

# APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

[www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk](http://www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk)



**48<sup>TH</sup> EDITION  
OCTOBER 2016**



June Jackson reading the poem entitled, "Freedom" at the V-J Day Service on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2016

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## 71<sup>st</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF V-J DAY COMMEMORATED AT THE NMA MVG PLANS TO ATTEND THE 75<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE FALL OF SINGAPORE IN FEBRUARY 2017

An interesting programme is on offer for those who have made arrangements to attend events in Singapore next February to mark and commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1942. Members have been notified about the military tour, lunch and attendance at the services on the 15<sup>th</sup> February, which the MVG is booking on behalf of those attending. This anniversary is an important landmark which we should acknowledge and offer support to the Singapore population which endured such deprivation during the dark years of the Japanese occupation. With the present Japanese Government's attitude of refusing to face up fully to the enormous suffering its military aggression caused in World War 2 throughout the Asian-Pacific region, and the attendance of their new Defence Minister, **Ms Tomomi Inada**, at the Yasukuni Shrine, we must make sure we do not forget the cruel treatment handed out to our Volunteer POWs and civilian internees. On Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> August 2016, Japan marked the 71<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of its surrender in World War Two. Its Prime Minister, **Shinzo Abe**, carefully avoided any mention of Japan's wartime aggression overseas and, more importantly, any mention of remorse. An extremely well expressed, thought provoking letter appeared in the **Straits Times** the following day, written by **Jean-Pierre Lehmann**, emeritus professor of international political economy at IMD business school in Lausanne and Singapore and visiting professor at Hong Kong University, entitled, "**A Letter from Normandy to Abe: Lessons for Japan from WW11.**" A copy of this letter is enclosed for you all to read.

The MVG also marked the 71<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of V-J Day on Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> August, with its annual service at the National Memorial Arboretum. A report of the service can be read on P.2. It may seem a good many years since that day of victory for the Allied Armies, but we must never forget the terror and evil inflicted on the local population as well as the military and civilian prisoners of war in all areas of the Far East. We are very grateful to those members who travel to the NMA – sometimes over long distances – to support this service of remembrance and thanksgiving. It is always a very rewarding day, and although we were unable to hold our usual communal picnic this year, due to the building works, we hope to resume this custom next August.

At the beginning of August, the MVG asked The National Memorial Arboretum to give a quote for the maintenance of the Malayan Volunteers Memorial Garden in perpetuity. Visits to the plot by members in May, for the annual gardening day (see the report in the July newsletter), and again just before the V-J Day service, indicated that the grass had not been mown and the bamboo spikes were growing rampantly throughout the grass. It was felt that this is not an acceptable way for the plot to be left during the year, and that funds should be used for keeping the plot in good order. To date, there has been no reply from the Arboretum about the cost of this. We thank **Anthony and June Jackson, Jonathan Moffatt, Simon and Lynda Moss and Donald Fell** for all their help with the maintenance of our Memorial Garden in the past.

As reported in the July newsletter, the National Memorial Arboretum has been undergoing a major re-building programme of the entrance and cloisters area near the Chapel. This is due to be completed by the end of October and opened to the public again. All Stakeholders at the Arboretum have received an invitation to a special preview event on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> October to explore the new facilities, visit the new **Heroes' Square and The Boyes Garden**, and see the new **Landscapes of Life Exhibition**. Unfortunately, we are unable to attend this preview.

A successful and well attended Service of Remembrance was held in Kings Park, Perth WA on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August. The Merdeka Day Service, held under the newly formed banner of "The Association of Malaysians in WA" (AMWA) was organised by **Bill Adamson**, President of the MBVA WA Inc, in conjunction with the MVG. It commemorates all those fell in WW2, the Emergency, the Confrontation in Indonesia and other post-war conflicts in the Far East. We are grateful to the **Adamsons** for their commitment to keeping alive the memory of those who have fallen in these conflicts.

An up-to-date list of members is issued with this newsletter. Once again, the annual update which is normally sent out in July has had to be deferred until October due to the numerous still outstanding subscriptions in July. In a small, family-orientated group such as the Malayan Volunteers Group, it is unacceptable for members to make the collection of subscriptions such an arduous and onerous task. Plenty of warnings are given in the January and April newsletters that subscriptions are due in APRIL every year, and they should not still be outstanding 6 months later, where ever members may live.

We are very disappointed that our application for 12 tickets for the Remembrance Day Service at the Cenotaph in London has been reduced to 2 plus one Veteran's ticket this year. The excuse which has been offered for this reduction is to make room for more Veterans to march. It is a shame that the Royal British Legion appears to have overlooked the role played by the Malayan Volunteer Forces in World War 2. We may not be veterans ourselves, but we do represent these military forces and

the civilians who were taken prisoner by the Japanese and became FEPOWs alongside their Allies in the Malayan Campaign. It is nonsense to expect our wonderful elderly Veteran members to march, but why should they not be represented? We are very sad to report the death of Singapore's former president **S.R. Nathan**, on 31<sup>st</sup> July, aged 92. He was Singapore's longest-serving President, serving 2 six-year terms between 1999 and 2011. He was closely associated with Singapore's founding leader **Lee Kuan Yew**, and also played an important role in keeping close ties between Singapore and Malaysia. His long and colourful career included stints as a spymaster and diplomat, serving as ambassador to Malaysia and the USA. MVG members were honoured to meet the President in September 2008, when **Mr. Nathan** unveiled the Memorial Plaque to the Malayan Volunteer Forces at the Changi Museum. We were all very impressed with his quiet, unassuming manner and his ability to put everyone at ease. The ceremony was twinned with a book launch and the President was duly presented with a copy of "To Japan to Lay a Ghost" by **Peter Rhodes** who was also present. We offer our sincere condolences to the people of Singapore.

## V-J DAY SERVICE – 15<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2016

**Report by Rosemary Fell**

Just over 40 members, guests and others assembled at midday in the MVG's Memorial Garden for the annual V-J Day Service. The weather was perfect – almost too hot for some, but one of the benches was in shade from the trees. Unfortunately, the service was marred by the constant noise of the gravel pit machinery and lorries coming and going from the works next to the plot. It was difficult for readers to make themselves heard against this noise, but it may be possible to find a battery run microphone for another year. Despite the building works at the NMA and temporary entrance, everyone found their way down to the plot by noon when the service began.

The service started with music from the soundtrack of the film, "Paradise Road." A bamboo flute played, "Guard Falls" by **Ross Edwards**, followed by part of the Largo from **Dvorak's** "New World Symphony, sung by the women's vocal orchestra. **Jonathan Moffatt** introduced the service and announced the readers in turn. During his welcoming remarks, he reminded us that this day was the 71<sup>st</sup> anniversary of V-J Day and this year the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the battle of the Somme. The wreath was laid by **Ruth Rollitt**, followed by the 2 minutes silence. The CD recording of "Abide with Me" was a little temperamental and the three verses of the hymn were sung almost unaccompanied. **Sir David Lewis** read Psalm 121, "I will lift up mine eyes," and this was followed by the poem by **Leslie Coulson**, written in WW1 before he was killed in action, entitled, "From the Somme" and read by **Keith Andrews**.

**Anthony Jackson** gave an excellent reading of the extract from **Ron Mitchell's** book, "Baba Nonnie Goes to War" in which he describes the ways in which morale was boosted on the Burma-Siam Railway. The thought-provoking Prayers were led by **Alison Brierley** and her brother **Michael Mowat**, and ended with everyone joining in the Lord's Prayer.

"Miss Foss, the Camp Superintendent," read by **Eileen Wright**, told the story of **Josephine Foss's** role in Changi Gaol and Sime Road Camp. Written by an unnamed person, it gave an insight into the character of this extraordinary woman. As an English Missionary, she worked in China and South Africa before going out to Malaya in 1924, becoming Headmistress of the Pudu English School in K.L. After the war she returned briefly to South Africa before returning to Malaya and ending her career teaching in Kuching.

The incredible, true story of a dog called **Judy** is told in a book by **Robert Weintraub** entitled, "No Better Friend." Given the title POW No: 81A Medan, this dog survived the horrors of the Sumatra POW Camps with her adopted owner, against all the odds. An extract from the book was read by **Imogen Holmes**.

We all sang the hymn written and composed by **Margaret Dryburgh** accompanied by the "Paradise Road" Choir before **Anne Hinam** read a moving piece, "Christmas 1942 at Palembang" from **William McDougall's** book, "By Eastern Windows." It seemed strange to be reading this in the middle of summer, but the sentiments expressed in the excerpt, seemed very relevant in today's materialistic world.



**Alison Brierley and Michael Mowat lead the prayers**

The poem, "Freedom" was taken (with permission) from a booklet produced by an Old Etonian Group who presented a plaque to the Changi Museum last September. It was written by **Lt. Robert Fletcher** in Kranji in 1945, and read with great sensitivity by **June Jackson**. The Exhortation, FEPOW Prayer and Kohima Epitaph were all read by **Guy Scoular**.

A recording of "Amazing Grace" was played as a musical finale to the service this year. Sung unaccompanied by the "Born to Sing" choirs from 4 regions in Perth, WA, we are grateful to **Robert Grey**, MVG member in Perth who sings with this choir for sending us the recording.

Members were able to picnic in the grounds after the service, and we hope to resume the communal picnic next year.

## REPORT ON THE SERVICE AT GOD'S LITTLE ACRE AT BATU GAJAH

By Michael Doncaster

[Editor: We are grateful to Michael for taking the time to write a report on this service for Apa Khabar.]

This year, my wife **Sandy** and I were able to get to Batu Gajah for the ceremony. The Australian Defence Advisor, **Group Captain Wendy Horder**, is well aware of my family history here in Malaysia and asked me to go up, so we were fortunate to have a seat next to the British High Commissioner and in the front row in front of the three planters' graves whose murder started the Emergency. It was very poignant for **Sandy** and me to be there as I have been studying the Emergency as part of my studies at the Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College this semester. So it came at a very good time. The service was very special, and I was greatly privileged to be there with my DA, but also with **Captain Keith Robb RNZN** and his wife, **Naomi**.

**Capt. Robb** is an old friend of mine from his days as Assistant Naval Advisor to Australia while he was in Canberra and when I was working in our International Engagement Headquarters.

We had a lovely time at the very poignant service which was very well attended. The British DA was there as well, along with the Colonel of the Gurkha Regiment based in Brunei, and a small

contingent of Gurkhas played a lament on the bagpipes, along with a band of retired Royal Australian Navy bandmen – including a couple of old shipmates from 1986. Everybody was timeless! The Royal Malaysian Mounted Police mounted an honour guard and catafalque party, which was very nice.

After the ceremony, we went back to the golf club, where I met **Oliver Huntsman**, a descendant of a Malay Volunteer, who is listed on P.175 of **Jonathan's** fantastic book, "*In Oriente Primus.*" I showed **Oliver** the book as I had it with me, along with a family photo album, and it was like meeting old friends. We had a wonderful time, and I am so pleased that I have **Jonathan's** book – it goes everywhere with me, and I have been able to use it to refer people to the MVG to join. [Editor: Thank you very much, Michael.] **Oliver** and his family continue to run Palm Oil Plantations here in Malaysia, and he has offered to take **Wendy** and me and our families out to one of his plantations next time he is in Malaysia so we can see what it would have been like for my family and others who made this country part of their lives. I will update you after we have been to a working plantation – it may be something useful to put in an edition of A.K! I am so pleased to see that he has joined – hopefully. [Ed: Sadly not] Following the service at Batu Gajah, we went back to beautiful Ipoh and visited the Memorial outside the Railway Station, where the previous day's memorial service had taken place. I did not attend that as I had commitments in K.L. but from all accounts, it was a beautiful service. **Sandy** and I then went up to Taiping where I went to All Saints Church to visit the grave of my great, great grandfather, who died in office as the Rector of All Saints Church, Taiping in 1912. As far as I can make out, I am the only direct descendent to have visited the grave in at least 50 years. It was a lovely afternoon, made more special by the willingness of a guy we met at Batu Gajah, who was the brother of the church warden. He organized to open the church and made us feel very welcome. It was a very special afternoon.

I am planning on going over to Sandakan and Rima in the coming months, and now, having read the article about Banka Island, I will try to get down there next time I am in Singapore. But before that, I am representing the DA at the Merdeka Day Service at the Anglican Cathedral here in K.L. and will attend Merdeka Day celebrations in August. Today, I was privileged to attend the Malaysian Armed Forces Trooping the Colour in the presence of the King and the MY Prime Minister – the drill was fabulous, and I am very privileged to have been able to attend. Recently some Australian Servicemen and their families who died on active service either in Malaysia or Vietnam, were repatriated. The Malaysians were very supportive, and their ramp ceremony was magnificent and a very special reminder of the close relationship we have.

I still haven't met **Andrew Hwang** due to my studies, although **Sandy** has at the Anzac Day Ceremony.



**Michael Doncaster & Captain Robb**

## **LETTER FROM RACHEL ROWE to JONATHAN MOFFATT**

**Smuts Librarian for South Asian and Commonwealth Studies at the University of Cambridge**

*[The following letter was received via the MVG website, and those members with relatives who were in Changi and Sime Road camps will have received a copy from **Jonathan**. We are issuing the letter to all members in case anyone knows of others with civilian camp connections.]*

Dear Mr. Moffatt,

I hope you may be able to help me in your capacity as a representative of the Malayan Volunteers Group. I am writing from Cambridge University Library where I am leading a small team which is working to conserve original WW11 records from the Changi and Sime Road civilian internment camps on Singapore. We are now mid-way through our two year Wellcome Trust-funded project and much of the Changi and Sime Road archive has been conserved. You may be interested in reading some blog posts written by our project conservators and archivist about this work on the archive. These can be found at:

<http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/royal-commonwealth-society/projects-exhibitions/changi-project>

Cambridge University Library is concerned not to disclose data of a sensitive and personal nature that may offend any surviving internees or their immediate family. I am therefore keen to contact as many families of the internees as possible to alert them that these records will be digitised and made available online in August 2017. Should they have any concerns then I would be pleased to discuss these with them, and may be reached by phone on 01223 333146 (on Wednesdays and Thursdays), by e-mail: [rcs@lib.cam.ac.uk](mailto:rcs@lib.cam.ac.uk) or by post. Please address letters to:

Rachel Rowe, RCS collections, Cambridge University Library, West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DR.

I would be very happy to ring people back and discuss any concerns they might have over the data.

It is the Nominal Rolls in the archives which include the most personal data. Each roll is slightly different but in general they list an internee's name, their camp registration number, camp address/hut number, their age (at the time of the nominal roll), nationality, and in the remarks section they might list the internee's pre-war occupation. Some include family relationships e.g. sister of, or list the country in which they were working prior to internment. Occasionally they list camp earnings, or a death in camp, when they would give the date of death of the named individual. Men, women and children were listed separately.

The archive includes files from Changi and Sime Road kept by **John Weekley** who served as Men's Representative, Changi Civilian Internment Camp, and as Commandant of one of the camp areas. These are listed in more detail online at:

<https://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2FGBR%2F0115%2FRCMS%20103%2F12%2F15>

They also include the files of Camp Quartermaster **Norman Rowstone Jarrett**:

<https://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2FGBR%2F0115%2FRCMS%20103%2F12%2F13>

Newspapers produced in the camp will be digitised – the Karikal Chronicle, the Changi Guardian and the Changi Chimes. These were written and circulated by the internees and include short pieces by a mix of named and anonymous authors/internees – see:

<https://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2FGBR%2F0115%2FRCMS%20103%2F12%2F29>

We will also be digitizing individual diaries, letters, plays and memoirs held as part of our archive. A list of these may be downloaded from our project web page via a link in the section entitled **Making Contact**. I am also attaching a copy of the file named *Changi\_diligence3.pdf* –

<http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/royal-commonwealth-society/projects-exhibitions/changi-project>

We are particularly keen to contact families of the authors of these items to ensure they have no objections to us publishing them online, and would be happy to forward you a printed copy of the list. Please advise me as to your postal address. We would welcome any information that might help us make proper attributions, identify copyright owners, or correct copyright acknowledgements.

Should an internee's family only become aware of a family record in the archive after we have put it online, then we will remove the image or images and any related information within three days of being notified.

I do hope you will forward my letter or disseminate its contents to members of the Malayan Volunteers Group. Cambridge University Library is keen to ensure the digital archive correctly identifies and acknowledges authors and copyright holders.

With very grateful thanks, and kind regards,

Rachel Rowe

Smuts Librarian for South Asian and Commonwealth Studies

Cambridge University

Centre of South Asian Studies (Mon/Tue) Tel: +44(0)1223 338094

E-mail: [rmr29@cam.ac.uk](mailto:rmr29@cam.ac.uk)

<http://www.s-asian.cam.ac.uk>

Royal Commonwealth Society Library (Wed/Thu) Tel: +44(0)1223 333146

E-mail: [rcs@lib.cam.ac.uk](mailto:rcs@lib.cam.ac.uk)

<http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/royal-commonwealth-society>

[On Fridays – location varies, e-mail recommended]

South Asia Archive & Library Group blog

<http://saalg.blogspot.com/>

Twitter: @RM\_Rowe (tweets on special collections)

**NOTE:** As a result of **Jonathan's** initial distribution of this letter to members known to have had relatives in these camps, he received the following message from **Rachel Rowe**:

*I am absolutely delighted to have received so many supportive and informative e-mails, and I think it would be a brilliant idea to give MVG member a talk followed by lunch in August 2017, to coincide with the online launch. I am copying in John Cardwell to ensure he has the correct e-mail address for you and also so that he puts this event in his 2017 diary! I hope Emma Nichols, our Project Conservator will also be able to join us then, and promise to get back to you with a proposed date in due course.*

**If you are interested in going to this talk please give Jonathan your names.** He says he doesn't know how many can attend, but it will be first come first served. He suggests that if members live too far away for a day's trip, they may consider staying for the night and combining it with sightseeing; a visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum; or shopping.

#### **NEWS IN BRIEF FROM SINGAPORE AND MALAYSIA – with thanks to Liz Moggie for sending these cuttings.**

**4<sup>th</sup> August – reports in the New Straits Times and The Star about Shinzo Abe's appointment of Ms Tomomi Inada as Defence Minister.**

This appointment has caused upset in both China and South Korea with their bitter memories of Japanese wartime atrocities. **Inada** is a regular visitor at Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine, which honours Japanese war dead including convicted war criminals, and has revisionist views of World War Two history. She is a lawyer-turned-lawmaker and is one of **Abe's** favourite cronies. She has made remarks defending Japan's wartime atrocities, including forcing many Asian women to become 'comfort women' for their soldiers, and she has led a party committee to re-evaluate the judgement of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. She supports **Abe's** hope to revise Japan's post-war constitution.

**In July and August in the New Straits Times, reports about the ongoing controversy for Japan to compensate the wartime sex-slaves from South Korea show that Japan is still reluctant to face up to its aggression in WW2**

In July, South Korea launched a foundation to be funded by Japan to provide support for South Korean women forced into sexual slavery by Japan's military in WW2. But this was greeted by protests by activists and students, despite the fact that Japan has pledged a contribution of 1 billion yen for the foundation. The agreement remains controversial because many believe that the South Korean government has settled for far too little. Opposition parties are still demanding a re-negotiation of the deal.

**An interesting article from a post-war copy of The Straits Times dated 1<sup>st</sup> December (year not known)**

A book of Remembrance and plaque to commemorate 413 officers and men of the Singapore Volunteer Forces who gave their lives in World War 2 has been completed and will be unveiled by the Governor of Singapore, **Sir Franklin Gimson**, at the S.V.C. Headquarters on 8<sup>th</sup> December.

The Book of Remembrance, a slim volume bound in red morocco leather, its parchment pages inscribed with the names of the 413 men, will be in a glass-topped lectern, which was designed and built in Singapore.

Yesterday, **Lt.-Col. W.G. Smith**, who is chairman of the S.V.C. War Memorial Committee told the Straits Times that the memorial will be placed in the Raffles Museum next to the statue of **Sir Stamford Raffles**.

At the unveiling ceremony, on December 8<sup>th</sup>, past and present members of the S.V.C. will parade after a dedication service by the Bishop of Singapore, the **Rt. Rev. H.W. Baines**.

[Ed: Does anyone know where this book is?]

**“U” LETTER PARTY/“J” BATTALION’S JOURNEY BY TRAIN FROM SINGAPORE TO THAILAND  
ON 28<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 1942 – a report by John Pollock**

In mid July this year, my wife and I went to Thailand which included 4 days in Kanchanaburi, one of which was with **Andrew Snow** from the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre Museum (TBRC).

The day with **Andrew** was spent visiting areas where members of “J” Work Battalion were during their march from Kanchanaburi to their first camp in Kinsaiyok in November 1942.

My father, **Walter Pollock**, a member of the FMSVF, was put into this Work Battalion, having arrived in Ban Pong as part of train letter party “U” which left Singapore on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 1942. This was one of the 13 train letter parties which left Singapore in late October and early November 1942.

Each party consisted of some 650 personnel, resulting in approximately 8,500 POWs arriving in Thailand over a two week period.

Letter Party “U” was unusual in that it consisted of a high number of Malayan Volunteers, some 57% of the total number in that letter party.

Another unusual statistic was the high proportion of officers, approximately 39% of the total party (61% other ranks). This compares to an average of 10% for officers and 90% for other ranks when looking at the composition of other letter party rolls over that two week period.

The majority of the officers were Straits Settlements and FMSVF Volunteers. Many of these had received late commissions in January/February 1942 as liaison officers, such as **Walter Pollock** who was commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant with the Intelligence Corps on 2/2/42. Others had commanded Chinese, Eurasian and Malay Companies and were in captivity separated from their men.

According to the diary of 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant **Charles Thornton** of the 2/FMSVF, who was also a member of “U” Party, their train journey took four days overland, commencing at 5.30 p.m. from Singapore on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 1942 until they reached Ban Pong at 5 a.m. on the morning of 1<sup>st</sup> November.

Members of “U” Party remained in Ban Pong until 3<sup>rd</sup> November when they moved off by motor truck, ‘packed like sardines’, to Kanchanaburi, some 70kms west of Ban Pong. After arriving in Kanchanaburi, these men were formed into Work Battalion “J” and allocated to Thailand Group 4.

**Thornton** indicated in his diary that, *“In deciding on the composition of “J” Battalion, our Command thought it would be a good idea to send all the Volunteers with the objective of keeping them as near to Malaya as possible.”*

**Thornton** then goes on to say, *“We had a preponderance of officers, of course, because of the number of Asiatic Platoons there had been in the Volunteer Forces, so that in “J” Battalion, the proportion of officers to men was as high as 1:1”*

Although, in the diary of **T.P.F. McNeice**, another “J” Battalion member, he had 230 officers and 370 other ranks as members of “J” Battalion.

The members of “J” Battalion set off from Kanchanaburi on the 4<sup>th</sup> November, under the command of a **Colonel Mackeller** of the 4/FMSVF and his 2<sup>nd</sup> in command, **Col. James** of the 2/FMSVF and over the next few days they would be marching to Tha Sao (Tarsao) which was the first Base Camp for Group 4.

In trying to get a sense of the route that “J” Battalion took from Kanchanaburi to their first camp at Kinsaiyok, **Terry Manttan** at the TBRC provided a schematic of a similar route that another work group took.

According to **Charles Thornton**, members of “J” Battalion marched approximately 12/13 miles that day from Kanchanaburi to a place called Lat Ya, which consisted of a few attap huts set in a clearing outside a village and in the middle of a Buddhist temple. A temple is still there today, which we visited.

About two hours into their march they came across a camp where POWs were building a bridge which **Thornton** later learnt was Chungkai. Those at the front of the group had a rest here for a couple of hours while the remainder of the party caught up.

The route of the march to Lat Ya took them through jungle and across padi fields. Traversing the padi fields involved negotiating a series of *“steep little bunds . . . each higher than the previous”* as described by **R.J.P. Garden** of the SSVF. Each bund surmounted was wet and slippery, with precarious footholds.

On arrival at Lat Ya, most men bivouacked in the open and were soaked in the overnight rain which fell. Reveille was at 5.30a.m., and at dawn the group marched off again, minus about 125 men, **Thornton** estimated, due to blisters on their feet and other ailments. **Thornton** described this day’s march as the *“worst in the whole journey”*, and that the *“route was similar in nature to that of the previous day, only very much muddier.”*

It continued to rain for most of that day’s march too, with **Thornton** describing how the rains had turned the soft earth

into a *“glutinous mixture which clung to our feet and impeded our already slow progress.”*

**Thornton** was ordered, with others, to round up stragglers. It got to the stage that **Thornton**, with about six stragglers, got to the camp at Tha Dan after dark following the 13 miles march from Lat Ya.

The camp itself was on the other side of the Mac Klong River, so they were ferried across and had to walk a few hundred yards, which for some of those sick was too much, so assistance had to be sought from others in the camp to carry them there. The camp was a jungle clearing with *“numerous camp fires ...racks of steaming clothes and semi nude bodies.”*

The final day's march was approximately 16 miles, but as the ground was reasonably dry and the weather good, this meant that it took about 10 hours for all members of the group to reach the camp at Tha Sao, without incident.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> November, “J” Battalion left Tha Sao for Kinsaiyok on barges, 50 people to a barge, plus a quantity of stores. In spite of their circumstances, **Thornton** describes the barge journey thus



**Site of Konyu River Camp today**

took another whole day to get to Kinsaiyok, some 10 miles upstream, due to the rising river levels (because of all the recent rain) and adverse current.

Here the Battalion stayed until early December, when they moved back to Konyu to start work on the railway in earnest. At Kinsaiyok, with no accommodation built, it meant that “J” Battalion had to construct the attap huts and while this was happening over a period of 5/6 days, the men had to camp out in the open.

**Thornton** noted, *“A most vivid memory of this period is of the nights in the open. There was always a very sharp drop in the temperature after the heat of the day and clad as we were in thin tropical clothes, we felt the cold badly. So huge bonfires were built around which we sat or lay in our blankets all night.”*

As well as visiting the sites that “J” Battalion moved through, part of the day with **Andrew** involved walking a 2.5 km. route of the now disused railway line starting near the Kinsaiyok main Camp and finally coming out into a flat area around Kinsaiyok Jungle #2 Camp. The walk passed by footings of a large bridge approximately 15 metres high where we joined the railway. We then walked along an embankment varying in height from 15 to 5 metres depending on the terrain. The embankment transitioned into a long cutting, perhaps 800 metres long, with a height from 1 to 5 metres where the walk ended. This short walk provided great examples of the type of works that the POWs and Romusha had to perform during the construction of the 415 km. long railway line.

The men who worked at Kinsaiyok came from different groups of British, Dutch and Australian POWs arriving from October 1942 through to February 1943. Later in July 1943, more British from **Col. Hugonin's** “Saigon” Battalion arrived to help the mammoth

task of completing the railway in that area. The whole day with **Andrew** was very rewarding and provided a greater sense of the area where my father was. One particular memory of the day which stood out for me was the distance which POWs needed to walk each way, some 4 kms. in total to get to and from the Konyu River Camp to the route of the railway at Konyu Camps 1 and 2, including the steep hill which they would have to have climbed. Overall, it was a well organised day which was thoroughly fascinating and out thanks go out to **Andrew, Terry** and the TBRC staff, headed up by **Rod Beattie**.

**N.B.** If anyone has any more information about Letter “U” Party, or would like to contact **John** about their relative's experiences with this group of POWs, they can e-mail **John** at: [john.pollock@gmail.com](mailto:john.pollock@gmail.com)

*“Towed by a small tug, we chugged upstream amidst glorious scenery. Tall limestone cliffs, forest-clad, slender bamboos and wiry river-side mangroves made a riot of colour, which was a pleasure to the eye and mind. Birds abounded, brightly hued – like bolts of colour.”*

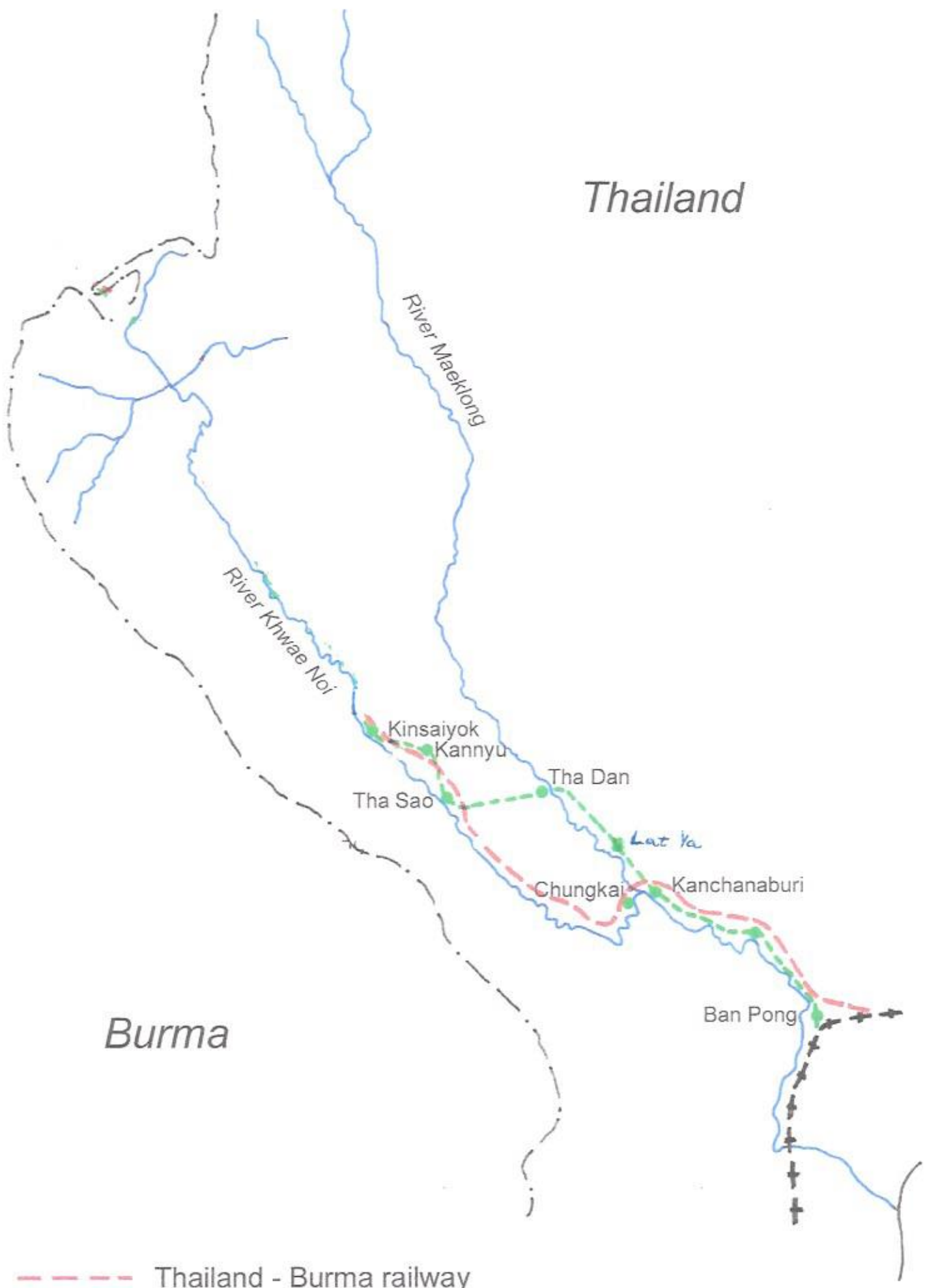
However, the *“...beauty of our surroundings could not make us forget our discomfort,”* (due to the constant downpour of rain throughout the journey).

The barges drew into the ‘overcrowded’ Konyu River Camp (a Camp that the members of “J” Battalion would return to) as darkness fell and the rain continued. After an overnight stay, it



**Kinsaiyok to-day**





- Thailand - Burma railway
- +++ Existing railway

## THE WARTIME RECOLLECTIONS OF TERENCE de SOUZA

*[Editor: Terry de Souza is one of our nonagenarian veterans who was a member of the pre-war Civilian Observer Corps in Singapore. His brother Clive was a member of the SSVF & a FEPOW]*

My earliest recollection is of growing up in a house on Queen Street in Singapore.

I was born on 27<sup>th</sup> January, 1924 at 210-14 Queen Street. My father was **Lambert Philamon de Souza**, and my mother was **Honora Josephine (nee White) de Souza**. I had, altogether, 2 brothers and 7 sisters, and they were as follows:

**Granville** - born 3/2/1905 and died - Feb 1957  
**Muriel** - born 6/10/1908 and died - 18/12/1970  
**Luvy** - details not recorded  
**Marjorie** - born 6/7/1913 and died - 2/10/1999  
**Elaine** - born 11/11/1917 and died - 1/7/1992  
**Pauline** - born 19/7/1919 and died - Feb 1942  
**Celine** - born 1921 and died - 1934  
**Clive** - born 14/3/1922 and died - 23/3/1996  
**Terence** - born 27/1/1924  
**Norma** - born 1/12/1925 and died - August 1977

There were two other children born who died at birth - **Michael** and **Olive**.

Queen Street in the late 1920s was a busy street. On our side of the street in Block 210 -15 were:

**The Pereira Family** at 215 - **Ambrose** and **George**.

**de Souza Family** at 214 - our family (**Lambert** & **Honora de Souza**).

**de Souza Family** at 213 - **Fred de Souza's** family (**Fred's** mother and my father were first cousins).

**de Souza Family** at 212 - **Herbert de Souza** who kept imported wild animals.

**Seth Family** at 211 - An Armenian family (**Kathleen, Edith, Theresa, Paul, Gilly**).

**Paglar Family** at 210 - **Ereck** and his mother.

When I visited Singapore in 1989, with **Ruth** my wife, I discovered that Block 210 in Queen Street had been demolished to make way for some new construction.

Opposite our home stood **St. Joseph's Church** run by Portuguese Priests. We did not belong to this parish, but we belonged to the parish of the **Good Shepherd**, a French diocese at the corner of Queen Street and **Bras Basah Road**.

I remember when I was about 4 years old, our neighbours, the **Fred de Souza** family, reported that a boa constrictor snake was hiding in their drain. This snake, apparently, had escaped from **Herbert de Souza's** building where he kept his animals, temporarily, before transporting them to his zoo in **East Coast Road**, opposite **St. Patrick's School**. The snake was recovered and put back in its cage. I also remember the time when a leopard escaped from **Herbert's** building and wandered across the street to **St. Joseph's Church** grounds. This time, a Malay gardener bravely captured the animal with the help of others, and put the animal back in its cage. I understand that the Malay gardener suffered many wounds from handling that leopard.

When I was about 6 years old, in 1930, I attended a Kindergarten school run by the **Clarke** family who lived on **Hooper Street**. **Mrs. Clarke** was a very good teacher who taught us to form our letters correctly. I used to be driven to her house every morning by her driver (*scyce*). One day the driver left me in the car for a few minutes when he went into the food market on **Rocher Road**, leaving me terrified at the thought of being alone in the car. In those days we were told not to wander around alone as we might be captured by Indian (East Indian) traders carrying big sacks over their shoulders, which, we were told untruthfully to keep us from wandering around, contained the heads of people used for burial under any new bridge being built to ward off evil spirits from the new bridge.

When I was 7 years old, I was ready to attend **St. Joseph's School**. I remember our neighbour, **Fred de Souza**, taking me to school on the first day because I did not want to go on my own. **Fred** must have been about 14 years old, but he seemed like someone much older. **Fred** or **Mougee** as we used to call him, grew up to be a fine gentleman and eventually became a successful lawyer in Singapore.

The school which I went to was called **St. Joseph's School** on **Bras Basah Road** opposite the **Cathedral of the Good Shepherd**. **St. Joseph's** was run by the **De Lasalle Brothers** and we were terribly afraid of the strict Irish Brothers. Our soccer team was one that I was very proud of, but somehow we could seldom beat the soccer team of the **Raffles Institution**, a public school. **Raffles Institution** produced a scholar who finally became the famous Prime Minister of Singapore - **Lee Kuan Yew**.

When I was 9 years old in 1933, we moved from Queen Street to a district known as **Katong**, some 6 miles away.

The address was - 489, **East Coast Road**, and the school that I went to was called **St. Patrick's School**, which was

also run by the **De Lasalle Brothers**. I attended that school until I was 17 years old in 1941. I graduated with what was then called the Senior Cambridge School Leaving Certificate. To take the Senior Cambridge examination, pupils from the various schools around had to assemble in a large hall at a different location from their respective schools, and take the exams in this public hall, with pupils from other schools.

The examinations, held in December 1940, went on for several days. The examinations questions for each subject we sat, were sent over from Cambridge University in England in large envelopes which were opened in front of us by the examination supervisor. We had no idea what kind of questions would be asked in Mathematics, History, Geography, Literature etc. The examinations for each subject ran for about 3 hours. After each exam, the papers were gathered up, put in an envelope and sent back to Cambridge University for correction.

We would not know how we did until about 6 months later - remember in 1941 all transportation overseas was by ship, which could take about a month from Singapore to England. We would only know how we did when we opened the newspaper called *The Sunday Times* one Sunday morning and read whether our names appeared on the list of successful candidates. My name did appear in the newspaper, in June 1941, and I was so glad to see that I had passed.

Our family resided at the following addresses:

214, Queen Street - where I was born in 1924 - until 1933.

489, East Coast Road from 1933 - 1938.

9, Upper Wilkie Road from 1938 - 1946 when I left Singapore for Britain in July 1946.

The Queen Street home was owned by my father, and it had many happy memories for me. From first going to St. Joseph's School, and then enjoying watching soccer games when our school played against other school teams. I belonged to a neighbourhood team when I was about 8 years old. The soccer team was composed of boys who lived on Queen Street. We used a rubber ball on those days and enjoyed our Saturday morning games. It was sad to leave Queen Street when we moved to 489, East Coast Road. I was about 9 years old and leaving my friends behind was painful. At our new home, some 6 miles away from Queen Street, I had to attend another school, St. Patrick's, which was built and completed about the end of 1932. This place was more in the country and we had a lot more room to play and move about than we had at Queen Street, which was near the centre of the city.

The new area of Katong, where we had moved to, had a beach a few blocks away, where I learned to swim and also to play tennis. Our new home had a huge plot, which probably measured 240 feet by 600 feet. Many fruit trees had been planted by the previous owners and we must have had at least 10 varieties of tropical fruits, which I enjoyed immensely during my years from the ages of 9 to 14. I used to love climbing those fruit trees (some of them 30 feet tall) sitting on the branches and enjoying feasting on those tropical fruits.

We had a Malay chauffeur (*scyyce*), who lived in the separate servants' quarters with his wife and 2 children. The gardener (*kebun*) was also Malay. He lived in another part of the servants' quarters with his wife and daughter who must have been about 16 years old. We also had 2 Chinese servants, one who cooked for us (**Ah Quay**) and another (**Ah Hoon**) who did other chores such as washing our clothes and cleaning the house. They also lived in the attached servants' quarters. These two Chinese servants called *amahs* were wonderfully faithful to us and could be trusted very much.

In 1938 on 27<sup>th</sup> January, my own birthday, **Muriel** our oldest sister, married **Francis Hoshimi** at the local church called the Church of the Holy Family at Katong. My brother and all my sisters got the day off school to attend the ceremony. The reception was held at 489, East Coast Road, our home. It was a terrific reception with lots of French Champagne and lots of food for the many guests who attended the wedding. **Granville**, the doctor, was missing as he was then in England studying for special medical degrees at Guy's Hospital in London. He had left for England in 1934 or 1935 and he returned in about May 1939, just before the start of World War II in September 1939, when Germany invaded Poland and brought Britain and France into the war on the side of Poland. Soon after **Muriel's** marriage, my mother decided to move back to the city. It must have been about the March or April of 1938. The new address was 9, Upper Wilkie Road, which was close to where the Governor of Singapore, **Sir Shenton Thomas**, resided within the vast grounds of Government House.

**Clive** and I were still at St. Patrick's School and it was decided that we stay in the Katong district. We then lived with **Francis** and **Muriel** in their home at 52A, St. Patrick's Road. I stayed there until July 1939 and **Clive** remained until December 1939. **Francis** and **Muriel** had a beautiful home with lovely furniture, a full size refrigerator, and a huge radio and gramophone player complex made by Westinghouse. This happened to be a present from the **Shaw Brothers**, who did business with **Francis Hoshimi** who was the local manager of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Films in Singapore. His business friend **Run Run Shaw**, who was knighted by the Queen of England sometime in the late 1970s, donated a Chinese Rest Home for the elderly at Broadway in Chinatown, San Francisco.

In 1939, I joined the St. Patrick's School Cadet Corps. I was then 15, and we learnt to march, clean our rifles (303 calibres) and attend training camp once a year. That year of 1939 saw the outbreak of WW2.

At Upper Wilkie Road, the whole family - **Marjorie, Elaine, Pauline, Clive, Norma, Granville** and I - lived together.

**Granville** had returned from England in May 1939, just before the outbreak of the hostilities in Europe. He joined the Government Medical Service and worked in the Public Health Clinics. At one time he worked in a Leper Colony in Malaya. I remember him saying that he felt it was more dangerous, medically, to be near a T.B. patient than to dine with a leper, as leprosy is not a contagious disease. My mother, a very devout Catholic, attended mass every morning and my father used to listen, every morning, to a recording called, "Soul of My Saviour" and one other hymn which I now cannot remember.

In 1940, **Pauline** married **Leslie Dumbleton**. They both lost their lives in February 1942 whilst trying to escape from Singapore. Their ship was sunk by Japanese warships off the coast of Singapore. In January 1941, **Marjorie** married **George Pritchard**, a British soldier in the Royal Artillery, and they had a baby girl, named **Mary**, in October of that year. They had a brief honeymoon at a seaside house my father got for them. On about April or May 1941, **Elaine** married **Arthur Wood**, a British Quantity Surveyor. Soon after Elaine was married, the **Simmons** girls, **Claire** and **Maureen**, came to live with us. They were distant relatives of ours, with whom we grew up.

And so life went by in Singapore in 1941 as the island prepared for an eventual confrontation with Japan, who by now occupied French Indo-China. This incident caused the USA to stop all oil shipments to Japan, and, I believe, the USA at this time froze all Japanese assets in the US, a move bound to cause even more hostility between these two powers on a headlong collision.

In August 1941, just seventeen years old, I joined the Singapore Improvement Trust, a Government survey agency whose duties were to make improvements to the city of Singapore. I was signed on as an apprentice land surveyor for 4 years. **Norma** was still at school then attending the French Convent School. At seventeen, I enjoyed many friendships, played tennis at the Singapore Recreation Club (S.R.C.), went to the movies ("The Wizard of Oz"; "Pinocchio"; "Gone with the Wind" were all favourites at the time). These were good times for us in Singapore, although the war in Europe was still raging, and Britain was fighting the battle for survival against Germany. Japan was threatening and we expected hostilities with Japan to surface at any moment.

I remember the exact time war broke out. I was staying at a friend's home on Sunday, 7th December 1941. At about 4 o'clock in the morning, 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941 (Singapore is 18 hours ahead of Pearl Harbour in Hawaii), we were awakened by the sound of anti-aircraft gunfire. We went out into the garden and could see a formation of planes flying overhead, lit up by the searchlights. The war in the Pacific had begun. I believe that these Japanese planes, flying from Saigon at the time, may actually have been over Singapore at the same time as the bombing of Pearl Harbour at 8 a.m. on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1941.

The next morning, I dressed for work and caught a bus to my office. Quite close to my office at Fullerton Building, we could see the results of the bombing - buildings smashed, people killed, and we had a dreaded feeling of more of this to come.

The first night of the war, i.e. 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941, an eerie feeling hung over all of us. We were experiencing a blackout all over the city, having dinner in a room with all the windows shut and by the light of a single bulb. At about 2 a.m. on the 9<sup>th</sup> December, the sirens sounded and we all rushed out with our blankets wrapped around us into the front garden, not knowing really what to do to protect ourselves. My two sisters, **Marjorie Pritchard** and **Elaine Wood** were the first to be evacuated from Singapore, soon after the war began on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941.

The next day, my father had a contractor build an air raid shelter in our garden. We used this shelter often as enemy warplanes made their daily raids on Singapore. As the Japanese forces came closer to the island in their relentless advance down Malaya, the raids became more frequent. A typical scene in our dugout shelter, covered by a wooden roof with 2 or 3 feet of earth piled up on top, was one of tense moments, when my mother would say her prayers and we talked and tried to ease the tension. As the planes droned closer and closer overhead, the silence became more pronounced as we waited for the planes to unload their deadly cargo. From the 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941 until the 15<sup>th</sup> February 1942, these bombings continued in intensity. On the 7<sup>th</sup> February 1942, the enemy forces crossed over to Singapore from Malaya, and as they came closer to the city, we began to be shelled and bombed at the same time. On Friday, the 13<sup>th</sup> February, we decided to leave 9, Upper Wilkie Road for a safer place. My mother, **Muriel** and her kids **Mano** and **John** with their amah, **Norma**, **Maureen Simmons** and our neighbours **Mrs. Hogan**, **Mrs. Jones**, **Sheila Jones**, **Joan Hanson**, **Nora Clunies Ross** and her children **Lennie** and **Eleanor**, were all driven to the French Convent on Victoria Street. **Buzzy Jones**, **Peter de Cruz** and I drove to Katong, a place we considered safe. My father went to stay at the church, right across the road from the convent. **Granville** went to the Fullerton Building to care for the wounded.

Finally on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 1942, Singapore capitulated to the Japanese forces. At about 5 p.m. just before the surrender, my mother, taking shelter with many others at the French Convent, was killed in a bombing raid by enemy planes. A direct hit on the building where these unfortunate people were taking shelter, resulted in the complete destruction of the structure. Another woman and my mother were the only two who were killed. The others, among them **Muriel**, **Norma**, **Maureen Simmons**, **Joan Hanson**, **Mrs. Jones** and **Mrs. Hogan** all suffered shrapnel wounds. Most were hospitalized.

[To be continued in January 2017.]

## THE LAST OF THE OLD 93<sup>rd</sup> HIGHLANDERS - PART 2

By Jonathan Moffatt

[Editor: As a result of Jonathan's article in the 47<sup>th</sup> Edition of A.K. (July 2016) I received an interesting reply from Dave Croft of the RAF Penang and Butterworth Association, (RAFBPA) as follows:

*"I took the liberty of copying the article relating to David Blyth (Newsletter 47, pages 20-24) and sending the copy to Sam Mold, a senior member of the RAFBPA.*

*Sam sent me a reply which you might find interesting. Sam joined the RAF from the Foundling School and failed as a budding bandsman because he broke one of the rules. This meant he wasn't sidelined for the Army as a bandsman, and he ended up as a long term regular in the RAF.]*

**Sam Mold's edited reply:**

Many kind thanks for the forwarded MVG article relevant to David Blyth's time in Malaya. As I knew David so well, you will gather I found the Argyll and Sutherland regiment's write-up of their 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion's time spent combating the Japanese invasion of Malaya more than the "interesting" you suggested.

David spent all nine years (1926-35) of his school days at the Redhill FHS (Foundling Hospital School), founded by a sea captain called Thomas Coram. It was a very old Catholic Convent purchased by the FHS as temporary premises while awaiting to find a new site to build a brand new complex in the countryside. After nine long years this was achieved when the pupils at Redhill were transferred to their new school opened in Berkhamstead in 1935. A few months later, aged 5, I was with the first intake of arrivals in April 1936 where we joined up with the foundlings who had moved from Redhill to the new FHS complex.

David Blyth, who died aged 96, belonged to our Old Coram Association (OCA) and was by far the oldest member in attendance at our reunions. The only other 'boy' who knew him from his schooldays was Tom Vale, now 93. I don't know how long David had been an OCA member, but some while back Tom introduced me to him. David was a lovely guy, very quite and unassuming who never spoke about his wartime service and the four years he was held as a prisoner of the Japs. Conversations with him mostly revolved around his school days and never about his Army and POW experiences in Malaya. There appeared to be a common trait among ex-POWs of the Japs not to talk about the horrendous experiences they suffered at the hand of their captors, and who could possibly blame them if they did not wish to be reminded of the harrowing times they all endured. I learned more about David Blyth's time with the Army in Malaya, not from his lips, but from the MVG article you sent me. Not until I read David's obituary did I learn he had joined the RAF on his return to the UK after the war. Tom and I last met David in June 2015. David asked me if I could let him have a photo of his old school. Last month, I took the photo he wanted up to our OCA reunion, only to learn he had, sadly, died 23 days earlier.



David Blyth 2012

**Jonathan writes:**

When I chose the title for this article, it was intended to refer to Stan Burridge who, as I 'discovered' in October 2011, lived in Bournemouth. He was believed to be the last of the Old 93<sup>rd</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders who served in India. But in January 2013, I discovered that yet another Argyll from Malaya, who had served in India, Drummer David Blyth lived in Cambridgeshire. After the war, he joined the RAF and, while stationed in Gibraltar, took up running. In 1981 he took part in the 1<sup>st</sup> London marathon. He was still running, cycling and swimming aged 93.

David died in May 2016 and Stan in December 2014. I am pleased to say that I was able to put them in touch and they had a reunion in 2014, the first time they had met since 1941.

**PART 2 continued:**

**Pte. Lachlan McGlade 2/A&SH** was still on the run six months after the battle of Slim River. At Titi in Negri Sembilan he shared a camp with Chinese guerrillas.

Here he witnessed, and later testified to the deaths from disease of his comrades.

One, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. John Colliston died from shock and septicaemia after being shot in the arm in an altercation with a Chinese guerrilla eager to buy his service revolver. Captured alone by a Japanese patrol on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1942, McGlade was taken to Jelebu, 80 miles south of Kuala Lumpur and was interrogated by the Japanese Garrison Commandant seeking information on the Chinese guerrillas:

*"I refused to answer questions. This led to my being sentenced to death; to be shot at midday Japanese time. I lay outside the Commandant's house in the hot sun all morning. Just round about there were large playing fields, and running along the front end was the main road where a large crowd was gathering to watch my execution, since it was to be a public affair 'owing' to my past behaviour which was not of the best.*

*I lay facing the road and on my left under some trees the firing squad was practicing the art of firing at a condemned man. My burial place was round behind me about 150 yards distance. The Guardroom had the black flag flying outside, and also the sentry post at the extreme end of the playing field from the Guardhouse.*

*This comedy went on until ten minutes to twelve, when a German officer visited the garrison. On seeing me lying outside in the sun, he approached me and asked me what I was doing here. I told him that I was a member of a Scottish unit stationed in Malaya and was lost in the jungle. He appeared to be satisfied with me and he then disappeared into the house. When he came out again he waved to me and rode off on a motor cycle. A few minutes later a Japanese soldier came out and dragged me away to the Guardhouse where I was mocked and beaten for the remainder of the day. This treatment was carried on by*

*all sentries and guards until midnight.*

*I was tied with my hands behind my back and then on to the door post. After they had finished mocking me etc. I was allowed to sleep which I pretended to do. After studying how long they came to see me, and finding it to be approximately 30 minutes, I decided to make my getaway. The ropes I loosened in about forty minutes and when the guard came out to see me, I was sleeping. A few minutes later I started to crawl behind the Guardhouse, through a hedge and round behind the Sikh police headquarters where I tried to find food but was unsuccessful. So I carried on until I eventually came onto the main road and proceeded along it until I came to some 'obstacle' which I gracefully and quietly approached and then went round it. When I was clear of the town, I managed to steal a fowl out of a Malay kampong then proceeded along the main road to Seremban, my destination being Malacca where I was determined to find a boat and sea compass with map included.*

*I was forced to hide in the rubber. It started to rain and I could not light a fire to cook my fowl. I was forced to eat it raw, and then I lay down and went to sleep, waking up about three hours later. I started to work my way forward in my endeavour to get to Malacca but I was sighted by a Malay woman who started shouting, and try as I would, I could never get away from them. They kept in touch with me until the arrival of a Japanese patrol who very quickly enough grabbed me and when they caught me, they dragged me onto the road, where they started to beat me with their fists, sticks, rifle butts and prodded me with their bayonets, also tying my hands in front of me, then tying them onto a cycle. This carried on for a full 4 miles back to the Garrison, where I was thrown into the civil jail and beaten up severely. I can assure you the humiliation and suffering I went through cannot be put into words."*

**Lachlan McGlade** was delivered to Pudu Gaol on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1942, 7 weeks after the Japanese occupation version of the Malay Mail reported the capture at Salak and delivery to Pudu Gaol of **Ptes. James MacFarlan** and **Tom Hunter**, the last Argylls to be captured after Slim River. Both **McFarlan** and **Hunter** survived the war.

**L/Cpl Tom Barnfather** from Littletown, Co. Durham was captured 14 miles northwest of Kuala Lumpur on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1942. He was mentioned in dispatches for his gallant work as a dispatch rider during heavy fighting along the Grik Road. In Pudu as conditions slowly improved he found himself, together with seven other POWs, working in the normally out-of-bounds officers wing as a mess orderly and batman. His duties consisting of going three times daily to the cookhouse, drawing the officers' rations, carrying them back to the mess, serving as a waiter, then washing up. At great risk, together with **AIF POW Charles Edwards**, he assisted the covering up for 48 hours of the **Vanrenen** group escape by attending the outside head count roll call then sprinting upstairs to be counted again in the roll call in the officers' sick bay cells. [See **Charles Edwards letter in Apa Khabar July 2012**].

In October 1942, **Tom Barnfather**, **Andrew Connelly** and the four drummer boys were among 140 'fit' Argylls sent by train to Thailand, first to Nong Pladuk then Tamarkan where they formed pile driving teams working on the wooden bridge across the Maeklaung. **Stan** ended the war on the Mergui Road and **Andrew** at Pechaburi. **Les Sandham** was transported to Japan and ended the war at Funatsu Camp. **David Blyth** went 300 km. up the Railway from Nong Pladuk to Nikki. Later he was sent to River Valley Road Camp, Singapore and was then shipped with 2,000 other POWs to Indo-China in February 1945. Here US aircraft attacks were a greater danger than the Japanese, who knew the war was lost.

**Lachlan McGlade** was sent to Changi, Singapore, where he was a thorn in the side of both the Japanese and the Senior British Officers. In January 1945 he planned another escape:

*"I was living under what some people call a life for a dog. In fact, it was worse. Food conditions were very acute and getting worse. It was a place to get out of. I went out through the wire to see a Chinese friend of mine who lived nearby. His name was **Wong Sang Tong**. He also had a brother, **Wong Sang Ming**. These two Chinese were of more use to the Camp than anyone else in the district. I would like to write a few phrases to their credit, but I'm afraid it cannot be now. On seeing **Tong**, who was the younger of the two, I questioned him as to the best way to get to Johore and how to get in touch with the Chinese Guerrillas who I knew were in that region. **Tong** supplied me with the necessary information but was very sorry that he could not give me any conveyance, as it was all controlled by the Japs, so I arranged to make my own way to Johore. I returned to the camp and made preparations for my escape. I did not tell anyone about this except my own comrades and did not give them the exact date so that my plan would not be ruined. I could not take my superior officers into the plans because I did not trust them. The officer in charge of the Camp was in the habit of handing men over to the Japs for punishment, which was, in my eyes, a crime unpardonable. This led me to class this officer as Jap Happy – this was my view. I state this because I suffered under him on my return from the jail in Singapore where I spent a short period.*

*My plan was to go on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 1945 and with the aid of the rising moon I could only travel by night. When I left camp I was prepared for capture at any time and therefore did not carry money or valuables with me otherwise I would not be able to carry out the act I would have to put on should I be captured.*

*After I left the camp, I was given quite a good helping hand on my way by the Chinese population that I met. I carried a note for assistance written in Chinese in case I got lost.*

*I was at large for 5 days, but I found it was very hard to get conveyance to Johore. On my 5<sup>th</sup> day of freedom, I met an Anglo-Indian who spoke perfect English. He seemed quite a genuine friend, so I asked him if he could get me a lift to Kranji which is near Johore. He called in a few of his friends and talked it over. They then decided to get me a lift, or at least that is the impression that I was led to believe. Whilst one kept me talking to him, his comrades said they would go off and get a car to give me a lift with. On their return, they came back with about forty civil police including Japs and Malays. On seeing the police arrive, I rolled up the note from the Chinese and threw it away behind my back because I knew escape was useless. I was captured at Phillips Avenue. When I returned to Changi, I put on a very good act of being very silly and stupid. I then went to Outram Road jail and had 16 days solitary."*

**Lachlan McGlade** lived to tell the tale of his two escapes and was liberated 7 months later.

## **THE DIARY OF CHARLES ROBERT SAMUEL – by kind permission of Sir David Lewis**

### **PREFACE by David Lewis**

**Charles Robert Samuel** was born on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1883 in Wrexham into a family with Welsh connections. He was educated at Grove Park Grammar School in Wrexham. He qualified as a solicitor and advocate on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1906 and in about 1908 he left the UK to go to Penang (which with Malacca and Singapore were then the three Straits Settlements and British Crown Colonies) to join the law firm of "**Presgrave & Mathews.**" He later founded the law firm of "**Ross & Samuel**" with **Balfour Earl Ross** (who qualified on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1905) as his partner and they later joined up with or perhaps acquired the goodwill of the Penang law firm of "**Logan and Ross**" (Advocates & Solicitors) founded in 1874 by **Frederick J.C. Ross** (after whom Ross Road is named). The firm was renamed "**Logan, Ross & Samuel**" in which **Charles Samuel** and **Balfour Earl Ross** were the two partners.

During WW1 (1914-18), **Charles** served in the Penang Volunteer Corps and the Straits Times confirms that he was a L/Sgt. in "A" Company in 1919. In the 1930s **Charles** served as a Municipal Commissioner for Penang. He was a very keen and senior Rotarian, President of the Penang Rotary Club in 1935-6, and served as the international District Governor (Rotary) for Malaya and Siam. He also served on the committee of management of and as the Honorary Librarian of the Penang Library.

In December 1941, **Charles** was approaching 60 years of age, had white hair and was a senior lawyer in the Penang local legal community. His father, **W.E. Samuel**, had died and his mother was about 90 years of age. His brother, **W.E. Samuel**, was still living in Wrexham and his sister **Miss A.J. Samuel** was still living in Wolverhampton with their elderly mother.

**Charles** married **Miss Helen Violet Scott Brown** (1889- 17/2/1942), the daughter of **Mr. and Mrs. H.G. Scott Brown** of Bournemouth. Her brother was **Egerton Scott Brown** living in Bromley. **Violet (Vi)** was a descendent of both the **Scott** and **Brown** families who were early Plantation owners on Penang Island.

**Charles** and **Vi** had two children –

1. **Violet Myfanwy (Miffy) Samuel** (28/7/1911 – 8/7/1998) who married **George H. Conaghan**, (an Irish Catholic & lawyer in Penang) after WW2. They had 3 children, **Moira, Michael and Paddy.**

2. **Lucy Gwynedd Samuel** (15/9/1912 – 15/12/1979) who married **John Stephen Aylwin Lewis OBE\*** (8/5/1909 – 15/4/2003) an officer in the Customs Service, in Penang in 1938. They had 1 child, **Valerie Bronwen.**

The original hand written Diary by **Charles Samuel** was deposited by my uncle **\*J.S.A Lewis OBE** with the Rhodes Trust Library in Oxford in 1966 and has since been transferred to the Weston Library which is part of the Bodleian Library. The Diary was written by **Charles** in a Dutch "Toko Atlas Padang" exercise book containing a Dutch Kalender 1941 in the Padang Camp a little time after the events described. I do not know how the original Diary was saved and assume that one of the survivors in the Padang Camps mentioned in the table at the end of the Diary must have kept it safe after **Charles'** death in 1944 and later given it to his daughters after the war.

I have typed **Charles Samuel's** Diary from the original text, which is not always fully decipherable, and added this Preface, the footnotes and Appendices 1-5. The Diary starts with a record of his firm's clients, and then continues with an account of **Charles'** experiences from early December 1941 until 4<sup>th</sup> November 1942. It covers his evacuation with his wife **Vi** from Penang to Singapore after the Japanese bomb attacks on Penang, their escape from Singapore in the **SS Kuala** on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1942 just before the surrender of Singapore, the sinking of the **SS Kuala** by Japanese bombers, their escape from this sinking to the island of Pom Pong, and then **Charles'** escape to Padang in Sumatra where he was eventually interned by the Japanese in the Men's British Civilians' Camp. Although his Diary does not extend to this time, he was probably transferred from Padang in October 1943 to Bankinang Men's Camp where he died aged 61 on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1944 (see footnotes 53 & 58). His wife **Vi** aged 53 escaped from Pom Pong Island on the **SS Tandjong Pinang** on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1942 with other women and children, but that launch was sunk by a Japanese vessel a few hours later on 17<sup>th</sup> February with the loss of almost all hands. **Charles** however did not know this when he wrote his Diary and was to die himself without ever learning about his wife's death. He did know though that his two daughters **Miffy** and **Gwynedd** (and his granddaughter **Bronwen**) had successfully reached Melbourne and were safe.

The Diary contains a fascinating eye witness account of the above events and of the fate of Penang and deserves to be better known by those who are interested in this period of history. We all have a duty to keep and preserve family archives for the benefit of future generations and historians. As his Diary illustrates, **Charles Samuel** was a remarkable man. Those like him who took the trouble in very difficult and sometimes very dangerous circumstances to keep diaries and record for posterity what happened deserve our admiration and thanks. I have prepared this account for **Charles and Vi's** descendents.

I have added as Appendix 5 some additional bibliography & in Appendices 1-4 other eye witness accounts and information about the bombing of Penang and the sinking of the **SS Kuala** and **SS Tandjong Pinang.**

**Signed Sir David Lewis**

**March 2015**

## **My Experiences since the Beginning of the Invasion of Malaya – Charles Samuel's Diary begins**

This record is merely a factual account of what happened to me, and also to my wife so long as we were together, since the outbreak of war with Japan. It is not intended to criticize the governments of the SS [*Straits Settlements*] and the FMS [*Federated Malay States*] or the policy of our military and naval leaders, nor to go into any questions relating to the causes which led to the ultimate occupation of the whole of the Malay Peninsula and the Island of Singapore.

I fell however that I should briefly refer to the employment of Volunteer forces purely as military forces in wars such as we have nowadays to be coped with. I think it has been established beyond doubt that civilian Volunteer soldiers, whose training takes place during peacetime in a haphazard and irregular manner and who cannot be permanently removed from their civilian occupations, are entirely unsuited to meet the fully trained soldiers of a military nation, armed with all the most modern weapons and fully supported by their aircraft. Our Volunteers and LDC [*Local Defence Committee*] should have been fully trained solely for the purpose of assisting in the difficult task of maintaining law and order and inspiring confidence in the civil population, and acting in support of the police forces.

One thing stands out clearly as a result of enemy air raids and the advance of enemy forces that our civil authorities had in no way visualized the situation which might arise in our towns and villages as a result of a blitz air raid. The ordinary people were left without any real advice or leadership, and thus chaos ensued. The Volunteers and LDC throughout Malaya could and should have been much more effectively used in stamping out looting etc, than in guarding posts on the coast against an enemy who never appeared. In any event they would with their inadequate equipment have been no match against up to date war machines of the enemy. There is one other matter and that is the evacuation of women and children and overage males from those places which were occupied by the enemy. There does not appear to have been any organised scheme for the removal and disposal of civilians from the towns, and this is probably due to the optimism and complacency with which the authorities both civil and military had viewed any attack by the Japanese on Malaya. The possibility of defeat never entered their heads and therefore never entered into their plans or calculations. But notwithstanding the situation which was allowed to arise and develop that Singapore was impregnable. From the beginning of the year 1942, evacuees and refugees from the northern districts were flowing into the City and yet until the eleventh hour no steps were taken to get them away. There was no plan whereby the women and those men who could not be employed and were overage could be removed. During the whole month of January there was time to evacuate thousands of those refugees in safety and decency. The last minute hurried flight of citizens, both men and women, from Singapore, some under orders from the Governor, others on their own account, was too dreadful and chaotic to bear detailed description. When the first batch of women and children evacuated from Penang on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1941 arrived in Singapore, all those who had children were immediately put on board a steamer and sent to Java and from there to Australia. Among them many were wives of men who were serving in the Penang Volunteers and were entirely dependent on their husbands' earnings. Yet no provision had been made for the payment of allowances to these dependents although provided for in the Ordinance, and in fact the allowances had not even been paid. Reliance was placed on the fact that most of the firms in Malaya had agreed to pay their salaries to all those serving in the Volunteers as and when called up for training. For this reason it had not been considered necessary to settle this question of allowances, and the Government taking advantage of the patriotic spirit shown by our commercial firms, shirked their responsibilities, and allowed these dependents to proceed to Australia without any means for maintaining themselves. Even as late as the end of January 1942, no steps had been taken to set up a tribunal to adjust and settle claims. Officers were fully protected but NCOs and the rank and file were not.

### **1 December 1941 (Monday)**

The sudden mobilization of all forces in the Colony and Malay States on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1941 was the first intimation to the public that the relations between Great Britain and Japan were causing serious concern. Nevertheless people did not take much notice of it or alter their mode of life, nor was any official pronouncement made, except that it was a precautionary measure. We in Penang remained in ignorance of the fate that was to befall us and everything went on as usual.

### **3 December (Wednesday)**

On Wednesday night (3 December) **Vi** and I attended a Shakespearean Recital at the Odean Theatre by **Miss Marie May** which was in aid of the Red Cross Fund. There was a great gathering of the people of Penang and the hall was crowded. Little did anyone realize that it was to be the last gathering at a function in Penang for many a day.



### 8 December (Monday)

The bombshell fell on the morning of 8<sup>th</sup> December. We woke to a bright and sunny morning. **Vi** was going down the Hill [*Penang Hill*] with me in order to deliver dresses and other garments to the Red Cross Sewing Party at the Runnymede Hotel, which had been made by her and her sewing party on the Hill.

The bus arrived at 8.20am. **Mackay** of the Eastern Smelting Co. was already inside. As we piled ourselves into the bus, with two large suitcases, market basket, my attaché case and typewriter, I jokingly said "We are off to Australia." **Mackay** replied, "Are you really going?" I laughed and said, "Oh no" or words to that effect. He then said, "Haven't you heard? We are at war with Japan." He then told us of Japan's surprise air attack on Singapore, Manila and Pearl Harbour, Hawaiian Islands and the immediate declaration of war against Great Britain and the USA.

We did not think that anything was likely to happen that day, so we proceeded down the Hill, **Vi** to the Runnymede Hotel and I to the office. **Vi** said she would collect our granddaughter **Bronwen** and take her up the Hill as had previously been arranged with my daughter **Gwynedd**.

At about 10.30am the first warning air raid siren sounded over Penang and shortly after Japanese planes were flying over the town. No bombs were dropped and they flew away after about 45 minutes. None of our planes went up and they had a clear and unimpeded flight over the town and surrounding district.

I stayed in the office until 3.30pm and then went up the Hill. I was the Senior Warden in charge of ARP [*Air Raid Precautions*] on the Hill and had twelve wardens under me. We had been formed in August and I had divided the Hill area into three sections with Headquarters at the Police Station. The sections were:

(1) Summit and Tunnel Roads, (2) Lower Tunnel Road and Viaduct Road on the west side of the Railway and (3) Tunnel Road and Viaduct Road on the east (from Tunnel Station to the Crag Hotel). These three sections were each to be patrolled by the wardens who were to report to me any breach of the "blackout" regulations. The patrols were under **Nagar Singh**, Government Health Officer, **Kunail Singh**, Overseer PWD, and **Das**, foreman in charge of Gardens' coolies.

On arriving home, I found **Vi** had brought up **Bronwen** and her amah [*nursemaid*] and also **Ian Knight**.

**Gwynedd** could not come as she was working in the Navy Office. **Vi** was busy completing our blackout which she made very effective. It took much time and trouble, all wasted had we only known.

I changed into ARP uniform and went to Headquarters, where I was met by all my wardens. At about 5.15pm the second air raid warning was sounded and several enemy planes came over, flying over the ridge of the Hill down towards Bayan Lepas Aerodrome, and circling round over the town. They proceeded to Butterworth and dropped bombs on the aerodrome and several dumps were set on fire.

I arranged that the three patrols should go out at 7.45pm. They went out and returned about 9pm and reported to me that most of the Chinese bungalows were crowded with men, women and children and that they had to speak to several occupants as to the inadequacy of their blackout arrangements. They stated that many of them did not understand what had to be done. I then realized I should have to visit these bungalows myself. The two chief offenders were the occupants of "Grace Dieu" and **Cher Wor Lok's** bungalow. Two of the wardens were then left on duty until midnight, and I returned home.

### 9 December (Tuesday)

On 9<sup>th</sup> December I went to the office having arranged for **Nagar Singh** or **Kunail Singh** to take charge should anything happen in my absence.

I arrived at the office without mishap. The warning was given at 10.30am. Planes came over the town, but did not drop any bombs. My partner (**Ross**) did not appear at the office that day and I presume he had been on night duty. He left the office on 8<sup>th</sup> December as soon as the first warning was given and I did not see him again until Wednesday morning.

I left the office at 3pm and returned to my duties on the Hill. There was another warning at about 5.30pm, but the planes kept over the Province [*Province Wellesley which is part of Penang on the mainland*]. Two of our planes went up, a Blenheim and a fighter, but were unfortunately quickly put out of action and shot down, one into the sea.

### 10 December (Wednesday)

On the next day (10<sup>th</sup>) I went to the office. The warning was sounded at 9.55am and 14 planes came over and bombs were dropped. The Municipal Electrical Office (Town Hall) was hit, the Pitt Street Power Substation which was completely destroyed and the Central Fire Station, Beach Street, was badly damaged, two fire engines being destroyed and many firemen killed and wounded. The All Clear sounded at 11.10am and I went to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Magistrates' Police Court to defend two Chinese boys accused of being members of an illegal procession in Campbell Street. It was a case of no importance, but the magistrate (**Bellamy**) refused an adjournment. However, we did not proceed far as at 12 noon the magistrate was ordered to report to the Volunteer Headquarters at once, and that was the end of the case!

My partner was in the office that morning, but we never had a chance of conversing and he had left when I returned from court. I did not see him again, nor could I get him on the telephone until Monday afternoon, he never tried to telephone me and I did not know that his ARP Headquarters had been moved. I returned to the Hill early in the afternoon and went on duty. The previous afternoon I had visited most of the bungalows with **Nagar Singh** and had warned occupants they must put out all lights if they could not black out effectively and that action would be taken if they did not comply with the regulations.

My wife was wonderful throughout all this trying time and showed courage and fortitude throughout. She was more than a help and support to me and I do not know how I should have got along without her. In that afternoon planes dropped bombs on Bayan Lepas Aerodrome and destroyed 4 of our planes. It is said that the pilots were there but could not go up without orders!

### **11 December (Thursday)**

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December, the day of Penang's doom, was bright and sunny. **Vi** had her weekly sewing party as usual at the house and I went to the office, little suspecting what was in store for me and how that day was destined to end our hitherto peaceful and happy life and probably alter the whole course of our lives in the future.

The warning was sounded at about 9.10am, just as I had arrived at the Library. I did not stay there, but went to the office and told the syce [*driver*] to put the car in Logan's Archway. Beach Street was full of people eager to see the planes. They came over the first batch of nine, glistening in the sun. They were over Beach Street and suddenly dived. I rushed into Mercantile Bank and then there was a crash and bombs were dropped further up Beach Street. Then there was a lull. I came out of the bank shelter and crossed Beach Street. I saw the planes again and rushed up Logan's Archway and sheltered at the bottom of the circular stairs. There were about 12 of us there, including **Heah Sing Whatt**, 3 of my clerks and the syce. There was a terrific bang and rush of air up the Archway which shook our door and threw us all backwards, but no one was hurt. We opened the door and found the passage choked with dust. After it had cleared, I went out into the yard and saw the remains of incendiary bombs still burning. The bomb had fallen on the Mercantile Bank and another fell near the Dispensary and swept through the shop. All windows in that part of Beach Street were smashed and the inside of offices and shops ruined. On going outside I saw flames coming out of the workshop of the Robinson Piano Co. I immediately called for help and after a time a stirrup pump was produced and the fire was put out. I returned to Beach Street and found the planes coming over again, so ran into the Chartered bank and sheltered there. This was the last flight over that part of the town. I told the syce to bring the car, which although suffering from the effects of the "blast" was still able to go. I went to the office by the back entrance and then observed that a big pile of [gunny] bags under the veranda of **Hagermeyer's** office was on fire. The syce and I pulled the sacks away and so saved the offices; if I had not seen it then nothing could have prevented the whole row being destroyed. I received no injury except a burnt hand. I should have mentioned that the furniture workshop of Pritchard & Co in Union Street was set on fire and was at this time blazing into the sky. No fire engines appeared on the scene. I went into the office, which was deserted. Parts of the ceiling and partitions had been blown out by the blast, but I had no time to put things straight. I collected a few documents and then got into the car. The syce was badly shaken and I was no better, but he said he could drive. In Light Street I saw that "**Phyllis**" shop and the front part of **Khoo Sian Ewe's** house were completely gutted by fire.

The Air Itam [or Ayer Hitam] Road was an indescribable sight, thousands of people in all sorts of conveyances and walking with handcarts, perambulators or any kind of wheeled vehicle stacked with their belongings, trekking God knows where for safety. I was told that there were over 50,000 people who had taken refuge in the Air Itam and Paya Terubong Valleys.

The Hill Railway Station was crowded with people wanting to go up there and I found **Mrs. Cooper** and **Mr. Lewis** of the George Town Dispensary also going up. My nerves were not as good as they should have been, and altogether I think I must have looked a sorry sight. On arrival at the top I got **Nagar Singh** to dress my hand and then went home and **Vi** who was much relieved to see me safe and sound. A stiff brandy ginger ale did something to prevent a nervous breakdown, which I felt was very near at hand. From the Hill we could see fires burning in many parts of the town. Bombs fell on the Central Market, Penang Road Fire Station, Magazine [Circle] shops in Campbell Street, premises of the Singapore Cold Storage, an oil mill at Sungei Pinang and other places. **Vi** had telephoned **Mrs. Watts**, wife of **H.K. Watts**, Manager of the Glugor Estate, who was living alone at Sungei Aea as her husband had been mobilized, to send her daughter **Anne** to us and to come up herself. **Anne** arrived with her amah and **Mrs. Watts** came up about 7pm. She was very plucky driving herself alone from Sungei Aea to the Air Itam Station [*at the bottom of the Penang Hill Railway*] as the roads were infested with bad characters on the lookout for what they could steal. **Gwynedd** also arrived as the Navy Office was suddenly closed and transferred to Singapore.

Planes came over again in the afternoon and bombed the aerodrome at Bayan Lepas and Butterworth [*Butterworth on the mainland opposite Penang Island*], otherwise the evening and night were uneventful. The closing of the Navy Office should have been a warning to us that Penang was not going to be held, notwithstanding the precautions which had been made. I did not go to the office again and I do not know what became of my car. I gave the syce permission to collect his family and take them to his mother's house at Glugor and never heard from him again.

The question of fresh food now became a serious problem as the Cold Storage could not guarantee to send up food as before and in fact we did not get anything more from them. They were selling on a cash basis and the shop was open from 6 to 10am. However, we had a fair amount of tinned milk and other food, also rice and flour. On Thursday afternoon the Deputy Food Controller sent up 20 bags of rice and 10 cases of milk for distribution among the coolies on the Hill and other people. Later he sent up another 10 bags of rice and milk, flour and cocoa. This relieved my mind, as coolies and others had begun to complain that they had "no makan" [*no food*]. They were stored in the PWD [*Public Works Department*] storehouse and **Kunail Singh** was to distribute on a rationing basis according to the numbers in a family. We soon got it working and everyone seemed to be satisfied when they realized they were not going to be allowed to starve.

### 12 December (Friday)

On the 12<sup>th</sup> December planes were over Penang again at 9.15am and dropped bombs in the Pulau Tikus area [*rat island near the coast*] and machine gunned in Burmah Road, North Beach and other streets. When they returned in the afternoon they encountered the first real resistance. Some of our fighters went up and shot down nine out of twelve of the enemy planes.

### 13 December (Saturday)

On the 13<sup>th</sup> December occurred the first breakup of the family. There were the usual warnings but the planes principally confined their attention to ships in the harbour. **Mrs. P.N. Knight** came up the Hill and brought some meat, bread, fruit etc., which was very welcome as we had had a further addition to my party. At about 10am a man (from Penang Harbour Board) and his wife with two infants appeared on our doorstep. They were looking for accommodation. Their house in Kelawei Road had been incessantly machine gunned and the wife was obviously on the verge of a collapse. All their servants had run away. As for some unknown reason the Government bungalows could not be used, although they were all unoccupied, we had to offer them shelter until I could see whether anything could be arranged. The day wore on without incident except the usual air raid warnings. At about 4pm whilst I was on duty at the Police Station, I received a telephone message from the CPO [*Chief Police Officer*] **Oakshott**, informing me that the Resident Councillor had ordered all European women and children to be evacuated from the Hill and directing me to give the necessary instructions. I proceeded to ring up the various occupants and gave them the orders. It was a long and tedious task and was not finished until after 6pm. **Vi** refused to leave me, also **Mrs. Brash**, **Mrs. Poelmann**, **Mrs. Flinter** and one or two others. I informed the CPO who agreed I would not compel them to go. I went to the Station and arranged with the Stationmaster he was to run the trains every quarter of an hour until all had been got away. On my return home at 6.30pm only **Vi** was in the house with **Anne**. **Mrs. Watts** had not then returned from Glugor. She arrived in time to pack her suitcase and catch the 7.15 train. We were now alone and the house seemed very empty. I had not been able to say "Good-bye" to **Gwynedd** as I was still at the telephone when she left. We were both very tired after all our labours and went to bed shortly after 9pm.

### 14 December (Sunday)

We were up again at 5.30am and prepared ourselves for another day. **Vi** came with me to the Police Station, but we had a quiet day, and no warnings at all. I should have taken this opportunity to put our house straight and hide some of our treasures, but somehow it had not dawned on me that we might be the next persons to be ordered down the Hill. I was on duty that night with **Das** until midnight and **Vi** came with me.

### 15 December (Monday)

On the next day (15<sup>th</sup>) we were up early and I was informed the Bus was out of order, which meant I should have to walk. The usual warning came at 9am and others during the day and a few bombs dropped. At 12 noon I received a message that **Mr. Rogers** was coming up the Hill and would I meet him at the Upper Station. I had just returned home so had to walk all the way back. At about 12.45pm **Rogers** arrived and told me that the RC [*Resident Councillor*] had ordered all Europeans to evacuate the Hill. I told him I could not go as I was in charge and I could not desert them all. He said I must go down and be at the E & O [*Eastern and Oriental*] Hotel at 6.30pm and that martial law was in force. I returned home and broke the news to **Vi** and told her I should stay. However, later **Rogers** telephoned to say I was to go. Then began a hurried packing and putting things away, and ultimately we were ready by 5pm and caught the 5.15pm down.

We were given a sad but very hearty send-off by the Station staff and most of the ARP wardens and that was the last we have seen of them. The servants were very good. I had not sufficient money to pay them any wages, but we gave them a considerable number of stores, rice etc. Our dog 'Patrick' was not in the house when we left and there had not been time to have him put down. We asked **Naga Singh** to look after him. And so we left our home, which had been our very own for just 2.5 months, and all our treasured belongings. It was tragic, but there was no looking back. We were going out into an unknown future and did not know what was in store for us. **Vi** was very brave. I had managed to telephone **Balfour Ross** before I left. He seemed very surprised that I should have been ordered to go and said he would try to see me at the E & O Hotel that evening. He did not come.

And so we proceeded down the Hill for the last time for many a day, leaving behind us our lovely and happy associations and I think the goodwill and affection of all those with whom we had come in contact during a period of nearly six years. It was a terrible break with the past and even now I cannot bear to think about it. **Rogers** and **John** [*his son-in-law JSA Lewis*] were at the Lower Station to meet us. We put our suitcases into the Customs van which **John** was driving and got into **Rogers'** car and were driven to the E & O Hotel. There was a large crowd of people in the lounge all waiting to be sent off "somewhere". We had drinks with **John** and at 7.30pm were out into cars, or rather packed into them. It was raining heavily and our progress along [Weld] Quay was agonizingly slow. At last we were allowed to disembark and found ourselves at the FMS Railway jetty. The luggage could not be found, so we had to proceed without it. **Mr. Watts** appeared on the scene and helped us and we scrambled on board a railway launch stumbling over packages etc. in the dark, but managing to keep together. The lower deck was packed with Indian soldiers and their baggage which added to the confusion and made it impossible to find one's luggage in the dark. At about 10.30pm we left the jetty and proceeded slowly to Prai [*a town near Butterworth on the mainland opposite Penang Island*]. We looked for our luggage and could only find my dispatch case and **Vi's** revelation case; her small suitcase and mine containing all my clothes could not be found and in fact we have never seen them again. This was a great blow to us and it seemed as though the little we had left to us was to be taken from us. We found seats in a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class carriage (later we found that all the carriages were 3<sup>rd</sup> Class), hard narrow wooden seats, most uncomfortable.

#### **16 December (Tuesday)**

The train left between midnight and 1am and we had not had anything to eat since our very hurried lunch. **Rogers** had given us a basket with cake and biscuits, but it was too dark to open them up. And so the long night went on with the train making interminable stops on the way. We arrived at Ipoh at about 10am. There was no food for us, but later tea appeared produced by a canteen service which was very welcome. At this stage there was an air raid and we all had to find shelter, the only available place being the booking office lounge which seemed as safe as anywhere. There were two raids which held us up until 1pm and then at last we were off again. We arrived in Kuala Lumpur at 4.50pm and found that a meal had been prepared for us, but **Vi** would not eat anything then, but wanted a bath. We went to the Station Hotel and changed and bathed. By this time most of the travellers had assembled in the lounge and we were informed we would have to stay in KL and that we could not go to Singapore unless we had got accommodation. We had none and did not know what to do as I had very little money. **Vi** had taken her PO Savings Bank Passbook but that was in the lost suitcase. We decided we would stay the night in the Hotel Lounge and were preparing a "shake-down" when a lady came up and offered us a shelter in her home. She was **Mrs. Gildersleaves** whose husband was in the Survey Department. We gratefully accepted and having secured our limited luggage we were motored to her house which was near the vicarage. The **Gildersleaves** were very kind and good to us and did all they could to make us comfortable and happy.

#### **17 December (Wednesday) to 1<sup>st</sup> January 1942 (Thursday)**

The next day we went immediately to the Govt. PO Savings Bank (Accountants Office) and after some delay obtained a new Passbook for **Vi** and an order to withdraw \$100. We then went to the station to see if we could find our missing luggage but there was no sign of it. After making some small but necessary purchases we returned to our new home. We stayed with the **Gildersleaves** until Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December. The day before **Vi** met our old friend **W.L. Blythe** who said we were to go to him as his spare room would be free the next day. He came for us and drove us to his house in the Lake Gardens and there we stayed until 1<sup>st</sup> January 1942. All this time, I was told I could not go to Singapore but on 31<sup>st</sup> December I went to see **Mr. Pendlebury** who was in charge of evacuees and told him I must get to Singapore in order to arrange my affairs and he finally gave me a permit to travel by train by the nightmail on 1<sup>st</sup> January with sleeping accommodation. **Blythe** was very kind and made us very comfortable.

**[To be continued in January 2017]**

## THE TALE OF A TABLE, JAVA 1942

By Flying Officer Claude McLaren-Reid

With thanks to Dave Croft RAF Butterworth and Penang Association

*[Editor: F. O. Claude McLaren-Reid had an interesting career. Thanks to Jonathan Moffatt for the following information about him:*

*Educated at the Royal Naval College, Osborne and Dartmouth. To Malaya 1926 as Assistant Superintendent of Excise FMS. By 1935 Customs & Excise Superintendent & Harbour Master, Port Dickson. Lt. SS RNVR till 2.41. From 1.42 RAFVR Flying Officer in Singapore, Batavia, Kalidjati. POW Java in Boei Glodok, Tandjong Priok, Cycle Camp, Depot Bandoeng L.O.G. [Lands Opvoedings Gesticht – a Dutch Gov. reformatory (prison)]. Camp Interpreter and Adjutant. Returned to Malaya 1946 Deputy Controller Customs & Excise in Ipoh, Penang & K.L. Controller of Customs Singapore 1951-52. Retired from Customs Service. District officer, Christmas Island 1953-1958.]*

The R.A.F. orderly room in Boei Glodok, the civil gaol in Batavia for long-term prisoners, in half of which some 1,200 R.A.F. personnel were crowded, was a cell-like room in the administration block some twelve feet by six. The furniture consisted of one small table, a chair and a couple of empty boxes, and the table did duty for the C.O., myself and the clerk, as necessity demanded.

After cajoling, threatening and imploring the officer in charge of the workshops for a month or more, an extra table was made for myself. The table was made from old sleeping boards used by the civil prisoners in peace time, but found to be hopelessly bug-ridden as to be unusable by our men. The top was a single piece of teak, approximately thirty-four inches by twenty inches. As Adjutant and Interpreter, my time was more than fully occupied for the first three months, but after that things got easier, and I occasionally found myself with nothing to do, there being very few (*things*) available. The then Japanese Commandant, a regular officer, had encouraged arts and crafts, and a successful exhibition had been held, many of the exhibits being made by expert hands. One day, it crossed my mind to do something of the sort myself, and the idea of carving the names of the Officers and Warrant Officers on my table occurred to me. I found that I had more space than was needed, so included a view of the solitary confinement cells. I finished up by placing a symbolic chain round the outside, the links being copied from the chains used on the civilian prisoners.

I managed to borrow an extremely blunt and jagged-edged gouge for a short while to remove the wood to give depth to the picture, but, apart from that, had only one blade of a "Dewars" advertisement penknife, a bone handled nail file and a sharpened nail or two to work with. It took nearly four months to complete and looked a pretty amateurish job when I had finished, but it kept me occupied and I was quite pleased with, not to say proud of it. In October (1942), the night before our first draft left, I got everyone available to autograph the back of it, but one man would never be there to sign. He had been captured one night early in April with two Sergeant pilots while making a gallant and very nearly successful attempt to steal an aircraft from the local aerodrome, after they had escaped from the gaol and made their way through the town. We never saw them again.

I put a coating of brown boot polish on the carving, made a three ply cover for it, and was looking for a place to hide it when, quite unexpectedly, in January 1943 the R.A.F. were moved to a camp at Tandjong Priok, the port for Batavia. Before leaving, I handed it over to a Dutch friend, **Lieut. G. Vischer, R.N.N.R.** to hide it for me. We stayed at Tandjong Priok only three months, and were moved to "Cycle Camp", Batavia, an old Dutch army barracks. Here I met **Lieut. Vischer** again. His crowd had been moved suddenly from Boei Glodok the day after we left, so he handed the table over to an Ambonese officer, who had been unable to hide it before he himself left and the gaol was closed.

The gaol was re-opened for some months as a rope-spinning factory, and several hundred British personnel went there from "Cycle Camp". The Adjutant found the table and looked after it, but, when the time came to leave, was too busy to hide it, so once again it was left lying about. Although they closed the gaol again, the Japanese decided to keep on the vegetable gardens around the gaol, and for quite a while a party went there daily from "Cycle Camp". The Dutch officer in charge of the party told me that he had been inside the gaol, and had seen the table stowed away in a furniture store. And that was the last I heard of it up to the time I left Java at the end of September 1945.

**London 1946.** One day in June, my friend **Dudley Grundy** telephoned to my flat and said he had great news for me. He had just heard from **"Wiggie", Squadron Leader C.C. Wigram\*** that a table had been found. **"Wiggie"** had just arrived from India, where he had been recuperating after our release, and on the way home in **H.M.T. 'Cape Town Castle'** had met a Wing Commander of the R.A.F. Regiment. It transpired that the latter had been in Java, particularly Batavia, and, while describing what had been going on there after the arrival of the British, mentioned that one of his raiding parties had found a bit of wood with a lot of names mentioned on it, and had taken charge of it. **"Wiggie"** recognized the description as that of my table top, and told the Wing Commander that he knew the owner and would pass on the information. As a result, I got in touch with the Wing Commander, who told me that the carving was in safe hands, but he could not say where.

At his suggestion, I went to the Historical Records Section of the Air Ministry – it was not there, but a lot of stuff was expected from Singapore, and I was assured that if it arrived, I would be informed at once. I then wrote to the Officer in charge of the Historical Records Section in Singapore asking him to keep it, if he had it, as I was sailing for Malaya very shortly. I received no answer to this letter.

When I reached Malaya, I started my search again. After a number of letters had been written and answered I traced the table top to the R.A.F. Provost and Security Service in Singapore, in whose custody it was pending onward transmission to the War Museum. I then wrote to the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief S.E.A. asking for the necessary authority for its release, and, on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1946, saw it again after nearly four years. It was a bit knocked about. Several of the letters were chipped and vandals had seen fit to knock a few rusty nails into it, but the boot polish finish was still there. The autographs on the back had nearly all faded away, and did so completely when I oiled the wood. I finished off the carving by inserting the date of our release, and by splitting the bottom centre link of the chain, which, with justifiable optimism, I had made larger than the others, in preparation for the day when our bonds would be broken. (I did not explain this to the Japanese who saw the table!). Now there was one thing left to do. There was space inside the broken link for an autograph, and there was one person only whose name I wanted there. I intended sending the carving itself to England, but it was bulky, and it would be inconvenient; in addition to which it would take months to get there and back. Instead of this, I took the spoon and fork which I had used throughout my prisoner-of-war time, which constituted the last of the 'Family Silver' the remainder having been looted from my house in Malaya, to a local silver-smith, who made a flat plate out of them. This I posted home by air mail, and, in a few weeks, it was returned, autographed, together with a short but gracious letter. A coat of varnish to keep the silver from oxidizing and into its place it went. Of those whose names are on the carving, the majority are alive, I send them this card as a memento of hard times shared, and with my best wishes for the future. To the relatives of those who are gone, I offer it as my humble tribute to the memory of the dead. **[Claude McLaren-Reid's inscribed silver cigarette case is shown left].**

Sept 1917 RN

Feb 1919 HMS Cumberland

Nov 1938 – Seremban

Jan 1942 – Singapore

From: P/O A.S. CONROY, D.A.F.M., 23 Provost Detachment, R.A.F. Batavia, N.I.  
 To: The President, Royal Air Force War Services Bureau, London, England  
 Date: 25.1.46.

**DISCUSE OF AN PLAQUE.**

This Plaque was recovered from Glodok Jail, Batavia, Java, by P/O A.S. Conroy, Deputy Assistant Provost Marshal, Royal Air Force, Netherlands East Indies. It is to be forwarded to the Royal Air Force War Services Bureau.

The marking is on a table top, the Jail Court yard is a residence of the part of the prison they were held prisoner in.

Well engraved by the staff of Royal Air Force prisoners of the notorious Glodok Jail is also forwarded.

*A.S. Conroy*  
 (A.S. Conroy) D.A.F.M.  
 23 Provost Detachment, Batavia, N.I.



The photo of the carved table is not clear enough to be reproduced here. But the names of Claude McLaren-Reid and MWF Tweedie can be made out – proving that the latter was indeed an RAF Officer and POW in Boei Glodok in Mar '42 [See P.8 of A.K. No: 47] Also see P.23\* 21.

## BOOKS

**“DORIS VAN DER STRATTEN. The Australian Mistress of the Japanese Commander of Kuala Lumpur.”** By Andrew Barber. Published by Karamoja Press. ISBN 978-983-43372-6-1

This is the true story of Doris van der Stratten, an Australian housewife who, at the onset of the Second World War, survived a massacre, a five-month trek through the jungles of Malaya, incarceration with POWs and then became the mistress of the Japanese Commander of the Kuala Lumpur Garrison, before he fell foul of the Japanese military police – the dreaded *Kempeitai* – and thus her fate was sealed. This is the story of her extraordinary life and tragic death.

**Andrew Barber** is the author of a number of books on Malaysia's colonial history. He is a former British Diplomat and a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society.

In the Epilogue to the book he writes:



“My interest in Doris van der Stratten stems from a book that I wrote in 2010 about the impact of the Second World War on Kuala Lumpur, a city I have lived in for almost twenty years. *“Kuala Lumpur at War 1939-1945”* was intended to explore the consequences of the conflict on the city and its people rather than tell the story of a military campaign, and in my research I came across various references to **Doris Heath/van der Stratten**. From this I pieced together the bare bones of her life, sad death and the subsequent war crimes trial. Her story was covered in five pages at the end of a chapter about Comfort Women. I wasn't entirely comfortable about this and certainly felt her extraordinary saga deserved better, but in the context of that particular book it was a fair outcome.

After *“Kuala Lumpur at War”* was published, work and other distractions stopped me pursuing new research projects ..... but the tale of **Doris van der Stratten** kept returning..... Eventually after a gap of some years I returned to the research trail. Unfortunately, as I knew from before, the **Murakami** court papers were missing from the dozens of other Small War Crimes Trials Court cases assembled by the

British War Office's 'Judge Advocates Office', whose dusty files now lie at the British National Archives at Kew. The records of these many trials held across south-east Asia in 1946 and 1947 offer a treasure trove of information about Japanese behaviour in the war, and about the *Kempeitai* and their methods. The Kuala Lumpur Trials themselves comprised over 20 cases, with the majority linked to the *Kempeitai*. Unfortunately, the file for Case No.128 – that of **Lt. Shuzi Murakami** of the Japanese Naval *Kempeitai* – is missing.

.....The truth (of what happened to **Doris**) will never be known. Come what may, it was extraordinary that **Murakami** walked free without any form of punishment.”

## THE STORY OF GANDER

**A Newfoundland dog posthumously awarded the Dickin Medal (Animal V.C.) in 2000 for his deeds in WW2.**

**Gander**, initially a family pet named **Pal**, accidentally scratched a child's face with his paw. Worried that he would be forced to have **Pal** put down, the original owner gave the large dog to **The Royal Rifles of Canada**, a regiment of the Canadian Army stationed at Gander International Airport, Newfoundland and Labrador. The soldiers quickly renamed him **Gander** and “promoted” him to sergeant. When the unit was shipped to Hong Kong in the fall of 1941, **Gander** went along.

The Battle of Hong Kong began on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941, the day after the attack on Pearl Harbour. **Gander** helped fight the Japanese invaders on three occasions. The last time, **Gander** picked up a thrown Japanese hand grenade and rushed with it toward the enemy, dying in the ensuing explosion, but saving the lives of several wounded Canadian soldiers.

After efforts by the Canadian War Museum, the Hong Kong Veterans' Associations & Commemorative Association, the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals awarded the Dickin Medal on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2000, the first such award since 1949. The citation reads:

*“For saving the lives of Canadian infantrymen during the Battle of Lye Mun on Hong Kong Island in December 1941. On three documented occasions, Gander, the Newfoundland mascot of The Royal Rifles of Canada, engaged the enemy as his regiment joined The Winnipeg Grenadiers, members of the Battalion Headquarters “C” Forces and other Commonwealth troops in their courageous defence of the island. Twice Gander's attacks halted the enemy's advance and protected groups of wounded soldiers. In a final act of bravery, the war dog was killed in action gathering a grenade. Without Gander's intervention, many more lives would have been lost in the assault.”*

At the insistence of survivors of the battle, his name was listed with those of 1,975 men and two women on the Hong Kong Veterans Memorial Wall in Ottawa, Canada.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2015, statues of **Gander** and his handler were unveiled at Gander Heritage Memorial Park in Gander, Newfoundland. [With thanks to **Sallie Hammond** for this story.]

## OBITUARIES

### PRESIDENT S.R. NATHAN OF SINGAPORE.

It was with sadness that we heard the news of the death of Singapore's former president aged 92. Born in Singapore, Mr. Nathan spent his early years in Muar, Johore, Malaysia, where he worked for some time after the Second World War in the Johore Civil Service. He played an important role in keeping the close ties between Singapore and Malaysia on an even keel, according to Malaysia's High Commissioner to Singapore, **Datuk Ilango Karuppannan**, having served as Singapore's High Commissioner to Malaysia in 1988. He also served as Ambassador to the United States and as Ambassador-at-large. Both the Prime Minister **Lee Hsien Loong** and H.E. President **Tony Tan** paid tributes to the former president and offered condolences to this family. President **Tan** said, "I had the privilege of working with Mr. Nathan from 1996 to 1999 when I was deputy prime minister and minister for defence. He helped set up the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, which is now the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies. The school is ranked among the top think tanks in the region."



S.R. Nathan

We are also sad to announce the deaths of former Far East veterans of WW2 and the Emergency – many of whom gave exemplary and courageous service to their country and to the defence of Malaya.

**Cynthia Cooke** was a Royal Navy Nurse who, at the age of 26, volunteered to tend hundreds of traumatized men recently released from the Japanese POW camps. She served on board *HMS Formidable* which notched up 100,000 miles collecting and repatriating Australian soldiers returning from the Far East plus 14,000 former POWs. She sailed with the ship to Rabaul in Papua New Guinea to rescue 1,254 Indian soldiers and return them to Bombay. All were suffering from malaria and eczema and were in a terrible condition. Repatriation was slow, but by the end of October 1945 some 70,000 had been repatriated to India, Australia and the U.K.

The experience marked a life-long devotion to nursing, and in 1973 she became matron-in-chief of the QARNNS – the nursing arm of the Navy, and was appointed CBE in 1975. She died in April aged 96.

Actor **Peter Fontaine (born Pexton)** died in June aged 95. When war broke out he joined the Royal Corps of Signals and latterly served in Burma as part of General Slim's "Forgotten Army". He became a versatile actor and appeared in over 100 films and TV productions. He attended the V-J Day Parade in Whitehall in 2015 as a Burma Star Veteran helped by his wife and daughter.

**Lt. Col. Edward Gopsill** served with the Gurkhas during WW2, and was awarded an MC and DSO while serving on operations in Indo-China and Malaya. He was in Malaya during the 'Emergency' and took part in several dangerous missions to flush out and destroy C.T camps. In December 1949, while in command of a company of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 6<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles he received news of a platoon of 1/10 GR following a large group of Cts about 150 strong. With his 60 men he launched a surprise attack and despite coming under heavy fire, beat off the Cts who fled. He was awarded a DSO for his leadership. He was involved with other skirmishes, and in one heated battle saved a Platoon of his company commanded by a Gurkha officer from the enemy. He remained committed to the Gurkhas throughout his life, and was involved with the Gurkha Memorial at the NMA – just above the MVG's Memorial Garden. He died in July aged 94.

**Lt. Col. Peter Kemmis Betty** died in August this year aged 100. He was a career soldier and fought a series of rear-guard actions during the retreat down Malaya in the Malayan Campaign, and was awarded the MC. He was commissioned into the Indian Army in 1936 and attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion The Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) in Delhi. He joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> King Edward V11's Own Goorkha Rifles (2/2GR), part of 28<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Brigade, 11<sup>th</sup> Indian Division. In 1937 and in 1941 they were sent to Malaya. Their base camp was near Ipoh, from where they took part in the fighting against the Japanese. They took part in the 4-day battle at Kampar and were forced to withdraw to the Slim River. Attacked by the Japs with tanks, 2/2 GR were outflanked by the enemy and when the bridge over the river was blown, the men were stranded on the far bank. Many were killed or drowned trying to swim across the river. The battalion marched south along the railway line, exhausted. At Parit Bunta they were bombed by enemy aircraft and suffered many casualties.

After retreating to Singapore, 2/2 GR were tasked with defending the naval base on the north-east of the island. After the causeway was blown, the Japs crossed the Johore Straits in small boats and 2/2 GR were ordered to withdraw again. In the Bukit Timah area they established a strong defensive position and were appalled when the order to surrender came. Having been wounded north of K.L., **Kemis Betty** was interned in Changi POW Camp where he created a vegetable garden and helped to rewrite the Battalion war diary which had been lost during the withdrawal. After his release, he stayed behind in Malaya to collect other survivors of the battalion. His MC was gazetted in 1946 and the citation read: "Although worn out himself, his cool judgment, calm orders and cheerful bearing so inspired his exhausted men that not once did his Company fail to hold its position or withdraw until ordered to do so. Despite suffering heavy casualties, it remained an organized, disciplined fighting force right up to the surrender."

Post-war, **Lt. Col. Kemis Betty** continued his army career in India, returning to Malaya with 2/2 GR in 1948 to serve during the Emergency. He stayed in Malaya until 1954 and then postings to Hong Kong and Singapore followed. But in 1958 he returned to Malaya once again and took command of 2/2 GR, and was mentioned in dispatches. After 3 years at the Joint Services College as Commandant, he was moved to Kathmandu as Military Attache. He ended his career in the UK on the Regular Commission Board at Westbury.

**\*The historical obituary of Cyril Charles Wigram – Somerset L.I., RFC & RAF 1900-1946.**

In 1939, he joined the RAFVR and was sent to the Far East. Captured on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1942 in Java, he became a POW at Boei Glodok with other members of the RAF. After recuperation in India he returned to England in 1946 and married the widow of his tenant who had lived in his house. The marriage failed and he died in 1952 aged 70. He is mentioned in the **Java Table Story\* on Ps. 20 & 21.**



## ML – KNIL VILDEBEEST AIRCRAFT

With thanks to Dave Croft of the RAFBPA for this article

Did the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army Air Force (ML-KNIL) fly Vickers Vildebeest biplanes over Malaya during the Malayan Campaign?

In his very readable book, *“The Naked Island”*, **Russell Braddon** writes of his experiences in the battle of Muar (14<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> January 1942) and says “...the three Dutch Wilderbeestes (*sic*) which passed our way daily and seemed to be our only Air Force in Malaya...” He later writes of an escape party set to make a break from Pudu Gaol “...a second (recruit) a young Dutchman called **Jan** who, as a co-pilot of a Wildebeeste (*sic*), had already survived death when his plane crashed in flames and he found himself without a parachute. He had climbed onto the tail of the blazing plane – the only portion not alight – and when it struck earth, he had been catapulted hundreds of feet through the air into the soft foliage of the top of a high jungle tree. He had climbed down unharmed...”

When a book is written, mainly from memory a number of years after the experiences the author suffered, both as soldier in combat and then as a POW of the Japanese, mistakes are bound to creep in and this is one area where I think this happened. Starting with the Vickers Vildebeest, the biplane torpedo bomber that was still in service with 36 and 100 Squadrons of the RAF at the outbreak of war in Malaya in 1941. These RAF aircraft did fly over the Muar battlefield, and all returned to Seletar. The biggest loss of these aircraft was at Endau (Battle of Endau 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> January 1942) on the east coast shortly after the Battle of Muar. A careful check of operators of the Vildebeest shows them to be solely RAF and RNZAF, although both RAF Squadrons did have a fair number of Australian and New Zealand aircrew at the time and, according to **James McEwan** (*The Remorseless Road*) being the rear gunner in a Vildebeest was a jealously guarded monopoly of the Australians. I can't see a young NEI airman taking the place of a seasoned Australian air gunner in a Vildebeest! But **Russell Braddon**, writing some 45 years earlier, would not have known that!

Through an agreement between the two major players, on the outbreak of war ML-KNIL aircraft would operate from a Singapore air base (Sembawang), these comprising a fighter squadron flying the Dutch variant of the Brewster Buffalo, and a bomber squadron operating Glenn Martin twin engine aircraft. Both aircraft types, in ML-KNIL markings and camouflage, flew operations with RAF, RAAF and RNZAF aircraft until those still flying in early 1942 were recalled to help defend the homeland.

### **Allied Air Operations over Muar Battlefield.**

On the **15<sup>th</sup> January 1942**, 12 plus Buffaloes from 21 RAAF Squadron (so named to avoid confusion with No: 21 Squadron RAF) and 453 Squadron RAAF, also 6 RAAF Hudsons, 3 Blenheims and 6 Glenn Martins attacked a convoy of ships off Port Dickson. There were no losses.

**16<sup>th</sup> January.** Japanese vehicles on the Gemas-Tampin road were attacked by 6 Glenn Martins, escorted by 12 Buffaloes of 21 and 453 RAAF Squadrons. Again no losses.

**17<sup>th</sup> January.** 6 Buffaloes from 21 and 453 Squadrons escorted 9 RAF Vildebeests to the Muar area. Again no losses through enemy action at the time, but the Japanese retaliated with a raid on Sembawang by 24 Mitsubishi G3M bombers, destroying 3 Buffaloes and seriously damaging another 5. Also 3 Hudsons were destroyed and 3 seriously damaged. Additionally 453 Squadron's Tiger Moth was also destroyed. It seems the Japs were very annoyed this time round.

During the raid an injured Dutch pilot, **Ensign Frits Pelder**, was carried to safety by RAAF **Sergeant R. Wheatley**, who risked his own life when ammunition was exploding all around. He was awarded the George Medal for this action.

**19<sup>th</sup> January.** 8 RAAF Buffaloes from Sembawang escorted 3 (possibly 4 depending on reference sources) Glenn Martins on an attack on Muar. The attacking party also included 5 Wirraway aircraft from Kluang. In this raid one Buffalo and one Wirraway were shot down, and all of the ML-KNIL Glenn Martins. A report from a 243 Squadron Buffalo pilot states that from a distance he had seen Japanese fighters attack one of the bombers which “...went down in a near vertical dive, the fighters following. One of these then turned into the bomber and raked it with fire, hitting the long ‘greenhouse’ cockpit and fuselage, the doomed aircraft crashing in a mass of flames.” Could this be the aircraft **Russell Braddon** writes about, and the young Dutch co-pilot of the ‘Wildebeeste’ (**which they didn't have**) was really the rear gunner of the flaming Glenn Martin?

The escape from Pudu failed...the escapees, including the young Dutch aircrew member, were recaptured in a very short space of time and after days of interrogation by the Japanese were driven to the Cheras Cemetery and executed.

I think it is fair to say that the evidence so far discovered, points to the young Dutch airman possibly being the rear gunner of one of the Dutch Glenn Martin bombers shot down in the Muar area on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 1942.

Further research reveals him to be **Sergeant Jan van Greveld** of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army Air Force (ML-KNIL). The date of his execution was given as ‘September 1942’ but an educated guess would place this as **16<sup>th</sup> September 1942**, in line with the dates of the deaths of the other members of the escape party given as the 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> September. These executions appeared to have been carried out in order of rank, with the two Sergeants first.

However, both **Russell Braddon** (*The Naked Island*) and **Bill Pearson** (*Captive Memories*, A.K. April 2015) state that all left Pudu Gaol at the same time under escort. This also raises the question of where they were held until they were taken to Cheras?

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### SATURDAY – 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2016. Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club, Piccadilly, London, 12-4 p.m.

There are still places available if you wish to attend this annual event, but please let **Rosemary** know immediately if you decide to come, and payment must be made at the same time. Cheques should be made payable to:

**Mrs. R. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group** and sent to the address on P.27

A BAC payment may also be made into the MVG account. The cost of the lunch is **£38 per person**. The set 3-course meal is leek and potato soup, steak, kidney and mushroom pie with seasonal vegetables, followed by sherry trifle and tea or coffee with petit fours. A vegetarian option is available on request with your booking, or any other dietary needs. A pay bar is available where drinks can be purchased.

The speaker this year is MVG member **Ruth Rollitt** who will be coming to talk about her father's work as an architect in Ipoh both pre- and post-war. Her talk is entitled, "**Iversen: Architect of Ipoh and Modern Malaya.**"

Please sign in at the front desk when you arrive and leave your coats and bags in the cloakroom on the ground floor or in the Ladies' Powder Room opposite the ballroom which is on the first floor. The Ballroom can be accessed by lift or by the stairs. A raffle will be held as usual for Group funds. Please bring a prize with you. There will also be an exhibition of old photographs from pre-war Malaya.

We look forward to seeing you and to meeting members who have not been before.

### THURSDAY – 10<sup>th</sup> November 2016. Cross Planting Ceremony at Westminster Abbey.

We are grateful to **Merilyn Hywel-Jones** for obtaining the tickets for members who wish to attend this annual ceremony. Due to an administrative failure, the MVG's 8 inch Cross has been misplaced, and a new one has been ordered through the **Revd. Pauline Simpson** Secretary and FEPOW Chaplain of the National FEPOW Fellowship Welfare Remembrance Association (NFFWRA). This will have the MVG's logo in the centre in place of the SSVF badge. The cross will be planted in the FEPOW Plot which is maintained by the NFFWRA and organised by **Pauline**.

The Field of Remembrance is well worth a visit if you are in London over the weekend of Remembrance Sunday.

### SUNDAY – 13<sup>th</sup> November 2016. Remembrance Sunday Service at the Cenotaph in Whitehall.

We are extremely disappointed to report that this year the Malayan Volunteer Forces will not be represented on Remembrance Sunday by a contingent of Malayan Volunteers Group members, as explained in the Editorial.

Having not received a printed application form by September, a telephone call to the RBL Headquarters revealed that all applications were to be digitized and had to be made online. The information was not sent to the MVG, despite having marched for the past 12 years. New computer software had to be downloaded before the application form could be opened and printed. The form required numerous details about each marcher including date and place of birth, for security reasons we were told. Finally, the completed form was returned to the RBL and we received an e-mail offering the MVG 2 tickets on the grounds that we had no veterans marching and that the RBL wished to make room for more veterans to march this year. Our marchers agreed that this was not acceptable and that unless we could march as a group of 12 we should reject the 2 tickets on offer. This has been done with a strongly worded reply that our veterans are too elderly to march, and that we are representing them and the civilians who were also prisoners of the Japanese.

It was also felt that, as the MVG had been shown marching last year on the BBC's TV coverage on the Red Button and mentioned in the commentary, we had achieved recognition and gone out on a high. Next year, things may change and we may be able to march again as a group.

**Donald and Rosemary Fell** have decided to attend the service and watch from the sidelines this year, and make a report in January. It will be interesting to see which groups are marching this year, and how many veterans are there.

### SATURDAY -10<sup>th</sup> December 2016. Commemoration of the sinking of HMS Prince of Wales and Repulse at the NMA.

Please contact **Bob Hall** for details if you wish to attend this service – or visit the NMA's website.

### 75<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE FALL OF SINGAPORE – 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017

A programme of events has been arranged by the MVG to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore next February and we hope that we will be represented by members from Malaysia, Singapore and Australia as well as the United Kingdom. The events have been arranged on consecutive days to allow member to attend other seminars, exhibitions or meetings which we expect the Singapore Government to arrange in conjunction with the Changi Museum, Singapore History Consultants, National Archives of Singapore and the National Heritage Board. As soon as we have any details we will let you know.

#### Tuesday – 14<sup>th</sup> February

Buffet-style "makan kecil" lunch for MVG members and guests – venue to be announced.

#### Wednesday – 15<sup>th</sup> February

Morning Service at the Civilian War Memorial – War Memorial Park, Beach Road - own transport.

Afternoon service at Kranji CWGC – coach to and from Kranji – pick-up and drop-off at the YWCA – Fort Canning Road - times to be announced.

Cost – SING\$ 15 per person

#### **Thursday – 16<sup>th</sup> February**

Customised Military Tour with Guide arranged by Journeys Pte. Ltd.

- MacRitchie Reservoir (Grave of Lim Bo Seng & Force 136 Memorial)
- Seletar Airfield
- Lunch (cost included in the Tour – at Seletar Country Club or Sembawang Club)
- Drive past Sembawang Military Airfield
- Singapore Naval Base (if clearance is received)
- Woodlands Causeway Sector (Revisiting the 27<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 8<sup>th</sup> Division AIF site & focus on the defence of the Causeway)

**Cost – based on 20 persons – SING\$98 per person.**

Coach to pick-up and drop-off at the YWCA – times to be announced.

Details of length of visit, addresses of accommodation and contact telephone numbers will be required in due course.

#### **PERTH – W. AUSTRALIA – 14<sup>th</sup> 2017. Service of Commemoration for the Massacre of the Australian Army Nurses.**

Australian members who wish to attend this service, please contact **Robert Gray** for details.

#### **PERTH – W. AUSTRALIA – 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017. Service to mark the Fall of Singapore.**

Please contact **Elizabeth Adamson** for confirmed date, times and other details. The Fall of Singapore Service in Stirling Memorial Gardens may be changed from midweek to the Saturday before or after the 15<sup>th</sup> February.

#### **MUNTOK – BANKA ISLAND – SUMATRA – 16<sup>th</sup> February 2017. Memorial Service on Radji Beach.**

Please contact **Judy Balcombe** for details. The service is being arranged by **Michael Noyce**, nephew of Australian Army Nurse **Kathleen Neuss** who was one of the nurses massacred on the beach in 14<sup>th</sup> February 1942. The service is in memory of all internees and military POWs.

#### **FRIDAY – SUNDAY – 9<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> June 2017. RFH Group's 6<sup>th</sup> International FEPOW Conference in Liverpool.**

**"Legacies of far East Captivity: Sharing Family Archives, Histories and the Post-War Impact of Health Issues."**

The Conference is co-hosted by the Researching FEPOW History Group and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. Those of you who went to the last Conference in 2015 found it to be interesting, informative and fun with international speakers from all over the world, and all experts in their own field. The following speakers have been confirmed:

**Anne Wheeler** (Canadian film producer and creator of 'A War Story')

**Frank Taylor** (Australian military history tours, Borneo Camps)

**Rod Beattie** (Thailand-Burma Railway Centre)

**Jeyathurai Ayadurai** (Changi Museum, Singapore)

**Michiel Schwartzberg** (International Committee of the Red Cross)

**Flora Chong** (ALPHA Education – teaching younger generations about the war in the Far East)

If you wish to book, there may still be room, but contact **Lizzie Oliver** as soon as possible, as registration forms were requested before mid September 2016

[lizzie.oliver@outlook.com](mailto:lizzie.oliver@outlook.com)

Registration forms can be downloaded at:

<https://fepowhistory.wordpress.com>

Cost is £120 per person.

#### **LIST OF MEMBERS**

An up-to-date list of members is included with the newsletter. Please check that your entry is correct – particularly e-mail addresses. If there are any corrections to be made, or you wish to change your entry for another year, please let **Rosemary** know. The changes will be sent out in January with the list of new members.

#### **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

The subscription rate for 2017-18 stays at **£20 per family**. It would be very helpful if members would please pay promptly in **April** when subscriptions are due. A subscription letter is sent out in April with the newsletter, with details of the MVG's bank account for those wishing to pay by a BAC transfer, and the address for a cheque payment. Payment may also be made by **Standing Order**. This has to be set up by individual members with their own bank. The MVG has no powers to alter a Standing Order or take the money from members' accounts. Thank you very much to everyone who has paid promptly – it makes the collection of subscriptions much easier for our regional secretaries as well here in the U.K.

#### **PASSWORD FOR ACCESSING BACK COPIES OF THE NEWSLETTER ON THE WEBSITE.**

The current password for this year is **"Kelantan."**

We apologise for the fact that some of the recent newsletters have not yet been uploaded onto the website. The situation is being monitored and we will add these as soon as possible.

## **ANNUAL ACCOUNTS**

The annual accounts are currently being prepared, and copies of the Income and Expenditure Sheet will be ready for distribution with the January newsletter. We are very grateful to Miss Sara Haines of SJA Accountants Ltd. for auditing these accounts free of charge once again.

## **GROUP PHOTOGRAPH OF MVG MEMBERS WITH HIS EXCELLENCY MR. S.R. NATHAN IN 2008**



This photograph has recently come to light. It was taken at the Reception at the Bark Café following the presentation of the teak board with the 5 Volunteer Forces badges to the Changi Museum on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2008. This was unveiled during the presentation ceremony by His Excellency, Mr. S.R. Nathan, the then President of the Republic of Singapore. H.E. made us all feel very welcome and was very gracious in feely giving his time to talk to members after the ceremony. It is a lovely reminder of a very special day.

## **CONTACTS**

### **ELIZABETH ADAMSON – MVG SECRETARY in AUSTRALIA**

5, Penistone Street, Greenwood 6024, Perth, Western Australia.

Tel: 089247 3374 e-mail: [bunneyelizabeth5@gmail.com](mailto:bunneyelizabeth5@gmail.com)

### **ANDREW HWANG – MVG SECRETARY IN MALAYSIA and SINGAPORE**

28, Jalan Batu Laut, Taman Bukit Seputeh, 58000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

e-mail: [ayl.hwang@gmail.com](mailto:ayl.hwang@gmail.com)

### **JONATHAN MOFFATT – MVG HISTORIAN and ARCHIVIST**

49, Coombe Drive, Binley Woods, Coventry CV3 2QU.

Tel: 02476 545 013 e-mail: [jonathanmoffatt@btinternet.com](mailto:jonathanmoffatt@btinternet.com)

### **MERILYN HYWEL-JONES – CROSS PLANTING CEREMONY AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY**

37, Gowan Avenue, Fulham, London SW6 6RH.

Tel: 020 7736 6324

### **ROSEMARY FELL – SECRETARY – EDITOR of APA KHABAR – MEMEBRSHIP – SUBSCRIPTIONS & DONATIONS**

Millbrook House, Stoney Lane, Axminster Devon EX13 5EE.

Tel: 01297 33045 e-mail: [rosemaryfell11@gmail.com](mailto:rosemaryfell11@gmail.com)

# A letter from Normandy to Abe: Lessons for Japan from WWII

On Monday, Japan marked the 73rd anniversary of its surrender in World War II. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe carefully avoided mention of Japan's wartime aggression overseas and any mention of remorse.

The writer urges Mr Abe to visit Normandy and learn from Europe's way of getting past its bloody history.

**Jean-Pierre Lehmann**

For The Straits Times

Dear Prime Minister,

I spent a few days with my grandchildren visiting the beaches in Normandy in France that witnessed the landings of D-Day and the cities and towns that were ravaged by the fighting; these represent the first crucial steps to eventually bringing an end to World War II in Europe.

We also visited the monuments and especially the cemeteries that bring forth a stark reminder of the deaths of the thousands of young men who perished so that subsequent generations might live.

Victory in Europe (VE) also allowed Allied troops to go to the assistance of China, which had held the Asian front against the onslaught of Nazi Germany's erstwhile ally, Japan, for the long, excruciatingly bloody, years of the Pacific War.

Thus, VE Day on May 8, 1945, after still more immense bloodshed, ultimately led to Victory over Japan (VJ) Day on Sept 2, had there not been VE Day, VJ Day may have been much more distant, or may indeed have not occurred.

I do not know if you have visited these sites in Normandy, but I would strongly urge you to do so. Among the many thoughts that

come to mind is how terrible it would have been for us, the post-World War II generations (I was born three days before VJ Day), had these young men not given their lives.

Imagine, Prime Minister, the truly horrific nightmare of a world dominated by Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and militarist Japan – which would probably have found some arrangement with Stalinist Russia – as opposed to the one in which you and I, and our children, were most fortunate to live. With VE and VJ Days, it was not just the Allies that won, the whole world won, including Germany, Italy and Japan.

Prime Minister, surely had Japan not lost the war and your grandfather – Nobusuke Kishi – and his militarist government dominated by fundamentalist "Japanist" ideology survived, the Japanese people would not have experienced the tremendous benefits that peace, prosperity and democracy have brought since 1945.

The victory ended not only the dictatorial rule of the Axis countries, but also eliminated Germany's Gestapo and Japan's Kempeitai, their respective secret police forces, well known for their arbitrary arrests and torture techniques.

That the victories were not simply for the winners of the war, as had arguably been the case with the end of World War I, but also for the "losers", is a proposition that no responsible German, whether in business, in politics, in the civil service, in academia, or in the media would contest.

Visitors to the cemeteries in Normandy include not only Americans, Canadians, Britons, Belgians, Dutch, French and Danes, but also Germans and Italians. The German and Japanese governments in the 1930s, and until their defeats, caused immense suffering to the people of the countries they occupied as well as to their own populations.

When you visit the cemeteries (which, as I say, if you have not yet, I hope you will) you cannot help

but be truly moved upon looking at the endless rows of tombs on which you read the names of the fallen heroes – though some were never recognised, and hence remain anonymous – and their ages, most of whom were in their late teens and very early 20s when they fell.

At least there is the consolation that they did not die in vain. The situation in Europe at the moment is far from ideal: there are many things to worry about regarding the Europe that my grandchildren will inherit. War in Europe, however, is not one of them.

## PACIFIST EUROPE, TURBULENT ASIA

There are many reasons for this. A major one is the unqualified recognition by Germans of their war guilt and of the abysmal evil of the Nazi regime. In contrast to the Yasukuni Shrine, there is no Nazi sanctuary that German political leaders visit for reasons of nostalgia and to worship their war criminals.

As a Frenchman, whose father spent time in a German prisoner of war camp, from which he fortunately escaped, I feel no suspicion, apprehension or wanting revenge towards Germans.

For my children (born in the 1970s) and grandchildren, Germans are fellow Europeans and human beings, not hated erstwhile enemies not to be trusted.

This pacific serenity in Europe stands in stark contrast with the turbulent situation in Asia. Again, there are, of course, many reasons for this turbulence. In good part, however, it arises from the stark contrast in the behaviour and attitudes of some Japanese political and thought leaders compared with their German counterparts. (In that context, if you have not already done so, I strongly recommend you read the book by Mr Ian Buruma, *The Wages Of Guilt: Memories Of War In Germany And Japan*. It was written more than 20 years ago, but still rings true today.)

The Yasukuni Shrine, which harbours the spirits of, among others, over a thousand war criminals, including 14 Class A war

criminals, stands out as a symbol of Japanese Pacific War ideological and historical defiance.

It was while I was in Normandy, deep in thought over the history and meaning of the end of World War II and its legacies in Europe and Asia, that I learnt of the appointment of Ms Tomomi Inada as your Minister of Defence.

Ms Inada has been a regular visitor to Yasukuni; she has been ambivalent over Japan's war crimes and whether Japan invaded China. Such a scenario would be completely unthinkable for a defence minister – or indeed any minister – in Germany.

Nazi Germany and militarist Japan were close allies in the 1930s and 40s. For many this was not simply an alliance of convenience on their respective western and eastern fronts, but an ideological alliance.

As you must know, your grandfather, Kishi, who, among other official posts, served as Minister for Munitions in the government (1941-44) of Hideki

**Prime Minister, surely had Japan not lost the war and your grandfather – Nobusuke Kishi – and his militarist government dominated by fundamentalist "Japanist" ideology survived, the Japanese people would not have experienced the tremendous benefits that peace, prosperity and democracy have brought since 1945.**

Tojo, was a follower of the Japanese fascist author Ikki Kita and, from 1933 onwards, frequently praised Nazi Germany as a model for Japan in his speeches. The Ministry of Munitions was responsible for forcing thousands of Koreans and Chinese into slave labour in Japanese mines and factories.

In her remarks quoted in the media, Ms Inada stated that alleged war crimes by Japan were matters of assessment and not objective facts.

Prime Minister, we know that while there may be some discrepancies in respect to, for example, the number actually killed in the 1937 Nanjing Massacre or the number of Chinese and Korean slave labourers in Japanese factories and mines, or the number of women forced into prostitution by the Japanese military in Korea, Taiwan, China, the Philippines, Indonesia and Burma, that they existed are objective facts and matters of interpretation.

I truly regret having to address these painful subjects in this open letter, including the complicity of your grandfather in the carnage and havoc that Japan wreaked in the 1930s and 40s.

It is absolutely impossible to imagine that I would need to have such a correspondence with a German chancellor or an Italian prime minister. The fact that such correspondence is impossible to imagine is why it is possible to imagine that, whatever happens, peace will reign in Europe.

Only when Japan comes squared to recognise its past guilt, only when political leaders stop visiting Yasukuni, only when they stop equivocating over the crimes committed during the Pacific War can the same be imagined in Asia.

In the meantime, perhaps you, as well as Ms Inada and others nostalgic for Japan's militarist and imperialist past, might visit the cemeteries and monuments on the beaches of Normandy and reflect.

Indeed, Japanese leaders visiting the cemeteries in Normandy in lieu of Yasukuni could well be a symbolically constructive step to eventual peace in Asia.

If Japan and the Asia-Pacific cannot come to peaceful terms in respect to the past, peace for the future will remain extremely fragile.

stpoinion@sph.com.sg

• Jean-Pierre Lehmann is emeritus professor of international political economy at IMD business school with campuses in Lausanne and Singapore, and visiting professor at Hong Kong University.