

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



50TH EDITION
APRIL 2017



Captain Ho Weng Toh, Vilma Howe and Olga Henderson walk to lay their wreaths during the Kranji Service, 15th February, 2017.

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MVG MEMBERS COMMEMORATE THE FALL OF SINGAPORE AND ITS AFTERMATH 75 YEARS ON AT SERVICES IN SINGAPORE, SUMATRA AND PERTH, WA

15th February 1942 - a date which changed the lives of millions of people.

The 75th anniversary of this important date in history, when Singapore fell to the Japanese resulting in three and a half years of untold misery and hardship for millions of people across the Far East, was remembered and commemorated by MVG members from various parts of the world at services in Singapore, Sumatra and Perth, Western Australia. Sadly, it is a date which passes with hardly a flicker of recognition by many people in today's busy life, and this makes it all the more important for those of us whose families were torn apart by this disaster, never to forget what a tragedy was to unfold. The profound depth of feeling at the service which took place in Kranji Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, Singapore, on that date in February this year, was tangible in the desire to remember the suffering yet pray for forgiveness and peace. Members also attended services at the Civilian War Memorial on Beach Road and the Australian Dawn Service on Sarimbun Beach. A report on the Kranji Service is given by **Rosemary Gransden** in the supplementary booklet, together with other reports. Other equally poignant services were held in Stirling Memorial Gardens, Perth WA; at the Australian Army Nurses' Memorial at Point Walter Reserve in Perth WA and on Radji Beach at Muntok, Bangka Island, Sumatra. Reports on these services have been sent by **Bill Adamson**, **Robert Gray** and **Judy Balcombe** respectively.

MVG members attended other events in Singapore including a buffet luncheon at the Singapore Cricket Club at the invitation of **Neill** and **Morag Aitken**; a Military Tour arranged for the MVG by Journeys Pte. of Singapore; and a Battlefield Tour by **Jon Cooper**. Reports on these events have been written by **Liz Moggie**, **Henry Langley** and **Jane Nielsen**. We thank everyone who has written these for the newsletter.

Since the MVG's visit to Singapore in September 2015 for the unveiling of the Sime Road Plaque at the Changi Museum, two other important Museums, which were then closed for refurbishment, have now reopened. They are **The Battlebox**, where **Lt. Gen. Percival** conducted the final stages of the Malayan Campaign and where he made the difficult decision to surrender to the Japanese, and the **Former Ford Factory** where the surrender took place. It was decided not to include visits to these Museums on our military tour, but to leave it to members to go by themselves during their stay. Those who went to **The Battlebox** (under the management of the Changi Museum) have said how worthwhile it was. The **Former Ford Factory** was only due to open on 15th February. Under the management of the National Archives of Singapore, it had been re-named "**Shonan Gallery**" causing much controversy in Singapore – so much so that before the end of the week in which it opened, workmen were removing the new sign for the gallery and replacing it with its original name - the **Former Ford Factory**. This sign of "people power" was quite an event in Singapore, where public opinion is not often successful in overturning decisions. **The Straits Times** newspaper gave good coverage of all the commemoration events in Singapore, including a cogent article on why the **Former Ford Factory's** name should be retained and not changed.

A privately organised visit to Sumatra and Java took place after the events in Singapore. The group included some MVG members, and we thank **Imogen Holmes** for her comprehensive report on this visit. As well as travelling to Palembang and Muntok to find the wartime places where the civilian men, women and children had been captured and interned, one of the main purposes of this visit was to try to locate the area in Belalau, south Sumatra, where the Japanese had deliberately concealed the civilian men, women and children in camps deep in the rubber estates. Using old Dutch maps and a modern GPS system, it is reasonably certain that an area in "**Kantor Lurah Belalau 11**" was where the final camps were hidden, about 15 kilometres from the nearest town of Lubok Linggau. This was where **Margaret Dryburgh**, the English Missionary, lost her life and the missing Australian Army nurses, amongst others, were found at the end of the war. A small **Ixora** shrub was planted in memory of **Margaret Dryburgh** who, together with musician **Norah Chambers**, created the Womens' Vocal Orchestra in the camp in Palembang in December 1943.

Our visit to the Muntok Peace Museum was very interesting. Built with money raised almost single handedly by **Judy Balcombe**, the Museum tells the story of the men, women and children who were captured by the Japanese and interned in Muntok. We hope that the key to the museum can be kept at the Timah Tinwinning Museum in the town, where we have established a good relationship with the Director, so that more visitors can have access to the Museum. Parts of the building are quite dark and electricity would enhance the Museum and allow it to be used in the evenings. The cost of installation will be met by the MVG, and we feel that this is a worthwhile project. Contributions towards the cost of installing electricity can be sent to **Elizabeth Adamson**, **Judy Balcombe**, **Andrew Hwang** or **Rosemary Fell**, and earmarked for **MUNTOK**.

After being denied our 12 tickets last November for the Remembrance Sunday Parade in Whitehall, we plan to apply early for tickets for this year's parade. However, tickets are issued on a **named person basis** for security reasons. If you are interested in attending the Parade this year – and it is the 75th anniversary year of the Fall of Singapore – but have not yet made a definite decision, please let me have your details so that I can apply for tickets, even if you do not turn up on the day. The following information is needed by **JUNE** so that I can write to **Lt. Col. Bob Gamble** and explain again who the Malayan Volunteer Forces were:-

1. **TITLE/RANK & FULL NAME AS PER THE PHOTO ID TO BE CARRIED ON THE DAY**
2. **DATE OF BIRTH DD/MM/YYYY**
3. **PLACE OF BIRTH**
4. **FULL ADDRESS AND POSTCODE**
5. **MILITARY NUMBER IF APPLICABLE**

If only a few members wish to march this year, we may be able to join our friends in the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association and march with them, but it would be an appropriate moment to remember the sacrifices our relatives made 75 years ago and march as the Malayan Volunteers Group. If I have your details from last year, you need not send them again. It is sad to report that **the Sime Road Plaque**, which was presented to the Changi Museum on 12th September 2015, has not weathered well. Despite its stunning appearance when unveiled in 2015, recent photographs taken in February this year show the present poor state of this brass plaque. Photos have been sent to Anwick Forge, the plaque maker, and we await their response to our strongly worded letter. We hope that the plaque can be restored on some way, but if not, we may need to order a replacement plaque in a more suitable and durable material which will withstand the climatic conditions. Some of you may be aware that the **MVG's website** is in need of an overhaul and renewal of its software. The present operating system is obsolete and we also need to find a more user friendly system. We are very grateful to **Peter Moffatt** for all his help in setting up the website and to **Jonathan** for maintaining it to date. **Peter** is no longer able to help with this, and wishes to hand over to someone else. It has been suggested that we should change over entirely to social media's **FaceBook** to 'advertise' the MVG, but the received advice has been that FaceBook cannot take the place of a website but could be used as an additional link with it. We are also very grateful to **Bob Margolis**, webmaster of the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association, who has spent a great deal of time sorting out the back copies of our newsletters and trying to reinstate them on the website. This has not been possible, and we need to upgrade our website as a matter of some urgency. If anyone knows of a professional webmaster who would upgrade our website and reinstate the newsletters, please would you let **Rosemary** know.

WISHING YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY EASTER

VISIT TO CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Notice from Jonathan Moffatt

On pages 4 & 5 of Edition 48 (October 2016) of *Apa Khabar*, a letter from **Rachel Rowe**, Smuts Librarian for South Asian and Commonwealth Studies at the University of Cambridge, was printed in which she kindly offered to give MVG members a talk in August 2017, followed by lunch, to coincide with the online launch of their work to record original WW2 records from the Changi and Sime Road civilian internment camps. MVG Members who were interested in attending this talk were asked to give their names to **Jonathan**. However, to date only 5 members have come forward.

We have now been given a date – as follows:

FRIDAY, 11TH AUGUST 2017 AT 10.30am FOR 10.45am.

THE TALK IS ENTITLED:

The British Malaya Collection and digitisation of information on Changi Gaol/Sime Road internees.

It will be a two hour session followed by an optional local lunch. **Please would you give your name to Jonathan ASAP if you are interested in attending (unless you've already done so) – BY 1ST MAY.** If you have already given your name to **Jonathan** but cannot now attend, please let him know as well.

Rachel Rowe writes:

Our plan is to talk to you about our Changi and Sime Road archives and we will have as many of the original records out on display as possible. **Emma (Nichols)**, the Project Conservator, will talk about the conservation work she has undertaken and we hope our digitisation colleagues will discuss their specialist work, and we wish to show you how to search our digital archive online.

Depending on numbers attending, we would like to offer small group tours of our conservation and digitisation studios, and a general short tour of the University Library. I realise lunch will be important for everyone, so I am happy to take your advice on that. I believe you suggested we booked some tables at a local restaurant. The St. John's Chop House is walking distance from the Library (10-20 minutes) and somewhere I would recommend. The menu can be viewed at:

<http://www.cambscuisine.com/st-johns-chop-house>

Jonathan adds: Lunch venue comments should go to him not **Rachel**.

COMMEMORATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

Report by Bob Hall

I travelled down to Plymouth on the 15th February 2017, to attend the 75th Anniversary Memorial Service at the Minster Church of St. Andrew.

The service was a fitting tribute to my father and all those who fought and died prior to the Fall of Singapore, and also to those who endeavoured to escape the Japanese invasion and consequently became prisoners of war in the Far East 1942-45.

I was invited to take part in the service and had the honour of bearing a candle with two other representatives whose fathers were also POWs in the Far East. The candles represented over three hundred thousand POWs who were made to suffer brutal treatment, starvation and disease under the sadistic hands of the Japanese during this period of occupation.

Many, of course, never returned and their bodies were never found, but for those who did, bore the mental and physical scars for the rest of their lives. The returning POWs were instructed by the military authorities (letters of silence) not to speak of their ordeal or the atrocities they witnessed, for fear of upsetting the political situation which was taking place (by **General MacArthur**) in the Far East and for fear of offending other families whose sons and daughters did not make it home.

Today, it is called Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and help is readily provided – in 1945 it was not so.

The service began with hymns and prayers followed by the candle ceremony. I stood alongside representatives of military personnel as we made our way down the aisle and presented our candles at the altar.

After a short address, an informative overhead projection presentation took place. It illustrated the military services and their roles in and around Singapore prior to its Fall in February 1942. The congregation also saw photographs showing the condition of POWs on repatriation, which were not only disturbing but also a reminder of how much they suffered during their internment.

The flag party then made its way to the front of the Church where a two minute silence was observed and ended with a bugler. The service was finally brought to a close with a hymn and a prayer.

After the service it was good to be reunited with both **Lisa** and her mother **Betty**. **Betty's** father was also in the same POW camps as my father in Palembang in Sumatra.

I was also able to make contact with **Jane (nee Williamson)** whose father was also on *HMS Prince of Wales* and fought in the same platoon as my father while defending the radio station at Kranji in Singapore.

After the service, I attended a short wreath laying ceremony with **Lisa** and her mother on behalf of the Plymouth FEPOW Association. This took place outside the church under a newly planted Rowan tree in remembrance of all Far East POWs.

The event then ended with a most welcome cup of tea and piece of cake.



Candle ceremony.
605K



Officials..
724K



We will remember them.
854K



Lisa Bob Betty 2.JPG
1665K

MVG SPARKS TRANSATLANTIC MEETING

By Dr. Malcolm Read

In November 2016, **Diana Mirkin** (nee **Purdie**), was scanning the MVG members list and stopped in surprise. Surely that was her father's name mentioned under **Malcolm Read's** details. An e-mail established that **Frederick Read**, the Government Analyst for Singapore, and **Donald Purdie**, Professor of Chemistry at Raffles College, were both members of the twenty-strong Chemistry Society of Malaya. However they, together with **George Boizot**, **Charles Owen** and **John Tetley**, were all killed by the Japanese as prisoners of war. As a result, the Chemistry Society of Malaya struck a medal that is presented every year to the best chemistry students at each University in Malaysia, to commemorate the one quarter of their Society who had perished in Japanese hands. The medal displays the names of these five men.

"We must meet," said **Diana**, whilst mentioning that her husband **Gabe** is a doctor specialising in Sports Medicine. I was staggered because I am also a doctor specialising in Sports Medicine, and I have looked after several Olympic teams. **Diana** asked if we could go to Florida, and looking out at the cold, damp, grey morning **Romy** and I jumped at the chance.

So in the 75th Anniversary year of the Fall of Singapore, we set out on 26th January, having only just learned that 75 years ago, **Diana's** mother **Carol** lay under a table to avoid the bombing while she gave birth to her daughter. The visit also established that I escaped with my mother on the 30th January aboard the "**Duchess of Bedford**" and **Diana** escaped with her mother on the "**Felix Rousset**" on the 8th February 1942. **Diana** was just 13 days old and carried up a gangway with no sides, in a box.

Having established what happened to us and our mothers, what happened to our fathers? **Donald Purdie** died in 1943 in Kanchanaburi in Thailand, and **Frederick Read** was one of the 300 men sent to Labuan, none of whom survived.

He was reported missing and presumed dead. Though I believe that I have now found the answer, as reported in my book, my mother never had closure.

What did we remember? Nothing. What did we learn from our mothers? **Diana's** mother wrote about her escape back to the USA in an episodic unemotional way and **Diana** has never published her papers. My mother never talked about the escape, but I have written a novel, based on a true account entitled, "**Don't know where, don't know when,**" which is available on kindle and Amazon. **Diana** and her American mother reached the USA but **Diana** had to go to Canada and officially emigrate as her father **Donald** was British. I stayed in South Africa until 1945 with my mother when she was recalled to Britain by the Malaya Agent (**Editor: Colonial Office?**) and has lived here ever since.

Does anyone know why or what the Malaya Agent was doing ordering my mother back to the UK? I have the telegrams.

Thank you MVG.

75 YEARS LATER – A MEETING OF PARALLEL LIVES

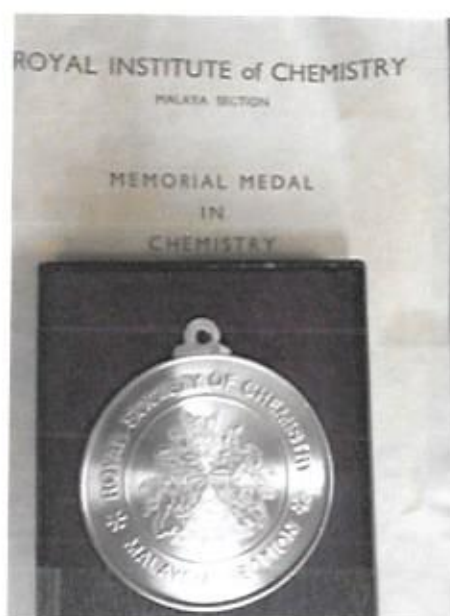
Diana Mirkin's story

As a member of MVG for many years, I have learned much from the stories of those who survived the Fall of Singapore as well as memoirs of many of those who were lost. My own father, **Donald Purdie**, died working on the Death Railway in 1943. I want to share a bit of his story as well as that of my mother, **Carol**, who was evacuated on the **Felix Rousset** along with my two-year-old brother and two-week-old me. Much of this story is drawn from my mother's unpublished book which she wrote between 1946 and 1949. I have also gotten a lot of information from **Mary Harris**, daughter of **Norman** and **Elizabeth Alexander**, who were my parent's neighbours and close friends at Raffles College.

This year, I have learned the parallel story of **Malcolm Read**, who had posted a note in the MVG's list



L to R Malcolm, Diana, Gabe, Romy



of members about a commemorative medal issued by the Malaya Section of the Royal Institute of Chemistry. Our fathers were both chemists – **Malcolm's** working for the government searching for ways to make white rice more nutritious, and mine as head of the chemistry department at Raffles College. The medal honoured them along with three other members of the society who had all died in captivity.

Malcolm was one year old and I was two weeks old when our mothers carried us aboard evacuation ships to escape from the attacking Japanese. Our fathers stayed behind, having left their civilian jobs to serve as “volunteers” for the defence of “Fortress Singapore.” They were captured by the Japanese and both died performing slave labour in brutal jungle conditions and on starvation rations. **Malcolm** wrote a detailed account of his family's experiences in his book “*Don't Know Where, Don't Know When*” (available on Amazon).

Our e-mail correspondence revealed that **Malcolm**, like my husband **Gabe Mirkin**, was a sports medicine doctor and that we had many other common interests, so we decided that it would be fun to meet.

Fortunately, **Malcolm** and his wife **Rosemary** were willing to do the travelling, and we were able to offer Florida's appealing winter climate. So in January-February 2017, we met to mark these 75th anniversaries:

- January 26 – Diana's birthday
- January 30 – Malcolm's evacuation from Singapore with his mother on the *Duchess of Bedford*
- February 8 – Evacuation of Diana with her mother and brother Rob aboard the *Felix Roussel*
- February 15 – The Fall of Singapore and the last day of freedom for our fathers, Frederick Read and Donald Purdie.

Donald and Carol Purdie's Story

Carol came from a modest upbringing in Glen Rock, New Jersey and went west to Stanford University in 1938. There she met **Donald Purdie**, a visiting professor from Cambridge University in England.

Carol was bright, pretty and vivacious while **Donald** was handsome, 6'4" and already being recognised as a brilliant chemist. He was nine years her senior, but they fell in love, married and moved to Cambridge in 1939. They were treated like royalty as **Dr. Purdie** did research and published in the most famous biochemistry department in the world.

The British were worried about an impending invasion by Nazi Germany. By 1940, the Germans were bombing England almost daily. After many months of uncertain life in the Blitz, the **Purdies** had a chance to get out of England when he was offered the professorship and chair of chemistry at Raffles College in Singapore (today the University of Singapore).

Voyage to Singapore

In late 1940, **Donald** and **Carol Purdie** and their infant son **Rob** arrived in Singapore and settled into their new life on the Raffles College campus. They experienced a happy existence except for the looming threat of Japanese expansion into all of Asia. News stories told of Japanese troops who were ordered to take no prisoners because that would slow up their advance. The Japanese had killed wounded Allied soldiers and hospital patients, and soldiers who had surrendered were often murdered. By the end of December 1941, the Japanese were flying constant bombing raids over Singapore and invasion of the island was imminent, so the British government there encouraged women and children to leave. All of the men were required to stay to defend Singapore.

Carol was in the late stages of pregnancy with **Diana**, too pregnant to fly or to travel on one of the evacuee ships, so she had to stay long enough to have her baby in Singapore General Hospital. By January 20th 1942, bombing raids occurred multiple times a day and civilians were dying at the rate of at least 150 a day. Shortly before **Carol's** due date, their house was hit by bombs that broke every window in the house and left them without a roof over their heads. Two-year-old **Rob** picked up a large piece of a bomb and brought it into the house, and was most unhappy when **Carol** took away his new-found toy.

Labour Under a Hospital Bed

By late January the Japanese were approaching Singapore and the British knew that they would invade very soon. All of the other wives and children of the faculty at Raffles College were gone when

Carol went into labour. **Donald** obtained leave to take her to the hospital, but the labour was long and hard and he had to return to duty. **Carol** spent her labour underneath the hospital bed, which gave cover from shrapnel from the exploding bombs. The air she breathed was full of smoke and the sound of exploding bombs was all she heard. **Diana Purdie** was born on January 26th. Mother and newborn had to stay four extra days in the hospital because **Donald** could not get leave to take them home. The Japanese continued to bomb the area heavily, so **Carol** and **Diana** spent the nights hiding under a table. **Donald** was able to get evacuee tickets for **Carol**, **Rob** and **Diana**, but he could not get leave to be with them for their departure on February 8th. They sat for hours on a road packed with cars trying to get to the docks, and far more people were turned away than were able to get on the ships. **Carol** climbed aboard the troop ship holding **Rob**, while a friend carried two-week-old **Diana** in a box. The friend, **Sir Norman Alexander**, later wrote that "helping her board in the pitch dark, carrying the baby up the slippery gangway with no outer rail, was my most hair-raising experience of the whole war." The ship had been hit by Japanese bombers before it arrived at the dock in Singapore and there was no time to repair the damage. With far more passengers than could be safely accommodated and not enough food or water, the trip was a terrifying experience. The Japanese continued to try to sink as many of the 200 evacuee ships as possible. **Carol's** ship was again hit by bombs on the journey out of Singapore but managed to get to Bombay three weeks later. There, **Carol** had her purse stolen with all her money, passports and **Diana's** birth certificate. After much hassle and confusion at the embassy, they were put on the **SS President Polk**, which travelled round South Africa, through the Panama Canal and on to Los Angeles. From there they took the train back to her family in New Jersey.

The Fall of Singapore

Diana's father had joined the Singapore Supplementary Volunteer Force [Ed: SSVF*] as part of the effort to defend the island. Earlier the British had assumed that any attack on Singapore would come by sea so they concentrated their limited resources on the harbour. Instead, the Japanese came down the Malay peninsula and invaded the island from the north. The invading forces faced very little opposition from the British and their allies. On February 15th 1942, after being attacked for only a few days, the British surrendered. Prime Minister **Winston Churchill** called the ignominious fall of Singapore to the Japanese the "worst disaster" and "largest capitulation" in British military history. **Donald Purdie** became one of the 85,000 British, Australian, Dutch and Indian prisoners of the Japanese. They were marched down the city streets to Changi prison, which had been built to house 600 prisoners. [Ed: N.B. Military POWs went to Changi Barracks & other military barracks in the Changi area. The civilians were taken to Changi prison.]

From Changi Prison to the Death Railway

For his first few months as a POW of the Japanese, **Donald Purdie** worked with other prisoners to make conditions in Changi as humane as possible, despite the extreme overcrowding and lack of food. They were even allowed to bring books from Raffles College so they could organise classes and make a library for prisoners. That all ended when **Donald** was transported north to a slave labour camp to build the Death Railway, a 258-mile rail line to connect Siam (Thailand) to Burma. After eight months of forced labour in impossible jungle conditions with virtually no food, sanitation or medical care, **Donald** died on May 17th 1943. He was one of 13,000 Allied POWs and 90,000 Asians who died in these work camps. Many of the surviving POWs have said that the popular films about the Death Railway, "*The Bridge on the River Kwai*" and "*The Railway Man*" failed to capture the horrible reality of their experiences. After the war, 111 Japanese and Korean soldiers were tried for war crimes for their brutal treatment of the Death Railway prisoners, and 32 were sentenced to death.

The Survivors

At the end of her long journey, **Carol** arrived in the United States with her two children and went back to Glen Rock to live with her parents while she waited for news of **Donald**. She eventually learned that he had been killed by the Japanese in 1943, but his death was not confirmed until 1945. She spent the rest of her life just trying to cope. She remarried twice: the first time with the practical goal of providing a stable home for **Rob** and **Diana** and the second time with the fantasy goal of building a sailboat and sailing around the world. She succeeded with both goals, although the trip around the world went only to Hawaii, where she and her third husband lived aboard their ketch **Crescendo** in Lahaina harbour until her death. Aged 57, she suffered a ruptured berry aneurysm in her brain and never regained consciousness. She died on January 23rd 1976 just a few days short of the 34th anniversary of her evacuation from Singapore. She never fully recovered from losing the love of her life and had been devastated by this terrible example of man's inhumanity to man. [Ed: **Donald Purdie went by train to Thailand on 28th Oct. 1942 in Letter Party "U" with many other Volunteers. *SSVF - Straits Settlements Volunteer Force.**]

My Father and the capture of the Mata Hari in February 1942 – Part 2

By kind permission of his son Phil Hogge

HMS Mata Hari leaves Singapore and is captured

The following account of the short voyage and capture of the *Mata Hari* is drawn from several sources; a small note book written by my father between 8th and 24th February 1942 (I still have it), **Captain Carston's** report written in 1945 after the war, and accounts by three of the passengers on board – **Mr. Harry Walker**, a Civilian Engineer at the Naval Dockyard in Singapore, **Mr. Jock Brodie** of Anglo-Oriental, a Tin Mining Company in Kuala Lumpur, and **Surgeon Lieutenant Commander J.G. Reed**.

[**Note 6:** Notebook of **Sub-Lieutenant A.H. Hogge RNR** (Chief Officer of *HMS Mata Hari*) written 8 February-25 February 1942, before, during and after capture of the ship.

“Detailed report of Circumstances Attending Capture of *HMS Mata Hari*,” written by **Lieutenant A.C. Carston RNR** (Captain of the *Mata Hari*) after his release from captivity in 1945.

“The Mata Hari: An Account” by **Mr. H. Walker MBE** <http://muntokpeacemuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Harr-Walkers-Account-of-his-Escape.pdf>

The Diary of **Mr. G. Brodie** of Anglo-Oriental in Kuala Lumpur 1942-45 <http://muntokpeacemuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Diary-of-Mr-G-Brodie-for-Web-with-OCR.pdf>

Letter on page 363 of the August 1951 edition *The Trident* magazine from **Surgeon Lieutenant-Commander J.G. Reed MRNVR.**]

In addition to these, “*Spotlight on Singapore*,” written soon after the war by **Lt. Col. Dennis Russell-Roberts**, gives many more details. **Russell-Roberts** had fought in the rear-guard actions down the length of the Malay Peninsula, was captured when Singapore fell and interned in Changi. But what makes his book so relevant is the fact that his wife escaped on the *Mata Hari* only to be captured and interned in Sumatra. There, like so many others, she died. His book is a very moving account of those who bravely fought, suffered and died during those dark days.

The *Mata Hari* was one of the last of some 47 small ships to leave Singapore on Thursday 12th February 1942, all overloaded with evacuees. **Carston's** report gives some bald facts: 113 crew consisting of 9 Officers, 72 Ratings (some of whom were survivors from the *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales*), 30 Marines and 2 Asiatics; 370 passengers – 60 Royal Navy, 60 Army, 118 civilian men and 132 women and children. Total on board 483, crowded together in a very small ship. **Russell-Roberts** wrote, “*As darkness fell more and more passengers flocked on board, and soon every inch of deck space was taken up.*” [**Note 7:** **Russell-Roberts** p.153.] **Jock Brodie** described the scene, “*There was no accommodation on board worthy of mention, and the oldest passengers were rightly given preference of the few cabins that existed. Men and women were sleeping or accommodating themselves on hatch tops, on deck and below deck where possible....*” [**Note 8:** **Brodie** sheet 8.] **Russell-Roberts** added, “*Every inch of deck space was occupied by passengers or by their baggage. Those who were on the boat and shelter decks were exposed to the open sky and would, of course, have to take the sun and the rain as they came. At least they had cool fresh air and escaped the fetid atmosphere of the main deck below.*” [**Note 9:** **Russell-Roberts** p.158.]

Jock Brodie made this pertinent comment, “*It seemed to be a desperate last hour move on the part of the authorities of Singapore to embark so many women and children on these small ships with largely improvised crews, and flying the white ensign thereby exposing those ill-manned and poorly armed vessels to the full fury of Japanese brutality at sea. Naval intelligence had failed in this part of the world and it evidently was not known that the Japs were concentrating in great force at Muntok, and the Banka Strait the same week-end as Singapore fell, also attacking Palembang by way of the Moesi River.*” [**Note 10:** **Brodie** sheet 9.]

At this point in the story, a little geography may help. The island of Singapore lies at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, separated from the mainland by the narrow Johor Strait. To the south of Singapore, there is a multitude of small islands, with Batam and Bintan 50 miles or so to the east and Sumatra a similar distance to the west. The Durian Strait passes through these small islands. 100 miles further south lie the islands of Lingga and Singkep and, further south again, Banka Island with the town of Muntok at its northern end. The passage south to Batavia (modern Jakarta) passes south through the Banka Strait separating Sumatra to the west and Banka Island to the east. At the northern end of this Strait, on the mainland of Sumatra, the shallow Moesi River winds its way up to the town of Palembang. Each of these places will feature prominently in the course of this narrative (see map at end.)

As I said earlier, there was no warning of the dangers that lay ahead when *HMS Mata Hari* departed Singapore at 19.30 on Thursday evening, 12th February, leaving behind the chaos of the burning docks. She went out soon after *HMS Scorpion*, *Vyner Brooke* and *Giang Bee*, all of which were similarly overcrowded, with orders to proceed to

Batavia via the Durian and Banka Straits. But first they had to find their way towards the minefield in the dark through thick smoke from the oil and petrol facilities burning on the numerous small islands. This made it almost impossible to identify the vital marks at the start of the swept channel through the Durian Strait.

Come Friday, 13th February, my father wrote in his notebook, "*Vis. Very bad with oil smoke. 04.30 proceeded down Durian Strait. Anchored W of the Brothers about 08.00. Frequent Air Alarms and planes passing close. 'Hiding' useless. About 12.20 nine bombers dropped altogether; missing ship all bombs falling close astern.*" Jack Brodie continued, "*However, the Mata Hari had been spotted and suddenly nine bombers appeared and dropped 12 bombs or thereabouts astern of the ship. It was bad aiming and providential for us. Only one man was injured with a piece of shrapnel. The Japs did not continue their attack, and the ship weighed anchor, and proceeded to steam south.*" [Note 11: Brodie sheet 8.]

According to Carston, they anchored again close to an island near False Durian, within ten yards of the mangroves in sixteen feet of water. He went on to say, "*Throughout the day the intervals between air alerts were never longer than twenty minutes. Planes came over in groups of from nine to twenty-seven machines.*" [Note 12: Carston p.2.]

But at 15.00, they decided hiding was useless and set off again. At 21.07, off the tiny islet of Berhala, south of Singkep, they saw gunfire to the south and again more gunfire and search lights at 23.15.

At 03.00 on 14th February, voices were heard hailing from the water. Jack Brodie in his diary said, "*I heard a voice from out of the darkness of the South China Sea and particularly intelligible to me calling, 'Can ye no throw us a line we've been in the watter five hoors.' The ship hove to, and on getting the location, a line as sent overboard. The same voice yelled, 'For heaven's sake pit oot that licht, dae ye want ta get blawn oot the watter?'"* [Note 13: Brodie sheets 9 & 10.] These six survivors were from *HMS Scorpion* which had been sunk by a Japanese cruiser at 21.15. Probably the gun fire and lights seen earlier had come from the sinking of the *Scorpion* and *Giang Bee*. This was the first information they received that Japanese surface craft were operating in the vicinity.

In view of this enemy activity, Carston decided to steer westerly to find and follow the 3 to 4 fathom line off the coast of Sumatra and make land at daylight. Here, they found a Dutch vessel proceeding south. A boat was sent across and they were advised to follow her to an anchorage in Sakanah Bay about 20 miles north of the Moesi River and to wait until nightfall before trying to make Palembang. On the way, a large formation of aircraft flew low overhead; Carston said in his report that 81 bombers and 20 fighters passed directly overhead at 2,000 to 3,000 feet without attacking.

In his description of these events on board the *Mata Hari*, Surgeon Lieutenant Commander J.G. Reed MRNVR said, "*Sub-lieutenant Hogge RNR, her first lieutenant, endeared himself to all by the cheerful and fearless way in which he leapt about, hour after hour, seeking and reporting the approach and direction of aircraft – and their passage was almost continuous – to those who were under some sort of cover and could not see them.*"

[Note 14: Reed p.343.]

According to Russell-Roberts [Note 15: Russell-Roberts ps.171-172.], while they lay at anchor, Carston invited the senior representatives of the passengers to a conference in his cabin. He told them all he knew and it was decided that their best course of action was to deliver the passengers safely into Dutch hands at Palembang. This would allow the *Mata Hari* unrestricted freedom of action. However, as they approached the mouth of the Moesi River, none of the navigation marks was lit and they were unable to obtain a pilot for the tricky run up the shallow river towards the town. They also met the *Majang*, a Dutch ship, which had just come out of the river. She informed them that Palembang was closed to shipping, had been heavily bombed and Japanese paratroopers had landed. This meant their only option as to try to slip south through the Banka Strait by night, despite the gunflashes that could be seen at the northern end.

Carston wrote in his report, "*There were not sufficient boats to accommodate the women and children, and as their presence on the ship prevented me from fighting an action I decided that in the event of being intercepted by the enemy, I would surrender the ship. The White Ensign was therefore struck, the gun's crew dismissed, and the Officers of the Watch instructed not to use the British or Allied challenges.*" [Note 16: Carston p.2]

On 15th February, my father's notebook records, "*00.20. On watch talking to Carston on the port side of the bridge. Searchlight suddenly switched straight on to bridge from vessel close to. Electric searchlight; blueish tinge agreeing with Scorpion description of Japanese cruiser. Tense moment waiting for fire to open. Men stand firm, adjust their life belts & take cover on starboard side of bridge. Nothing happens and continue with search light trained on us. Stop Engine. Search light trained on stern (no ensign up). Burst of red tracer fired over stern. Rang off engine. No further fire & searchlight switched off. Proceeded down Banka Strait with nav. lights on towards two vessels sweeping with searchlights about 8 to 10 miles away. Held in search light several times but no signals exchanged. Off light buoy south of Muntok, what appeared to be a cruiser closed in on us & ordered us to anchor immediately by International Code. Anchored at 01.15.*"

Captain Carston's report is similar, but bear in mind it was written in 1945 after the war and his long experience as a POW in Japan – he was lucky to survive. He says, *“At approximately 00.15 hours, searchlights accompanied by light gunfire, were focused on ‘H.M.S. MATA HARI.’ Stopped engines. Endeavoured to ascertain identity by Morse lamp. 00.30 hours, searchlights were switched off. 00.45 hours having received no reply to Morse lamp, I proceeded on voyage still uncertain as to whether ‘H.M.S. MATA HARI’ was amongst American, Dutch or Japanese craft. Approximately 03.00 hours in position, two miles south-east off first lighted buoy in BANKA STRAITS, the ship was again lit up by searchlights. Stopped engines. Received signal by Morse in International Code: (1) Anchor at once. (2) Do not attempt to lower boats. (3) Show a light. To these I complied. Tried again to establish identity, but received no reply. At dawn observed many warcraft and several transports in the Straits. The Japanese had made a landing at Muntok shortly after midnight.”* [Note 17: Carston p.2.]

According to Harry Walker, who had stayed behind to destroy the Naval Fuelling Installations in Singapore and was now a passenger on board, *“It was a very dark night. Some of the passengers were dozing, others whispering, when suddenly shells began to ‘zip’ overhead. One could actually feel the air disturbance as they passed close to us. A pom-pom could be heard, apparently from the mangrove a short distance away. The firing ceased as abruptly as it had begun.”* [Note 18: Walker p.1.]

He continued, *“Sometime later there was an uneasy stir among the passengers. A whisper was heard, ‘Look – over there!’ I looked and, sure enough there were two black shapes gliding slowly around us. A voice alongside me said ‘They’re Japs’, but some seemed to think the ships might be Dutch. Suddenly, after what seemed a lifetime, signals began to pass back and forth; it seemed that each could not understand the other’s code. However, after some delay, our Captain told us that they were Japanese and instructed all the women and children to stand up and the men to lie low. A searchlight was put on us. It was a horrible moment; we didn’t know whether they would fire or not. The Captain then announced our surrender, because of the large number of women and children on board – a wise decision I think and borne out later when we saw many bodies of men, women and children.”* [Note 19: Walker p.1.]

By now it was Monday morning, 16th February. My father wrote. *“Daylight, recognized Japanese ensign on larger destroyer that had ordered us to anchor. All gear dumped. Boarding party arrived 09.30 & searched vessel for arms. Ordered 4” ammo to be dumped. Breech block had not been dumped by Commander’s Orders. All hands mustered, men searched for arms & ship searched for arms and ammo. Gun breech and W/T taken away. Ship ordered to anchor in Muntok Roads. Shifted about 11.00.”* It was fortunate that they also had time to dump the signals book and destroy all sensitive equipment.

The irony was that the *Mata Hari* had sailed through almost the entire Japanese invasion force which was putting troops ashore at Muntok and Palembang. They had managed to escape the whole armada only to be seen and trapped by the last ship.

The ordeal that followed

There is a list in **Russell-Roberts’** book showing that, of the 47 small ships which escaped from Singapore in the evening of 12th February, 25 had been sunk, beached or scuttled and 13 captured between the 13th and 17th. [Note 20: **Russell-Roberts** ps. 184 & 185.] There is no information on the remainder. It is hard to ascertain exact numbers, but some sources indicate that at least 2,000 men, women and children perished on these ships.

[Editor: Other sources put the number much higher at between 4,000 and 5,000, many of whom have never been identified or named. We have Michael Pether to thank for his invaluable research into the passenger lists of so many of these small ships, including his recent update on the Vyner Brooke passengers.]

For example, the *Scorpion* was bombed and sunk by gunfire with 36 survivors and 115 missing. The *Giang Bee* was sunk with 70 survivors and 223 missing. And so it goes on, ship after ship, with very little mercy shown to those on board, despite the majority being civilian evacuees. The worst example is what happened to the *Vyner Brooke* with 47 crew and 181 passengers aboard, most of whom were women and children.

Describing this event, the Australian War Memorial site says, *“Among the passengers were the last 65 Australian nurses in Singapore. Throughout the daylight hours of 13th February Vyner Brooke laid up in the lee of a small jungle-covered island, but she was attacked late in the afternoon by a Japanese aircraft, fortunately with no serious casualties. At sunset she made a run for the Banka Strait, heading for Palembang in Sumatra. Prowling Japanese warships, however, impeded her progress and daylight the next day found her dangerously exposed on a flat sea just inside the Strait.”*

[To be continued in July.]

Keeping an Eye on the Japanese in Thailand – The Jungle Border Patrol of 1941

With thanks to Dave Croft (RAFBPA) for this article

The Border Patrol was a short lived reconnaissance organisation, put together to gather information from along the border separating Thailand and Malaya, which could be of future British military value. Operating as a secret organisation, probably as part of the Oriental Mission (SOE Far East 1940-41), the raising of the Border patrol in 1941 was placed in the hands of **Edward Oswald Shebbeare** who, as Chief Game Warden of Malaya, was an experienced jungle traveller. His 'team' of section leaders also had experience of the Malayan forests and country, being made up of the **Noone** brothers, **Herbert Deane (Pat) Noone**, Acting Director of Museums and **Richard Noone**, a recently qualified anthropologist; **William Frederick Baldock** and **H.C. Dolman**, both government forestry officers. In **Dennis Holman's** book, "*Noone of the Ulu*", we learn that **Pat** operated his sector from Grik and **Richard** from Kroh. The book also describes how, in principle, the sections might have operated; each section officer was responsible for recruiting their own patrol members and organising how intelligence was gathered. **Richard** engaged eleven men (known to him) and they, with their families, were relocated to Kroh. The numbers were increased to fifteen a little later to complete his 'intelligence gathering' group. Training in raft construction, navigation and bush (jungle) craft was undertaken, being followed by visiting the sector (split into five advanced posts) to familiarise each group with their section before leaving them to operate independently.

Richard was also involved in establishing a secret route through the jungle linking Kroh with the British-owned Pinyok Tin Mine in south Thailand. The route was intended for infiltrating infantry across the border to cut the Betong road to Yala road should the Japanese attempt to invade Malaya through Thailand. The route was also to have a series of huts constructed and stocked with food for use by British families evacuated from the mine and secretly making their way to Malaya. Over a period of ten days a secret escape route was made to Bukit Bubus on the border. Unfortunately, those at Pinyok attempting to test the route failed to locate the mountain but reached a pass north of the mountain, so **Richard** had his team link up the 'escape' route with this pass. A later decision was made to use the pass as a dump for arms, ammunition and wireless sets for those at the mine who, apparently, were tasked to defend the road on their retreat from the Japanese until the British Army arrived. Soon after this, the Border Patrol was disbanded and the 'secret' route abandoned.

Following the disbandment of **Richard's** section of the Border Patrol he reported to the 3/16th Punjab Regiment, was commissioned as a second lieutenant and took part in Operation Krohcol, the British crossing of the border into Thailand following the Japanese invasion of Malaya. At around the same time a message was received at Tapong, the advanced patrol base for **Pat Noone's** section, for his group to be disbanded and for him to report to the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders at Grik.

2nd Lt. **Richard Noone** eventually escaped from Malaya/Singapore ahead of the Japanese, arriving in Australia, via Sumatra and Java, on 6th March 1942. In Australia he joined the Intelligence Section of SOE but was not permitted to return to Malaya during the war, for security reasons. He returned to Malaya in 1952 and following the accidental death in 1953 of **P.D.R. Williams-Hunt**, Advisor on Aborigines, he was appointed to the post of Advisor where he eventually learned of his brother's fate in 1943 at the hands of two of the Temiar people. For those interested in the story of the **Noone** brothers whilst in Malaya, the book, "*Noone of the Ulu*" by **Dennis Holman** is worth reading. Whilst not a scholarly account, it gives plenty of detail to make the stories both readable and interesting.

William Frederick Baldock, also a Border Patrol section leader, held a post in the Forestry Service of Tanganyika from 1922 to 1939 before transferring to Malaya in the post of Conservator of Forests. On the outbreak of war in the Far East, he joined the FMSVF, and was later captured by the Japanese in the Jabor Valley (Kuantan) and killed on the 30th December 1941. The battle is described by **Dr. Peter Ewer** in "*The Long Road to Changi*" as follows: '*On the morning of the 30th December, the Japanese advanced via the Jabor Valley in greater strength than they had previously shown. They were engaged by our artillery and small arms fire and confused fighting continued throughout the day....*' **W.F. Baldock's** service details appear on the Singapore Memorial as being a private in the 2nd (Selangor) Battalion FMSVF, column 391, at the time of his death. [Editor: **Baldock's** short biography in "*In Oriente Primus*" by **Jonathan Moffatt** states how he was cruelly murdered by the Japanese after capture.]

2nd Lt. **H.C. Dolman**, the forestry officer recruited as another section leader by **E.O. Shebbeare**, is briefly mentioned in "*Noone of the Ulu*" and also in "*Moon Over Malaya*." It is believed he surrendered to the Japanese after a brief period in hiding as the Japanese swept down Malaya towards Singapore.

"*You have to cut a bit of a dash on these occasions,*" was the reply **Edward Oswald Shebbeare** gave when it was remarked he seemed to be overdoing it a bit by wearing socks when he met **Lord Casey**, President of Bengal c1949, on his retirement from the Malayan Service. Having a 'relaxed' attitude to what he wore was his usual style and on this occasion he was dressed in shorts, an old khaki shirt, boots, and, unusually for him, socks! Born in 1884, before arriving as Chief Game Warden for Malaya, he had a strong connection with India. Apart from an uncle who won the VC during the Indian Mutiny, his connection was through his work as a government forester and his dedication to the conservation of the wildlife in India. As a forester, he developed an agro system that included the re-introduction of the indigenous people (previously 're-homed' under a scheme in the early 1900s) to help regenerate failing forests.

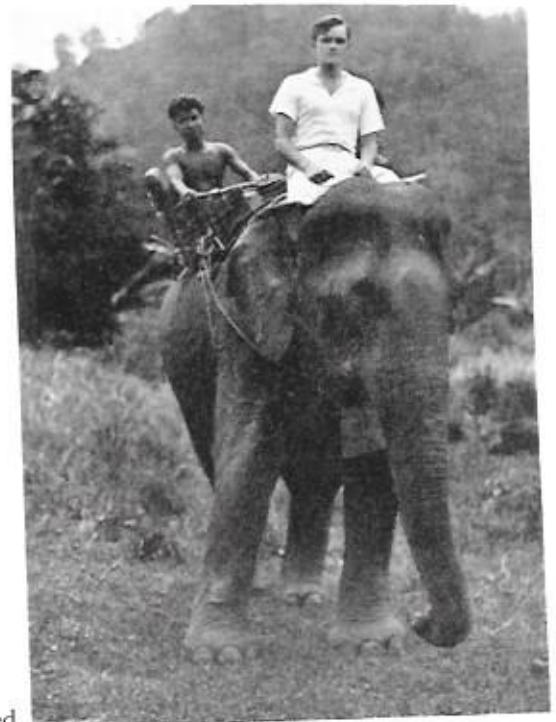
His knowledge of the hill tribes' people and animals led to his appointment as Transport Officer on the British Everest Expedition of 1924, and as Deputy Leader of the British Expedition of 1933. The film, "*The Epic of Everest*," a documentary of the 1924 expedition, shown on BBC 4 on the 22nd September 2016, shows **Shebbeare** dressed as a normal mortal, presumably it was on a later expedition where he dressed in Tibetan clothes, complete with umbrella!

E.O. Shebbeare arrived in Malaya in 1938 as Chief Game Warden. His first main task was to establish the King George V National Park (Taman Negara, Malaysia) first proposed by **Theodore Hubback**. Once established, he walked an elephant and calf from Kuala Kangsar over the mountain range to the National Park for them to start a new life in the reserve. The journey, which took a month, was through jungle, over ridges and along river valleys and made possible with the help of the Temiar people. At the beginning of January 1942, **Shebbeare** was approached by **F. Spencer Chapman** (author of "*The Jungle is Neutral*") whom he had known in India, to see if he would join **Chapman's** stay-behind party when the time came. Even at 57 years of age, **Shebbeare** was considered to be a valuable addition, mainly because of his experience and knowledge of the jungle and its people, but also because of his general fitness. But some time following this meeting **Shebbeare** was captured by the Japanese and interned in Singapore.

Chapman later entered **Shebbeare's** bungalow at the Gap, only to find it looted, but he did retrieve a few copies of the *Himalayan Journal* and an Everest diary with the intention of returning them to **Shebbeare** when possible. Upon release from internment, **Shebbeare** returned to his pre-war post as Chief Game Warden until his retirement shortly afterwards.

References:

- An Introduction to the Malayan Aborigines 1952 by P.D.R. Williams-Hunt
- Moon Over Malaya 2003 by Jonathan Moffatt and Audrey Holmes McCormick
- Noone of the Ulu 1959 by Dennis Holman
- Our Man in Malaya 2009 by Margaret Shennan
- The Jungle is Neutral 2003 by F. Spencer Chapman



Pat Noone travelling by elephant



Shebbeare in Tibetan clothes and umbrella.



1924 Expedition. Bottom left is E. O. Shebbeare



E. O. Shebbeare



W F Baldock



THE DIARY OF CHARLES ROBERT SAMUEL contd. – by kind permission of Sir David Lewis

[Editor: In January this year I received a very moving letter from **June Wingate** following the publication of the second part of **C.R. Samuel's** diary. In it she said:

"I would like to thank **Sir David Lewis** from the bottom of my heart, for allowing the diary of **Charles Robert Samuel** to be printed in **APA KHABAR** – January 2017, 49th Edition.

After nearly 75 years this is the first detailed account I have read of the last voyage of the **SS Kuala** and the bombing and sinking of the vessel.

My mother, **PENELOPE LANDON**, was on the **Kuala**. I knew, from local accounts that she had swum to **Pom Pong Island** after the sinking and also that she was a volunteer with the **Volunteer Medical Services** and had helped with the patients on the beach. I knew she had been picked-up off **Pom Pong Island** and stowed with many others in the hold of the small freighter **TANDJONG PINANG**, which was subsequently bombed and sunk off **Banka Island**, 30 miles North West of **Tanjong Ular lighthouse**.

There were very few survivors, and my Mother was not amongst them.

I would also like to extend my grateful thanks to **Jonathan** and **Rosemary** who take so much trouble to investigate, record and publish so many events and experiences which may not personally affect them, but are of great interest and concern to many others. Thank you **Jonathan** and **Rosemary**."

15 February (Sunday) – continuing

.....we were told to go to the camp on the other side (of the island) where the water was. There we met **Mrs. JB Ross, Mrs. Allen, Sturt, Scott-Ram** [both of whom were interned in **Padang**], **Stocks** (Mercantile Bank), **Mrs. EJ Bennett, Mrs. Lucy Walker**, PWD officers, **DM Millar, Miss (Dr.) Morris** and many others. Those in charge of the camp then proceeded to form us into parties of 12 under a leader. We joined up with **Sturt** (leader), **Scott-Ram**, the **Robertsons, Aste, Stocks**, ourselves and three others. At 5pm we were given a small biscuit with bully beef and one cigarette each and half a finger of water and that was to last us until the next day. We then searched for a place to sleep on. It was a beastly hill, all slopes and no flat, but at last we found a little hollow enclosed with the big creeping plants. The earth was of a brownish hue and as there had evidently been no rain for some time, it was very dusty. Late in the night **Vi** woke up and said she heard noises and thought they were Japs but I tried to reassure her. We then discussed the question of the boat which was supposed to be coming one night. The order had been given that all women and children and wounded would go first. I said I thought she should go as until all women and children had left the men could not get away and that we could not remain indefinitely on the island

SS KUALA



[With thanks to David Wingate for sending this photograph which he coloured.]

with only a sprinkling of water and starvation rations. We agreed we should have to part. God knows whether I did right or wrong, but I knew **Mrs. Robertson** was going and that **Vi** would have several friends with her.

16 February (Monday)

The next day (16th Feb) was a repetition of the first, a little water, biscuit and bully beef at 8am, then a lie-off until 5pm when the same rations were again served and finally a search to find a place to rest ourselves for the long night. The place we selected was very uncomfortable and although I chopped away at the campus I could not improve it. I think at this time I was very trying to **Vi** and did not put up with the discomfort as uncomplainingly as she did. I must have dozed off at last, when suddenly the order was shouted, "All women and children come down". This meant the relief boat had arrived. Although we were expecting it, it took me by surprise. **Vi** jumped up and was running off in the dark, but I suddenly realised she was leaving me without saying "Goodbye". I dashed after her and kissed her and called to **Mrs. Robertson** to wait for her and that was the last I saw of her.

The camp was now fully awake and orders were repeated for all women to go down, but I could only think of my own loss and sense of desolation. Gradually after about 2 hours the noise died down and all was quiet again, and I knew she had gone. I lay down and prayed to God to protect her and bring us together again soon.



Figure 9 - Survivors of Kuala & Tien Kwang on Pom Pong Island
On the left, in pensive pose, is AC1 B. Scott, RAF. Next to him, in white vest and shorts is AC1 J Williams, RAF.

17 February (Tuesday)

The next day (17th) after our meagre meal I went up the hill and lay down by myself and I thought of all that had happened and whether I had done the right thing. I am not ashamed to say that I wept, but I resolved to try to pull myself together and be brave and I knew **Vi** would be. We were in God's hands. He had taken

the ordering of our lives and we had to abide by His judgment and hope for His mercy. About 180 women and children had left by the boat which I subsequently heard was a Dutch coaster the **SS Tandjong Pinang** and was going to Batavia [*Jakarta*] if she could get there. We were given an extra ration of water at 12 noon and the usual rations at 5pm and then I lay down with **Sturt, Robertson** and **Scott-Ram** and tried to sleep but it was not much use. I should have mentioned that at about 6pm a junk came from Sanjong Island with some rice and also the launch which had come on the first night. The launch took away more of the nurses and wounded and I think they went to Sanjong.

18 February (Wednesday)

I spent the next day (18th) alone but could not climb far up the hill as I felt too weak. I am not made for such experiences and do not shine and I missed **Vi** terribly. That evening the junk came again. I had already thought of going back in her and I suggested we should find out whether the boatmen would take us. They agreed, and we asked permission and so at 7pm or so myself, **Sturt, Scott-Ram, Robertson, Stocks**, and two others named **Kelly** and **Gilmour** (Singapore Municipality) clambered into the junk and in the gathering darkness sailed for a new and unknown destination. I really felt that another day on Pom Pong would be my last.

19 February (Thursday – 26 February)

At about 9pm on the 19th February we arrived at Sanjong where there was a fairly large village. **O'Grady** who was in charge of the camp there was not at all pleased to see us, but had to put up with us. There we met **Mackay** (Eastern Smelting Co.) and **Dr. Morris** who had also arrived there with the wounded from Pom Pong. **Cairns** of Penang with his child (2 years) had come from another island. I think our numbers were about 50. The food here was more plentiful, rice and bully beef or pumpkin and we could buy bread from the village. On my arrival a MAS nurse (**Mrs. Homer**) gave me a cup of cocoa which was nectar. I suppose I must have looked "all-in". We stayed in this village until 22 February (Sunday) when a motor launch came and took most of us away. We had been informed that survivors were being taken to Dabo (Sinkep Island). We left at about 11am but had to land at a village called Kota for the night and sleep in the open. We arrived at Dabo landing jetty at 10am on the 23rd February. After being taken to the Military Headquarters which was in the charge of **Capt. Alexander** (Penang) we were told to join the civilian camp quartered at the Administrator's (**Mr. Mine**) house. The women were put in the Controller's house. In this camp we met **JB Ross, Sir John Bagnall, EJ Bennett, Mr. and Mrs. Smart** (KL), **Docker** (Cable & Wireless, Penang) and many others. When we arrived the catering was being run by **EJ Bennett** and consisted of rice and some green veg. However, he and **Bagnall** and two others left to live in the Club (they had money) and so **Sturt** was appointed caterer and the food was greatly improved. **Smart** was in charge of the camp and had been given some money by the Controller for our maintenance but **Bennett** evidently refused to spend it.

27 February – 8 March

I shall now only detail a short summary of my travels until my arrival at Padang, W Sumatra where I am now interned as a British civilian. I do not feel like writing full details of my experiences at this stage. I must mention that during this time **Sturt, Scott-Ram** and **Robertson** were very kind and helpful to me, in fact, I received kindness and consideration from all sides. I suppose any white hairs gave me the appearance of a weak, old man and created sympathy; at any rate I was very grateful.

JB Ross did all he could to ease my situation and was responsible for my being given the preference for a comfortable journey as we moved across Sumatra.

On 27th February left Dabo on Naval Motor Boat (**Heng Jan**) at 11am, whole party (except 2 or 3 nurses), men (about 30) were crowded into tiny cabins, arrival Tembilahan (Indragiri River) at 11am, 28th February. Most uncomfortable journey. Had a meal in eating shop (curry and rice) and then left at 5pm to go up the river to Rengat. Arrived there at 7am, again confined in the cabin. Met **Major Campbell** who knew me and took me with **Ross** and a few others to the Rest House and gave us coffee and sandwiches, a wonderful meal. We were to go further up the river by barges and junks to Ayer Molek (Indragiri Rubber Estate) where there was a big military camp. We left at 11am towed by an invasion barge, one junk and one launch with women. After a tedious journey we arrived at Ayer Molek at 6.45pm and were taken to the Camp which was the factory and drying sheds of the Estate. About 800 in this camp of which 650 must have been military, naval or air force. Food was very bad and little of it. Slept in a drying shed, huge place with rubber mattress sheets for our beds.

On 2nd March the military began to move off to Taluk by motor lorries and on 3rd March I was given a seat next to the driver in one of them and left at 7.45pm and was taken to Taluk. **Major Nicholson** (censor Malaya) had also been sent on in another lorry. Arrived Taluk about 11.45pm. There I met another officer who knew me. I think he said he was in **Henry Waugh's**. He took me to an empty Chinese School where **Nicholson** had already arrived. Slept on the floor.

Next day went to Chinese Hotel and got a bed and cubicle for Fl 1. The rest of our party arrived on 5th March, they had been detained by floods; the rains were terrific.

On 6th March **Nicholson** and I sent on to Sawahlunto (railhead) in motor omnibus with 8 Japanese prisoners. Arrived at 6.30 and ultimately found our way to the House where we were told we could stay and that we should be given a meal and would leave by train for Padang at 5.30am next day. It seemed all the military and other evacuees had left that morning by train and we had just missed them. **Nicholson** was very upset but from what we have learned since I am not so sure it was not a merciful providence which kept us back. Slept on a beautifully sprung mattress bed, but was woken up at 4 am. Had coffee and sandwiches and then set off in dark for station. **Nicholson** and I caught the train and travelled quite comfortably to Padang, W. Sumatra, where we arrived at 12.30pm on 7th March 1942 and had come to the end of our journey for many months to come.

There was a Dutchman on the platform with a Red Cross band on his arm, so I approached him and he took us to the Stoot Huis (Town Hall) to the Evacuees Office. We were kindly received and sent with our very meagre baggage to the Marapi Pension where we were given a room and then a meal – rijsttafel (*Indonesian rice dish*).

9 March – 16 March

The rest of our party arrived with **Ross** on the 9th March and were billeted in various places. We were very lucky and stayed on at Marapi. **Miss Smith**, the proprietress, being very kind to us and gave us good plain food. I had made enquiries at the Town hall as to whether the **SS Tandjong Pinang** had arrived at Padang or whether the survivors had come by road, but they had no knowledge of them. I was shown the list of all those who had passed through, but **Vi's** name was not amongst them. I also saw the British V-Consul and asked him to cable Batavia but he could not do so as communication was cut off, the Japanese having occupied Palembang and S. Sumatra.

The days passed tediously until on the 16th we were told Japanese would enter the town the next day. We were all waiting expectantly for a boat to arrive from Colombo to take us away, but none came and perhaps it was just as well as the Indian Ocean was at that time at the mercy of enemy submarines, destroyers etc. and there would have been slender hope of our getting through safely. The last lot had left by a Dutch boat the night before we arrived at Padang (6th March) and, as we have been told it was sunk, it was a mercy we did not arrive in time to catch it. It is not known whether the other survivors from Pom Pong caught this boat, or the previous one which it is stated sailed on the 27th February. It is possible that **EJ Bennett, Bagnall, Grant, Aste, Stocks, Brewer, Kelly, Gilmour** and a few others who went ahead of us from Ayer Moluk in private cars were on the last boat. They had passed through Padang and had left by some boat. They left Taluk on the 4th March and should have arrived in Padang on the 5th (evening) or 6th (morning). At our Pension, a **Mr. and Mrs. Buck** were staying; they had come to Padang from Palembang. He was a road and aerodrome constructor and had two caterpillar tractors with which he was constructing an aerodrome 10 miles from Padang, but when we arrived all work had been stopped and Padang declared an open town. They were very kind to us and **Buck** gave me a few odds and ends which were very welcome. I had picked up a few clothes but mostly in the last stages of wear.

17 March - 6 April

On 17th March, the Japanese arrived and soon visited us removing the beds and mattresses and my clothing including my Gillette razor, cigarette case, towel, khaki shirt and other articles and there I was bereft of my belongings for the third time; it was not an enjoyable time, but by degrees things settled down and the authorities took control. The Javanese and Malays also began to loot houses but a few shots and several arrests clipped their efforts in the bud. We were visited by a Jap officer who told us to stay in and that we were confined to the house until the 7th April. In the meantime, **Nicholson** caught a bad cold and developed a throat and cough with a temperature and as he could not shake it off was removed to the Military Hospital on the 25th March and so I was left alone. **Ross** had been given a pass by the authorities so that he could visit the various billets and he came on occasionally which relieved the monotony.

The days went by until the night of the 6th April when a police officer came to the house and informed us that all men were to parade at the Police Station at 10am the next day and the women at the Convent at 3.30pm. It was the intention of the Jap authorities to intern all the Dutch and Indonesian civilians and British civilians.

From 7 April 1942 (Internment)

Buck and I went off the next morning and were lined up on the Padang (parade ground) with about 500 Dutch civilians. Later we were marched to the Gaol and told that was to be our quarters. I will draw a veil over the place, enough to say it was most unpleasant and very overcrowded. I spent one night there which was more than sufficient. We were locked up for the night from 7pm to 8.30am. The next morning about 10 am I and **Buck** were called out and to my intense joy found that **Ross** had been allowed to come and take us

to the British Civilian Camp at the Military Club. This was a very nice place with two large airy rooms and a view of the surrounding hills and open country all round. There I met again **Sturt, Robertson, Scott-Ram**, and others; in all there were 52 (including **Cairn's** child). I soon settled down to the new existence and tried to keep my mind occupied.

However, on the 2nd July we were told that we were to be moved to new quarters and to be ready by 3.30pm. So we all packed up our belongings and were marched to the Catholic Social Hall at the other end of town. This was a much smaller place, only a large assembly hall in which we had to eat and sleep and the compound enclosed in a high palisade. Here we still are on this 17th October 1942 and Heaven knows when we are going to be released or given some liberty. We perhaps should be thankful that we are very largely left alone. The Japanese have issued regulations which, so long as we obey, leave us in peace. We are living a communal life. The Japs took what money we had and then changed it into guilders and told us to live on it (Fl 3,000) for six months.

Ross is the leader of the Camp and we have a Committee. I have been on it for nearly 4 months. It is elected every 2 months. We are all keeping good health but unfortunately **Farquharson** (In MSS Police Service) fell ill and died.

We have asked the authorities to give us information of our wives who left Pom Pong on the **SS Tandjong Pinang** but so far they have done nothing. We heard that this boat was intercepted and turned back to Singapore, in which case **Vi** is interned there. The thought of it is unbearable as I feel the food situation there must be desperate. Malaya is nothing like so self supporting as Java and Sumatra. Here we can get vegetables and rice and flour, but what vegetables can be obtained daily in Singapore with thousands and thousands of people to be fed, no butter, milk, tea etc?

I lie awake at night thinking of it and wondering how she is getting along, whether she has been able to get some clothes etc. but I can do nothing, only hope that all will be well or at least better than my thoughts depict.

Robertson has been a great help and says we must keep going, it would serve no purpose to return to Singapore broken in health and unable to help our wives when we do meet again, but oh how I wish we could get some news; it is this uncertainty as to where **Vi** may be that makes it harder to bear. I can only pray to God to help and protect her.

I shall bring this to a close. I have not kept a day to day diary, but one day is much the same as another. There are 45 Dutch women interned in a separate camp, also survivors, but none from Pom Pong Island.

Mrs. Smart, Mrs. Brooks, Mrs. Moncur, Mrs. Frankie Walker are among them. **Smart** is in our camp. Our rations are getting more difficult as there is no more flour and we are told rice is to be severely rationed. We have not been fed badly, principally rice, vegetables, bread and bananas, but I have lost a lot of weight and do not feel at all strong, and really feel my 60 years.

Today is the 4th November (233rd day of internment) and we seem to be no nearer the end of our captivity. What degradation for our prestige for thousands of British men and women to be interned in their own Colonies and at the mercy of the enemy, and all their property and belongings confiscated or looted and stolen. What is to become of us all I ask myself; will there be anything left for the private individual except ruin and poverty to face? But all that is as nothing compared with the finding of **Vi** and the reunion of the family. How are **Myfanwy** and **Gwynedd** getting along; it is all too harrowing and one can only trust in God's mercy and keep oneself buoyed up with the hope that all will be well and that we shall still have years of peace and happiness before us, even though we have to live on a very meagre scale. I must do my best for all of them to make up for these weary months of privation, suffering and anxiety and must not let myself go "down hill".
[The Diary ends on the 4th November 1942, although Charles added information in the table he kept (listing British Men interned in Padang, W. Sumatra) as well as information about camp finances.

There are conflicting records about Charles's death. The Colonial Office Register of Deaths states that he died aged 61 on the 15th December 1944 in Bangkinang internment camp of dysentery and that this information came from Japanese internment camp records. However, many records sent to the Colonial office were incorrect and on the Register of Deaths he is wrongly described as an "Estate Manager, Penang".]

INFORMATION REQUESTED - Gareth Owen writes on behalf of his brother Robert Owen, resident in Switzerland:

Colin W.A. Inglis was a British architect working for the Public Works Department in Singapore in 1942. His diary was privately published in 1945 with the title, "**Singapore to Colombo**", and tells the story of his escape from 13th February to 3rd March 1942. After a few years with the Indian Engineers, he died on 15th February 1944.

I recently obtained a copy of his book and found a letter inside from **Inglis** addressed to a **Mrs. M. Stuart of 56, Banbury Road, Oxford**. Dated 14th June 1942 at Calcutta, he mentions last seeing **Mrs. Stuart's** husband at the Cathay Building in Singapore on the 11th February 1942. He goes on to write about his last days in Singapore and subsequent escape (on the **SS Kuala**), the bombing of his ship at Pom Pong Island, and eventual voyage up the Indragiri River in Sumatra to reach Padang where he was lucky to be immediately embarked on a British destroyer. The last page of the 6 page letter mentions his sister and brother-in-law **Moira** and **Wreford Clements** of "**Falen**", **Surrey Gardens, Effingham Junction, Surrey**. Perhaps descendants of either **Mrs. Stuart** or **Moira Clements (nee Inglis)** might like to take possession of this letter. If anyone can help locate them, please contact me: **Robert Owen** – e-mail: robert.owen@thenet.ch

THE STORY OF COLIN INGLIS'S ESCAPE - By kind permission of Sir David Lewis

Friday 13th February – Thursday 5th March 1942

Colin Inglis is selected to attempt an escape from Singapore to Java on a small passenger boat the SS Kuala
Colin Inglis was a British architect employed by the Department of Public Works (PWD) in Singapore. For the last six months he had been occupied mostly on Fleet Air Arm projects. Selected as "essential personnel" for evacuation to Java early February, he was forced to pack his office bags alongside local Asiatic staff who were to remain. He then reported to a heavily bombed quayside at Telok Ayer basin to board the SS Kuala. This is his story:

The *Kuala* was built to carry about twenty five passengers, but about 600 odd people were eventually put aboard – all very matey. We sailed at dusk, leaving Singapore blazing in a hundred different spots, but nevertheless the City proper looked comparatively unharmed!.... Returning to the poop deck, I squeezed into my place between **Roger Steed** and **Burke-Gaffney**. Supper began. Corned beef, tinned fruit and assorted cream biscuits, washed down with whisky and water. Shortly we settled down for the night, as there was nothing else to do – even smoking being forbidden owing to black out regulations. Using my tin hat as a pillow, I lay down as far as possible on the hard deck. Being unable to stretch fully outright, it was some time before I managed to get off to sleep, but not for long. The hardness of the deck and the little bumps of oakum which came through the planks, added to a wind which was distinctly cold, woke me shivering. On return to the poop deck, **Hutton**, always resourceful and thinking of others, went off to see what he could do about a bucket of tea, and shortly returned with it – milkless, sugarless, steaming hot, and very welcome. We were just dipping our cups into it when the cry went up that bombers were approaching. We all trooped down to the main deck, which had the steel promenade deck over it, and hoped that would be sufficient protection. The planes, however, flew over us, paying no attention and directed their attack on to the abandoned *Kwang Wu* further out. This they sank with one salvo, and went on towards the horizon. A wild relief went through us that perhaps they hadn't spotted us, and I said as much to **Hutton**. He looked graver than I've ever seen him look before and shook his head. We watched the other ship sink by the bow, milling about before the small portholes, when someone yelled from the promenade deck that the planes had turned and were coming back. The whole crowd of us sank to the deck like a corps de ballet and waited for what seemed like a year before we heard the planes. Their roaring was soon drowned by the whistle as the bombs began to fall, and we all snuggled closer trying to burrow under the next door person. With a series of roars the bombs exploded and the ship heaved and shuddered (so did we!).

Immediately a loud hissing broke out and clouds of steam came pouring from the engine room, the first bomb having broken the main steam pipe. All then remembered the old saying about rats and traps, and we surged up into the air again to find the bridge and upper deck well ablaze.

A start was made putting women and children into the ship's boats which we had left alongside when we came back from Pom Pong, while the rest of us dashed about throwing overboard lifebelts, seats, drawers anything in fact which would float. I then took my shoes off to be ready in case we had to jump for it, and wandered around looking for a safe place in which to put them, not realizing it didn't matter where they dropped. **Alex Niven** and I saw a Chinese woman with two children hovering on the brink before jumping into the boat, we went to her and took the children and told her to jump and we'd pass the children down. She jumped and missed. So I passed my child to **Alex** and went after her. When I came up to the surface she was being dragged into the boat, so **Alex** passed the children to me and came in too. Between us we got the kids into the boat and looked around to see what we could do next. It was then that I realized the difference between paddling about in a swimming pool in trunks and splashing in the ocean fully dressed, but lighted on a piece of wood about 2 ft long, 9 ins wide and 2 ins thick. This I tucked under me and then heard the planes returning. This time they were aiming at *Tien Kwang*, and I saw one bomb coming down quite close. Most of the missiles exploded in the water which gave those swimming a feeling as though their tummies were being pummelled by quickly wielded sledge hammers. Several bombs however, fell on the rocky shore of the island, flinging great boulders and splinters in all directions, and causing a number of casualties amongst those who had already landed. The explosion of one bomb near me in the water swamped me in its filthy black wash smelling utterly putrid. And I surfaced again alternately praying and cursing with fervour and fury. The two probably cancelled themselves out!

Never have I felt so completely helpless as floundering in the water whilst these bleeding Japs dropped their eggs – helpless and at time petrified.

When things had quietened down again, I paddled round on my little bit of board collecting odds and ends of boards, sticks, etc. and passed these around to those who looked as though they needed them. Feeling rather like Father Christmas, I found a kapok mattress floating, so grabbed it and towed it off to two women keeping up on an oar.

These ruddy Japs paid a third visit, and once more our insides were subjected to rough treatment. More bombs dropped on the island again, causing many casualties....

I thought I'd make for the island almost due west of Pom Pong, about two miles away, and started off again. And then it was I suspected that a fairly strong current was running away from Pom Pong, and this was confirmed soon by coming on a dead woman, who, despite my efforts, would not be shaken off, but kept up with my by now somewhat hysterical swimming, with the greatest of ease.

Eventually I outstripped her and, swimming on, discovered that no matter what I wanted to do, I would pass the island I'd chosen well to the south. I then began to look around for somewhere else to land – somewhere to which the current would bring me without much effort on my part. It was now 1.30pm and I'd already been in the water two hours and was beginning to feel tired, and, strangely enough, bored. My watch, which had been so cheap, was proving its worth, if never before, by ticking valiantly....

Deciding that it was now no time to be finicky, that I must get out of the water before nightfall, I set off in the opposite direction for one of the swampy islands – 4.30, 5.30, 6.00. This was awful! If I was getting nearer it was so slow as to be imperceptible to the naked eye. And with the open sea beyond and nothing else in sight I began to wonder what life was all about. Had I escaped all injury in Malaya in the two months of raids, escaped hurt when the docks were bombed yesterday evening, and the *Kuala* this morning, just to float to an unidentified grave somewhere in the Pacific? It didn't make sense, although it looked as if nonsense was going to win. It was beginning to grow dusk and I was feeling distinctly rattled. I pulled myself upon my board to rest my arms, and ye gods! There was a fishing boat with two Malays in it about 200 yards away!

That fishing boat picked up no fewer than ten survivors from the Kuala. Dozens of other survivors were dotted on neighbouring islands. Colin Inglis eventually continued his journey to Padang in Sumatra and was soon in danger again from the advancing Japanese. On 3rd March he would be evacuated to Colombo in Ceylon by the Australian ship HMAS Hobart; less than two weeks later, Padang fell.

RODERICK JAMES RAIT

In January, Angus Stirrat, a medal collector from Scotland made enquiries about a set of medals he had recently purchased from a medals' dealer. He did not recognise the letters "FMSVF". He contacted the MVG through the website, and on further investigation through Jonathan, the medals turned out to belong to a Roderick J. Rait. His biographical details are as follows:

RAIT R.J. [Roderick James] 'Roddy' born 13.3.1901 Rottingdean, Sussex. To Malaya 1920. Assistant Planter, Subu Estate, Batu Tiga [1924]; Midlands Estate, Highlands & Lowlands Para Rubber Co. Ltd. [1935] then Manager, Bukit Jelutong & Rastek Estates, Selangor. Enlisted VF 1922. Commissioned 2nd Lt. 1.4.1937. Later Captain 2/FMSVF. POW Changi then Singapore to Thailand with Letter 'U' Party [But listed as Capt. R. Rist] on 28.10.42. POW camps: Kinsayok, Kanu, Tarsoa, Chungkai, Tamuan, Kanchanaburi ending the war at Nakorn Nyok. Wife **Lotti** evacuated on Charon, arriving Fremantle WA 18.1.42. **R.J.** was repatriated 10.45 to London NW1. Planting in British Honduras 1950s. **Lotti** died 31.7.69 in Edenbridge, Kent. **R.J.** died 1991.

Efficiency Medal relates to his other ranks service: Corporal 24.6.1938, EM 2nd clasp awarded 13.10.1049 when Captain. His Liberation Questionnaire [WO 344 files] and POW index card [WO 345 boxes] at NA Kew.

Does anyone know of any other family members?



PRISONER OF THE JAPANESE

The Trials and Tribulations of

Private William Munro – 1st Battalion Straits Settlements Volunteer Force 1942 – 45

By kind permission of Donald Ruffell and the late Diana Ruffell (nee Wallace)

Pre-war Bill Munro was a partner in Allen and Gledhill, Advocates, in Malacca and Singapore. On retiring to the U.K. he practiced in Edinburgh and became a Q.C.

As a full private in the Singapore Volunteer Corps, 1st Battalion of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force, I became a prisoner-of-war on the surrender of Singapore on the 15th February 1942. My company was then on patrol duty in Scott Road in Singapore. The din all morning of shelling and bombing and firing had been terrific. Then suddenly it all ceased at noon. The silence seemed absolute. What a relief it was.

The next day we handed in all our arms and after another day or two when we fed ourselves from the refrigerators of the various deserted houses in the neighbourhood, we were told to fill our water bottles and prepare for a march. We were mustered at dawn and then marched in columns of three to Changi Barracks, 16 miles away. The whole of the British Army in Singapore seemed to be there and as the days went on more and more troops from up-country filtered in. I was, I think, in Barrack Block C to start with and slept on the concrete floor of the verandah. There were no washing facilities to start with, the Japs having cut off Singapore's main water supply from Johore, and there was only enough water from local reservoirs for cooking and drinking. For the first week the weather was dry and the day temperature about 90°. At last the rain came and with it there was a rush outside of naked bodies with odd bits of soap and dirty shirts and shorts for washing. Later, showers were restored and for a time we were allowed to bathe in the sea. Food was three plates (or, more accurately, half plates) of rice a day, prepared by our own cooks, and eaten with a spoon, and sometimes we would have some local vegetables and even on occasion a tablespoon of sweetened condensed milk. That was considered a great treat.

Boiled white rice has a diuretic effect but has not laxative properties. This was fortunate because the water closets were not working, being without water. Constipation became a problem but our doctors assured us there was no need for worry. The cause was the change of diet and a lot less to eat. We compared notes on numbers of days without motions. I can remember that my count was eight days which was about normal. There was one man who claimed a record of six weeks but he was not generally believed. Latrines were fixed up and rough seats put over deep holes in the ground. These were known as boreholes and the rumours which became rife throughout the camp, and were said to emanate from that quarter, were known as borehole rumours. There were many of these and I think there is little doubt that many of them were deliberately put about to keep up morale. A favourite one was about a three pronged landing by American troops on the west coast of Malaya. This was recounted with great certainty and in some detail. But when we got various stories about American landings in different parts of the Peninsula, generally two or three pronged ones, we started to regard them with amusement. Morale indeed in those early days was quite high. We never really believed that the Japs would win the war and, though I speak here about the feelings of the Singapore and Malayan Volunteers with whom I was in contact, we were confident we would be free again in a period of months. We saw little of the Japs. They allowed our own officers to run the camps and we had our own doctors to attend to us. Some working parties were allowed into town and brought back medicines and other desirable articles and also books from vacant houses. I can remember acquiring a bottle of marmite from one of these parties. I think I paid for it in cigarettes. Cigarettes were issued from time to time but were never plentiful. They were, however, much in demand and I can remember as a non-smoker myself how surprised I was at the effect on smokers of being deprived of their tobacco. Otherwise perfectly respectable people would lie and steal to get cigarettes or tobacco. Indian paper bibles were much sought after, for with some issue-tobacco cigarettes could be rolled from the pages. Drinkers deprived of their alcohol did not react in the same way. There was, of course, no issue of alcoholic drink and we had to accept that, but when at a later date some barrels of rum were discovered at the Race Course where I worked for a time there was no rush for the offered tot. I remember trying it but not wanting any more after the first mouthful.

I can't remember that we had any particular employment during our early days at Changi Barracks. We wore our uniform shirt and shorts and were paraded from time to time for a roll call. We were allowed to swim in the sea though this privilege was later withdrawn when the Japanese complained that some of our troops made indecent gestures towards a squadron of Japanese naval ships that were passing up the Straits of Johore towards the Naval Base.

In May 1942, I was told to join a working party at the Race Course at Bukit Timah. There were 100 or so of us, mostly Singapore and Malayan Volunteers, but also some British troops, and we were carted off in lorries, all our possessions,

such as they were, in kit bags. We settled in at the rear of the stands upstairs where the Tote windows are and where at other times we used to queue up to put our bets on and occasionally receive our winnings. We had mattresses to sleep on and on the whole it was more comfortable than Changi. Our job was to make hay out of the rough lalang grass that we were sent out in small parties to cut. A lorry would take parties of us to grassy patches in various parts of the island and we cut the grass with scythes and sickles. This was done in the mornings after an early breakfast of boiled rice and we returned to the Race Course for another meal of rice and a short rest. The grass that we brought back with us was laid out for drying on the Club car parks. When it had dried out after a day or two the grass was remade up by us into 20 kilogramme bales in wooden baling machines operated by hand. The baling machines were in a marquee and four of us were detailed to each one. After the first few weeks of grass cutting I, along with others – I don't know how the selection was made – was put on exclusively to baling work. The purpose of this haymaking was never clear to us. The rumour was that it was for the horses that the Japs were using. The Japs did seem to have some cavalry units on the island but if their horses ate that hay they must have had pretty strong stomachs. On the subject of stomachs, our evening meals at the Race Course were an improvement on what we had been having before. The Singapore Cold Storage Company's stocks had been raided and in the evening we had meals of beef and tinned fish with our rice. We also had the opportunity of buying ground nuts and palm oil and occasionally pineapple and bananas.

Although our own officers were in charge of us in this camp, we did have daily visits from Japanese soldiers. There was a **Sergeant-Major Takei** who came on his motor cycle and seemed to be the senior man in charge, and a few one, two or three star privates used to look in on us. They were quite friendly and sometimes produced photographs of their families to show us. Communication, however, was somewhat difficult since they knew very little English and we very little Japanese. Curiously, though we could speak in the hearing of a Japanese soldier in the most opprobrious terms of what we thought of them without any reaction from them at all, yet if we used the word "Bastard" the reaction was immediate and the speaker was promptly awarded with a succession of hard slaps on his face. This was the popular form of immediate punishment amongst the Japanese even amongst their own troops. It was bad luck on the Australians with us because, of course, the word "bastard" is one of the most popular words in Strine, almost a term of affection.

While we were in this camp, we had our first food parcels from abroad. These ones were from South Africa and were said to have been shipped at Lourenzo Marques where Japanese merchant ships had, by arrangement, taken certain diplomatic staff and others from North China and Japan. I think we had one parcel amongst four of us, but I have no exact recollection of the contents except that there were tins of South African jams which were greatly enjoyed. We also had books, some from the same source at the parcels and some we brought with us from Changi. We had leisure in the evening to read them. Our time was adjusted to coincide with Tokyo time which was about two hours ahead of Singapore time, so that when we were roused at 6.30am it was really only 4.30am and still quite dark and when we finished work at about 6pm it was still broad daylight. Lights out was about 10 or 10.30pm. The water supply had become plentiful again and we had showers. We had rest days on Sundays and we did have a certain amount of news from the outside world. Somewhere there was a hidden radio and small snippets of news reached us, though, since it was passed round by mouth, it was not very reliable. We were not allowed at first to send or receive letters. At one stage, we were allowed to send postcards of not more than 25 words to relatives and to receive similar postcards, but I do not remember quite when that occurred. It may have been about the time of our first Christmas as prisoners. When we had been at the Race Course for five months or so, that is towards the end of October, we – i.e. all the workers at the Race Course – were carted off to a camp of wooden huts at Sime Road, near the Bukit Timah golf course. This camp had been used as temporary quarters by the RAF during the war and the huts were well built but in a state of disrepair. Our job was to restore the huts, living in them meantime. We learnt later after we had left that the civilian internees in Changi Gaol had been moved into these huts. We were there till just after the New Year. **[Editor: N.B. Sime Road Camp was RAF HQ until December 1941. After capitulation it was used by the Japanese to house Allied POWs until October 1942 when 3,000 POWs were sent to Thailand. In November & December 1943 "H" Force survivors were returned to Sime Road, and in May 1944 the POWs were sent to Changi Prison and the civilians there were transferred to Sime Road Camp.]**

I remember arriving at Sime Road in a high fever which the doctor diagnosed as due to tonsillitis and I was sent at once to the three or four bedroom sick bay where I spent my first week or two. I shared this small hospital with **John Grant** of the Borneo Company and an amiable Eurasian called **Pennefather**. We had some of John Buchan's works to read. On recovering I was given a bed in one of the huts. This was a charpoy or string bed, the kind that Sikh jagas (guards) use for sleeping in front of the buildings they are employed to guard. I thought this was great luxury but I had not reckoned on the reaction to it of my sacro-iliac joint which I had strained digging gun pits during the war. I suffered

agonies from that and on top of it I had shingles round my middle. I was daubed with mercurichrome for the shingles and given a Gray's powder at night to help me sleep. I used to wake up after two or three hours and walk round the camp to get some alleviation from the pain. It was then that I learnt of the phases of the moon, how it rose in the east and set in the west and how the new moon first appeared low in the darkening west and as it waxed on the following nights disclosed itself higher and higher in the heavens until as a full moon it rose lazily from the eastern horizon. I had never known that before. I can remember that during my nocturnal rambles I would think somewhat grimly of the words of **George Borrow's** gypsy friend when asked why he went on suffering the discomforts of gypsy life:

"There's day and night, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise the wind on the heath. Life is sweet, brother". Fortunately there were no Japs in that camp at night though we had visits during the day to see that we were getting on with our work of restoring the huts. During our sojourn at this camp, however, we had a visit from a Japanese general for which we were mustered by the regular sergeant-major in charge, **Sergeant-Major Edge**, known as Rusty, a small man, very English, probably Cockney. I remember this visit because the general's name was **Fukuci** and the sergeant-major's pronunciation of the name caused amusement. My first Christmas as a prisoner was spent at this camp. My shingles were gone, my back improved and we had a holiday. Our cooks prepared a special meal for us but the only items in it I can remember were little cakes made of ground rice and slightly sweetened. Another thing I remember at this camp was the weevils in the rice supplied to us. We ate this, weevils and all, quite happily, reckoning that the cooked weevils would supply us with some much needed protein. We left this camp just after the New Year and returned to Changi Barracks. This time I was in a different block and somehow acquired a stretcher for a bed. It was a change from the charpoy but it was little protection from the hard concrete floor and probably because of that my back pains eased considerably. Changi had changed somewhat in our absence. There were fewer troops there, many having been sent off in groups to Siam to work on the railway. Also, dysentery had broken out and the hospitals were full. There had been many deaths. One improvement, however, was the foundation of Changi University. The graduates of various universities had got together and organised classes where various subjects were taught. I was organised into the Faculty of Law and given the job of lecturing on Jurisprudence to a mixed bag of about twenty officers and men. Fortunately I was provided with an ancient copy of **Holland's** "Jurisprudence" which was a text book I had used myself in my student days and my lectures consisted largely of reading selections out of that book. Whether my students gained any knowledge from my lectures which stood them in good stead in later years I do not know and I don't suppose I shall even know. Changi University started with ambitious plans to hold examinations and award degrees. I was sent away, however, before anything like that happened and I never did find out whether these early proud ambitions were even achieved. Another improvement was the small theatre in Changi village where a small company formed by the troops performed various plays. I can remember one that was called "Who killed the Count?" There were others and there was also a concert party run by Singapore and Malayan Volunteers who always wound up their concerts with the song, "We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when, but I know we'll meet again some sunny day". It kept our spirits up.

The Japs still kept out of our way. The food was the usual three servings of boiled rice a day with vegetables sometimes, and we were continually hungry. When you're as hungry as we were you think of nothing but food: you imagine menus of your favourite dishes and it was a hobby of some to write out imaginary menus on odd pieces of paper. Some news filtered through. Somewhere there was a hidden radio receiver and we heard reports of the fighting in North Africa where, we were told, the Germans were getting a licking. This helped our morale. Bed bugs were a bit of a nuisance at this time. We used to take our beds out to the sun in the morning and try to kill off as many bugs as we could using whatever instrument was handy. I used a steel nail file – don't know how I came to possess it – and I can still remember the smell of those bed bugs when I squashed them.

Dysentery was still rampant in the camp and sometime in March 1943 I fell victim to it. I was carted off to the hospital – Roberts Hospital, I think – where all the beds seemed to be full. I had to witter around for a bit until a bed was found for me. After a pretty rough night I was approached in the morning by an RAMC major doing his rounds. "What's your stool like?" he said. I was somewhat puzzled by this question because to me a stool meant something you sat on. So I looked cautiously round my bed to see if there was a stool there that I hadn't noticed before and when I saw none I said, "I haven't got one". "God," he said, his face falling. "What the hell are you doing here?" There was no doubt, however, about my dysentery and I stayed on in that hospital getting my daily dose of Kaolin – the only medicine available – until I was pronounced cured. I was then allowed to go to another building called the Diet Centre which was under the charge of **Dr. Crawford** of the Malayan Volunteers whom I had known at school. In addition to our rice there we had doses of a yeast drink which had rather an odd flavour. We also had some corned beef and other oddments from some American food parcels that had arrived and there were stacks of American newspapers. Most, if not all, of these papers were Californian ones and we used to laugh at the columns of socialite activities and drool over the advertisements for various beach and mountain resorts. We were not on the whole depressed. There was still great confidence in an Allied victory. [To be continued in July].

OBITUARIES

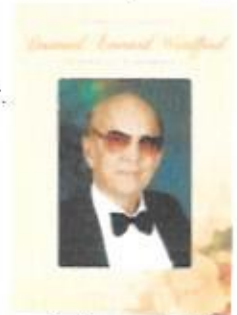
MICHAEL HAMMETT – born 1937 – died February 2017

We send our very sincere sympathies to **Michael's** wife **Valerie** and son **Mark** on his death. He was evacuated from Singapore with his mother on a cargo boat bound for Batavia. From there, they travelled to Colombo and eventually reached England. His father **Harold George Hammett** was in the MCS and was a Pilot Officer with the MAAF. He was captured at sea in February 1942 near Sumatra and interned in various camps in Palembang and Muntok where he was the Camp Leader. **Michael** lived with his wife in Jersey.

DESMOND EVERARD WOODFORD – born 1931 – died December 2016

Veteran child internee, **Des Woodford** died on 8th December 2016 aged 85 after a brief battle with cancer. Des lived in Australia but was a regular visitor to Malaysia where he did business. He was well known in the Eurasian network of businesses and with his wife **Gillian** used to meet **Andrew Hwang** annually in Kuala Lumpur. He leaves his wife and 4 grown up children, **Wayne, Liz, Dale, and Linda**. His book, "Waiting for the Durian" written by **Susan McCabe** tells the story of his interment as a child in camps in Palembang and Muntok with his parents.

Our very sincere sympathies go to his wife and children on their sad loss.

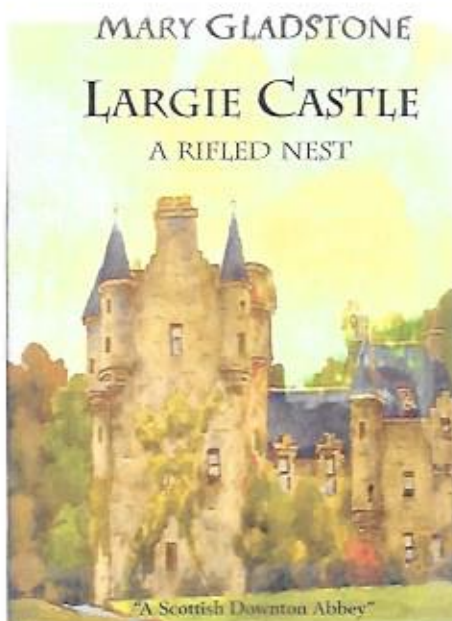


We are also sad to report the death of Royal Marine **Colonel David Shallow MC** aged 89. As the subaltern of a troop of 40 Commando Royal Marines hunting bandits in Perak in 1951, he came across a small group of them late in the afternoon, and followed them for three days until 3 were shot and 2 surrendered.

Adam Bergius DSC has also died aged 91. He was part of the crew of midget submarine **XE-4** which had orders to cut underwater telephone cables from Saigon to Singapore and Hong Kong to Singapore, so that the Japanese had to use wireless communication which could be intercepted and deciphered. Trained as a diver, he managed to cut the Hong Kong cable at a second attempt, despite the depth of the water, using breathing apparatus which was still very much in its infancy. For his gallantry, perseverance and outstanding skill he was awarded the DSC.

BOOKS

"**LARGIE CASTLE. A Rifled Nest.**" By **Mary Gladstone**. Publisher: firefallmedia. Paperback 346 pages. ISBN 10: 1939434823 Amazon Co. UK £14.25 ISBN 13: 978-1939434821



Mary Gladstone's well written and well researched book combines family history with the story of her uncle, **Major Angus MacDonald**, a professional Army officer in the 2nd Battalion, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, who was lost at sea in March 1942 following the sinking of the **Rooseboom**.

Angus became heir to an ancient Scottish name and large property. Educated at Winchester College & Magdalen College, Oxford, he joined the 2nd Argylls in India in 1937 and was sent with them to Singapore in 1939. A man with a love of solitude and big open spaces, he had little liking for Singapore and was more at home upcountry.

In the Malayan Campaign, **Angus**, formerly adjutant to **Colonel Stewart**, was Brigade Major to **Brigadier Paris**, 12th Indian Infantry Brigade. He distinguished himself in the fighting on the Upper Bukit Timah Road, Singapore, darting in his 6hp baby Fiat [he was 6ft 4 ins tall!] up and down the road with messages. Ordered out of Singapore with **Brigadier Paris**, they got away to Sumatra aboard the **Sylvia** and found themselves aboard the **Rooseboom** bound for Ceylon from Padang.

The story of the sinking of the **Rooseboom** is well known through the ghost written books and articles by survivor **Walter Gibson**. Less well known is how in 1949 at the Edinburgh Court of Sessions, **Gibson's** testimony and subsequent writings broke the rules of honourable soldiering in describing the distressing and, in the eyes of **Angus's** family, dishonourable death of **MacDonald** that **Gibson** himself had not witnessed. This ensured a second death: that of **Angus's** reputation as he ceased to be mentioned in family circles. **Mary's** book goes some way to establish the truth of **Angus's** death and enhances the reputation of this brave officer. [Reviewed by **Jonathan Moffatt**].

WEBSITES TO VISIT

<http://muntokpeacemuseum.org/> - This website was set up by **David Man**. It is devoted to the civilian internees captured and held at Palembang and Muntok. It has many interesting biographies as well as information about the Museum

<http://www.manfamily.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Reis-Prisoner-of-War-Diary-for-Muntok-Visit-Letter-Size-With-Postscript.pdf> - This is the Diary of **Gordon Reis** whose grandson is **David Man**

Japanese Sign Final Surrender - YouTube film of the Japanese surrender in September 1945.

<http://www.cwgc.org/news-events/news/2017/2/daughter-who-escaped-singapore-in-1942-returns-to-pay-tribute-to-father-who-stayed-behind.aspx> - Article by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission on a telephone interview with **Rosemary Fell** before the events in Singapore.

The Church of Our Lady & St. Thomas of Canterbury National Memorial Church of FEPOW

The church is a 'Living Memorial' not a barren monument of stone. It is a working Roman Catholic Parish church and has the unique distinction of being the only church erected to the memory of FEPOW and Civilian Internees of all Faiths and Nations who died in the Japanese POW and Internment Camps. It was built in 1952 by the Priest Fr. Malcolm Cowin who had been a FEPOW and was Priest here from his release in 1946 until 1965. The church has always been National in its commemoration, and since 1998 has been designated as the National Memorial Church of FEPOW.

Visitors may like to note that:

The Church's times of opening are available and displayed in the Market Cross Tourist Information building in the Town's Market Square. The church may be closed for reasons that may not be announced. Currently the Parish Priest has his Day Off on Mondays, and the church is not open.

Set in the outside wall of the Entrance porch is a Memorial stone to Prisoners Of War and Civilian Internees of the Far East during World War Two.

Inside the church are some FEPOW artefacts and a Memorial Chapel which has a cabinet displaying original handwritten Books of Remembrance in three volumes.

The Memorial Chapel is a Shrine to the memory of FEPOW with small stained glass window. A second cabinet houses four New Books of Remembrance: One augmenting the list of RAF FEPOW who were not listed in the original Books, and three to contain the names of FEPOW Survivors who have died since release from captivity.

To view the names in the Books directly or search specifically for a name an appointment has to be made initially via the administrator of the church – telephone 01953603104 or email the archivist Peter Wiseman cpmt@163wis.freereserve.co.uk ^{SEE BELOW} or administrator@fepow-memorial.org.uk Arrangements can then be made, and additional information given. Visitors are most welcome.

FEPOW Information we hold:

A computerised database of the names in the original books was started in 1989. The current database developed from this and names of previously unknown FEPOW and Internees who also died in the camps were added as and when they are made known to us. Nearly 25,000 names are entered from the original books and some 9000 names have been added to date.

The database is not available for public access but is searchable on request provided details are given. Names can be added to the database if they are not recorded in the original Books. It was further extended to record names of FEPOW who survived the Camps but have since died. If a name is not found we will add it if that is what is wished by the enquirer. With names being added, the New Books (ie Survivors Since died) are generally reprinted each year. Names received after February cannot guarantee being added in the reprint for that year. The number of names added varies each year.

The Armed Service Forces mentioned in the Books are too extensive to list here. However, it includes British Air, Sea and Land Forces and Regiments including Merchant Navy, and Commonwealth Forces, Indian Army, and Dutch Military and civilians, Overseas Volunteer Forces of the Far East, and Civilians. Unfortunately little or no detailed information has survived for civilians mentioned.

Details of Service Personnel generally include the Service Number; Rank; Surname; Initials (some Forenames in full); and Regiment &/or Unit. Some information is missing for some names, and a few Camps are known and are mentioned in the database, but by no means all. In the case of names already entered, details can be corrected if they are wrong.

phandtmwiseman@gmail.com

Criteria for names to be added to the Books:

It is simply either:

The person who died was held captive in the Japanese POW/ Internment Camps (there were over 600) or Prison-ships during WWII;

Or having survived captivity and the hostilities as FEPOW/Internee, and died in freedom at some point post-war. This also applies to Civilian Internees including children and those born in internment. To ensure a correct entry we need as much detail as possible. Ideally, Service Number; Rank; Surname, Forenames or Initials and Regiment. For civilians places of employment/ local defence forces details may also be helpful Camp names and approximate dates of imprisonment/ internment are also helpful.

Original entries - we cannot alter the handwritten information displayed on the page. However, the names have been transferred to a computerised database, and amendments can be made to incomplete records there.

Sources:

Little information exists to say where original names were obtained from. Anecdote, Casualty lists, Commonwealth War Graves Commission and any organisation that held relevant details were approached. While the intention of this criteria just stated was specific, it was brought to our notice that amongst the names entered therein are several who are now known to have been Killed In Action. We have taken the view to abide by the original criteria.

The extent of the information we hold is entirely dependent on information provided (by relatives, friends or veterans newsletters) which may not always be correct. As volunteers we do not have the resources of time or money to substantiate names submitted for inclusion, but will assist if we can from the knowledge we have acquired. We have access to several books containing some FEPOW death rolls.

Please note:

We are not, and have never been part of any military or governmental organisation. Neither do we receive information from any official sources.

Donations

Relatives were approached for donations to help build the Church, which was paid for largely by Public Subscription.

A formal fee for checking/entering names is NOT demanded for this facility, but all donations to the church are welcome. To help maintain the work of this important Memorial Church, donations in the region of £10 (GBP) are acceptable. If the donor is a UK taxpayer the donation can be gift-aided: Please ask for a special envelope as designated by HMRC.. A special Memorial certificate can be created on request for £25 incl UK postage. This is a facsimile of the page where the FEPOWs name appears.

Memorial service

An annual ecumenical memorial service for surviving FEPOW/INTERNEES and their families in May each year, around the 14th but this is a 'moveable feast'. All are welcome to join us. Visits at other times can be arranged through the administrator or directly with me. The Books can be seen on display, but may only be viewed for inspection by appointment. The website www.fepow-memorial.org.uk is updated but will redirect you to the newer website <http://www.wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk/> A link at the top of the homepage – FEPOW - will take you to additional information.

Peter Wiseman BA Hons

(Honorary Archivist) Jan 2017

Contact 01953 604144., 163 Noewich Road, Wymondham, Norfolk NR18 0SJ

Email: phandtmwiseman@gmail.com

Flying Tigers

Taken from an article in the magazine, "Ipoh When Tin Was King"

With thanks to Liz Moggie

[Editor: During the Service at Kranji Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in Singapore on 15th February 2017, to mark the 75th Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore, wreaths were laid by three veterans of WW2 – **Olga Henderson** and **Vilma Howe** [MVG's former civilian child internees] and **Captain Ho Weng Toh**, a War Veteran and pilot with the legendary Flying Tigers. This is his story.]



Ipoh's Flying Tigers
Captain Ho Weng Toh (left) and Captain Leong Ming Sen

During WW2, many Malayan students who had been studying in Hong Kong decided to make their way to mainland China. Two of these were from Ipoh, **Ho Weng Toh** ("Winkie") and **Leong Ming Sen** ("MS"), who were of the same age and childhood friends.

Ho Weng Toh's father emigrated to Malaya from the Guangdong province of China in the early 1900s. He started a shoe business, selling his shoes at the tin mines and rubber estates. He instilled in his children the Confucian philosophy of hard work, frugality and uprightness.

Leong Ming Sen's grandfather was a mining tycoon, and the family lived in a large house. The two boys went to the same school – St. Michael's Institution in Ipoh.

In 1938, having finished his Senior Cambridge exams, **Ho Weng Toh** went to Hong Kong to study engineering at Lingnan University – albeit in Chinese which he had to learn.

On a visit home "**Winkie**" persuaded his friend

"**MS**" to join him in Hong Kong, but the war interrupted their studies and Hong Kong fell on Christmas Day 1941. **Ho** escaped to Guangdong on a bumboat, where he saw an advertisement for pilots in the Chinese Air Force. Trained by retired US Army Air Corps Captain **Claire Chennault** who had formed the American Volunteer Group (AVG), they flew antiquated P40 fighter planes dubbed **Fei Hu** (Flying Tigers) by the Chinese Press. They inflicted heavy casualties on the Japanese Air Force.

In 1942, as the US entered WW2, the AVG was inducted into the US Air Force, and the Chinese pilots were sent to the US for training. They returned to China to form the Chinese American Composite Wing (CACW). "**Winkie**" was sent to train at Assam and Lahore before going to the US for a one-year course in combat flying. With his good command of English, **Ho Weng Toh** was selected as interpreter and guide to the other Chinese trainee pilots. In 1944, "**Winkie**" returned to China and was sent to Chongqing where he was assigned to the First Bomb Squadron of the CACW based in Hanchung, Shenxi. The unit was unique in that Chinese and American crews flew in operations together, and their CO was none other than **General Claire Chennault**. "**Winkie**" was now part of the legendary Flying Tigers. He was assigned to the bomber wing and operated a medium sized bomber, the B25. Their mission was to bomb and strafe enemy targets in Japanese-held territory. Throughout 1945, "**Winkie**" flew combat sorties in the China-Burma-India theatre of war.

Leong Ming Sen, meanwhile, escaped to Chendu and enrolled in the Medical faculty of the West China Union University. But in response to China's call for more pilots, he applied to train and was selected just as **Weng Toh** completed his training as a bomber pilot. "**MS**" underwent a crash course and flew missions over the 'Hump' (foothills of the Himalayas between China and India) in a DC3 from Kunming to Assam loaded with tin ingots, and returning to China loaded with aviation fuel. After extra training in Calcutta, he joined the China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC) based in Shanghai, which was a partnership between the Chinese government and Pan American Airways which established the first air routes into China over the "Hump" – a dangerous route over the Himalayas without the accurate weather forecasting of blizzards, thunderstorms and strong cross winds. When the Japanese cut off the Burma Road, this air route was the only outside supply route into China. "**MS**" flew this route regularly carrying strategic war materials, food and medical supplies for the Chinese expeditionary forces. When the war ended, "**Winkie**" flew rehabilitation missions from Hankow. After visiting his family in Ipoh, he joined the Central Air Transport Corporation (CATC) flying DC3s and C46s as a commercial pilot. **MS** continued to fly with CNAC until forced to flee by the Communists. Both "**Winkie**" and "**MS**" returned to Malaya where they joined Malayan Airways at Kallang Airport, Singapore, in 1951, & were among the first Asian pilots to fly for them. Later they were pioneers of Malaysia-Singapore Airlines and also Singapore Airlines. In 1963 they became Instructor Pilots, and having trained so many young local pilots, "**Winkie**" earned the nickname of "**Daddy-O**".

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

LONDON – April 2017 – Joint MVG/BMS Meeting at the Malaysian High Commission

We are very sorry to announce that this meeting has now been postponed until September. I hope to have a date by July but we will keep members informed.

WYMONDHAM – Sunday 14th May 2017. Annual FEPOW Service at the Church of Our Lady & St. Thomas of Canterbury.

We are delighted to have made contact with **Peter Wiseman** who is the newly appointed Honorary Archivist for the Church. He has sent us information about the National Memorial Church which can be read on pages 22 and 23. If anyone would like to add a name to the Books of Remembrance, please apply to **Peter** for a form either by writing to the address given at the end of the information or by e-mailing him at: phandtmwiseman@gmail.com It is now possible to include civilian internees in these Books of Remembrance, and we hope that our members with relatives who were civilian internees will apply. If you would like to attend this service, please apply for tickets from: administrator@fepow-memorial.org.uk as soon as possible. The service is well supported and the Church is quite small. The service starts at 12.30pm and is followed by a buffet lunch in the Church Rooms.

Anne Hinam and her sister **Jean Goyder** have agreed to lay the wreath this year on behalf of the MVG. We thank them for representing the Volunteers and civilian internees.

NMA – Sunday 21st May 2017 – Annual Gardening and Plot Maintenance Day.

Our intrepid gardeners have again agreed to spend a day tidying the Plot, and we are very grateful to them. There has still been no reply to our letters asking to pay the NMA a lump sum for the maintenance of the plot in perpetuity.

LIVERPOOL CONFERENCE – Friday – Sunday 9th-11th June 2017. 6th International Conference.

“Legacies of Far East Captivity: Sharing Family Archives, Histories and the Post-War Impact of Health Issues.”

The conference is being organised by the Researching FEPOW History Group and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. Those members who have signed up to attend the Conference will have received the details from **Lizzie Oliver**. The balance of fees is now due and should be paid to **Mike Parkes** asap. You are also asked to sign up and pay for any of the optional meals – Friday supper at the LMI, and Saturday Buffet Supper at the Liner Hotel. There are optional trips on the Mersey Ferry on Sunday evening and to the Imperial War Museum North at Salford Quays on Monday, 12th June.

V-J Day – Tuesday 15th August 2017. Annual Service at the NMA in the MVG Plot at 12 noon.

The Service will reflect the 75th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore and the various services which have recently taken place. Please make a note of this date. After May we will have a better idea of the new Visitor Centre at the NMA, and the possibilities of having our usual joint picnic lunch after the service.

LONDON – Saturday 21st October 2017. Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club, Piccadilly – noon to 4pm.

Menu and cost to be announced in July. **Roger Willbourn** is our speaker this year. His talk entitled, **“A Survey of the Surveyor”**, is about his grandparents' lives in Malaya for over 40 years; the death of his grandmother on the **Giang Bee**; and his grandfather's time on the Railway. **Major Eric Willbourn (1/FMSVF)** was Director of the Geological Survey in Malaya.

LONDON – Thursday 9th November 2017. Cross Planting Ceremony at Westminster Abbey.

Please contact **Rosemary** if you would like to apply for tickets for this ceremony before August. Our 8 inch black cross dedicated to the Volunteers, will be planted by the RBL in the FEPOW Plot, with permission of the **Rev. Pauline Simpson NFFWRA**, FEPOW Chaplain and secretary. We also plan to order another 8" black cross with the MVG's logo.

LONDON – Sunday 12th November 2017. Remembrance Sunday Service and March Past at the Cenotaph in Whitehall

As mentioned in the Editorial, if you are planning to attend this ceremony this year to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore, please let **Rosemary** have the details given, even if you cannot make the march when the time comes. Tickets for entry are now personalised and not transferable. If you gave me your details last year, you only need to let me know that you plan to attend, as I have them still. Application for tickets has to be made digitally, and the details given should be the same as on the photo identity document you bring with you. Names are requested by JUNE, please, to give us a chance of persuading the RBL this year that we are not volunteers, but relatives of men who belonged to the Malayan Volunteer Forces, and therefore entitled to march to represent them and other civilians who became prisoners of the Japanese. I will apply for tickets everyone who wishes to march and who sends me their details. Failing that, we may be able to march with the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association in the Far East Air Force contingent.

NMA – Sunday 10th December 2017. Anniversary of the sinking of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse.

Please contact **Bob Hall** for details of this annual service. Please note: The service does take place outside at the Memorial.

SUBSCRIPTIONS – due in April 2017.

We have maintained the annual subscription at **£20 sterling** for this year, but give notice that with increased printing and postage costs, this will rise to **£25 sterling in April 2018**.

The annual subscription letter is enclosed with a tear-off section to be returned with your payment by post or by e-mail with notice of type of payment. MVG's UK bank account details are given in the letter.

Payments may be made by cheque, bank draft, standing order or BAC. For all UK and overseas members, except Australia and Malaysia/Singapore, payments should be sent to **Rosemary** with cheques payable to:

Mrs. R. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group [at the address below].

Australian members should pay **Elizabeth Adamson AUS\$30** for e-mailed newsletters and **AUS\$45** for printed newsletters.

Malaysian and **Singaporean** members should pay **Andrew Hwang RM\$115** or **SING\$40**

Please remember to pay your subscription before July 2017 when the up-to-date list of members for 2017-2018 is due.

I FOUND A BONE - By Teo Kah Leng (Peter)

A TRIBUTE TO THE SOOK CHING MASSACRE OF THE CHINESE AFTER THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

[Editor: This poem was published in the Holy Innocents' English School Annual in 1955. On 22nd February 2015, Samuel Chia read an article in the Straits Times seeking the author, Teo Poh Leng (Paul) of the poetic narrative "F.M.S.R." published in 1937. He guessed (as it turned out, correctly) that Kah Leng and Poh Leng were brothers, the "Peter and Paul" mentioned in the last line of the poem.]

I found a bone at Ponggol Beach
Half buried in the sand
And bleached as white by the sea and sun -
I picked it with my hand.

It was as brittle and as light
As coral in the sea;
It once had been an arm like mine,
And a hope like me.

"I had a hope, for life is hope,
My days were young and fair;
I had faith in fellowmen,"
The arm bone did declare.

"But then there came a fateful day
To shatter hope and faith;
'Twas Nineteen hundred forty-two,
February twenty-eighth.

"Barbarian hordes had overrun
This fair and sunny isle;
They herded me and friends of mine
Like a pack of creatures vile.

"A futile dream was hope in life,
And faith in fellowmen!
We're driven like sheep to Ponggol Zoo
And never heard again.

"They strung us each to each in a line,
With hands behind us tied,
And stretched us on the sandy beach
To face the rising tide.

I held the arm bone in my hand,
And let my warm tears fall;
My brothers were slain at Ponggol Beach,
My brothers Peter and Paul.

"My brother stood upon my right -
A friend he was to all;
He leaned a little on my side,
And merely whispered, 'Paul'.

"He had a wife and children small,
Five altogether told;
I was my mother's youngest son,
And she was blind and old.

"Where was the other brother of mine?
Him too did those brutes take?
Good God, keep him from murderous hands
For his and mother's sake!

"Is this the way of faith and hope?
I muttered in my breath;
'Must guiltless blood be made to ebb
In such inglorious death?'

"I am the way of life, your Hope,'
I heard a voice reply;
'Know I am hanging on a cross,
And Calvary is nigh.'

"A machine gun spat a volley long,
A bullet whizzed through me,
And I was dragged down by the line
That dropped before the sea.

"I heard my brother groan and die,
I heard approaching feet;
And ah! I felt the welcome steel
That stopped my heart to beat."

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