations training and was selected by **Colonel A.F. Warren RM** to attend the SOE's 101 STS in Singapore. Fit expatriate men, mostly planters and miners with a good knowledge of Malaya, its people and languages were put through weapons and explosives training, learning the use of tommy guns, delayed fuses and booby traps. Bill was picked to join one of nine 'Stay Behind' parties to be infiltrated behind Japanese lines across Malaya. It was believed that officer status would give the 'Stay Behind' men a better chance of survival if captured so Bill was commissioned 2nd Lt. and attached to 3rd Indian Corps.

The 'Stay Behind' party was led by **William Stubington**. Already in his mid 50s, originally from Hampshire, **Stubington** was educated at Cranleigh School and came out to Malaya in 1912 with his brother **Robert**, also a surveyor. **William** served in the Malay States Volunteer Rifles in WW1 (Pte. 1323 15 Platoon 'D' Company 1915) and in the FMS Surveys Department in Perlis, Penang, Kedah, North Perak but mostly in Pahang. He was a fluent Malay speaker and could read and write Jawi. Retiring from the Surveys Department in 1933 he then worked as a licensed Surveyor in Penang and was a Sgt. in 3/FMSVF. Following the evacuation of Penang, he arrived in Singapore on 18th December 1941 and obtained a valuation job with the Army before being brought to the attention of **Colonel Warren**.

The other members of the 'Stay Behind' party were 36 year old **Guy Rand**, Manager of Sunggala Estate, Perak and until recently a Company Sgt. Major in 1/FMSVF; 28 year old **Oliver Darby** of Bagan Serai & Parit Buntar Estates, Perak and formerly of 1/FMSVF; 30 year old South African **Ted Elkan**, a mining engineer on the Rawang Tin Fields and **Ahmad**, **Stubington's** Malay servant.

Bill's Story

They left Kuala Lumpur on 4th January 1942. Lightly armed, they entered the jungle without radios, intent upon sabotage and disrupting the Japanese lines of communication. **Bill** takes up the story: "**Stubington** had already been in discussion with **Spencer Chapman** and **Colonel Warren** because we learned from **Stubington** that dumps of food, ammunition and explosives had already been made in the Pahang forest area bordered by the road from Kuala Lumpur to Bentong, Raub, Benta, Jerantut and the Pahang River – quite an area! Our area of proposed operations included that through which ran the East Coast Railway. And so it was on the next day we found ourselves on a truck with more ammunition, explosives and stores going north east from Kuala Lumpur towards where we expected to meet up with an arranged Malay guide to take us through to our rendezvous and stores dumps in the jungles of Pahang. Not enough thought was given to us having suitable equipment and stores for these operations. In the extras we were carrying on the truck were some land mines, limpet mines for underwater use, and plastic boxed explosives with magnets for attachment to vehicles etc., 2,000 rounds of ammunition for the two tommy guns (shades of Al Capone!) with which we were issued, both having drum magazines and were quite heavy to carry. The stupidest thing of all in the stores that were on the truck, was a household radio in a large and heavy wooden case, and a heavy duty car battery that was supposed to be the source of power for the radio! How were we going to be able to recharge the battery?? And besides, the radio and battery were far too heavy and cumbersome to be carted around in the jungle and we were not intending to be rooted in one camp but to move around looking for targets to move against. Our personal arms, apart from the 2 tommy guns, were a .32 automatic pistol for myself; a .38 revolver for **Elkan** and Army revolvers for **Stubington, Darby & Rand**. We were also equipped with 2 parangs, extremely handy to have in the jungle and a very effective weapon in a tight spot.



We were approaching Bentong when we came to a road bridge that had been destroyed by our retreating forces and so it was the end of the road for our truck and extra stores. **Stubington** told us that we had about another 5 miles to go to reach our rendezvous with our Malay guide. So **Elkan** and I picked up what tommy gun ammunition we could reasonably carry, our packs containing some extra clothes, toilet gear, jungle medicine etc. and jumped down off the truck, stumbled across the bridge wreckage and faced up the road while waiting for the others to join us. **Stubington** sent the lorry back to KL with a message for **Colonel Warren**.

So we continued up the road, not knowing where the Japs were and trying to be ready for any eventuality. **Elkan** and I took turns in the lead with the Skipper bringing up the rear. There wasn't a sound except for our footsteps and the interminable clicking of cicadas in the trees on either side of the road.

It was sometime in the afternoon when **Stubington** decided that we should move off the road into the secondary growth and jungle. He took the lead in locating a well worn path, which after about an hour led us to a small Malay kampong, the Headman of which turned out to be the guide we had been expecting to meet. We were made welcome and given a Malay meal of rice and cooked chicken with spices etc. As it was getting late it was decided that we would rest up in the kampong till the next day. The Headman assured us that the Japs hadn't penetrated anywhere near. It was certainly unreal! No sound of battle anywhere, no aircraft activity or sounds of road traffic and the Malays in that kampong certainly didn't appear to be afraid of impending doom.

Mind you, **Stubington** had told us that he had been given 2,000 Malayan dollars with which to pay for portorage in moving stores about, and we found out later that when the money ran out, so too did any further help.

In retrospect, I shudder now at our complete disregard for our circumstances at that time. Here we were, supposedly in enemy dominated territory and we did nothing to verify that we were safe from attack or to establish where the Japs were. No recce of the immediate area or anything. This bothered me as it went against all that I had trained for as a regular soldier. However, we spent the next two days moving forward our stores, making temporary shelters of bamboo for overnight stops, usually on the side of small streams. **Elkan** and I teamed up together as did **Darby** and **Rand**, and we took it in turns at humping stores and war material from one place to another until we made a final camp way up the slopes of Bukit Benong which is some 6,916 feet high, where the spacing of the tall and very large trees was not so close and wasn't crowded underneath with secondary growth and tall lallang grass in which we were subject to attack by leeches which would adhere to our skin and clothes and suck blood until they fell off bloated, and the mosquitoes were horrid and annoying too.

As for the jungle animals, for all the time we were in the jungles of Pahang only once did we see a tiny mouse deer, a sweet little animal about a foot high on delicate legs with a nice head and face. We stayed still while it looked us over and then moved on. One night we heard elephants trumpeting and the next day we had occasion to visit one of our dumps away from camp. We discovered that two wooden boxes of primed hand grenades had been broken open and half the contents were missing. Other stores had been trampled including a box of 100 Lead Azite detonators. They had been completely flattened and not one had exploded. That pleased us because it proved that they were indeed safety detonators, as claimed, and needed a fuse to set them off! We knew it was elephants that had ransacked the stores because their droppings were all around the area. And we couldn't help feeling sorry for whichever animal had swallowed the hand grenades because being primed, they were lethal, and should any of the pins rust away and release the triggers, then a very nasty tummy ache would be the result.

So we lingered on the side of Bukit Benong. I made a useful camp oven out of two empty containers that had contained oatmeal biscuits and I became the camp cook, making some nice make-believe Cornish pasties out of crumpled up oatmeal biscuits, tinned meat and dried eggs.

January 1942 passed into February, during which time **Elkan** and I had experimented with our explosives, perfecting booby traps and timed long delay fuses should we ever have the chance to use them. **Stubington** had several bouts of malaria and was a sick man. He sent **Ahmad**, his servant, out as a scout to gather news of Jap movements, but we eventually succeeded in stopping him doing that because of the risk of him being followed by other Malays, for **Ahmad** was a town Malay and could be picked out as such by local and kampong Malays.

One of the tall trees on the hillside of our camp was leaning outwards from its roots and made a perfect lookout point over the canopy of trees surrounding us, and when we climbed it there was a wide view over the tops of the jungle trees lower down, but we couldn't see any roads because of the thickness of the jungle growth. One day whilst on lookout I heard the noise of a plane and into view came a Brewster Buffalo fighter plane with RAF roundels on the wings and fuselage. Fortunately we refrained from attracting the pilot's attention for we realized that he was searching for something, signs of activity and perhaps a camp fire. By now, any fighting was far to the south of us, possibly as far as Singapore, so it wasn't possible for the pilot of the plane to be anything other than Jap!

In February, we persuaded the Skipper to allow us to venture out of camp two at a time on successive days to recon our supposed area of operations. **Darby** and **Rand** went first to search for an easy route to the Benta/Jerantut road. They were away for some six hours and returned to say that they had located a way and had observed no movement of troops, transport or even locals on the road. The following day **Ted Elkan** and I took off with some primed hand grenades in our pockets, but with strict instructions from the Skipper that on no account were we to cause any trouble that would lead to a search for our camp by the Japs. We reached the road at about 10.00 a.m. at a point where on the opposite side of the road there was a high bank with small tree growth right up to its edge.

We decided that above the bank would be an ideal place to hide up and observe the road, and we were in a good position for something like an hour when we heard the sound of approaching traffic. Along the road came a convoy of lorries, open and ten in number. The vehicles were not military ones but civilian of various types and as they passed below us and not more than 15 feet away, we saw that each one had a Jap driver and a mate in the cabs and in the back among the loads there was also another Jap soldier. It was our first sighting of a Jap soldier close up, and rather scruffy and unkempt they were too, and mostly unshaven! Our elevated position on the roadside was really ideal and it was indeed a great temptation to lob a few grenades into the trucks as they rolled by, but remembering our instructions we had to let them go their way. They were travelling presumably to Kuantan on the East Coast.

It was mid-February 1942, **Stubington** was ill with malaria and unable to make any firm instructions, or give directions. We realized that we were in a useless situation in that we couldn't move out to a more active area, as we didn't know where any of the other parties were operating, if at all. We had no contact with local Malays who risked Japanese reprisals against them. Perhaps if we had known their whereabouts, we could have joined up with Chinese Malayan Communist groups.

So we let the days go by, proving to ourselves that it is possible to adapt to a rough life in the jungle provided one has the will power to do so, has sufficient stores and medication and the ability to make do and mend.

In retrospect, I suppose our team was a good one. **Darby & Rand**, being rubber planters were used to the outdoor life in Malaya; **Ted Elkan**, as a mining engineer, was used to the hard life of deep shaft mining in the outbacks of Pahang and Johore, and had a first class knowledge of the use of explosives, and I, the only real trained soldier in the group, was able to adapt to whatever conditions prevailed with the benefit of being a trained Sapper and proud of the ability such training had instilled in me. **Stubington**, our leader, was a good man and had volunteered for this operation in the belief that his knowledge of the areas of Pahang he had surveyed years ago would be of some use to the operations. But, and I say this with the greatest respect for his courage and convictions, he was really too old and unprepared physically for such operations and should not have been accepted for those reasons.

So February dragged through to March for us. The Skipper's condition was slow to improve. His servant, **Ahmad**, looked after him as well as possible and from time to time ventured out to gather news and obtain fruit. Meanwhile, **Elkan** and I spent a lot of time making up different explosive devices and gadgets with short and long fuses for hopeful eventualities. Our camp was protected from sunrise intrusions by many of these devices placed at strategic points on the approach trails, and our safety was dependent on these gadgets because at night time we didn't mount any guard. Our forays out of camp continued checking on Jap movement along the road, but our consumption of food supplies was becoming a problem.

It was decided that we should quit the camp and make our way down the Pahang River to the East Coast and work our way down to Singapore! The intention was to re-group, re-equip and try again in another area. In our innocence we were fully convinced that Singapore would be still firmly held by British Forces!

Ted Elkan and I had to decide what to do with the considerable amount of explosives and ammunition unused in three caches. There was gelignite; F.I.D. [fuse instantaneous detonating] in coils; detonators; hand grenades in boxes; trip switches; 1,000 rounds of tommy gun ammunition as well as ammunition for our hand guns. We experimented with various pencil timers and trip switches to gain as much time as possible after leaving camp so that we could be well away from the area when the explosions occurred. We eventually came up with an arrangement that would give us about 30 hours clearance from the area. The system was weight of water controlled.

Ahmad, in the meantime, had been sent out of camp to obtain a river canoe large enough to carry us all down the Pahang River safely. Our intention was to travel at night to avoid detection.

On the afternoon of March 14th, **Ahmad** returned to camp and told us that he had been able to purchase a canoe large enough for our purposes with two paddles and that it had been secreted in undergrowth on the river bank just below the river crossing. So the die was cast. It was decided that we should move the following night, March 15th. During the day, we demolished our bamboo shelters, distributed the remaining small stocks of food and ammunition between the four of us as **Stubington** was too weak to be loaded up.

Elkan and I laid the explosive charges. We quit camp at 9.00 p.m. and made our way down to the road with **Darby & Rand** taking the lead, then **Stubington & Ahmad**, with **Ted** and I bringing up the rear.

After reaching the canoe in its hiding place, which was several yards from the river bank, we dallied for perhaps an hour, having a snack of oatmeal biscuits and marmite while we discussed our next move. **Elkan** and I wished to dispose of the explosives we had brought along and prevailed on the others to wait for us while we laid some charges on the railway line. It took us about an hour and when we returned to the others, found that they were on edge and wanting to be on the way down river.

We found that we were travelling downstream at quite a fast rate and had unwittingly moved over to the eastern side of the river. I was on the steering oar at the back trying to keep the canoe on a straight course with the flow of the river, and for some unknown reason the front paddle man dug into the stream and the canoe swung broadside on the flow of the rushing river and we came up against a strong post or fishing stake sticking out of the water, which caught us amidships, tilted the canoe and we were all flung into the river! It was a calamity! Being dark, I didn't see what happened to the others, but I was swept perhaps some fifty yards downstream before floundering ashore and scrambling up the bank to find myself completely alone, wringing wet and empty handed apart from my holstered peashooter of a hand gun.

I listened for sounds of the others, but all I could hear was the sound of cicadas in the trees and the sound of rushing water. So I started calling "Ahoy. Ahoy!", and after a few minutes first **Darby** then **Rand** appeared wet and shaken, and then **Ahmad** supporting **Stubington**. It turned out that **Ahmad** had saved his Tuan's life by supporting him in the water then dragging him ashore. **Ted** appeared, saying that he had been swept some way downstream but had managed to hang on to the canoe and had dragged it back along the bank to where we were, a truly fantastic endeavour in the circumstances.

Amazingly, one paddle and one tommy gun had been saved because they had jammed under a seat, also the parang, but the haversacks containing our remaining stocks of food and medical supplies were lost. We had lost all notion of time. It was perhaps 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning of March 16th 1942, dark and cold.

Someone miraculously produced some matches and we were able to light a fire and dry ourselves and our clothes. We then discovered that we were not far off a well used riverside track and also a group of some 3 or 4 Malay kampong houses scattered among some trees on the other side of the pathway. We approached the nearest house and called out in the Malay tongue for the occupants to wake up and assist us. The Headman of the group appeared. He told us that he was afraid to help us because the Japs had already been through the kampong. We did notice a paper Jap flag attached to the side of the house and were told that there were frequent Jap patrols which came through to enforce obedience. But he did give us the news that the fighting in Malaya was finished and that Singapore had surrendered in February. This news really shook us and we found it hard to believe. The Headman gave us a meal of cold rice, chillies and fish but implored us not to stay in the kampong because if the Japs found out he would be taken away and killed.

We realized that we had to move from that disaster area to a place of comparative safety. I cannot recall how we managed to propel that cumbersome canoe across the fast flowing waters of the Pahang River to land on the other bank and find ourselves a hiding place in a clump of tall growing bamboos, but we did, and just managed to secrete ourselves just on sunrise. The canoe was sunk at the water's edge away from prying eyes. **[To be continued in January 2015].**

IN MEMORY OF CORPORAL ONG KIM SAI – An FMSVF Volunteer

By Alex Teoh and Vincent Teoh

In the Perak town of Taiping, Malaysia, is situated one of the Commonwealth War Grave Commission sites, the Taiping War Cemetery. Though not as large as the Kranji War Cemetery in Singapore, the Taiping War Cemetery is most tranquil as it is located at the serene Lake Gardens town of Taiping, which means "the town of everlasting peace."

Against the backdrop of the Maxwell Hill (today re-named Bukit Larut) resort, this war cemetery holds many stories and history in terms of the sacrifice of regular Allied soldiers and Perak Volunteer soldiers during the Second World War, who fought against the Japanese aggressors.

The statistics of the Taiping War Cemetery confirm certain sad facts – out of the 850 grave markers, more than 500 are without names – paying tribute to the unknown soldiers who fell in combat or in captivity. Most of the names are of British, Australian, New Zealand, Indian and Gurkha soldiers. We, in peaceful times, are always appreciative of their great sacrifice and remember them.

Among those graves are a few little known or almost forgotten Malayan Regular soldiers and Volunteer soldiers who heeded the call of duty to defend Malaya against the invader. The names of the men of the Federated Malay States

View of Taiping War Cemetery



Volunteer Force (FMSVF) and a Chinese Malayan from the Royal Army Service Corps, who are interred in the Taiping War Cemetery are as follows:-

Names	Regiment	Age	Rank
Abdul Rahman bin Ahmad	FMSVF Pahang	19	Private
CHAN Kam Weng	FMSVF Perak	35	Corporal
Crosbie-Hill Anthony	FMSVF	-	Lieutenant
De Wit, Ivor Henry	FMSVF	39	Private
LIM Poh Ann	FMSVF Perak	-	Private
Milne, John Norman	FMSVF	-	Sergeant
McCracken, Henry Maxwell Geddes	FMSVF	29	Private
ONG Kim Sai	FMSVF Perak	24	Corporal
TANG Bee Choon	FMSVF Perak	30	Private
Vuillemier, Noel L	FMSVF	25	Private
KWA Teik Loke	RASC	-	Private

The FMSVF

Arising from the patriotic fervour following the Boer War in South Africa, the European population working in Malaya came up with the idea of recruiting and training Volunteer soldiers in the Federated Malay States (FMS) of Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang.

These states passed legislation in 1911 enabling the formal recruitment of 554 European men from the 4 states into a battalion which was then called the Malay States Volunteer Rifles (MSVR). Right from the onset the MSVR faced numerous challenges in the form of a dearth of suitably trained officers and NCOs, stiff competition with sporting clubs and rifle associations for members, and limited enrolment as recruitment was restricted to Europeans only. The formation of the Perak Volunteers detachment of the MSVR was delayed due to the aforesaid reasons, unlike in Selangor where there were more Europeans and the recruitment and training of Volunteers went on relatively unhindered and regular firearms practice and foot drills were quickly instituted.

In 1915, the FMS formed the Malay Volunteer Infantry (MVI), a battalion which was to be constituted only of Asian Volunteers with European officers. With the rapid expansion of the MVI, it was decided in 1921 to combine the MSVR and the MVI into a single multi-racial brigade-sized force known as the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force (FMSVF) and each state detachment was to be gradually brought up to battalion strength. The 1st Battalion was recruited in Perak, the 2nd in Selangor, the 3rd in Negeri Sembilan and the 4th in Pahang.

Significant events in the history of the FMS Volunteers:

- Formation of the European-only MSVR in 1911
- MSVR representation in the 1911 Coronation Procession of King George V in the streets of London
- MSVR supporting the police force in quelling the Kuala Lumpur riots of 1912
- The enrolment of Asian and Eurasian Volunteers into the MVI began in 1915
- The merger of the MSVR and MVI into the multi-racial FMSVF in 1921
- In 1933, the FMSVF was formally re-organized with separate companies or platoons for the Europeans, Malays, Chinese, Eurasians and Indians. Indian Volunteers were few in number and were usually grouped together as HQ platoons or sections.

The FMS Volunteer Force had the objective of assisting in the permanent defence of Malaya against external aggression and assisting the Civil Power in the suppression of local disturbances, if required.[cf. Handbook of British Malaya 1937] During the Malayan Campaign, the FMS Volunteers played a role in the defence of Malaya and Singapore right up until the Surrender of Singapore on 15th February 1942. At least 38 men of the FMSVF are known to have been killed in action. A composite unit of assorted European regulars and European and Asian FMS Volunteers fought right to the bitter end in Singapore under the command of **Major H.J. Cockman** who was himself killed in action on 15th February 1942. One of the fighting Volunteers was **Corporal ONG Kim Sai**, a member of No: 8 (Taiping Chinese) Platoon of 'B' (Chinese) Company of the 1st (Perak) Battalion of the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force (FMSVF). **Corporal Ong** was the uncle of the MVG member Alex Teoh of Singapore.

CPL ONG Kim Sai Cpl. Ong was born in Taiping in 1918, the son of **Mr. Ong Saik**, who was involved in the tin mining industry. **Cpl. Ong** was educated at the King Edward VII Government School in Taiping. He joined No: 8 Platoon of 'B' Company, 1/FMSVF when he was the education officer attached to the King Edward VII School.



A few days before the Japanese invaded Malaya in December 1941, **Cpl. Ong** and the rest of No: 8 Platoon were mobilized in Taiping. Not much is known to **Cpl. Ong's** family of where No: 8 Platoon was posted and what their instructions were, but some records indicated that the platoon was ordered to defend the Kampong Tekka airstrip north of Taiping.

Unfortunately, the order was eventually given to abandon Taiping as it was on the British line of retreat down the west coast in view of the rapid Japanese advance from Penang and from the east coast along Kroh and Grik. On Boxing Day, 26th December 1941, Taiping was fully occupied by the Japanese forces. No: 8 Platoon eventually ended up defending Singapore.

In Singapore, No: 8 Platoon was reportedly stationed in a Chinese High School (possibly St. Patrick's School) along Bukit Timah Road. Not much is known of the platoon's activities until after the Japanese successfully entered Singapore Island. No: 8 Platoon under **Major H.J. Cockman** of 1/FMSVF was involved in the defensive fighting in the Geylang area.

Cpl. Ong was in the machine gun section of No: 8 Platoon and the entire MG section was wiped out in the heavy fighting at Geylang Serai on Sunday, 15th February 1942 – the day of the Surrender of Singapore. He was 24. **Cpl. Ong** and his Volunteer comrades from the MG section were buried where they fell and markers were placed on their graves. The other men of the MG section were **Cpl. Chan Kan Weng, Pte. Tang Bee Choon & Pte. Lim Poh Ann**. After the Japanese surrender in September 1945, the graves of **Cpl. Ong Kim Sai** and his fallen comrades were identified and their remains were eventually brought back to the Taiping War Cemetery in their home town of Taiping for a military burial with full honours on 5th June 1947.

The Malaya Tribune of Friday, June 6, 1947

			
Memorial Service	Full military honours	Representation from Perak royalty and local communities	Final burial

For **Cpl. Ong's** service and sacrifice, he was posthumously awarded three WW 2 Stars. The medals were: **The 1939 – 1945 Star; the Pacific Star and the War Medal 1939 – 1945.**

The medals are now in the possession of **Cpl. Ong's** nephew, **Alex Teoh**.



War Medals

Many stories have been documented and many books written about the regular soldiers who participated and fought in the Malayan Campaign. Sadly, not much is recorded about the sacrifice of the Asian FMS Volunteers who fought and died defending Malayan and Singapore. Many of the surviving Asian Volunteers who escaped capture by the Japanese kept a low profile and destroyed all evidence linking them to the Volunteers during the Japanese Occupation. Those who did not do so risked betrayal by informers. Some traditional Asian families also did not want to recall the suffering of the war, the difficulties of post-war reconstruction and the terrors of the Malayan Emergency. However, before another generation passes on, we should document the story of the Asian Volunteers before all memories have faded and it becomes too late.

2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the Japanese surrender. Let us recall, record and commemorate those who fought, sacrificed, suffered and died so that **"Their Names Liveth for Evermore."**

THE WAR DIARY OF GERALD W. SCOTT – PART 3

By kind permission of his widow Anne Scott

On board the M/V "Mutiara"

At long last I was driving the lorry through the gates and the others were following on behind. I parked behind the stack of petrol tins I had been unloading that afternoon and a hand-chain was organized to unload the supplies and get them aboard. At the same time five empty drums were being filled by hand with fuel from a lighter lying alongside. Eventually – a few minutes before midnight – everything was in readiness to cast loose.

Then, as we gently eased away from the wharf the first shell of the evening fell. It fell fair and square into the middle of the stack of petrol tins now about 30 yards away – and the whole thing went up in one gigantic burst of flame. But we were away – and not a minute too soon. More shells dropped on the quay but already we were out of range moving slowly forward over the dark smoke-covered sea.

As we passed through the Inner Roads of the harbour the whole water-front from Keppel Harbour to the Post Office was visible, it appeared to be a sea of flames from end to end. Never have I watched a spectacle so awe-inspiring and ghastly. Singapore in the early hours of Saturday, February 14th, was well and truly a city ablaze.

And then, from way down the coast, a searchlight shone out over the water picking out each little vessel in turn and holding it in its beam before turning on the next one. But no shells followed us as we steered for the only passage through the minefields and we started to breathe a little easier. Surely now, God willing and weather permitting, we were masters of our own fate?

Our launch – the "M/V Mutiara" – was a 13-ton vessel propelled by an old two-cylinder Kromhout two-stroke hot-bulb diesel engine and normally was used for conveying the Installation Staff between the Island Installation of Bukum and Singapore. There were 25 on board – 23 Shell Company Staff and 2 Chartered Bank men. Our Captain, an Installation Superintendent, had not been to sea for over 17 years and the only chart we had was one of Singapore Island marking the positions of the minefields and which had been obtained from the Master Attendants' Office. We also had, including myself, five engineers and as luck would have it, three were marine engineers – two holding Acting-Second Engineers tickets.

As we passed the Singapore Yacht Club on our beam a powerful naval tug bore down on us and passed to starboard. The Captain decided to follow its stern light and soon we were joined by an R.N.V.R. launch. I signalled this launch – painfully slowly with a flashlight – that we had no navigator and he told us to follow him. This was no easy matter because he apparently had only one engine working and was consequently proceeding on a somewhat erratic course. He would take large semi-circular sweeps with his one engine full out and then correct his course with the rudder. However we managed to follow him fairly successfully – only bumping into him once! And so we were led through the channel of the minefields.

About 2.30 a.m. the naval vessels stopped and spent the next three-quarters of an hour signalling to each other with powerful horizontal beam signal-lamps. It seemed that they were not certain of their course. Then the leading vessel started off again and half-an-hour later ran aground – on the rocks – so did we. There was nothing further to do but to try and get some sleep and this we did very successfully.

When it was light, just after 6 o'clock we found that there were three vessels lying near – but all three got off and went their way without so much as a word or offer of assistance. At 8.15 the engine was running but was revolving backwards (a 2-stroke engine can run either way) and after much difficulty we managed to re-float. The water was very shallow but when we reached deeper water the engine was stopped and reversed.

Everything was plain sailing now and the "Mutiara" settled down to a steady 8 knots and began to put some good sea-miles between us and Singapore. The sky in the direction of the city was black with smoke and trailed far out to sea. In point of fact we could still see it when we arrived off the coast of Sumatra.

We found from the chart that we had run aground at Pulau Tekong which we finally cleared at 8.30. At 9.49 we passed the top buoy marking the entrance to the Durian Straits which is the main channel through the Rhio Archipelago. The second buoy was passed at 10.50 and the 3rd at 11.50 a.m.

At 10.40 two squadrons of 9 Japanese planes each flew overhead but didn't pay us their unwelcome attention. In the afternoon we sighted a Royal Netherlands Indies naval vessel lying off the Zuid-Broeder Island and we drew alongside. She had been gutted by fire and we found out later that she had been dive-bombed three weeks before. The vessel (the "Deuch") was boarded and valuable charts obtained from the chart-room. The condition of the ship was chaotic. The cabins gave the impression of having been ransacked and the contents of trunks and suitcases were strewn everywhere. Broken crates of whisky and beer lay in the companion-ways together with the body of a dead engineer – in a boiler-suit which had been covered by a naval top-coat.

After casting off from the "Deuch" we circled the island to find a cove in which to heave-to for the night, but unsuccessfully in this it was decided to make for the coast of Sumatra. This we made at 5.45 anchoring a couple of miles or so off the mouth of the River Katima. The tide was out and it was very shallow. Almost everybody had a bathe. The following morning, Sunday February 15th, we were unable to start the engine – and in attempting to do so lost the necessary air from the air-cylinders. A small hand-pump was connected to the cylinders but unfortunately the boss, into which the pump-handle fitted, was broken. Dunne, one of the marine engineers, made a series of clamps and these took the best part of the day to complete.

Just after 3 o'clock, the motor launch "Celia" drew alongside. She had 65 soldiers on board under the command of Brigadier Paris and Major MacDonald of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. They said that they were making for Djambi but hadn't got sufficient fuel or oil. We agreed to give them 1 drum (44 gallons) of fuel and 1 tin of oil, and they agreed in return to take Faber, a Dutchman, and de Souza who was ill with malaria and sea-sickness. Faber was to arrange for help to be sent to us as soon as possible.

In the meantime, all hands on board were set to man the improvised pump and pumping continued for the rest of the day, all Monday (and subsequently all Tuesday). On Monday midday an unsuccessful attempt was made to start the engine and a futile attempt was made at 10 p.m. but again we had no luck. We were unable to get sufficient pressure of air in the cylinders to turn the engine over. It was raining now and a strong wind had blown up. The "Mutiarra" was rolling badly as she was abreast the tide and wind, and she was bumping badly on the bottom.

On Tuesday morning we started pumping all over again, our aim being this time to fill the 3 air-bottles to 16, 16 and 10 atmospheres each and so give the engine a fair chance to start. We pumped all day and in the evening decided to wait until the following morning before making the attempt.

During the night a motor vessel drew close and signalled. We informed her that we were British and that our engine was disabled. She replied that she was going to continue on her way and would send back help. And as daylight came she weighed anchor and sailed off.

After breakfast, which the chief 'cook' and his assistants so efficiently prepared, the dreary and back-breaking procedure of pumping continued. The bottles had lost some air during the night through leakage and were registering 14½ and 12 atmospheres in the top cylinders. At 9 o'clock the kerosene burners to heat the cylinder heads were lit in readiness for yet another attempt to start the engine. Everybody was very cheerful and optimistic in spite of a bad night when the boat had pitched and tossed like a cork in a mountain stream.

At 10 o'clock the air-valves were opened. The engine fired and revolved half-a-dozen times and then died – and so did our hopes! Things looked pretty hopeless and the air-pump boss was now broken beyond further use. The engineers held a conference together and various suggestions were considered. The outcome of this was to bring the air-cylinders and pump up on deck. One of the roof-brackets was detached and fixed onto the pump fulcrum, the pump having been fixed onto the engine-room roof. The heavy clutch-lever was brought up and attached to the bracket. A really sound job was made and by 1 o'clock we were ready to start pumping again. We took it in turns and by 9.30 all 3 cylinders were registering to the red marks on their gauges – approximately 16 atmospheres each! It was back-breaking work – but it was good exercise and it gave our minds something to think about. Each man on board had the satisfaction of feeling that he was contributing something to the common cause. The air-bottles were now lowered into the engine-room preparatory to making a fresh attempt to start in the morning.

Thursday dawned with a dark sky and a slight swell and it was cold. But we knew that today was the first time that the engine was going to be given a sufficient pressure of air to give it a really fair chance to start – although confidence in its starting was not too high after the previous failures. At 7.20 the burners were lit and twenty minutes later the air-valve was opened. All our hopes were concentrated on that dreadful moment. With a resounding explosion the first cylinder fired and away she went running up to full speed and belching black and white smoke from the exhaust. The next ten minutes were anxious ones as the engine fired irregularly and water streamed from a cracked gasket in the cylinder-head. However, when the anchor was weighed, she steadied down under the load and the course was set – South East. Our hearts and heads were light and talk centred on hot baths – food and beer which we thought we might get within twenty-four hours.

At 11.30 we overtook a Chinese 'tongkang' – a large wooden fishing vessel – from which we took on board 7 soldiers (RAs). They told us that they were trying to make for a pre-arranged rendezvous at the mouth of the Indragiri River. They also told us that Palembang, to which we had intended to go, was already in Japanese hands and so it was decided to follow their instructions.

We arrived at Pridgi Raja, at the mouth of the Indragiri River at 4.30 and were met by the Penghulu of the village, magnificently dressed in a uniform of starched white drill, and 4 army officers who had made the journey from Singapore partly by using a life-boat and partly by sailing in a 12-foot sailing dinghy. They produced a sheet of instructions addressed to *"All British and Imperial Forces and Personnel"* stating that personnel should proceed to Tembilahan, 4 to 5 hours sailing up the river. It went on: *"From Tembilahan you must go further up the river to Rengat where there is a camp and food. From there you will be transported to Padang on the west coast from where you will later be evacuated. In navigating the river keep to the outside of the turns. Go slow and keep a sharp look out for logs and sand-banks."*

At 5.30 the journey up the river was started and we now had on board 13 extra men bringing up our strength in all to 36. 10 p.m. saw us tied up at Tembilahan where we spent the night. In the morning a further 21 soldiers came on board and at 7.30 the engine obligingly consented to start and we set off up the river for Rengat. Incidentally, the engine started up in the first instance in reverse so it had to be stopped and a fresh start made.

Packed like sardines – there now being 57 on this little boat – we chugged the whole day up the river going aground only twice. We reached Rengat at 7 just after darkness had set in. Here we ran aground hard and fast in the middle of the river – and although we worked for 4 hours trying to re-float our efforts were unsuccessful. But it didn't matter very much because we now had no further use for the vessel.

From here on, we entered the Civilian & Army Evacuation Scheme. This necessitated our spending 3 nights in a rubber factory and two more in a gymnasium before arriving at Padang, 269 miles from the starting point at Rengat. This cross-country run was accomplished by truck and train and was accompanied by the ever-present fear that the Japs were on our heels. In point of fact, the Japanese struck across country to Bencoelen (sic) on the west coast and we, by reaching Padang, were consequently 200 miles further up the coast from them.

It was thought in Padang that although no immediate danger existed, it was expected to materialize in the course of the next few days. And we knew that there were several hundred people, including a few women and children, still behind us.

Arriving in Padang was for me one of the best experiences in my life. Here was civilization! We rode from the station in little two-wheeled gharries – known as "Saldas" – to the town-hall where we were each presented with a whisky-and-soda! After registering with the Evacuation Authorities we were offered clothing (which we declined as we could buy clothes in the shops) and then billeted on Dutch families in the town who had volunteered to take in evacuees. Two days were spent in this delightful town. I cannot speak too highly of the efficient way in which the Dutch Authorities helped us or of the charming manner in which the Dutch residents received us.

The problem in Padang was to get onto a vessel – any vessel. Eventually we secured passage on a K.P.M. collier for which we paid 1800 guilders – over £300 for the 23 of us. This ship was to take us to Tlapjap (sic) – the only port still open in Java. The Japs by this time had landed in Java and the Government had evacuated to Bandoeng (sic).

And so at midnight on Saturday, February 28th once again we found ourselves at the station together with about 120 soldiers waiting to entrain for Emerhaven (sic), the port for Padang, 4 miles away.

When we got on board the "Palaleh" we found that the 2nd class accommodation, for which we had paid, consisted of a deck-passage and 23 of us were to share the after coal-hatch. And our food was to be rice, sardines and bread. We steamed out of Emerhaven (sic) at 6 a.m. on Sunday, March 1st on what we imagined was to be a 700-mile trip to Java taking about 4 days.

Hugging the coast and zig-zagging to elude submarines we steamed for 33 hours. Then, as the ship was nearing the Soenda (sic) Straits, which separate Sumatra from Java, the ship was turned round and started back on her previous course. We were given no information concerning this change of plan until the following morning when the Captain enquired whether anybody on board had any maps or charts available. One of the native crew had a map in his diary. Later the 1st Officer told us that a radio message had been picked up from Nirom, the N.E.I. Broadcasting Station instructing all vessels heading for Java to set about and proceed to the nearest British port. The Captain, after conferring with his officers, decided to act on this instruction as he felt he could not safely return to Padang which he thought might, by now, be conceivably in Japanese hands.

In view of this it looked as if Colombo might be our intended destination – and a very rough calculation, made from the map printed on top of a "Via Imperial" cable indicated that the distance to be covered was in the region of 1,400 miles or about 8 days.

The course having been set 30° N of W we steamed day after day keeping a 2-hour watch each per day on port and starboard and eating rice and 1 sardine (if one could call it a sardine!) twice a day and two pieces of bread. This was washed down with milkless tea.

On Monday evening we sighted the mountains of Ceylon and the following morning, Tuesday, March 10th we entered into the harbour of Colombo – having taken 25 days in our escape from Singapore and the Japanese.

THE WARTIME EXPERIENCES OF CHARLES KINAHAN 1939 – 1945. Part 2

By kind permission of his family

The early months of our captivity were especially hard on the married Malayan/Singapore Volunteers. Many of their wives had stayed on helping in various ways (nursing etc.) until a few days before surrender. They were evacuated on some of the last ships to leave Singapore – mostly small Straits Steamship coasters. Several of these ships were sunk by Japanese aircraft and lost with all hands. We knew that this happened but did not know which ships were affected. So many men did not know whether their wives were alive or dead, what was happening to their children etc. Some never found out until after the Japanese surrender. We bachelors were spared these traumas.

TO THE SIAM-BURMA RAILWAY

I was sent on the first group of 2,000 prisoners. Although at the time we had little knowledge of what was in store for us, in retrospect I was indeed fortunate to be sent on this party to an area where we got lots of nourishing food.

The journey from Singapore to Banpong [(sic) - the base for the railway] took four days. We travelled in box cars each holding 28 men. Fortunately the guards allowed us to keep the cargo doors open otherwise the heat would have been intolerable. For this concession we were on our honour not to attempt to escape. As we settled down I was delighted to hear a Northern Irish accent amongst my fellow passengers, **Frank Reid**, a Queen's Law graduate who had been in a legal practice in Ipoh and in the local volunteers there. We struck up a firm and lasting friendship, and were together for the rest of our imprisonment; **Frank** later becoming godfather to our youngest son **Timothy**. Our friendship was tried under severe conditions and not found wanting. Conditions in the box cars were extremely cramped with no room for all 28 men to lie down at the same time, so we took turns to lie down whilst the others stood in the doorway. To defaecate you had to stick your bum out of the cargo door, whilst your mates inside held your arms – quite a performance! There were numerous stops all along the line. At several stops at small stations in Johore, we were acknowledged by large numbers of employees of rubber estates in the area. Somehow the word had got out that a train load of P.O.W.s was to be in the area. They had come probably hoping to see their old tuan (manager) and to offer him (and the rest of us) food such as bananas. It represented a considerable sacrifice by people already short of food and was a boost to our morale.

In other war zones, officers and other ranks were put in separate camps, but in our case, except for the last

few months, they were not separated. It helped the morale of other ranks to have their officers with them. The railway construction started at Banpong (sic) about 40 miles west of Bangkok. This was the base area in which plant, materials and equipment were assembled. Banpong lies in a flat plain with rice fields in all directions. Much other food was produced in the area – fruit, eggs, peanuts etc. We were in this area for about 3 months. Adequate food restored my health. The main horror of the camp was the annual flood following monsoon rain and the snow melt many miles north in the Himalayas. The cookhouse area was on higher ground, but in prison huts we were wading around in filthy flood water up to our knees – the latrines having overflowed!

The prisoners were housed in long huts built of bamboo and roofed with atap palm fronds. There was a passage down the middle and platforms on either side made of split bamboo on bamboo framework. Each man had a space about 7ft. long by 2ft. 6 inches wide on these platforms. The split bamboo became inhabited by lice and bed-bugs – caused by a lack of personal hygiene amongst some of our fellow prisoners. The camps were surrounded by high bamboo fences which were easily penetrated. In fact, escape was never really on the cards. We were many hundreds of miles away from the Allied units in North Burma. You could not disguise yourself as a Siamese or a Burman and would be entirely dependent on the native peasantry. The few who did try were quickly handed back to the Japs for a cash reward.

The camp guards consisted of Japanese officers and NCOs (mostly elderly). The other ranks were Koreans who were not (for historical reasons) fond of the Japanese. They were mostly pretty slack in the performance of their duties. Had they been strict and conscientious we would never have got away with our contacts with **Boon Pong** and the medicine/batteries/money which he provided via our ration party.

The railway was built to supply the Japanese army in Burma so avoiding the long sea haul to Rangoon via Singapore, the Straits of Malacca and the Indian Ocean, where they were subject to attack by Allied submarines.

The first section of the railway as due north to Kanchanaburi about 20 miles over flat rice-field country; it was built by the Siamese. The P.O.W. work started at Kanchanaburi at the crossing of the River Kwai. A wooden bridge was built by Japanese engineers using P.O.W. labour. Subsequently, the Japs built a steel bridge on concrete piers; they had dismantled a bridge in Java and brought it from there but it was at least two years before that was completed, so the temporary wooden bridge was essential for moving materials up the line as it was pushed towards the Three Pagodas Pass and South Burma about 200 kilometres. We were moved from Banpong to Chungkai which was sited on the river bank a mile or so up stream from the bridge in a rice field area. I was to spend the next 30 months in this camp for reasons which I will explain later. As camps go it was better than most. We got reasonable food and were able to supplement our diet with peanuts, bananas and duck eggs with the money we earned by working – a mere 15 cents a day. We were able to bathe in the river after work each day and to wash our clothes there.

In my first few months at Chungkai I was one of a party working on a cutting through a rock face. We drilled holes by hand for explosives and then removed the resulting rock. I was also involved in this period with embankment building, manually passing baskets of earth along a human chain.

My greatest good fortune was to be appointed NCO in charge of a ration party which went every day by river to Kanchanaburi to load rations on to barges and lorries for transit to our own and other camps. The officer in charge was **Captain Murdock** of the Manchester Regiment who died from a painful abdominal complaint (? cancer) before our release. This was heavy work. Bags of rice weighed two piculs (about 266 pounds). These were lifted by four men (one on each corner) on to the shoulders of a fifth man. I learnt the knack of load carrying the hard way, but was soon able to perform as well as the others, several of whom had been manual labourers, dockers, etc. in civilian life.

Working parties were detailed by the senior British officer in the camp – in our case **Col. Outram** from a Lancashire Territorial Unit followed by **Col. Williamson** of the Indian Army. The Japanese took no part in selection, but merely told him how many men they wanted for particular jobs or for transfer to another camp. One of our principal tasks in Kanchanaburi was to go to the store of a Siamese ration contractor named **Boon Pong** who also ran a canteen in Chungkai camp where small items such as bananas, peanuts, tobacco and duck eggs could be purchased with the pittance which we earned for working. I struck up a relationship with **Boon Pong** who acted as an important underground channel between us and the British civilians who were interned in Bangkok and had access to money and much needed drugs which were passed to our camp via **Boon Pong** and our party. This was an immensely valuable contact. Because of it, **Col. Outram** kept me on the party for over two years so that I was never put on any of the parties which were sent up country – sometimes to their deaths.

The **Boon Pong** contact involved risks. Thanks to the indolence of the Korean guards in charge of our party we got away with "murder." **Boon Pong** even cashed a £50 cheque for me and others. [Editor: See back Page 27 of A.K. 38 April 2014]. It was duly presented after the war and I still have it as a family memento. **Boon Pong** was the source of supplies which must have saved the lives of many prisoners. In particular, he was the source of medical supplies and torch batteries which enabled **Max & Donald Webber**

to operate their radio receiver. Occasionally I took out an empty torch case and brought it back with three fresh batteries in it. This kept us in touch with the progress of the war and was of immense help to our morale. We had to be careful about the extent to which we released the news to the main body of prisoners. Careless words in the hearing of our captors could have cost lives. Sadly, we had a few men from amongst the British and Dutch (largely Eurasian) prisoners who were quite capable of passing on the word to our captors in order to ingratiate themselves to them.

I have a vivid memory of one such incident. A few enterprising fellows were breaking out of camp at night (not difficult) and selling clothing, blankets, mosquito nets, watches, rings etc. to neighbouring Siamese farmers. Some of these items had been stolen from their fellow prisoners. One such Other Rank out of camp at night on such an errand bumped into an officer who was also out of camp collecting drugs for the hospital from the same Siamese contact. The officer got back into camp without difficulty, but the O.R. was spotted by a Korean guard as he came through the fence. He ran into one of the large P.O.W. huts and lost himself in the crowd. The next day, the Japanese camp commander demanded that the individual concerned should be handed over for punishment – probably a few days in a cell on rice and water. If this was not done then the camp rations would be cut which implied that in order to maintain the hospital rations the rest of us would be further cut.

Although everybody knew the identity of the individual concerned, he refused to come forward to take his medicine. He threatened that if he was handed over against his will he would tell the Japs what he had seen outside the camp and, furthermore, who was operating the radio. This constituted an extremely serious threat to our lines of supply for drugs and batteries for the radio, and to the lives of those involved – myself included. It seems extraordinary, when viewed from this distance, but we seriously considered bumping him off. The drying up of drug supplies could have caused the deaths of hospital patients. The problem was solved by the Japanese calling for men to go up-country as replacements for sick prisoners who had been brought back to our Chungkai hospital. Our camp commander put the guilty person on this party. We heard that he subsequently died of cholera in the up-country camp. So the Jap camp commander never got his man, and our rations were cut for a short period, but at least the radio continued to operate and our source of valuable drugs was not interrupted.

After the Japanese surrender, but before we were moved from our camp to Bangkok and home, I and another member of the party (**Jimmy Tough**) were able openly to visit **Boon Pong** and his family and to thank them for all their help. They gave us lunch in an upstairs room.

After the war, **Boon Pong** received a decoration from **King George**. Looking back on this period of our imprisonment, I feel pretty certain that **Boon Pong** must have bribed the Japanese quartermaster and our camp commandant, though I have no evidence of this.

Chungkai became a base camp to which the sick were brought from camps further up the line. Dysentery, persistent malaria and beriberi were major problems from which many died. Many camps further up the line were hit by cholera. Hundreds of those up-country men died in Chungkai, many being almost dead before they reached us. Many, including myself, developed large ulcers on our legs. Because of malnutrition these would not heal. They suppurated and got larger and larger. Many had to have the infected leg amputated below the knee. I was more fortunate.

The Japanese system of manning these up-country camps was that the last party out of Singapore went to the furthest camp, passing through the camps manned by parties who had left Singapore earlier. My lot, being first out of Singapore, were in the base area where food was reasonable. Some of our people were subsequently sent further up the line to replace casualties. My great fortune was to have never been sent on any of those parties, presumably because our British camp commander retained me on the ration party because of the contact established with **Boon Pong**.

History claims that approximately 16,000 prisoners died on the railway out of about 60,000 sent there from Singapore and Dutch from Java/Sumatra. My general impression was that very few actually suffered severe physical ill-treatment. The deaths were largely due to lack of proper food, lack of medicine, lack of clothing – sins of omission rather than commission. When the railway was being forced through, literally over dead bodies, many very sick men were forced out to work. This made the job of the British camp commanders terribly difficult. The Japanese demanded so many men who had to be produced even if some of them were almost dead on their feet.

Lack of proper food caused vitamin deficiency illness (beriberi); lack of anti-malarial drugs resulted in persistent malaria. The two combined were often fatal. Major killers were dysentery and cholera. Very few survived cholera which could wipe out a complete camp; this is probably why the Imperial War Graves Commission only has graves for about 8,000 of the 16,000 who died. As I saw for myself, when **Kathleen** and I visited the two cemeteries at Chungkai and Kanchanaburi in March 1989, many of the 8,000 graves are simply marked "soldier, name unknown." The cemeteries were beautifully maintained.

Cholera is the most dreadful disease. It hit Chungkai camp when I was there. By clamping on the most severe discipline we managed to contain the deaths to about 100 out of 7,000 in the camp at that time.

The Japanese allowed us to use their punishment cells for those who ignored orders to keep all food covered, to sterilize all eating utensils and not to put one's head underwater when bathing in the river. We had empty oil drums with bamboo fires underneath in which water was kept on the boil at meal times for sterilizing eating utensils.

In addition to bringing prisoners from Singapore and the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) to work on the railway, they also brought many thousands of Tamil and Chinese labourers from the rubber estates and tin mines in Malaya. They were always kept in camps away from us. Not having the same discipline as P.O.W.s they died in large numbers from cholera and dysentery. So far as I know, no records were kept of the number of deaths amongst those labourers but I have read somewhere of a figure of at least 100,000 dead. It has been well named "the Death Railway." This title has been perpetuated in the "Death Museum" at Kanchanaburi which we visited in March 1989. We used to say that for every sleeper on the line there was one dead body. Our heaviest casualties were among the groups known as H Force and F Force. These were the last to be sent from Singapore and went therefore furthest up the line.

The railway was completed by the end of 1943, early 1944, after which pressure eased off. Groups of prisoners were kept at various camps along the line to act as maintenance gangs. Fewer numbers were needed so the Japs sent the survivors of H and F Forces back to Singapore, and sent further parties to Japan to work in factories/mines/docks. Towards the middle of 1944, I was detailed for one of these parties. I was approached by a member of the Manchester Regiment who wanted to go with his mate who had been detailed for the party. He asked would I agree to him taking my place? On the basis of "better the devil you know ..." I agreed provided the British camp commander also agreed, which he did. Sad to relate, their ship was sunk by an Allied submarine on the way to Japan with the loss of all hands.

For those of us remaining behind on the railway, life became much easier. It was even possible to go for a walk outside the camp. On Christmas Day 1943, a friend and I (**R.W. Lee** of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank) took our lunch with us and consumed it on top of a nearby hill. Coming back into camp we met two Japanese officers coming in the opposite direction. We saluted as was required of us, they wished us a Happy Christmas and went on their way. We formed our own little orchestra and a dramatic group and games of football were organized. **Frank Reid, 'Sweeny' Todd, 'Trams' Carline** and I formed a bridge four which had regular sessions in the evenings. We played in a small atap hut which **Frank** and I had built for ourselves. The same pack of cards lasted throughout. We all got to know what the back of the Ace of Spades looked like!

Food was quite reasonable during this period (mid 1943 to August 1945) – meat and vegetable stew to help down the inevitable rice. With the supplements which I was able to buy in the camp canteen (bananas, peanuts and duck eggs) I was probably as well nourished as the folks at home on war rations. When I was taken prisoner I weighed about 170 pounds. At the worst, I was down to about 105 pounds. This was early on in 1942 before I was sent on the first party to Siam. I was almost too weak to climb stairs. The joke was that you could teach anatomy by holding a light behind me! Going on the first party to Siam where food was reasonable, probably saved my life. By the time we were released in August 1945 my weight was up to about 145 pounds, and I was priding myself on my ability to carry heavy weights. Red Cross food parcels, and letters from home, did not reach us until July 1945, i.e. just before our release!

One of our greatest God sends was the radio receiver operated by **Max and Donald Webber**. **Donald** was a rubber planter at Sembrong Estate in Johore. **Max** was a forest officer in Malayan government service. So we knew about the progress of the war both in Europe and our own area of Asia. This helped morale greatly, especially the Allies' progress in Burma and the Pacific.

Max & Donald were running enormous risks. At times they had to bury the set, and at another time it was hidden down the latrine! I lost contact with them in early 1945 when the officers were moved away to a camp of their own.

Great excitement was caused by Allied bombing raids on the bridge over the River Kwai which was about one mile from our camp. The planes flew quite low over Chungkai camp on their bombing run. They had almost no opposition. Japanese fighter aircraft had been withdrawn for defence against the developing attack on the Japanese homeland. When these raids took place we knew that it meant hard work for us. Trains to and from Burma were stuck at either end of the broken bridge. Our job was to unload into lighters from one side and reload onto the train on the other side and vice versa. I have a vivid memory of a train from Burma carrying Japanese wounded. They had to be got out of the train, down the slippery bank, into a lighter, over the river, up the bank and into the train on the other side. What shocked us was the attitude of the Japanese NCOs in charge of the train of wounded. They shouted at them, kicked them, etc. I suppose that their attitude was that no good Japanese soldier should be a drag on their comrades. They should take a hand-grenade and go to join their ancestors! It was our British P.O.W.s who helped them and gave them a drink from their own water bottles. This incident brought home to me the vast differences between the Japanese culture and our own. **[To be continued].**

THE STORY OF DR. ALBERT STANLEY McKERN (1885 – 1945) – PART 2
A PENANG DOCTOR IN MYTH AND REALITY – by Leslie A.K. James & Michael C. Rawlinson

Who was Dr. McKern?

Albert Stanley McKern was not Scottish but Australian, although his family was probably of Scottish descent. The births, deaths and marriages registry of New South Wales records that he was born in Petersham, New South Wales in 1885. He was the youngest son of Henry and Hannah McKern. He married Effie Clark on 3rd June 1908 at St. James Presbyterian Church in the Sydney suburb of Burwood. He obtained a BA from the University of Sydney in 1911 and, accompanied by his wife Effie and their two young children Eric Ronald (born 1909) and Ralph Noel (born 1911), left for the United States arriving from Southampton at Ellis Island, New York on 19th September 1911 aboard the German liner *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*. His destination was New Haven, Connecticut, where he studied theology at Yale, obtaining his MA in 1913. In 1914, with a career change in mind, McKern and his family sailed for Scotland where he studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh from 1914 to 1917, graduating with an MB and ChB.

His Life in Penang

Dr. McKern and his family then left for Penang. Here he entered private practice as a physician and surgeon at 37A Beach Street as recorded in the Yale Alumni Directory for 1923 (P.392). The Singapore and Malayan Directories for 1933, 1936 and 1940 record him successively in partnerships of Drs. Jamieson, Sharp & McKern at 39 Beach Street and 4, Beach Street and Drs. McKern & Allan at 4, Beach Street. Meanwhile a third son, Kenneth, was born to Dr. McKern and Effie in Penang on 17th March 1924.

In Penang, Dr. McKern served on the Hospitals Board for 1923, 1924, 1925 & 1930 and on the Central Midwives Board in 1924. In 1936 & 1937 as a Justice of the Peace, Dr. McKern was appointed a member of the Board of Visiting Justices under the Prisons Ordinance for Penang. He was also a member of the board of George Town Dispensary Ltd. The year 1927 saw Dr. McKern embroiled in a public controversy over conditions at the Penang Hospital. Described by one newspaper as “Penang’s leading private practitioner,” he had been appointed in May, along with several leading businessmen and lawyers, as a member of a Visiting Committee to examine conditions at the hospital. In its findings the Visiting Committee described the hospital as a “scandal and a disgrace”, bringing it into conflict with the Penang Chief Medical Officer, who accused the Committee of conducting enquiries with hospital staff without going through him. Dr. McKern, the only medical doctor on the committee, was singled out for criticism by the **Malayan Saturday Post** which described his remarks as a “somewhat crude denunciation of officialdom.” In October, all members of the committee resigned en bloc in response to the decision of the Straits Hospital Board that the Committee must only approach the Chief Medical Officer when they wanted information.

Dr. McKern was a popular physician. He receives favourable mention in **To Heal the Sick: The Story of Healthcare & Doctors in Penang** published in 2004. He is described as having the busiest practice in town because he never ignored a patient’s call however late the hour, and his house visits were announced with a jolly greeting that would cheer up his patients at once.

Dr. McKern’s fame as a physician in Penang lasted well after the war. In 1947, American statesman and diplomat W. Averell Harriman of the Yale College Class of 1913 wrote to him to seek his help in rebuilding the war-torn Changsha campus of the Yale-in-China Association. A reply from the trustees of Dr. McKern’s estate, Evatt & Company, Accountants & Auditors at the Chartered Bank Chambers, Penang, conveyed the sad news that Dr. McKern had died in internment on 16th June 1945 at Belalau in Sumatra.

His Properties in Penang

At a time when the northern beaches of Penang were unspoilt with little or no development other than the Penang Swimming Club with its famous salt-water swimming pool at Tanjong Bungah, Dr. McKern foresaw the potential of acquiring beachfront properties. On one of these – now the site of a row of four identical condominium towers – he built ‘Elysian,’ recalling the name of his parents’ residence in the Sydney suburb of Arncliffe. His two-storey house featured in **The Straits Times** of 19th September 1935. Described in an article headlined “House with a Supreme Site – Dr. A.S. McKern’s Residence in Penang,” the house was designed by leading architects of the day Messrs McNeil & Miller. The following description was taken from the journal **The Malayan Architect**:

Situated about four miles from town on the shore side of the north coast road, this new house enjoys what must be one of the finest sites in this part of the world for a residence. It overlooks the entrance to the harbour on the north with Kedah Peak in the distance and commands a fine view of the hills to the south. The plan has been arranged to take advantage of these views and the natural beauty of the site. Trees were preserved wherever possible and an effort has been made so to group the house and its appurtenances that

the mass might conform with the general disposition of the landscape.

The library and the owner's suite above have been arranged at the west end of the site, as far as possible from the noisy elements of the house, namely the entrance and the kitchen wing. Privacy in these apartments has thereby been obtained.

The sloping ground to the east caused the natural entrance to be from that end of the house. The floor of the porch and vestibule is some three feet below the ground floor of the house so that the dining room is not disturbed by the entrance, yet cross ventilation is obtained in that room.

This arrangement also permitted of a mezzanine floor connecting the pantry and upper floor by service stairs so that this very necessary adjunct to a house in the tropics is thereby obtained in the most inconspicuous manner possible and no bedroom is disturbed by a back passage.

The house is of fire resisting construction throughout. The exterior walls are finished in granolithic brushed out to expose the granite chips. The roof is covered with French tiles and all the valley gutters are copper. The interior walls and ceilings to all rooms are plastered with hardwall plaster. The upper floor and stairs are reinforced concrete finished with teak. The floors of entrance, stair hall, lounge and loggias are paved with marble, whilst those of the library and dining room are finished with teak parquet.

The walls and ceiling of the library are panelled with specially selected figured teak and built-in book cases and furniture are of the same material. There is a fireplace in this apartment executed in Bukit Mertajam granite having an electric fire in a burnished steel dog-legged grate.

The dining room, which is of an interesting shape, has a domed ceiling with concealed lighting. The walls and ceiling of this room are stippled in a primrose yellow and the metal work is painted matt apple green tipped with gold.

The owner's bathroom and adjoining offices are carried out in Rosa Aurora del Portogallo Marble, the bath being sunk and a marble wall cupboard has a sliding plate glass mirror as a door. The other bathrooms and lavatories are tiled to 6ft. 6ins. with mottled eggshell finished tiles, having mosaics on the floors.

The walls and floors of the pantry and kitchen are also tiled. All the sanitary appliances are of the most up-to-date type, some coloured fittings having been installed. Hot and cold water is supplied throughout the house from a 'cookerheat' stove in the kitchen.

The low arches on the ground floor provide wide shaded openings whilst on the upper floor uninterrupted views are obtained by the use of folding sliding steel casements and shutters. There are four specially designed stained glass windows in the house and ornamental grilles have been used in several places to ensure ventilation when the house is shut up.

The internal finishings are all of selected teak and the ironmongery of bronze and chromium plate.

In the post-war years, 'Elysian' was a Royal Air Force leave centre on loan from a certain **Group Captain R.N. McKern**. This was Dr. McKern's son Ralph Noel who had joined the RAF in the 1930s and trained as a pilot and flying instructor. Appointed to a permanent commission in 1936, he was assigned to the Straits Settlements Volunteer Air Force in Singapore, later joining No. 36 (Torpedo Bomber) Squadron at RAF Seletar which he was commanding when the Japanese invaded Malaya. He left Singapore with the remaining RAF aircraft and personnel before the surrender and returned to the U.K. After the war, he returned to Singapore and was appointed officer commanding RAF Station Changi in August 1951. He died in Scotland in 1959.

Dr. McKern's son Eric died in 1950 while his wife, Effie, who had left Singapore separately from her husband, died in London in 1947. It was the death in 1997 of Kenneth – also a medical doctor – that ten years later triggered the legacy provisions of the will for the three universities in 2008.

Other properties acquired by Dr. McKern included one immediately to the west of 'Elysian' which was leased after the war to the French plantation company Socfin which in 1951-52 built its beach bungalow 'Villa Aremi' on the site. The dark wood-panelled interior design was along the same lines as Socfin's now demolished 'Minyak Club' at Rantau Panjang in Selangor near the famous 'House of Palms' associated with the French planter Henri Fauconnier, author of the 1930 novel, **The Soul of Malaya**.

On behalf of Socfin the late Pierre Laine, a long time resident of Penang, dealt with the Chartered Bank as the Trustee of Dr. McKern's interests in Penang and negotiated a 30 years + 10 years lease. After the expiry of the Socfin lease, Villa Aremi was run by Berjaya Corporation as the Tanjung Country Club until the end of 2007, when the conditions of Dr. McKern's will took effect.

Finally we come to another of Dr. McKern's properties – the Batu Ferringhi beach property known as 'Lone Pine.' The earliest reference to the name we have found is an article in the **Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser**

of 7th September 1932 when an accidental drowning death was reported there. Victor Clarence Pasqual was one of a party of three who had gone to 'Lone Pine' at Batu Ferringhi for the day. Sadly, their day at the beach ended with Pasqual's drowning.

In the years after the First World War 'Lone Pine' was an apt name for an Australian to give to a property lined with pine-like casuarinas trees, for Lone Pine was the site of a significant battle fought by the Australian infantry during the Gallipoli Campaign of 1915. There was a McKern – a 22-year-old Corporal Howard Taylor McKern born at Arncliffe, NSW – who died of wounds received at Lone Pine but we have not been able to establish if he was related to Dr. McKern, although it seems very likely.

According to Dr. Iain Esslemont of Margaret River, Western Australia, who joined Dr. McKern's former practice after the war and was in Penang from 1962 until 1977, Dr. McKern had built the original double-storey structure facing the lawn at Lone Pine as a maternity hospital, and behind this building he intended to have a swimming pool as he believed that water exercises were beneficial to expectant mothers, but this was never completed because of the war.

Conclusion

So, was Dr. McKern a hero?

Yes, he certainly was, but he was not a night-time ghost walking on a Tanjong Bungah beach or hiding in a cellar sending cloak-and-dagger radio signals to the Allies.

Nor was he betrayed by an anonymous Malay driver. Neither were he and his wife beheaded in their Tanjong Bungah house. How these stories attained such currency remains a mystery!

Dr. McKern was a real flesh and blood hero. In the midst of his own suffering and that of his fellow internees in a Sumatran prison camp and on the brink of death, not only did he make provisions for his family, but remembering the pain of Penang mothers whose babies he delivered, he also ensured that his fortune from land purchases in Penang would go to alleviate further suffering of mothers in childbirth. Finally, those of us who may baulk at the sight of some of the tower blocks rising on his former beach properties can take solace in the lasting humanitarian legacy of this pre-war Penang doctor.

PENANG HERITAGE TRUST SAVES SOONSTEAD – report by Khoo Salma Nasution, President of PHT

[This large white old colonial-style house between Gurney Drive and Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah was due for demolition to make way for more high-rise apartment blocks. The PHT successfully organized a petition, "Save Soonstead" to prevent the developers from destroying part of this beautiful mansion.]

Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) is delighted by the news that Soonstead's developers have decided to withdraw their current planning application and amend their design so as not to destroy or demolish any part of this heritage building.

This is a great win for Penang's heritage. We would like to convey our heartfelt thanks to everyone who signed the PHT petition to save Soonstead! Thousands of signatures and passionate comments have shown that heritage matters. We are particularly grateful to YB Chow Kon Yeow for decisively handling this issue after listening to the voices of the petitioners.

PHT appreciates the developer's cooperation and their willingness to modify their original plan. We hope this dialogue can continue, so that a truly sympathetic solution can be found which will complement the unique Soonstead site and setting and bring long term gains to the developer.

PHT would like to reassert its calls for a comprehensive review of heritage guidelines regarding Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, which still faces threats from other proposed developments.

We ask MPPP to review its policy and guidelines and renew its commitment to conserve the special character of Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah. We also ask for a scrutiny of the inventory, in case other precious heritage buildings like Soonstead have been left out or somehow gone missing from the inventory.

We also ask for urgent attention and action for Runnymede Hotel and Shih Chung School which have been listed since 2013 on the Penang Heritage Trust list as two of Penang's 7 Most Important Endangered Sites.

MESSAGE FROM JUDY BALCOMBE ABOUT THE MUNTOK COMPUTERS

The "Singing to Survive" concert proceeds are still creating a dialogue between the Sumatra Primary School & the Muntok Cares Foundation and the MVG through Judy Balcombe. We thank her for all the work she has done to achieve such a good rapport with the people of Muntok, and we are delighted with the result.

On 16th July Judy received an e-mail from Mr. Isa of the Cares Foundation to say:

"...Mr. Mirwan [School Principal] today invites me to testify that his computer has been purchased. I have attached the photograph of this e-mail. Mr. Mirwan also said to me to say thank you very much to you and all of the friends have incorporated in MVG ..." Attached were 10 photos showing the 4 computers.



WEBSITES TO VISIT

The following series of interesting websites have been brought to the attention of the MVG through a new member, **John Hoshimi**. It also comes in a video entitled "**Footsteps**." It is a 4 part documentary on the history of the ethnic races in Singapore – Eurasian/Indian/Chinese/Malay. It brings to life the story of Singapore's dynamic early communities and neighbourhoods, and may be of interest to those who lived or still live in Singapore:

From a Distant Shore (Indians)

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/starterkit/servlet/page/tv/tvshows/footprints/distanceshore>

Legacy of a Royal Malay Port (Malays)

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/tv/tvshows/footprints/videos>

Settled Land (Chinese)

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/starterkit/servlet/page/tv/tvshows/footprints/settledland>

Between Two Worlds (Eurasian)

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/starterkit/servlet/page/tv/tvshows/footprints/betweentwoworlds>

New Straits Times Photo Archive:

<http://www.nib.com.my/cross-search/search/1411550835/>

Transcript of the missing Penang Medical Services Roll of Honour held in the IWM (IWM access no. k.07/2200) Found by MVG member from Penang, **Leslie James** while researching at the IWM in June. [See his report below.]

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/publication/47833>

Frozen Pensions for ex-pats retired in certain Commonwealth countries.

John Corner highlights the problems faced by some British families who have, for various reasons, decided to retire outside the U.K. and found that their pensions have been "frozen" despite the fact that many have paid full NI contributions for the required number of years to achieve a FULL index-linked pension – namely those living in Australia, South Africa and Canada. Those who retired in other countries such as America, Europe, Korea, Japan, the Philippines, for example, still have their fully index-linked pensions. There are now official bodies in Australia, South Africa and Canada who are actively campaigning to have their pensions 'unfrozen.' See the following website: <http://youle.info/bpia-blog/>

John says that he has written to his former MP and to David Cameron, but that so far they have not managed to achieve success in righting this obvious wrong. John can be reached on: astley22@bigpond.net.au if anyone can offer any help.

PENANG MEDICAL SERVICES ROLL OF HONOUR 1941 to 1945 - Researched by Leslie A.K. James

[While Leslie was in London he went to the Imperial War Museum to follow up a couple of research projects on which he is currently working. One of these was to find the names on the lost Penang Medical Services Roll of Honour].

In 1948 a memorial plaque and Roll of Honour was unveiled at the Penang General Hospital in memory of the Penang Medical Auxiliary Services staff who died during the war 1941 – 1945. Unfortunately, the plaque has been lost over the years and there is no local record of the names on the missing Roll of Honour.

The Straits Times has two reports on the Penang Hospital War Memorial:

1. "Memorial to Penang M.A.S. Men", Straits Times, 11th April 1947.

This article reports that at a meeting of representatives of the Penang & Province Wellesley Medical Auxiliary Services chaired by the Chief Medical Officer Dr. W.G. Evans, it was decided to place a plaque and roll of honour in the Penang General Hospital in memory of the M.A.S. workers who died in the bombing of Penang.

2. "Penang Memorial" photograph – 'Ruby picture' - Straits Times, 2nd October 1948.

Caption "Roll of Honour for Health and Medical Services Staff who died during the War unveiled by Mrs. A.V. Aston this week." The quality of the photo reproduction is not good and the names are illegible but the plaque appears to list 70 names. The plaque has a badge at the top with the dates 1941 & 1945 on either side above the words "Roll of Honour."

At the IWM Leslie saw the transcript of the missing Penang Medical Services Roll of Honour on the website shown above.

He was given access to the document but was not permitted to photocopy it due to "copyright" reasons. The document was a mimeograph copy of a three-page document headed "1941-1945 War Memorial – Medical Services – Roll of Honour" with 66 names in three columns giving Name, Office and a third blank-headed column providing circumstances of death. He was given permission to copy the document by hand but did not have time to record all the names, except the following eight European names:-

Clark, Mrs. D., Nursing Division, M.A.S. Lost at sea as a result of enemy action 13.2.42

Nelson, Miss I.M., Sister, General Hospital. Lost on the "Tanjong Pinang" in February 1942.

Norris, Dr. V.H., Medical Officer, P.W. Died as a result of enemy bombing in Singapore.

Robinson, Miss M., Sister, General Hospital. Lost on the "Tanjong Pinang" in February 1942.

Self, Mrs. Monty, Nursing Division M.A.S. Lost at sea by enemy action.

Smith, Dr. J.E., Private Practitioner. Arrested by Kempeitai and believed executed.

Southern, R., Lay Superintendent, Pulau Jerejak. Died in internment camp.

Stanley, Dr. C.A., Medical Officer General Hospital. Died as a result of torture by Kempeitai.

There were 58 other names of Malaysians of all ethnic backgrounds and social levels.

MEMORIAL APPEAL. NEW MUSEUM PLANNED FOR MUNTOK – by Judy Balcombe

A new Museum is planned to be built in Muntok, on Banka Island, Indonesia, in memory of the British, Australian, New Zealand, American and Dutch people who were held captive by the Japanese during the War and the many who died between February 1942 and September 1945. Land for the Museum has been donated by the local people at Kampong Menjelang, the site of the former Women's Internment Camp, and the building can proceed if we are able to raise the construction costs, estimated to be £14,000 sterling or \$25,000 Australian dollars.

I would therefore like to let Malayan Volunteers Group members know about this planned new Museum and invite them to donate to this project. **[N.B. Editor: This is not an MVG project but MVG members may wish to donate to it].**

As we know, civilian European men working in Malaya and Singapore were required to join the Volunteer Forces, to train to defend their country against the advancing Japanese. They were not permitted to leave the country without a permit and hence tens of thousands of civilians were still in Malaya and Singapore with their families in February 1942.

In the few days before Singapore fell, permits to leave were finally issued. Many civilians were later caught in Singapore and were interned there. Many others rushed to the Harbour, boarding any vessel available.

44 boats bearing evacuees left Singapore Harbour in the last 2 days before February 15th. Of these, all but 4 were bombed and sunk. It is estimated that between 4 and 5 thousand people lost their lives in the sea. Survivors who reached the shores of Banka Island were interned in Japanese camps or killed. 2 groups of shipwrecked men, and another of 21 Australian Army Nurses and a civilian woman were bayoneted and machine gunned to death on Muntok's Radji Beach.

The internees were held under very primitive conditions, moved backwards and forwards to different camps. Their numbers were swelled by captured Dutch civilians. They received very little food or clean water and inadequate medical supplies. They developed Malaria, Dysentery, TB and Beriberi and many people died.

Muntok Men's and Women's Camps had very high death rates. At the end of the War, it is estimated that one half of the men and one third of the women internees had died from sickness and starvation.

Several of us have visited Muntok and Palembang in Sumatra. We have formed bonds with the local people who are very interested in the internees' history and wish to preserve their memory. The Muntok Heritage Community and Muntok Cares Foundation aim to maintain historical buildings and local history. A Heritage Path is planned from Muntok Harbour to the Customs House and the former Cinema where the internees were first held; to the Jail (the former Men's Camp); to Kampong Menjelang and the new Museum; to the cemeteries; and to Radji Beach and the Australian Nurses' Memorial.

The Women's Vocal Orchestra concert held in Chichester in the U.K. in October 2013, provided the funds to carry out classroom ventilation repairs and to buy 4 laptop computers for the primary school at Kampong Menjelang. Other donations from families have deepened the original camp well and built a new well for the local people. The concert funds will also be used to create a Plaque with the names of all the British, Australian and New Zealand internees who died in Muntok Camps.

After the war, the Dutch military made orderly graves with wooden crosses for all internees. Many family members have photos of these graves. However, the cemetery was not able to be saved.

In the early 1960s, the Indonesian Government wished to close some smaller cemeteries. The Dutch War Graves Foundation moved all the Dutch military and civilian graves from Muntok to Jakarta. The British Government, however, only moved their own military graves (which included Army Nurses) and a small number of other Service graves (e.g. Police, St. John's Ambulance etc.). The civilian graves were left behind as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has no responsibility for civilian graves.

This situation persisted despite lengthy correspondence to the CWGC and Foreign Office by former internee Mrs. Shelagh Lea (nee Brown), who lost her mother and many friends in Muntok Camp. Houses were built over the graves in the late 1960s and a petrol station was built on the site in 1981. During the building of the petrol station, the remains of 25 people were uncovered. These were given to the local Catholic Priest, who arranged for the bodies to be reburied in the Muntok Catholic Cemetery. A Headstone reads "Here lie 25 English victims of the Japanese War." A detailed cemetery plan in our possession shows that the graves found during the excavation for the petrol station were in the exact position of the women internees' graves. It is thus believed that it is the women's bodies which now lie in the Muntok Catholic Cemetery. The men lie under houses behind the petrol station.

The planned new Museum in Muntok will be built on donated land at Kampong Menjelang, the site of the former Women's Camp. It will be a wooden building of 8 x 9 metres, with 3 rooms to allow displays, models of the camps and a reference library. The building will be simple, out of respect to the internees. The Museum is to be called the Peace Museum; the local people would like visitors to know that war is very harmful and everyone should try to ensure that it does not happen again. The Muntok Cares Foundation, which is to arrange construction of the new Museum, would like to commence building late in 2014 or early 2015 if possible, to avoid the wet season and to aim for the Museum to be completed by September 2015, the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the camps.

Many MVG members will have read internee William McDougall's book, "By Eastern Windows," or his diaries, "If I get out Alive," describing life in the men's camp. I am in contact with McDougall's biographer in the USA. Professor Gary Topping wrote to me recently that he is gladdened in his heart that Muntok can now be a place of 'beauty and education' and no longer a place of dread.

I hope that the new Museum may also help people to feel connected to Muntok in a more positive way. Any donations towards building this Museum as a permanent memorial, to help ease our collective memories, would be very welcome. In addition to financial donations, I would be happy to arrange for any copies of photos, letters etc. relating to the internees to reach Muntok safely. I can be contacted on: jdbalcombe@gmail.com

Donations may be made through Rosemary Fell, MVG in UK, Mrs. Elizabeth Adamson, MVG in Australia or directly to Muntok, via the Muntok Cares Foundation. The account details are given below:-

Recipient's Account and Bank A/C Name: **ELARA PURNAMA SARI – Treasurer of Muntok Cares Foundation**
Recipient Account Number: **1120006461524**
Bank Branch Office Name: **MANDIRI KCP Mentok**
Bank Address: **Jl. Yos Sudarso 1/78, Muntok-Bangka Barat, Bangka Belitung.**
Branch Office Number: **16902**
Mandiri Bank Swift Code: **BMRIIDJA**

Mr. Isa of the Muntok Cares Foundation asked if any donation sent to this account could, please, be followed by an e-mail, so that they can ensure the transfer is successful. His e-mail is: isa12_syarif@ymail.com Mr. Isa is the son of the Muntok photographer who took the photos of our relatives' graves after the war.

BOOKS

"The Narrow Road to the Deep North." By Richard Flanagan. Published by Chatto £16.99/e-book £8.98.

An immensely moving novel of life and death on the Burma railway, based on the central character who is a surgeon and finds himself in charge of hundreds of disease-ridden men who are being used as machines to build the railway. The author's father was a survivor of the Death Railway, and died on the day the novel was published.

"My Father in his Suitcase. In Search of E.J.H. Corner – the Relentless Botanist." By John K. Corner

This book is now available on Amazon UK for around £20 sterling, as well as internationally in Europe, the USA, New Zealand, Australia, Africa and the Middle East. A 2nd edition is probable as new information continues to come to light – in particular, a list of some 19 'missing' Genus & Species named after the botanist from Dr. Egon Horak. Please let John know if anyone can recall anything else of relevance about his father which could be included.

The book has been reviewed by various eminent bodies including the International Mycological Association & the Japan Society Journal. Areca Books of George Town, Penang & the Penang Bookshelf also stock it now. [See the links below]. Professor Mikiko Ishii who helped John's father's research for **"The Marquis – a Tale of Syonan-to"** has agreed to translate John's book into Japanese, & has presented a copy to the present Emperor & Empress of Japan.

John adds that their family home, E.J.H. Corner House, in Singapore's Botanic Gardens is now a high class restaurant.

<http://www.imafungus.org/issue/42/04.pdf>

www.japansociety.org.uk/32426/my-father-in-his-suitcase/

<http://arecabooks.com/product/father-suitcase-search-e-j-h-corner-relentless-botanist/>

www.penangbookshelf.com

OBITUARIES

SIMON FEATHERSTONE CMG – former British High Commissioner to Malaysia.

We are sad to announce the death in August of Simon Featherstone – who was the well-respected and well-known British High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur. Our sympathies and thoughts are with his family at this sad time. His diplomatic career in Malaysia was brought to an early end due to his illness, although as a fluent Mandarin speaker, he was due to take up his next post as Ambassador to China after his tour in Malaysia finished. H.E. always invited the congregation to breakfast at the Residence after the Service at the Cenotaph in K.L. on Remembrance Sunday. In February 2014, Simon was conferred with an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws by the University of Nottingham .



OLGA KATHIGASU – 26th February 1921 – 6th September 2014

Olga Kathigasau passed away in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday, 6th September 2014 after a long illness. She was 93. Olga was the elder daughter of **Dr. Abdon Clement Kathigasau MBE** and Malaya's decorated war heroine, **Mrs. Sybil Kathigasau** (author of "No Dram of Mercy"). She was the couple's second child, the eldest being **Michael** who died shortly after birth. Olga had a younger sister, **Dawn**, and an older adopted brother, **William Pillai**, who was a wartime Volunteer sergeant in the 1st Perak Battalion, Federated Malay States Volunteer Force.

Born in Kuala Lumpur on 26th February 1921 and baptised in St. John's Church at Bukit Nanas on 6th March 1921, Olga was brought up mainly in Ipoh. She was educated at the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus School in Ipoh from 1928 to 1938. Olga enrolled at her father's alma mater, King Edward VII Medical College in Singapore but ended her studies prematurely and returned to live with her parents in 1940. During the Japanese Occupation of Malaya (1941-1945), Olga's parents were directly involved in aiding the (mainly Communist) Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) underground resistance movement in Perak, with some help from the children. In 1943, the entire family bar Olga had been arrested by the dreaded Japanese secret police, the Kempeitai. Dawn was released within 24 hours but the other 3 were given long prison sentences and Sybil was also subjected to extensive torture. Olga was at home when the Japanese raided and took Dawn away but Olga somehow evaded arrest.

From the moment her parents were arrested, Olga became Dawn's guardian until the end of the war. Dawn was almost 15 years younger than her. Post-war, Dawn received an 8-year medical scholarship from the British Colonial Office and was sent to London for her studies. Olga remained in Ipoh to care for her father (her mother having died in 1948). In 1950, Dr. Kathigasau greatly surprised his family by unexpectedly marrying a former patient of his, **Gertrude Wong**. This upset Olga greatly as she was devoted to her father. She must have considered emigrating to escape the unbearable domestic situation, for in 1957, Dawn (by then Mrs. Dawn Spalding), even offered to pay for Olga to join her in England. At the eleventh hour, Olga declined to go, giving the reason that she had to remain in Malaya in case her father's second marriage failed, and he might then need her to take care of him again! Olga was also never close to her birth mother, although they were alike in

temperament and looks.

Olga never married and remained with her father until his passing in 1972. Under the terms of Dr. Kathigasu's will, the family home at 141, Brewster Road, Ipoh, was sold and the proceeds amounting to \$28,000 were inherited by Olga for her future upkeep as she did not work and had no source of income. In later years, when her inheritance ran out, Olga received financial support from various family members, friends and even complete strangers who were moved by her family's ordeal or impressed by her indomitable spirit and wit, and her remarkably sharp recollections of the traumatic war years.

Olga became the de facto guardian of her family's history and legacy and she attempted to correct the editorial and factual errors which appeared in the various editions of "No Dram of Mercy." The original manuscript was incomplete when her mother, Sybil, died from her injuries in 1948 with the last 50 pages yet to be written at the time. The original manuscript was then held back by the British Colonial Office as Sybil was deemed to be sympathetic to the Communist guerrillas in her writings and it would have been foolhardy to allow the book to be published in its original form at the start of the Malayan Emergency! When the book was finally published in 1954, Olga learned that it had been completed and revised by 2 unnamed British individuals – one said to be a professor and the other an editor working for the publisher!

In her final years, Olga lived in a nursing home in Ipoh but as this was publicly known, she was often bothered by various people who sought to interview her or attempted to obtain possession of the historical documents and memorabilia she inherited from her parents. She was already ill and became badly affected by all the unnecessary attention. Her closest friends were appalled by the constant intrusion into her privacy and they discreetly had her transferred to another home in Kuala Lumpur at their expense where she could live out her life in peace and quiet.

Olga is survived by her nieces – the daughters of her younger sister, Dawn Spalding. The funeral service was held at the Church of the Holy Rosary, Jalan Tun Sambanthan (formerly Brickfields Road) Kuala Lumpur at 11.00 a.m. on Friday, 12th September 2014.

Compiled by Andrew Hwang.

We are also sad to announce the death of **Lt. Col. Charles Verdon RM** who has died aged 93. He was sunk on the *Prince of Wales* on 10th December 1941 by a group of 9 Japanese high-level 'Nell' bombers as he commanded a twin 20mm Oerlikon gun on the quarterdeck. Most bombs missed but one penetrated her hull and she started to sink. Verdon was taken off by the destroyer *Express* and returned to Singapore where he was employed on security at the naval base. When the base was abandoned at the end of January, 1942, 210 Marine survivors from Z Force were formed into 2 companies and amalgamated with the 2nd Battalion, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders to defend Singapore. At the Fall he was taken prisoner and sent to Thailand to work on the Burma-Siam Railway in the first party to be sent. His CO **Capt. Claude Aylwin** from the *Prince of Wales* was in charge of a 600-men "battalion" made up of more than 30 different British & Allied units. Verdon credited his 3½ years of survival as a POW to Aylwin's leadership. His obituary in the Telegraph can be read on the website: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/11011029/Lt-Col-Charles-Verdon-RM-obituary.html>

The death of **Lt. Commander Philip Cookson** was also announced on the Telegraph. Cookson commanded the submarine *Oberon* while based in Singapore between 1965 & 67 during the Konfrontasi in Malaysia. He used the submarine for secret surveillance of the shore and to land the SBS personnel. He perfected a way to land the SBS two at a time while the submarine was still submerged via the 'escape trunk.' They would breathe through air bottles attached to the boat until all the party had escaped and then swim ashore.

The full obituary of **Gordon Smith**, whose death in April 2014 was announced in Apa Khabar [No: 39 P.22] in July can be read on: <http://www.bmj.com/content/349/bmj.g4495?ijkey=miJDzPqqrjPr4Q&keytype=ref>

Our very sincere and heartfelt condolences go to MVG member **Karen Harney** on the death, in May this year, of her beloved mother **Rosemary**, widow of Penang Volunteer **Alan Helbling**. **Rosemary & Karen** were among the first group of MVG members to march at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday, and she attended the dedication of the Memorial Stone in the NMA.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SATURDAY – 11TH October 2014. Annual Reunion and Luncheon – RAF Club, Piccadilly, London. 12 noon to 4 p.m.

This is a final reminder that it is still possible to attend the lunch if you wish to come, as long as you send your payment of £37 pp with your booking. Please let **Rosemary** know the names of any guests and your dietary requirements if you cannot eat the set menu. Cheques payable to:- **Mrs R. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group** or by BAC payment into the MVG's bank account [See April's subscription letter for details]. The talk by MVG member **Becca Kenneison** on "The Malayan Volunteers in SOE" should be of great interest, especially with **Bill Pearson's** account of his involvement with "Stay Behind" Party No: 2.

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

We are grateful to **Merilyn Hywel-Jones** for organizing the tickets for those members who applied to attend this ceremony. The Royal British Legion at the Poppy Factory in Richmond has been asked to plant the MVG's large black 8 inch Cross in the FEPOW Plot before the ceremony. If members are planning to visit the garden at the side of Westminster Abbey where the crosses are planted, there is a plan of the plots with their names and numbers at the entrance to the garden. Wooden crosses can be obtained for a donation beside the Abbey. We hope to see a few more Volunteers remembered this year.

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

The tickets and instructions for this year's service have arrived and will be sent out to everyone who has asked to attend shortly. There has been a bigger demand for tickets this year due to it being the anniversary of the start of WW1 and we have a waiting list of members still hoping for a place. **If you have asked for a ticket but cannot come at the last minute, please return the ticket to Rosemary so that it can be passed on to somebody else.**

As mentioned in July, we have booked a table at The Premier Inn opposite the All-Bar-One for lunch after the march. We think it may be less crowded and busy than the wine bar after last year's difficulties with our table there.

SATURDAY – 14TH FEBRUARY 2015. 4th Annual Memorial Service in the City of Stirling Memorial Gardens, Perth WA.

Australian members will be reminded of this service by **Elizabeth Adamson**. It takes place in the Memorial Gardens where the 2 plaques are situated – one commemorating the Australian members of the Malayan Volunteer Forces and the second to the people of Western Australia who took in the evacuees from Singapore in 1941-42. Contact Elizabeth for further details.

SATURDAY – 14TH FEBRUARY 2015. Service at Point Walter Reserve, Perth WA.

Annual service at the Australian Army Nurses Memorial to commemorate those who were massacred by the Japanese in Sumatra.

SUNDAY – 17TH MAY 2015. Annual Memorial Service in the FEPOW Church of Our Lady & St. Thomas, Wymondham.

We very much hope to continue with the tradition, started this year, of laying a wreath during this service. Please would anyone who would like to attend the service in May next year let **Rosemary** know. Tickets have to be applied for and can be obtained by applying to the Administrator at: administraton@wymondham-rc-church.org.uk or go online: www.fepow-memorial.org.uk The Service starts at 12.30 p.m. and is followed by a very good buffet lunch provided in the church rooms. Arrangements can be made for the MVG to pay for a poppy wreath, but we have to inform the Church that a wreath will be laid on behalf of the MVG.

FRIDAY – SUNDAY 5TH-7TH JUNE 2015. Researching FEPOW History Group's International Conference in Liverpool. "Surviving Far East Captivity and the Aftermath: 70 years on."

Details of this conference were given on P.25 of Apa Khabar in July 2014. IF you have missed the registration date of 30th September 2014 and you would still like to attend the conference, there may be places available or there is a reserve list in case people pull out. Please contact Mike Parkes on: www.researchingfepowhistory.org.uk For anyone with an interest in the Far East Theatre of War this is an opportunity not to be missed. Each speaker is an expert in their field of research.

SATURDAY – 15TH AUGUST 2015. 70th Anniversary of V-J Day. Service in the Chapel at the NMA at 12 noon.

Details were given in a leaflet in July. These will be finalized early next year, but if you are able to indicate your attendance at the Service as early as possible, and let **Rosemary** know, it will help with making the arrangement with the NMA for lunch.

The leaflet will be enclosed again in the January newsletter in 2015.

SINGAPORE – 12TH SEPTEMBER 2015. 70th Anniversary of the signing of the Surrender by the Japanese in Singapore

To date the following events arranged by the MVG have been pencilled in:

Thursday 10th September – All day Historical Tour to the north-west and north-east of Singapore Island with the Singapore Heritage Board organized by **Jane Nielsen and Merilyn Hywel-Jones**.

Friday 11th September – Buffet lunch at the Bark Café at the Changi Museum for all MVG members & guests, from noon.

Saturday 12th September – **Early evening Service at Kranji Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery** – bus to be laid on.

Monday 14th September – Tour of Sime Road Camp and Adam Park with Jon Cooper, Battlefield Archeologist/Possible unveiling of the Sime Road Memorial being presented by the MVG.

In addition to these events, there will be other things going on in Singapore organized by various organizations and the Singapore Government, such as Exhibitions, Conferences and Historical sites to visit. Details of these will not be known until much nearer the time of the anniversary. However, for those wanting to book their accommodation and travelling arrangements we have been advised to be in Singapore for at least 3 days before 12th September and for 3 days afterwards. As soon as we have any more details we will let members know, but we may not have a timetable until much nearer the time.

SATURDAY- 24TH OCTOBER 2015. Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club, Piccadilly, London.

We are pleased to announce that **Anton Rippon** will be organizing this event from next year. More details to be given in Jan.

SUNDAY – 8TH NOVEMBER 2015. Remembrance Sunday. A reminder of the date for next year.

NEW PASSWORD FOR ACCESSING THE NEWSLETTERS ONLINE - PAHANG

After a delay in sorting out the problem with re-instating the back copies of Apa Khabar online, they are available once more. To access the back copies please use the new password – **PAHANG**

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Thank you to everyone who has paid promptly this year. Please remember to increase any standing orders or bank BAC payments to £20 sterling for U.K and overseas members before April 2015 when subscriptions are next due. Payments to **Rosemary Fell Malayan Volunteers Group**. Australian members please pay **Elizabeth Adamson** in Australian Dollars as advised; Malaysian & Singapore members please pay **Andrew Hwang** in Malaysian Ringgit or Singapore Dollars as advised. Reminders will be sent out in April 2015.

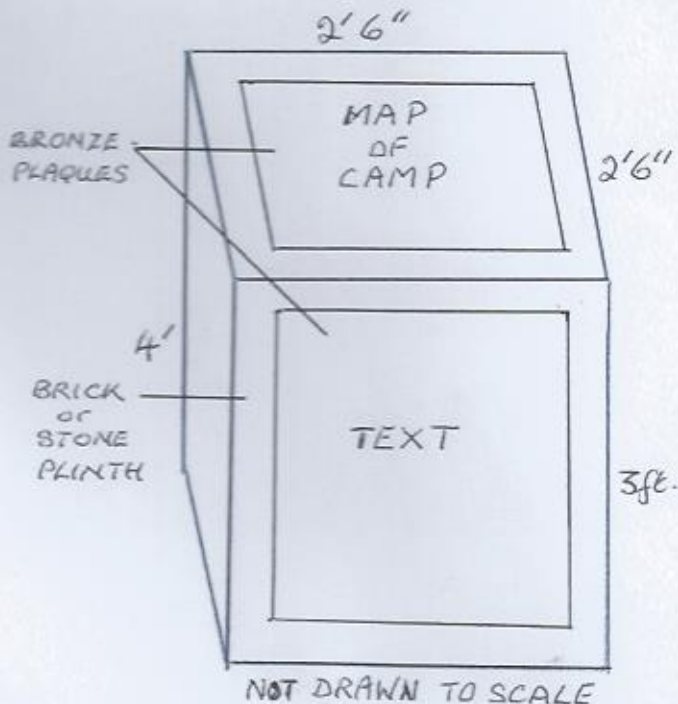
ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

A copy of the Income and Expenditure Sheet is enclosed for your perusal. If you would like a copy of the full set of accounts, please send a SAE to **Rosemary** at the usual address given on P.27. Once again we thank Miss Sara Haines at SJA Accountants Ltd. for her generosity in preparing not only the U.K. accounts, but also those from Australia and Malaysia, and the "Singing to Survive" concert accounts, without any charge to the MVG. The amount of work to present these accounts must have been considerable and we are extremely fortunate to have the services of Miss Haines who shows a great interest in the MVG's aspirations and activities.

LIST OF MEMBERS

The up-to-date list of members is also included with the newsletter. Please check your entry carefully, and let **Rosemary** know of any mistakes or if you wish to have alterations made in future lists. In particular, please inform of any changes to your postal or e-mail addresses. If your evacuation ship is known but not recorded, please let **Rosemary** know so that it can be added.

PROPOSED DESIGN FOR THE SIME ROAD MEMORIAL IN SINGAPORE



It is proposed that the Sime Road Memorial should take the form of a brick or granite stone plinth, on the sloping top of which will be the stylised map of the WW2 POW Camp, designed by MVG member **Jane Nielsen**, made in bronze relief. On the front of the plinth there will be information about the use of the camp during the Malayan Campaign, and its subsequent change to a POW camp for the civilians turned out of Changi Gaol in 1944, and other civilian POWs from Singapore's Eurasian and Jewish communities. The text will also be in bronze relief, unless we are given permission to have the plaques made in polished stainless steel, which is maintenance free and is the preferred material of Anwick Forge, where the plaques are being made. However, the Singapore authorities usually insist on bronze as their preferred maintenance free plaque material. The cost of these 2 plaques will be considerable, whichever material is used, and members will be advised as soon as the estimates are received.

A third alternative is marine quality brass, but again this may not be considered as suitable.

If all goes according to plan, we hope to have the memorial built and ready for unveiling next September when MVG members are in Singapore to mark the 70th anniversary of the Japanese surrender.

At the moment, we plan to have the memorial placed in the area of the Sime Road Camp itself. If we are not given permission for this, we are very grateful to **Mr. Jeyathurai Ayadurai (Jeya)** of the Changi Museum for considering housing the memorial within the grounds of the Changi Museum. We are also very grateful to **Jon Cooper** of TAPP for liaising with the Changi Museum, and for helping us obtain permission for presenting this memorial to Singapore in memory of all those who were imprisoned in Sime Road Camp in WW2.

V-J DAY 2014 – FRIDAY 15TH AUGUST



June Jackson who laid the wreath with her grandchildren Harry & Tabitha.



Singing "The Captives' Hymn" during the service.

CONTACTS

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ROSEMARY FELL – SECRETARY/EDITOR of APA KHABAR/MEMBERSHIP/SUBSCRIPTIONS/DONATIONS

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