

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



**51ST EDITION
JULY 2017**



Jonathan Moffatt with the map of the Thailand-Burma Railway designed by our late Australian Veteran Member Charles Edwards and presented by Ian Lewis Hinde and John Hembry

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MEMBERS ATTEND AN'INFORMATIVE RESEARCHING FEPOW HISTORY CONFERENCE IN LIVERPOOL THE FIGHT FOR RECOGNITION IN THE U.K. FOR THE VOLUNTEERS CONTINUES

We are delighted to announce that our new website will shortly be online. It has a clean, modern look and will be easy to negotiate. All the original material which was on the former website is being transferred to the new format with the exception of the enquiries section. All enquiries older than those posted in 2015 have been removed. If anyone wishes to renew an enquiry, please send it to **Rosemary Fell** initially. We are hoping to have a small team who can add material to the website, once it is ready. Details will be given in due course.

We are grateful to **Anne Hinam** and **Jean Goyder** for representing the MVG at the Annual FEPOW Service at Wymondham, and for laying the wreath on behalf of the Malayan Volunteer Forces and Civilian Internees. A report on the day can be found on P. 2. We thank **Edwin** and **Hilary Green** for attending the service as well. As mentioned in the April newsletter [A.K. No: 50] we are grateful to **Peter Wiseman**, the Archivist of the Church of Our Lady & St. Thomas of Canterbury, for the information he gave us about including the names of civilian internees in the Books of Remembrance. Members who wish to apply can do so by writing to or e-mailing **Peter**. [phandtmwiseman@gmail.com].

Despite writing two letters to the Head of Operations, **Peter Orgill**, at the National Memorial Arboretum in August and September 2016, after our gardening day last year, offering to pay the NMA a sum of money to maintain the MVG's Memorial Garden in perpetuity, we are still waiting for a reply to our offer! Therefore, on Sunday, 21st May 2017, the usual gardening team spent a very rewarding day at the Arboretum carrying out the annual clean-up of the Plot. We thank **Anthony** and **June Jackson**, **Simon** and **Lynda Moss**, and **Donald Fell** for giving their time so freely and willingly this year. It is much appreciated. A report on the Gardening Day is on P. 2.

The 6th International RFH Conference in Liverpool in early June was well attended by some 20 MVG members. They were rewarded by two and a half days packed with talks on a wide range of subjects. It was good to have talks on the Borneo Camps as well as hearing from our own **Dr. Nigel Stanley** about the "Double Tenth" incident which had such terrible consequences for his own father and other members' fathers. One of the most interesting talks was by a Canadian lady called **Flora Chong**, who is associated with an organisation called **Alpha** which is involved in educating students in Canada about the history of the war in the Far East. A full report on the Conference is included in this newsletter. See Ps. 19 & 20. Sadly, we do have to report that for the third time, our request for the use of the spare material-covered board in the FEPOW Memorial Building at the National Memorial Arboretum for some information about the Malayan Volunteer Forces has been turned down. We had hoped that with a change of Chairman and Trustees of the Building there would have been a more enlightened approach to our request. Once again the Volunteer Forces, made up of all nationalities, races and creeds in pre-war Malaya, and living, working and fighting for their own country in the Malayan Campaign, remain unrecognised in the FEPOW building. Our fight to raise awareness of all the Volunteer Forces for their unique role in the Campaign and in captivity here in the United Kingdom continues. We are fortunate that we receive recognition and support in those countries in the Far East where we have presented plaques and have sponsored the Museum of Peace, and there is a great deal of good will for our determination to remember those who died in the defence of their own countries.

We hope that as many members as possible will attend the annual V-J Day service this year on Tuesday, 15th August. As usual, weather permitting, the service is to be held in the Memorial Garden, and will reflect the 75th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore and the MVG's visit to Singapore in February. We have now seen the newly refurbished Visitor Centre at the NMA, and come to the conclusion that it is not possible to have our usual communal picnic after the service because the tables and benches have been removed to make way for a much larger dining area and coffee shop. Instead, we can use our own plot after the service or members may be able to find individual benches where they can have their picnics.

To date, we have not heard from the Royal British Legion about the 12 tickets we have requested for the Cenotaph march past on Remembrance Sunday. If we fail in our request to march on behalf of our relatives under our own MVG name, we have been offered the chance to march with the RAF Butterworth & Penang Association in the Units of the Far East Air Force contingent. We are very grateful to them for their kind offer, but hope that we do not need to avail ourselves of this.

We thank our Australian and Malaysian secretaries, **Elizabeth Adamson** and **Andrew Hwang** for their work in recruiting new members and for attending other local remembrance services throughout the year. Our thanks also go to **Jonathan Moffatt** for his unstinting work on behalf of the Malayan Volunteer Forces to help those who are still searching for the truth about the fate of their relatives. We are also enormously grateful to **Michael Pether** for his invaluable and detailed research into the passenger lists of those evacuation ships from Singapore which were sunk and survivors taken captive by the Japanese.

THE FEPOW SERVICE AT WYMONDHAM Report by Hilary Green

On Sunday, 14th May, we were lucky enough to attend the Annual Service of Remembrance at the beautifully calm church in Wymondham, built to commemorate Far East Prisoners of War. At the laying of the wreaths (accompanied by a live rendition of the *Pie Jesu*), MVG was represented by **Anne Hinam**, who laid the wreath, and her sister **Jean Goyder**. Before the service started, I was able to talk to them and hear the story of their father and their time in Australia in 1941.

The service was very moving, with carefully chosen readings. The highlight for us was the Responsorial Psalm. This was beautifully sung and conducted by **Peter Wiseman**, Archivist of the FEPOW Memorial Church. **Peter** does a magnificent and complex job of recording the names of those who survived in the Memorial Books. He couldn't have been more helpful.

This was followed by a buffet lunch of sandwiches and a wonderful opportunity to mix and talk with other relatives of FEPOWs and to make new friends. It was an honour to shake the hand of survivor **Bob Huckelsby**, who, in spite of an arm in plaster, was in good health and spirits.

Anne Hinam adds ... "at the buffet lunch **Peter Wiseman** showed me the page he had created for our father to be added to their records."



GARDENING DAY IN THE MVG'S MEMORIAL GARDEN AT THE NMA

Report by Rosemary Fell

Another good day's gardening was achieved on Sunday, 21st May, at the NMA. We were again fortunate to have a fine day, and at about 10 o'clock, once we had collected together all our implements, we set to. Bamboo bushes were trimmed back and new spikes removed; the paved "V" was weeded and edges cleanly cut; the benches and paved areas were cleaned and the trees mulched.

Our grateful thanks go once again to **Anthony & June Jackson**, **Donald Fell** and to **Simon & Lynda Moss** for their continuing support. As mentioned in the editorial, after our gardening day in May last year, we wrote 2 letters on headed notepaper and posted them to **Peter Orgill**, Head of Operations at the NMA, requesting to pay the NMA a sum of money to look after the Plot for us in perpetuity. We eventually received an acknowledgement of our letters by e-mail, but not an answer to our offer to pay them money! In December last year, we were

contacted about how much the plot had cost the MVG for insurance purposes, and since then we have heard nothing. The new visitor centre at the MVG is very well designed. It's large and airy and appears to be well able to cope with the hundreds of visitors who descend on the NMA every day. With the many memorial plots encompassed within the 150 acres, services of remembrance take place almost on a daily basis. However, the personal atmosphere of the original building seems to have been lost. Indeed, the desire for clean lines and no "clutter" seems to be the overriding criterion – even within the bookshop area. Having presented the former "Arbour Restaurant" with the 5 Volunteers' badges which were on display on the inside wall of the restaurant, we looked to see whether they had been put back, together with the many other regimental badges which were on display there. To our dismay, they were not there. On enquiring what had happened to these badges, we were told that they were not going to be put back in the Visitor Centre and that they had been stored in a cupboard. The Volunteers' badges are all hand painted and cost the Group nearly £50 each. This represents a not inconsiderable sum for them simply to be discarded in a storeroom, and we have written to the NMA, enclosing photocopies of each badge for ease of identification, asking for them to be ready for collection on 15th August when we are next at the NMA. We have now received an e-mail to say they are ready for collection in August. If anyone has a good idea about where these badges could be placed, please let **Rosemary** know. We may consider auctioning them at the annual luncheon to raise money for the Group.



l to r Anthony, Lynda, Donald & Rosemary
Photographed by June

VISIT TO CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
FRIDAY, 11TH AUGUST 2017 AT 10.30AM FOR 10.45AM

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

This is a reminder. If anyone else wishes to attend this talk, please give your name asap to **Jonathan Moffatt**. The MVG is very fortunate to have been given this opportunity to learn about the work of the University to record original WW2 records from Changi and Sime Road civilian internment camps. There will be original records on display, a tour of the conservation and digitisation studios and a short tour of the University Library.

REMEMBERING THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

By Ros Bickford

[Editor: This report was received too late for inclusion in the April newsletter supplement.]

Mike and I were privileged to join other members of the MVG at various events to mark the 75th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore. My Dad was a POW and, according to his memoirs, captured on his 21st birthday, being 18th February 1942. Dad spent some months at Changi and was then transferred to the POW camp at Kuching, where he remained until the end of WW2. My dad's name was **Alec Bulford** and he was with the SSVF. This year marks 10 years since he passed away.

I had ordered a set of replica miniature medals and wore those with pride at the Memorial Service held at Kranji. That was such an emotional day for me, as no doubt it would have been for everyone else who attended. I also found the name of a relative on one of the panels on the Memorial Walls.

It was also very interesting to talk to various members of the MVG and each one of those members had a story to tell, either as an internee, or as a child evacuated from Singapore. Several of the people that I talked to had a story very similar to mine in terms of their relationship with their father and I found that so very poignant and it gave me a greater understanding of why Dad was quite often very introverted and kept to himself. I thank those people for telling me their stories and hope to meet with them again one day.

I took the opportunity to visit the new museum at the Old Ford Factory, where I met with one of the curators and donated a copy of Dad's memoirs on the Fall of Singapore as well as some photographs. She was very touched to receive such a personal account and this will be kept with the Singapore National Archives.

The trip to Singapore wasn't all sad memories as we had the opportunity to visit some wonderful places such as the National Orchid Garden (and wasn't that a feast for the senses!). We also ate some wonderful food from different cultures. We even enjoyed High Tea at the Raffles Hotel on Valentine's Day and that's a memory I'll treasure for a long time.

Thank you, Rosemary, for arranging the tour and allowing **Mike** and I to join you, even though we are not yet financial members of the MVG, although my brother is a member.

Ros Bickford, 9, Derby Street, Harden, NSW 2587, Australia.

A REPORT ABOUT RECENT DEALINGS WITH THE CHAIRMAN AND TRUSTEES OF THE FEPOW
MEMORIAL BUILDING AT THE NMA

As mentioned in the editorial, it is disappointing that for the third time, the Malayan Volunteers Group has been refused the use of a spare board in the FEPOW Building for information about the Malayan Volunteer Forces. Reasons for this refusal have differed each time – the most extraordinary being that the Trustees didn't want any "clutter." However, the excuse this time was not to upset the Java Group or the Hong Kong Veterans. However, the most upsetting aspect of this refusal concerns research being done into names of Volunteers to be included in the lists for projection on the walls of the building, both military and civilian. Our perception is that the names of not all Volunteer FEPOWs or civilian internees are to be included.

We also have to remind MVG members that only COFEPOW members are entitled to visit the upstairs archival room where a large box file of information about the Malayan Volunteers was provided by **Jonathan Moffatt** when the building was first opened in August 2005. We presume this information is still there, but unavailable for members to peruse, unless an appointment is made.

We are also sorry to report that personal information about members' relatives given to **Phil Beynon**, and stored in Albums which were kept on a book case in the Building near the Java Windows, has also been removed. We hope that the Trustees of the FEPOW Building will let us know what has happened to these Albums in due course. On each occasion, our request for information about the Malayan Volunteers in the U.K. FEPOW Memorial

Building has resulted in a bruising encounter and rebuttal. We shall not be making any further overtures to the current management, and feel we must inform our members that, unfortunately, not all Volunteers are included. The names of Chinese, Malays and Indians who were in the British Armed Forces, Volunteer Forces or British Indian Army and became FEPOWs are not included in their lists. A good example is that of SSVF Medical Officer Dr. POH Chee Juay whose POW index card is shown below:

收容所 Camp	昭和 年 月 日	番 號 No.	
姓名 Name	POH. Chee Juay.	生年月日 Date of Birth	12th January 1906
國 籍 Nationality	CHINESE-NATIONALISED 英 BRITISH.	所屬部隊 Unit	No. 38255 No. 2 Volunteer Field Ambulance.
階級身分 Rank	Lieut. S.S.V.F.A. M.O. Roberts Hospital.	捕獲場所 Place of Capture	SINGAPORE
捕獲場所 Place of Capture	SINGAPORE	捕獲年月日 Date of Capture	昭和 17 年 2 月 15 日
父 名 Father's Name		母 名 Mother's Name	
本 籍 地 Place of Origin	Singapore.	職 業 Occupation	GENERAL MEDICAL PRACTITIONER
通報先 Destination of Report	Mrs. Poh, Wife. c/o Mrs. N.K. Sen, Chartered Bank of India Calcutta, India.	特記事項 Remarks	

Dr. POH C.J. [Chee Juay] 'Joey' LRCP & S OBE 1948 born 1906. Son of merchant Cheong Choon Beng who was in the Malayan Volunteers Contingent at the Coronation of King George V. Educated Raffles Institution. Studied Medicine at Edinburgh University 1924-1929 then post graduate work at Liverpool University and Dublin. Returned to Singapore 1930 with Scottish wife Mima. Daughter Frances born 1933. GP, Queen's Dispensary, 671, Geylang Road, Singapore. A well-known tennis player in Scotland & Malaya. Joined Singapore Volunteer Corps 1940. Lt. to Captain 8225 Singapore Volunteer Field Ambulance. POW Changi, Singapore to Thailand 1943. Kanchanaburi Hospital, Nakom Pathom, Tamuan, Nakon Nyok. Returned to Queen's Dispensary post war. He was very active in the community in post war Singapore: Municipal Commissioner 1947; JP 1949; YMCA Committee 1947; member Leprosy Board 1950; President of the YMCA Mens Club 1949. He died 6.1.1984 in Sutton, London.

Other Chinese and Malay POWs not included are in the following list:

ATY	SERVICE	SVC NUMBER	RANK	NAME	NEXT-OF-KIN
CHINESE	CHINESE NAVY	4-97 (?)	L/COOK	CHEAH MING CHEH	WIFE: MIE SHER YAN, CU CHU-KANG, SOHO, CHINA
MALAY	MALAY NAVY	MN 496	L/TELE-PRINTER	WAHID P. YAUDIN	FATHER: NG WANG, HONG TENGEE MALAY SCHOOL, LUMUT, PERAK, MALAYA. MOTHER: CHUNG B. NINGRA, 49 JALAN HARTINI, NG, BUKIT K. L., MALAYA
do.	do.	MN 360	L/SEA	NORDIN ABDUL RAHMAN	MOTHER: MRS. NUSURA B. HAJI MOHD NOOL, KOTA LAMP, KANAKA, K. KANGSAR, PERAK, MALAYA
do.	do.	MN 1099	A.P.	ABU BAKAR MATYA	FATHER: DOLAH B. ABDUL KELEMAN, BESAR, MALACCA S.S.
do.	do.	MN 807	A.B.	AHMAD ABDUL	FATHER: MRS. B. SELAPING, LINGGANG 34 CO. 56, PATANI, KEDAH, MALAYA.
do.	do.	MN 798	A.B.	BUDIN SAAT	FATHER: ARIFFIN B. SHAFIE, 195 NG. BOYAN, TIARING, PERAK, MALAYA
do.	do.	MN 923	A.B.	HASHIM B. SHAFIE	UNCLE: ABDUL MANUF JALAN DATO, NG. PALOH-LOOH, PERAK, MALAYA
do.	do.	MN 505	TEL	MUSA BIN HUSSEIN	FATHER: HAT PERAK B. ALI, BATU 21, NG. GURAH, KEDAH, MALAYA
do.	do.	MN 800	A.S.	NOORDIN BIN MAT	FATHER: BESAR B. SAMIN, JALAN BANGU, K. KANGSAR, PERAK, MALAYA
do.	do.	MN 74-2	A.B.	SULAIMAN BIN SAMIN	FATHER: BESAR B. SAMIN, JALAN BANGU, K. KANGSAR, PERAK, MALAYA

The following were taken prisoner of war in February 1942, & imprisoned with other British POWs in Palembang. On 25th April 1943, they were released against their wishes in most cases (especially Cheah Ming Cheh), and given local employment by the Japanese Authorities; up to the time of release they constantly avowed their British Nationality. One other Malay, Kassim Bin Osman (Ref. Pg 32), had a wounded leg and was not released.

Other European Volunteers included Danish Planters whose story is told in the following newspaper article:

ARTICLE FROM THE DANISH NEWSPAPER POLITIKEN – 27th October 1945

By kind permission of Klaus Lunoe, son of Torkild Lunoe, with translation by Ruth Rollitt

[Torkild Lunoe was employed as a rubber planter in Malaya in 1930 where he joined the Kedah Volunteer Force. In 1935 he moved to Perak where he joined the 1st Battalion FMSVF (Perak) and became a POW together with members of other Volunteer Forces.]

Three Danes in Japanese prison where men were whipped to death.

Three planters from Westenholtz Estates in Malaya returned home after the Fall of Singapore after years of suffering as slaves of the Japanese.

The three Danish Planters who had slaved for the Japanese as labourers in the docks building fortifications and laying railway tracks in almost impenetrable areas through mountains and jungle returned to Copenhagen yesterday.

Two of them, **Hans Madsen** and **Torkild Lunoe** were working for Westenholtz Estates in northern Malaya when the war broke out. A third, **Aksel Kofoed**, was working for a British Estate more to the south of the country, but all three had fought in the defence of Singapore when the city eventually had to surrender to Japanese superiority. With several thousands of allied soldiers, they became Japanese Prisoners of War.

They had previously battled their way through Malaya, but this fight – horrendous and unequal it might have been – was nothing compared to the years they had to spend as slaves for the Japanese.

In spite of all stipulations and treaties, they were used for war-work and whipping and torture became the order of the day. On their arrival at the airport on a British transport plane, **Mr. Madsen** told some tales from that period – a shocking story about violence, hunger and deprivation.

Slaves on the ammunition and petrol ships.

"I was employed as a planter by Westenholtz Estates – or as their official title is: United Plantations and Bermann's Oil Palms in Malaya – for more than ten years. Shortly after my arrival, I and **Lunoe** joined the Volunteers in the area. The situation was indeed restless.

Then the war came: The Japanese sent in large forces and the few people in our group gradually had to surrender to their superiority. We fought our way down through the Malay peninsula, sometimes we got involved in bitter fighting against the fanatical Japanese, but succeeded in reaching Singapore without too great a loss. Here, we took part in the defence of the city – until it fell. And then our fate was sealed. **Kofoed, Lunoe** and I were forced down to the port and under the most dreadful threats we and other POWs were forced to load the ammunition and petrol ships.

Ten Hours work often stretched into several days and nights.

We worked here for about a year and the Japanese supervisors who were there to check us took no notice whatsoever of our health. I have seen people fall over from hunger and exhaustion – they were just left to die. Working hours were set to ten hours a day, but that only happened occasionally. We often had to work for days on end without a break. That was when the Japanese were especially busy getting their supplies to the front – and they were always busy.

There was more than enough to do – but not much to eat. We did not actually suffer from starvation in the first year or so in Singapore. But the food was far from sufficient and I often fell asleep with a rumbling tummy. But – **Madsen** adds laughingly – we were so exhausted after our work, we slept like logs in spite of the hunger and on waking up we greedily gobbled up our ration of rice.

A job from hell when men were killed.

But it became worse. I and other prisoners of war were moved to Siam. The Japanese wanted to build a railway between Bangkok and Rangoon – an endless chain of horror and hunger. We worked on the railway for seven or eight months – and my – did we work! Human feelings were certainly not known by our captors. They forced us to work with long bamboo poles – and if a man fell ill and could no longer shovel, you can be sure – they would beat him as a warning example! I have seen these butchers maltreat a POW to death. I have also seen prisoners, who for some reason were disliked by the captors, being taken away. We all knew what that meant – torture and torment. And you never saw the man again. I, myself, have often been beaten with bamboo poles on my back – but I was lucky and avoided anything worse.

Most 'slaves' were European, but there were also some Malays and southern Indians working there. These were soldiers in the local regiments, commanded by the British. But you never saw prisoners from the Malayan Freedom movement in spite of there being many who often managed to attack the Japanese. The Japanese simply did not bother to drag prisoners with them after capturing them – they either shot or beheaded them on the spot. The same took place if a group of Partisans were caught off guard in the jungle where they hid. The Malay Freedom fighters worked wonders and caused much damage to the Japanese. **[MPAJA?]**

We spent about a year on the railway, while Cholera, Dysentery and tropical sores were rife. Then we were moved

back to Singapore – but during our time there we often tried to escape. However, this was taking a great risk. Punishment for the first offence was an incredible beating, for the second beheading, hanging or shooting – but we were in despair.

Return to Singapore's prison camps, peace and freedom.

We spent the last years, before peace arrived, in a large camp in Singapore where we grew vegetables for the Japanese army's rations – and for our selves. Not that we saw much of it. Supplies dwindled non-stop and towards the end we hardly got enough rice to feed ourselves.

In turn, the Japanese became nicer and nicer to deal with – as they realised that the fortune of war had turned. I am sure they feared reprisals and unlike what I have heard about the Germans, they tried in every way to make us forget the horrors – but that is not possible.

At long last Peace and Freedom came. It is not possible to describe our joy when the allied parachutists landed in Singapore. The whole camp erupted with joy and the Japanese fled.

Now I want a lovely long Danish holiday – and then I suppose I shall return to the estate – but as I saidFirst of all a holiday!

Finally, the story of **Captain Raja Aman Shah** of the **FMSVF** was told in the Heritage Section of the New Straits Times, on Army Day in 1st March 2004:

A CAPTAIN'S LAST STAND

The volunteer force is a fighting force. In times of war it becomes, by law, part of the army. During WW2, many volunteers died in action in an effort to bring peace and freedom to the nation.



CAPT RAJA AMAN SHAH:
In the uniform of the
Federated Malay States
Volunteer Force

Thousands of names of all the fallen races, united in service, are inscribed on the walls of Singapore's Kranji War Memorial. One such is **Captain Raja Aman Shah's**. Son of the **Raja Kecil Sulong** of Perak, he was educated at the Malay College in Kuala Kangsar. Upon leaving college in 1920, he joined the Malay Administration Service and six years later was promoted to the Malayan Civil Service becoming District Officer in 1935. He joined the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force before the Malay Regiment was formed in 1933, and was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant in the Perak Battalion (1/FMSVF).

Just before war broke out in 1941, he was promoted to Captain and became second-in-command of "C" Company of the Negri Sembilan Battalion (3/FMSVF). His duties included training civilians in air raid precautions and the volunteer forces for speedy integration into the regular forces.

The FMSVF & SSVF were mobilised on 1st December 1941. **D.O. Raja Aman Shah** applied for release to military service and was deployed with "C" Co. to Port Swettenham to support the Indian Regiment and destroy all vessels on the Klang riverside. Given the choice of returning home, along with other local volunteers, he

elected to serve in the two reduced volunteer companies to fight the Japanese. They defended both in south Johore and in Singapore near Changi. After his CO was killed **Raja Aman Shah** took command and continued to engage the enemy, making contact with the Malay Regiment and fighting until the fall of Singapore.

Members of the Malay Regiment and local volunteers were taken prisoner and sent to Farrer Park. **Raja Aman Shah** and his fellow officers refused to take off their uniforms and were questioned daily by Japanese officers. Food was denied to them and the only water available was contaminated. His brother-in-law **Tunku Abdul Rahman** tried to secure his release, and freedom was offered, but he refused unless all his comrades-in-arms were released with him. The Japanese would not consider this.

Just before nightfall on 28th February 1942, the prisoners were moved out in 3 groups, hands tied behind their backs and bundled into military trucks. At the Changi Road junction, they were forced to march to a hilltop – first the Eurasian group, then the Malay officers with some Chinese and lastly other Chinese. They faced a firing squad along the trenches and all were killed except one man – **Private Chan Cheng Tean** of the 4/SSVF (Malacca) – who survived to tell the story. [Ed: His story is told in A.K. Edition 13 (Jan 2008)P.6].

Major Hamilton Moore – a former superior officer – wrote to **Capt. Shah's** wife:

"It was a very great grief to me to hear sad news on my return to Port Dickson, as I had a very high opinion of your husband, both as a man and as a soldier, and I was happy to call him 'friend'. One could always rely on his sound judgement, advice and courage..... I remember one morning I tried to persuade your husband to leave us and make his way upcountry. He gave us many excuses (not to do so)..... He had been with us right through and felt honour bound to take what was coming to us – perhaps a mistaken sense of loyalty at the state of affairs, but one that one cannot help but admire. I at least had the pleasure, although a sad one, of thanking him for all he had done for me and "C" Company."

A VISIT TO KOTA AMBON, AMBON ISLAND, INDONESIA

Report by Liz Moggie

At 9.30am on 10th April, 2017, Leo and I set off in a hotel taxi to visit the CWGC Cemetery at what would have been the outskirts of the town in the 1940s. Our driver was a friendly man and confirmed that the Cemetery is sited where the infamous Tan Tui POW Camp was.

Jonathan Moffatt had requested me to look for the grave of a Volunteer and the details that he gave are:

Harsley, Ralph Martin, b.1917 at Williamstown, Victoria, Australia, son of **Charles** and **Hilda Harsley**. He was Assistant at the Chartered Bank, Singapore, and a well known sportsman. Pte. 1/SSVF Armoured Cars to Sgt.Pilot 50 MVAF. Evacuated to Java 1/1942, then escaped to Australia. Enlisted RAAF 4/42. Killed 29/7/1944 (aged 27) at New Guinea. Service No: 418221, Grave at Ambon, Coll. Grave 3, B.10.

Ambon is not a large cemetery and, although it was hot, there was plenty of shade in which to walk up and down the pleasantly grassed slope looking for "B" columns. Leo took the right hand side and I took the left. After about 20 minutes when we had covered the cemetery we met and then realised we had misread the notes and we were looking for a '**Martin**' – quite the wrong name.

We then asked for assistance from the very helpful man in charge of the cemetery (**Bapak Samsuden Ohioyuf**). He took Leo up into the far right hand side top corner and there was the grave:

428221 Flying Officer R.M. Harsley. RAAF. 20th July, 1944. Age 27. Beloved son of Charles & Hilda Harsley.

Pak Samsuden told us that it might even have been he who had helped to bury **Harsley's** remains when they were relocated. (I do not know when this was carried out). We had found **Harsley's** grave but know nothing more about him other than the details **Jonathan** supplied. We placed a poppy there, to honour the young man who had made the supreme sacrifice.

Pak Samsuden is a serene, self-contained man and very knowledgeable about the Cemetery. He gave us his telephone number – 0812 8912 1198 – to pass on to anyone looking for a particular grave. He says if anyone has the plot number he will know where the grave is. As always, the cemetery was beautifully maintained with huge shade (Angsana) trees well positioned at intervals. Quite a number of graves were marked "An unknown Australian Soldier." In front of the main Memorial Stone was laid a wreath inscribed "From the Far Eastern POW Association." To the side of the main entrance were the simple but attractive living quarters of the keepers.

Tan Tui Camp was one of several POW camps established on Ambon Island. The POWs worked on constructing and enlarging airfields at Laha (where the present Pattimura Airport is sited) and at Liang in the northern part of the island. Two more nearby camps at Palao on Haruku Island (another infamous name) and at Amahei on Ceram Island were also airfield construction camps. There was a huge Japanese naval presence in the area (even today Ambon is an important port) and it was from these airfields (as well as from others) that raids on Darwin were conducted.

Ambon War Cemetery gives prominence to Gull Force which had been sent (ironically from Darwin) to bolster the Dutch bases and hold the Japanese advance. The units were too few in number and too dispersed to achieve their purpose. There were, however, gallant actions carried out in trying to do so. There was also one horrifying massacre of more than 300 Australian and Dutch prisoners near the Laha airfield.

At the entrance to the cemetery is an information plaque which reads:

Gull Force (21/2) Association AIF

**In memory of the 694 members of Gull Force interned in Ambon War Cemetery,
which was the site of the Gull Force barracks and the Prisoner of War Camp, 1941-1945.**

In 2014, **Roger Maynard** published his book "Ambon" (Hachette, Australia) which tells the story of Gull Force. According to him, the death rate for those held in captivity on Ambon was"a staggering 77 per cent."

The next day we drove to visit the **Siwalima Museum** (of culture and ethnography) on the south and opposite side of the city. On the pleasant, winding road up the hill on which the Museum is situated we passed a Japanese bunker enclosing a very large (naval?) cannon. The information at the rear of the bunker said that the whole of the bunker could be camouflaged with foliage.

Nor far away, on the descent back to the city, is the Australian Memorial situated at Kudamati, site of a fierce engagement between Australian and Japanese forces in the early days of the invasion. This Memorial is to commemorate the members of **Gull Force** who survived the war and returned to Australia. The gates were locked and although we could clearly see the Memorial we were not able to read the inscription. Our driver informed us that the gates are unlocked only when commemorative ceremonies take place.

[Ed: **Sergeant Pilot R.M. Harsley** was attached to "A" Flight MVAF based at Kallang Airfield, Singapore. Formed from the original Royal Singapore Flying Club, "A" Flight was commanded by Flt. Lt. John Caister-Cooke, a Senior lecturer in Maths at Raffles College in civilian life. Before the Japanese invasion, the MVAF was used in a variety of ways, including flying military personnel around and air reconnaissance. However, not all commanders in the field recognised their worth. On the day following the Japanese invasion, Sergeant Pilots Maxey and R.M. Harsley flew an operational sortie and were ordered to assist the Australian forces near Kahang, Johore. The CO viewed their Tiger Moths with scepticism and sent them on a useless 100 mile reconnaissance flight over the China Sea – unarmed, unescorted and unwanted!]

My Father and the capture of the Mata Hari in February 1942 – Part 3

By kind permission of his son Phil Hogge

The ordeal that followed contd.

“Not long after 2 pm Vyner Brooke was attacked by several Japanese aircraft. Despite evasive action, she was crippled by several bombs and within half an hour rolled over and sunk bow first. Approximately 150 survivors eventually made it ashore at Banka Island, after periods of between eight and 65 hours in the water. The island had already been occupied by the Japanese and most of the survivors were taken captive. However, an awful fate awaited many of those that landed on Radji Beach. There, the survivors from the Vyner Brooke joined up with another party of civilians and up to 60 Commonwealth servicemen and merchant sailors who had made it ashore after their own vessels were sunk. After an unsuccessful effort to gain food and assistance from local villagers, a deputation was sent to contact the Japanese, with the aim of having the group taken prisoner. Anticipating this, all but one of the civilian women followed behind. A party of Japanese troops arrived at Radji Beach a few hours later. They shot and bayoneted the males and then forced the 22 Australian nurses and the one British civilian woman who had remained to wade into the sea, then shot them from behind. There were only two survivors – Sister Vivian Bullwinkel and Private Cecil Kinsley, a British soldier. After hiding in the jungle for several days the pair eventually gave themselves up to the Japanese. Kinsley died a few days later of his wounds, and Bullwinkel spent the rest of the war as an internee. Of the 65 Australian nurses embarked upon the Vyner Brooke, 12 were killed during the air attack or drowned following the sinking, 21 were murdered on Radji Beach, and 32 became internees, 8 of whom subsequently died before the end of the war.”

By those standards, the passengers and crew of the *Mata Hari* were very lucky. My father wrote about the events of 16 February, *“10.00 Boat off to order all men ashore & ship’s life boats to be put ready for towing. Men to land first, women later. Only one suitcase each allowed to be taken.*

Landed with first party. Taken to Harbour Master’s Office at end of jetty. Found case of stout on end of jetty & had a bottle. Given Coca Kola in Hbr. Master’s office. Men on grass space outside H.M. Office & some taken off to discharge cargo boats etc. While waiting in office survivors from sunken ships & boats arrived at intervals. Wilkinson & Capt. Chapman arrived from Yin Ping. Party of about 20 Australian nurses arrived, survivors from Vyner Brooke. Had walked about 10 miles along beach after landing. A pitiful sight, some with sarongs on, some with feet bound up with rags, most with chins bruised & chapped from life belts. Ship bombed & sunk. Survivors in boats & being towed through the water in life belts.

About 14.00 everybody taken to a nearby cinema & all herded in. Officers put into comfortable cane chairs, men on benches on left side. Women, children and civilians on benches on right side. I managed to get four rows of cane chairs shifted for the nurses to sit on much to the guards’ objections. The guards prevented further shifting of chairs for the other women to sit on. At dusk, two large pots of rice were brought in & all got a small helping of rice with a handful of sugar sprinkled over it.

Wounded men grouped on & near stage on roughly made beds. No medical supplies given or attention paid to the seriously wounded men or to the protests of the doctor. Found where the well was & helped a nurse bring in water & had the first good drink that day, parched before then. Lights out at 10.00. Slept on the concrete floors. During the night J soldiers prowling round & stole all watches. Woke with mine being slipped over my wrist. Called the sentry dozing near the door – he merely laughed. Was roughly pushed down on the floor & grunted at. Thought it wiser to keep quiet.”

Harry Walker wrote, *“Ashore at Muntok, we were herded into various buildings. With other Admiralty civilians and a number of Australians, I was put into a store shed but soon after Jap soldiers arrived and lined us up outside to be moved to some unknown destination. I wasn’t keen on this and took an opportunity to slip over to another party which was being shepherded into a large corrugated iron cinema. This, I found out later, was a mistake. The original party had gone off to the Muntok landing ground to work, while we were jammed like sardines in the cinema and the Jap soldiers were brutal.”*

But worse was to come. Walker went on, *“Mr. Bowden, the Trade Commissioner for Australia, could speak Japanese. This was unfortunate, as when two Japs were tearing off his wristwatch, he said something to them. They became very angry, dragged him out, made him gather a small bunch of flowers and dig his own grave. Then they shot him and he died like a brave man with arms folded. There were so many of us in the cinema that the Japs hadn’t time to deal with us all before morning came, when we were marched out to the landing ground to join up with the other party.”*

The next three days were similar. Here are a few random extracts from my father's small notebook:

"Only a very little rice to eat. Women, children and elderly civilians had their baggage searched & were then marched away up the road carrying their baggage. Our party, all combatants and younger civilians, told to wait for lorries(sic). All this time wounded left out in the open on improvised stretchers – no medical supplies. When lorries arrived, all crammed in & driven up to airfield where we lined up for baggage search. Soldiers took away all razors, knives, scissors, cameras, food stuff and cigarettes. Men made to join gangs of prisoners working to fill trenches dug across the airfield and to clear jungle to enlarge it. About 17.00 all hands fell in & were marched back to the town carrying all their gear. Hell of a march with suitcases. All men & civilians billeted in the jail. A dreadful insanitary place with Chinese coolies suffering from open sores. A bomb hole in centre of the yard acting as a latrine. Slept soundly on a concrete platform with a cup as a pillow. Scrounged round the kampong and ate guavas, limes and berries, also a bit of coconut. Still no medical supplies. Armstrong, the worst wounded case with both legs shattered, had to have one foot amputated – not much hope for him without the necessary supplies."

Of this man Jock Brodie wrote, *"One young RAF pilot officer, who had both feet shattered when on one of the shelled ships, had to have an amputation operation carried out with the aid of a saw made by one of the prisoners from ordinary hoop iron. With such equipment it was not surprising that the young man died. About 15 people died during the short stay at this depot."*

Brodie also mentioned their work at the airfield which involved clearing away the bush and wild shrubs to lengthen the runway, *"At 9 a.m. plain boiled rice was issued, about a cupful, and the same happened about midday, and that was all the food until our return to the jail when plain rice again was our exclusive menu. This 12 hour a day work continued for a fortnight and it was, of course, an infringement of international code to engage civilians on war work of this kind."*

The *Mata Hari* returns to Singapore

On Friday, 20th February, having been ordered to collect a skeleton crew the previous afternoon, my father was up at dawn, mustered with all the ships' crews returning to Singapore, and marched down to the pier to be taken out to the *Mata Hari* in the Harbour master's launch with a Japanese doctor who spoke good English. The launch was well stocked with provisions, so they had a snack and looted what they could, including some beer and a bottle of gin, while going between the ships. On board the *Mata Hari*, they found a chaos of clothes everywhere – all decks and cabins were just one mass of churned-up clothing. Despite the mess in his cabin, my father was able to find my mother's letters in a drawer, which was a great joy to him. The provisions store has been looted, but a few odds and ends of tinned food were left. They sent some back ashore with the Japanese doctor, but collected all the rest and, that evening, gorged themselves on sausages, bully beef, tinned fruit, biscuits, tea, milk and sugar – an enormous feed, he said. Next day, 21st February, they were ordered to raise steam and ready the ship for the return to Singapore. On Sunday, 22nd February, they got under way and, with the Japanese cruiser *Sendi* in charge of the convoy, shaped a course northwards towards the Lingga Islands where they anchored at dusk between Lingga and Banka Islands, almost in sight of Muntok Hill. At the entrance of the Banka Straits, they passed many bodies, including women, floating in the water. On Monday, they were under way at dawn and proceeded slowly north outside the Lingga Islands. My father spent much of the time clearing out his cabin and looting sufficient clothes to fill a kit bag. On Tuesday, 24th February, he made his last entry in his notebook when they anchored for the night in a bight off the Bintang coast. The *Sendi* fired on and sunk a number of drifting mines. Meanwhile, he said, *"All hands looting gear & all have a fairly complete rig. Also gave quite a lot of clothes & blankets to our men on launches as they came alongside."*

Wednesday 25th February – here the notebook ends.

The survivors go their separate ways

At this point, everyone had gone their separate ways. **Ruth Russell-Roberts** spent most of the war in Palembang and then Muntok, where she died of malnutrition and Banka fever.

Harry Walker, after working on the airfield in Muntok, was sent to the Pladjoe Oil Refinery on the Moesi River near Palembang, where they were made to unload steel plates and pipes from a Japanese ship. *"Heavy, exhausting work,"* he wrote, *"From 6am to 6pm, seven days a week. We were given rice and, sometimes, a one inch square piece of fish or meat. The heavy work, the food, and the beatings, soon began to tell."* Many died of dysentery.

When they were too tired to work, they were sent to Palembang gaol before being moved back to the terrible Muntok gaol. *"Here began our most dreadful period. Packed into the cells like sardines: 180 grams of rice a day and soon people began to die of starvation, dysentery, malaria or beri-beri. Six a day sometimes and out of 700 there were 500 of them seriously ill and everybody had tropical ulcers. I had malarial bouts every 2 or 3 weeks for 18 months and 1 attack lasted 6 days and nights, and I believe we only ever had 1 recover from wet beri-beri."* But he survived and was released in 1945. [To be continued in October.]

MEMORIES OF EVACUATION & CAPTURE OF THE "MATA HARI"

By Vilma Howe (nee Stubbs)

AN EYE WITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE CAPTURE OF THE MATA HARI

[Ed: Vilma is one of our wonderful veterans and a former child internee. Together with Olga, another former child internee, she laid a wreath on behalf of the civilian internees at the service in Kranji CWG Cemetery in February 2017. In February 1942 she was just 13 & her brother Reg 11].

We were the frantic last-minute batch of "women & children" advised to leave Singapore, as the island, now on the verge of capitulation, was desperately struggling against merciless air and ground attacks from the Japanese invaders.

FEBRUARY 12th 1942

After our horrific night of assembled terrified evacuees cowering within the protected walls of Clifford's Pier, the trucks were now rumbling in, piling us on hurriedly, carrying only essential hand luggage, then lurching their way towards Keppel Harbour through distressing sights of disintegrated buildings, mangled bodies and wailing survivors of air attacks ... transporting us to waiting ships that would, presumably, take us away from this destruction and, hopefully, to freedom...

The scene greeting us on arrival at the wharf was one of utter pandemonium ... luggage scattered everywhere in total disarray, panic-stricken crowds frantically taking shelter up against dusty smoke-filled buildings as enemy aircraft targeted the docks, intermittently bombing & machine-gunning the area.

Meanwhile, launches were lining up, shuttling evacuees as speedily as they could towards the ships that, hopefully, would remove everyone from all this.

An aunt of mine, her children & her mother waved goodbye as their boat sped off. All of them were never seen or heard of again. Presumably, they boarded one of the ill-fated ships that were later bombed & sunk. My mother was wharf-side, searching through the scattered luggage, determined to make sure her heavy baggage had arrived at the docks before she boarded, thus delaying our descent into a boat, much to the dismay of an impatient cousin and her 3 young children, and she was very relieved when mother joined us and we were finally able to leave.

Down the narrow flight of wet, slippery steps we descended and into the waiting craft. Because of our tardiness, we had to squeeze in among the already-boarded impatient bodies ...nowhere to sit, forced to use our hand luggage as "cushions". Stacked full, the launch moved off heading towards the waiting ships ... speeding over choppy waves, the turbulence already affecting my mother as she was showing signs of seasickness. We began our approach to the "**Mata Hari**" hoping we would be able to hastily exit the cramped launch, but some uniformed personnel aboard shouted, "We can't take them, this is a military ship" ... disheartened at being refused, we ventured on to the next vessel, this one a much larger ship, "**Vyner Brooke**"?? – I cannot quite remember. Another refusal to accept us, it was already full and the evacuees already safely on board waved goodbye to us. Little did they know it would probably be one of the fateful ships to experience tragedy & sinking in the next few days. And so, our 'rounds' of anchored vessels continued, with varied refusals each time. Despondent and defeated, we were told we had no alternative but to return to the docks as the enemy planes were now wreaking havoc on us, peppering the water surrounding us with machine-gun fire, sending some in the boat into near hysteria. My mother was really seasick now ... Our launch began its return to Keppel Harbour over the turbulent sea, as we witnessed the scene of destruction at the docks on fire before us. It was then we heard the reprieving cry across the water from the "**Mata Hari**" ... they would take us on! Hastily, we turned back towards the ship...

Alongside the boat now, everyone was set to grab their bags and make a dash for our lives into the ship. I crossed over what seemed like a narrow plank and found myself on board, my brother **Reg** and grandmother followed me. My mother, in bad shape now, had somehow been carried aboard but we had no idea where she was. We consoled ourselves that she was on the ship and we would find her later.

Boarded, I am not sure if it was the lower engine room we entered, but I could hear the clang of machines and the heat was suffocating. The perspiration began to trickle off me ... and searching for some respite from the stifling humidity I noticed some people going up a narrow stairway, so **Reg** and I decided to follow it up. Grandmother, however, staunchly refused to budge, assured us that she was O.K. in the "hold" with other unadventurous souls. Now we would have the task of finding where they had taken mother.

Our ascent took us to the ship's deck, a somewhat narrow one. Hoping to find somewhere to set our bags down, we were shocked to discover every inch of deck space had been taken up with evacuees and their luggage. About to despair, I spied a tiny niche and rushed towards it. **Reg** and I took rapid possession of this spot, sitting on our bags to claim this territory.

Unable to 'enlist' a volunteer to mind our bags so we could both search for mother, I had to reluctantly sit forlornly on them as I sent **Reg** to find her. Looking out over the deck railings, I cringed at the sight of

Singapore helpless under raging fires that lit up the night sky, the sound of bombs pounding at the remnants of the island. Two tearful young girls stood at the rails. They had left behind a father & brother at the docks. Here they were, alone, with a bag of table games in their hands. Much later, I discovered they were the **Liddelow** sisters with whom we would share more in internment.

I had been sitting on my perch awhile when my seat began feeling unusually warm, so I took my coat off and resealed myself – only to jump up hastily! I discovered I had been resting on some kind of hatch or storage area where, perhaps, pipes ran beneath, and now, with the engines moving, things had heated up! I noticed a few others had apparently made the same discovery as they exclaimed their discomfort. Keeping my baggage in view, I moved gingerly towards the rails to try to inhale some of the cool breeze as the "**Mata Hari**" sailed slowly away – shedding tears as I recalled my happy childhood in Singapore and wondering if I would ever return there, and if I did, how would I find it?

My reminiscing was interrupted by a shout from **Reg**. He had found mother. She had been allotted cabin space due to her indisposition, and her condition was slightly improved. Returning to me, **Reg** had lined up some food, aware that I as "baggage minding."

We settled for 2 biscuits each with some bully beef, which was devoured quickly. He suggested I wait to visit mother until next morning as she was already asleep. We then attempted to settle down for the night on our warm seats. I laid my coat down as a buffer and prepared to sleep. A short while later, **Reg** found the heat unbearable and, in fetal position, slumbered on the deck floorboards.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 13th

It must have been dawn when I opened my drowsy eyes and thought I heard some muffled voices and movements close to my head. Investigating, I realised I had been dozing outside some kind of door which felt warm. I was informed I could be outside some sort of kitchen area! I decided then to sit up in case someone came out through that opening with food and tripped over me!

One by one, the bodies around me slowly awakened, either by the noise of the ship's engines, or tormented by worried thoughts racing through their minds about where our destination would be, and if we would get there safely.

In the midst of this apprehension, I must recount an amusing incident. An uproar behind me disclosed a rather annoyed lady complaining about "people leaving plates around." Seems the bewildered soul had laid her head down in the darkness on a used food plate, leaving her hair this morning in a tangle of fat! My smile soon vanished when I discovered the coat I lay on was also partially oiled.

Reg, ever mindful of his stomach, was off to line up for breakfast, grumbling that the queue was almost the length of the boat! I think it was – again – biscuits and a few meagre scraps of bacon. It was now my turn to visit mother. After a short search I found her enjoying a "patient's" breakfast of peaches/cheese/bread, brought to her by a crew member! She said she was recovering nicely "as long as the boat doesn't rock too much!" The "**Mata Hari**" was, as I discovered, sailing very slowly and cautiously through dangerous seas, so we certainly weren't speeding.

As the officer returned to check on mum, I must have appeared very waif-like because he informed me that if I was nervous I could share mum's space in the cabin!

I broke the news to **Reg**, and fortunately we were able to leave our hand luggage with me. Without "baggage minding", **Reg** was free to roam and went below deck to check on Granny or anything that peeked his curiosity.

While conversing with mum in the cabin, the ship's siren suddenly wailed into the cabin rushed some crew members, made us don life-jackets, warning us that enemy planes were overhead, perhaps even as many as 30 aircraft! My heart was racing as I heard the drone of those bombers above us. Suddenly a terrific crash shook the ship. Small objects in the cabin toppled off the shelves ... we're sinking, we thought ... clinging together. A short time passed, followed by an uneasy quiet ... then the all clear sounded! The officers left our cabin, while we remained. On the men's return, they told us that the "**Mata Hari**" had not been hit, and the only casualty was a passenger who stayed on deck and received a minor shrapnel wound on his leg.

Everyone else was unhurt but **Reg**, below deck, related how evacuees down there had been rattled and almost hysterical by the raid, imagining water was going to pour in when the explosion shook the ship. With mother's caution ringing in my ears, I decided to peek out and see what was occurring on deck. A few passengers had emerged, peeking over the rails and peering into the water. Could anyone have drowned, I wondered? A downward glance showed several dead fish floating in the sea ... seems some marine life had suffered the bombing so we narrowly escaped.

Things seemed to have calmed down somewhat later, and it felt like the ship was moving again – albeit slowly – and there were even instances when it seemed we had stopped momentarily. The drone of enemy bombers, however, could be heard through the day and we experienced several warnings alerts, each time praying they would miss targeting our ship as it slowly crawled on its journey. The rest of the day passed quite rapidly, everyone on edge waiting for the next air-raid.

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 14th

The meals today were a slight improvement. Things began looking up as we were given our disembarkation numbers and were informed we would be issued landing tickets next morning. At last! – some indication we were going to make it to our destination. Our ship seemed, once again, to be crawling on its way, and we would duck for cover each time the warnings sounded, but the bombers seemed to miss our ship.

A lady called **Mrs.Close** and her son **David** were lucky enough also to have been allotted a bunk in the cabin with us now. Before saying our goodnights, she muttered, "I wonder what the morrow will bring forth" – words I would always remember in the following days – and so the night closed in on us.

FEBRUARY 15th

Somewhere in the early hours of this morning, probably around 3 a.m., I was awakened by blinding flashes of light which penetrated the porthole, missing my face but focusing on **Mrs.Close** who abruptly jumped up in terror. Soon the cabin was astir as we all wondered what new peril awaited us. Piercing searchlights seemed to be sweeping the "**Mata Hari**", and we thought we detected other strange "whizzing" sounds – were those shells going over us? We could do no more but wait ... eventually both the flashes and other noises stopped and, hearing no further alert warnings, we retired nervously to sleep.

Morning broke, and there seemed to be much activity outside our cabin. I peeked out cautiously, and was aghast to see the troops on board pitching every defensive weapon possible into the sea ... everything, even flashlights! I came to the chilling realisation this was not a good sign, we must have surrendered to our attackers. The "**Mata Hari**" was not moving now, obviously we'd been captured!

It was then mother decided to "freshen up" in the nearby washroom, so I took her there and we were shocked on the way to pass a fully armed Japanese sentry, rifle with bayonet fixed standing guard. Then, tacked up (perhaps outside the wireless room) I read a note with the chilling message, "**Singapore has surrendered unconditionally to the Japanese forces today ...**"

We learned later that an enemy boarding party had arrived on our ship early, claimed ownership by hoisting the Japanese Rising Sun banner up the "**Mata Hari's**" mast, above our white surrender flag. Then they left our ship temporarily but, surrounded by their destroyers, we stayed anchored in defeat.

Pondering my fate now, I could hear muffled voices praising our captain. Puzzled, I queried an officer who explained that the Jap warships had encircled us the night before, cross-crossing us with their blinding searchlights and firing warning shells over us. With a shipload consisting mainly of defenceless women and children, our captain made the quick decision to surrender, feeling that captivity would be a better solution than passengers being bombed and drowned or lost at sea.

Sometime later, our captors returned aboard, this time with some high-ranking officials. We were instructed to "assemble" on the Captain's deck. A hush fell over us as we tried to hear the translator telling us we were under the rule of Nippon now," and consequently her captives. They told us the "**Mata Hari**" had been caught in an "awkward" position in the Banka Straits, between Java and Singapore and, as such, we would have to "wait" here until a "neutral" ship appeared to remove us (???) which could be several weeks! As the official's speech dragged on, an aerial dogfight took place between what seemed like one of "our" planes and theirs, a welcome distraction for us, but it didn't affect the speaker who droned on and on as we sweltered in the open sun. Satisfied he had delivered his warning, once again the enemy left our ship, confident we would not move as we were threateningly surrounded by their warships.

The speech left us all puzzled, but the captain warned perhaps we should "ration" food for the next few days until more specific plans were issued by the Japs about our stay on the "**Mata Hari**" as they had not mentioned supplying us with any food.

The day of nervous anxiety didn't last long. Later that afternoon, several enemy officers boarded and issued the order – **ALL men were to evacuate immediately!** Soon launches moved alongside our ship, the men were quickly bundled into them and whisked away to some unknown destination, the women aboard becoming alarmed at this gesture, feeling we were left to the mercy of the enemy with no men to support us. A little later that afternoon, another order was barked out, this time **All** of us were to prepare to abandon ship. Our considerate quick-thinking captain, once again nursing the welfare of his passengers, then issued the order that we could go down and take all the food supplies we wanted, urging mothers to take milk for their babies and coaxed us to take whatever we could carry.

Preparing mother in her cabin to pack and leave curtailed my attempt at "looting" the ship's stores. When I eventually got down there, I saw tins littered everywhere – some kids had been so hungry, they had opened cans and devoured the contents! I gave my grandmother a can of milk and made her drink it, as we had no idea when we'd eat again. She told me she had witnessed the carnage as people went on a rampage grabbing at food stocks.

Reg and I went back up to fetch mother down. Soon, a few launches pulled alongside the "**Mata Hari**". The enemy had emphasised we take only what we could carry, not a scrap more. Mothers with infants, toddlers on their arms, could not manage much more than a wee shoulder bag, which would be a disastrous fact later as we entered internment owning nothing but that which we now carried.

We spilled into the launches, crammed awkwardly together as we sped across the water, the crafts badly navigated by our captors inasmuch as we had to endure boat collisions a couple of times. As we pulled away we gazed sadly at the "Mata Hari" stationary now, the Japanese flag claiming her, alone out there in remote defeat. With dusk beginning to fall, we headed towards a mile-long wooden pier. Arriving there, we climbed the wooden stairs of Muntok Pier, the starting point of our lives as civilian internees for the duration of this war....

[Ed: All that is left of this wooden pier now is a piece of wooden foundation among the large stones on the beach.]

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

1. STRAITS TIMES CHANGI PRISON FEATURE

Vilma was contacted in May by a journalist from the Straits Times News Desk called Tang Fan Xi who was working on a story for the newspaper about the history of Changi Prison in WW2. The prison is being presented as one of Singapore's National Monuments. She asked Vilma many questions about life in the prison, covering such details as living conditions; how long she was there; her age and experiences in the prison; the food and clothes she had; and the physical and psychological impact of her imprisonment.

Having given quite detailed replies to the questions, Vilma reports that very few of her replies were quoted and that the article was all about the prison and not about the inmates.

2. AN INTERESTING LETTER ABOUT CAPTAIN DAVID NELSON FROM DR. HUGH SMITH

In early May, Jonathan Moffatt handed over the files on Captain David Nelson (SRE[V] 2i/c Engineers attached to Intelligence, Fort Canning) which he had received from Mason Nelson, to Stephen Walton, Senior Curator of Documents & Sound at the IWM. As the letter shows, in early February 1942 Captain Nelson was a sick man. Had he handed over Dr. Smith's 'sick note' to his CO, it is very likely that the great Changi POW Record Keeper would have ended up as a relatively obscure civilian internee. Instead, his outstanding records kept in Changi – Bureau of Research & Enquiry – was of great importance to the POWs.

DRS. SLOPER & SMITH
J.S. Sloper M.D., M.R.C.P. (Lond.)
Hugh Smith M.D., Ch. B. (Edin.)

3 BATTERY ROAD
SINGAPORE

DRS. SLOPER & SMITH
J.S. Sloper M.D., M.R.C.P. (Lond.)
Hugh Smith M.D., Ch. B. (Edin.)

3 BATTERY ROAD
SINGAPORE

4/2/42

This is to certify that I have to-day examined David Nelson. His general condition has deteriorated very much in the last two months. I have known him for about ten years, and looked after him for various minor ailments during that time.

In my opinion he is quite unfit to carry on working long hours such as he has been doing, and I think

he should be given leave as soon as possible, otherwise his condition will become steadily worse.

Hugh Smith
M.D.

The letter, dated 4/2/42, reads:

This is to certify that I have to-day examined David Nelson. His general condition has deteriorated very much in the last two months. I have known him for about ten years, and looked after him for various minor ailments during that time.

In my opinion he is quite unfit to carry on working long hours such as he has been doing, and I think he should be given leave as soon as possible, otherwise his condition will become steadily worse. Signed: Hugh Smith M.D.

3. OTHER INFORMATION FROM JONATHAN ON THE IWM

With only two hours available to me for research, I decided to focus on FMSVF papers. I started by re-reading R.J. Godber's diary transcript up to the Fall of Singapore. He was in the FMSVF Armoured Cars & with many others returned to Singapore

from leave in Australia as late as 1st February 1942. He talks of two particularly brave men in the unit who, in civilian life, were 'meek and mild' contrasting with two officers full of bravado but continually avoiding danger to themselves. I followed up with the 'scrapbook' of **Godber's CO Major Mills**, another who came back from Australia, working his passage on a merchant ship after being told to stay put as he was 50 years old. He arrived in Singapore on 29th December 1941. If anyone good at photography visits the IWM Research Room [on Level 2], there are 8 superb photos of FMSVF Armoured Car men and their vehicles [Lanchesters and Marmon Harringtons] in **Major Mills'** 'scrapbook' worth getting images of. Also a two-sided FMSVF discharge certificate to be found in the papers of **T.A. Buckley**.

4. LETTER FROM EDWARD HEBDITCH WRITTEN ON THE S.S. TEGELBERG ON HIS WAY HOME

By kind permission of his daughter **Júne Jackson**

Please excuse terrible writing but out of practice.

On S.S. Tegelberg in Red Sea 26/9/45

My dear Lilian,

It was so kind of you to write me during interment. Your 2 P.Cs that got through, especially the second one dated June 18th was about the first news we had in the camp of the 2nd Front opening up in France. However you dated it May 18th a month in advance but the Post Mark June 18th gave us the correct date. It certainly caused a lot of excitement & hundreds of people read it. And wondered why the Jap censor had not stopped it. Prices in Singapore were a little inflated during the last 2 years. A Buffalo or cow cost about \$50,000 – say £6,000. A Ford car about 4 years old say £8,000/-/- I have paid £5 for a hen's egg & £6 for a duck's egg. A hen or duck for eating would cost about £7 per lb dead weight. For sugar I have paid £1 per oz i.e. is £16 per lb, a tin of Bully Beef £25, a bicycle cost about £150 & a tin of condensed milk (4 years old) £15.

I was so sorry to hear about Mary Nye & John Hebditch from Gertrude. She also tells me Bet is not too well these days. I do hope by the time I get to Norton she will be her old energetic self again.

We hope to arrive somewhere in England about 8th to 10th of October. I hear also that David has been looking after Rachael or rather the other way round. Goodbye until we meet & best wishes to Harold, Bet & all.

Sincerely, Teddy.

5. RODERICK JAMES RAIT

In A.K. 50 in April, we mentioned the sale of "**Roddy**" **Rait's** medals, and asked if anyone knew the family. We received the following interesting reply from **John and Ann Evans**:

.... of more interest to us is your note about **Roddie Rait**. His wife, nee **Charlotte Pyke Taylor**, was a cousin of Ann's Australian grandmother, **Margaret Ferguson (nee Taylor)**. Her father, **Oliver Harry Taylor**, was a younger brother of Granny's father, **William Drayton Taylor**, and their father also called **William Drayton Taylor** was a substantial grazier in Victoria. Ann's Australian cousins are being told about the sale of **Roddy's** medals – we met him several times and he was friendly with **Ann's Aunt June**.

[Ed: The Evanses have not heard from their Australian cousins to date.]

PRISONER OF THE JAPANESE – Part 2

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 Allan and Gledhill, Advocates in Malacca and Singapore. On retiring to the U.K. he practiced in Edinburgh and became a Q.C.

After a spell at the Diet Centre I was sent to Selarang Barracks, scene of the famous incident where the Japs had crowded thousands of prisoners into the barracks' square and refused them food and drink until they signed a pledge that they would not try to escape. The prisoners had refused to do this until after some days when they were assured by their officers that a pledge made under duress was not binding and they were ordered to sign. This happened while I was at the Race Course and we only heard about it afterwards. I can't remember ever having to sign such a pledge either at the Race Course or afterwards. The Japs probably ignored us.

I was a few days at Selarang where I shared an alcove with a man called **Hatcher** of the Nestle milk company and **Roger Savage Bailey**, **Dulcie Gray's** brother. I was then told I was to join a Force going overseas – was it J Force? Previous Forces had been sent to Siam to the infamous Railway – though we knew nothing then about the conditions there – and the Japs put it around that this Force was an invalid one and we were being sent to a camp on Shikoku, Japan's smallest island and south of Honshu, where there was an established hospital and we would not have to work. The reality was somewhat different.

There were about 900 prisoners in this Force, 300 of them Australian and there were 26 Malayan and Singapore Volunteers amongst the others. We were taken down to the docks at Keppel Harbour in lorries. There we sat around for most of the day. This was early May 1943. Towards evening we were marched on to a small tramp steamer and packed into three holds, 300 in each. We dossed there where we could. There was just enough room to lie down and

we had our kit bags for pillows. It was stifling. For the first day or so, we were not allowed on deck except for visits to the latrine which were wood and canvas creations jutting out over the sea. Food came down the hatch in large buckets and we queued for our rice and vegetables three times a day. There were Jap soldiers around with rifles who controlled our visits to the decks. Later, after some prodding from our officers, the Japs allowed us to wash by dipping buckets into the sea and sluicing one another with sea water. Oswald Wynd in his novel, "The 40 Days" (Collins, 1972) provides an excellent description of what life was like on that ship. I don't know what the ship was named but we called her the "*Mucky Maru*". I can't remember shaving on that ship, but I must have occasionally. I had from early days of my imprisonment got into the habit of shaving every second day. I had a pre-war Rolls Razor which had two hollow ground steel blades and a strop and hone all combined. It lasted me right through my days as a prisoner and for some time after. Supplies of soap were the difficulty. Shaving soap soon gave out and those of us who shaved had to rely on ordinary soap which was generally scarce. Many grew beards, and there was one prominent Singapore citizen who grew a most impressive beard and swore he would not shave again until the Japs were beaten and he was free again. We moved north-east out of Singapore in convoy with a tiny Japanese torpedo boat just ahead on the starboard side. It was a slow journey but after, I suppose, about a week we arrived at Cap St. Jacques in French Indo-China where we made a short stop. From there we went on to Formosa where we stopped off the port of Takao. We must have stopped there for at least a day for a party went ashore and brought back a load of bananas, three or four for each of us. Quite a treat that was. Then we made our way slowly north towards Japan. We weren't long out of Formosa, however, when something happened to the engines of the "*Mucky Maru*" and we had to drop out of the convoy and proceed alone still more slowly towards our destination. We were a sitting duck for any hostile submarine and there was one incident when we were all hustled down the hatches which were closed for some hours but nothing happened. Ultimately, the hatches were lifted to let some fresh air in and the rumours went round that there never had been a submarine but the Japs had mistaken some floating object for a periscope. What the truth of that was we never discovered but the Japs were certainly very excited about it.

The sea fortunately remained calm throughout our voyage and towards the end of it the officers offered us a prize of ten Singapore dollars for the best essay about the trip. I put my thoughts into verse on a yellowing piece of paper that I had somehow acquired. We never did hear, however, what happened to these essays and along with my poem they just disappeared. The \$10 was never awarded. We were then very near the port where we disembarked and I expect all papers were destroyed in case the Japs got them. They would not have been amused. The only part of my poem I can remember now is the supposed remark of a young girl seeing us as we arrived:-

"Who are these, my dear Mama,
Who limp along the street?
They look like tramps,
They smell like cheese,
They seem to have some skin disease
And sores upon their feet."

The voyage took about six weeks. About half way through it I developed a bad cough and was examined by a little Australian doctor. I think he was the only one aboard. He applied his stethoscope to my chest and back and tapped me in several places and the wagged his finger at me and said, "You must stop smoking." Since I had been a non-smoker all my life I thought this advice rather lacked percipience. The atmosphere of the hold we were in was thick, 300 of us packed into it, and many smoked. It was obvious how I got my cough.

At last, sometime about mid-June, we disembarked at Moji, a port in the north of Kyushu. As we came off the gangway each of us was sprayed front and back with what we assumed to be some kind of disinfectant. There was a drizzling rain falling, the plum rains, someone said. We were lined up at the dock for numbering. The Japs were not very good at arithmetic, often seemed to get confused counting, and we were frequently lined up in two ranks and made to number in Japanese. Thus they made sure no-one was missing. I can't remember when we started this numbering in Japanese – *ichi, ni, san, she, go, roko* etc – but we learnt it pretty quickly. A mistake meant a slap or two on the face. At Moji we made our first acquaintance with "binto" boxes, small wooden boxes with a thin wooden partition down the middle, packed on one side with boiled rice and on the other with some kind of vegetable as a rule, such as pickled daikon or sometimes seaweed. Wooden chopsticks were supplied.

Although it was the Japanese summer, it seemed cold at Moji after sailing through the tropics, and in our shorts and shirts we shivered a bit. We did not stay very long around the docks at Moji before being marched on to a ferry that took us across to Shimonoseki on Honshu, Japan's largest island. We spent an hour or two there in a large building that looked like a school and then in the dark marched to the railway station carrying our kit bags and boarded a train. The carriages were open ones and we sat in fours, two and two facing one another with a gangway separating the fours.

There was a lavatory at each end of the carriage. It was, however, a Japanese train built to accommodate small Japanese bodies and we certainly found it cramped. We slept where we sat. I can remember waking up on a warm, sunny morning seeing peasants working in the fields that sloped down to the blue beauty of the Inland Sea. It would have been an enchanting picture had we been in a condition to enjoy it. We were four days on that train. Every few hours the train stopped at a town where we got out and were marched to an open space and given exercises to do while the local population looked on at us gloatingly – or so it seemed to me. Food on the train was supplied in binto boxes, three times a day. I believe I managed to shave twice on that journey.

Sometime on the fourth or fifth day of that journey we arrived in the evening at Aomori, a port in the north of Honshu, having travelled right through the length of the island. At Aomori we boarded a ferry which took us to Hakodate in Hokkaido. A Japanese officer spoke to us on the ferry, which was quite a fair sized steamer, and told us we would be well treated in Hokkaido and in accordance with the principles of Bushido. I hadn't heard this term before but **Oswald Wynd**, who interpreted the speech for us, explained that it was the name for the Japanese military code of honour. We were not reassured.

On disembarking at Hakodate, we were marched in the dark to a camp of wooden huts behind the city. That first night was a cold one and I shivered most of the night. Next morning, after the usual numbering to make sure no-one had escaped, we were marched off to a factory on the outskirts of the town which seemed to be a munitions factory. There were articles that looked like shells lying around. Our officers – there were two or three of them only – made an immediate protest pointing out that this work was contrary to the terms of The Hague Convention which Japan had signed and professed to abide by. We were about three or four days in the munitions factory and then we were divided up. One party went to Muroran where an airfield was, I believe, being built, one party worked at the docks at Hakodate, and a third party, of which I was one, went across the bay each morning in an open barge to the village of Kamiiso where we were set to work in a cement factory, belonging, if my memory is not at fault, to a company called Ansano. The factory was right beside the sea alongside a jetty where the barge deposited us. Jobs at this factory were varied. Two – or was it three? – of us sat in high seats at the receiving end of large machines which poured powdered cement into large bags made of double thick paper. These were handed down to have the tops sewn up by another machine and then put on trucks which had to be pushed along a little railway line along a jetty at the end of which they were loaded onto barges. Two of us lifted the bags off the trucks and handed them to another two who stacked them in the barge. Cement is dirty stuff. It gets into your hair and your eyes and up your nose especially if the wind blows. The chaps at the machines had to wear protective masks over their mouths and noses and covers on their heads. We all had our hair cut very short. We cut one another's hair but I seem to remember someone with hand-clippers, the kind barbers used to use, who did the job for most of us. I think I paid him with cigarettes. My usual job was known as "pusho-trucko" and it involved pushing the truck up the jetty to the barge and then, after it was unloaded, pushing it back again to the machines.

There were Japanese workmen there, mostly over military age, but there was one younger foreman who would shout at us, "speedo, speedo" and slap us if we did not come up to his standards. The workmen were quite friendly. Every so often, there would be a break for rest. This was known as a "Yasumi" (or "Yasume" to give it its usual spelling). Sometimes when the machines broke down the yasumi was prolonged. There was one occasion when a gang of workmen had to be called in to examine the machines which had been out of action longer than usual. They discovered in the works an assortment of nuts and bolts and bits of iron and wood which our chaps had been putting in to cause a breakdown. We expected the worst. The Japs, however, treated this as a joke and laughed. We had, of course, a break for lunch for which we sat on forms at long rough wooden tables. We carried our lunch with us from Hakodate. We were given a sort of large bun made of bread and, as far as I can remember, there was also usually a bit of daikon or seaweed or something of that sort with it. We stopped work about five or six and went back across the bay to Hakodate in the barge. Our supper there was the same as breakfast, rice with soya beans. In Japan, we always had soya beans cooked with our rice and occasionally, as a treat, we would be given some whale meat or squid and on rest days we had as a great treat, sweet brown beans. In Singapore, Sundays were our rest days, but in Japan, in the beginning at least, our rest day was only after ten days' work.

We did this trip from the main camp at Hakodate across the bay until some time in October. The weather was good and the sun shone most days. It was pleasantly warm. In October, we made our final trip across the bay taking all our belongings with us and were installed in a newly built camp of wooden huts. These were well built and inside were wooden platforms built out from the walls and about a foot from the concrete floor. On the passage between these platforms were coke-burning stoves. These soon became necessary. We were issued with several blankets each, gray blankets made mostly of cotton but with some wool in them too. We slept on the platforms using one or two blankets below and one or two above. It wasn't noticeably comfortable. We were also given tunics and trousers, a sort of

uniform of a rather dirty looking dark green cloth, more cotton than anything else. This was our winter uniform. We were also issued with used British great-coats. I believe the Red Cross were responsible for these.

Winter started in November when we had our first fall of snow. This did not lie very long and during our two winters in Hokkaido the first snows were followed by a thaw when it seemed fairly mild. Then in early December the snows started in earnest and the temperature fell. Until the end of March, the average temperature was about 10* or 12* Fahrenheit, - 20* of frost day and night. Snow was a foot or so deep and had to be cleared off the roads. Our stoves were lit and kept constantly burning night and day so that it was always warm in our own quarters. Night guards had to be appointed, two or three for each hut, to keep watch on the stoves and replenish them when required, and we took turns at that job, doing an hour for each watch. We went on working at the cement factory until about Christmas and I can remember the excitement when the rumour went round that food parcels had arrived from America, and we saw them being dragged in sledges up to the camp. These were handed out at Christmas and this time we had one parcel each. They contained things we hadn't seen for over a year - chocolate, tinned prunes, condensed milk, cheese, butter, corned beef, soap, cigarettes etc. The temptation to consume all these exciting things on Christmas Day, which was a holiday for us, was great but I think all of us managed to spin these out over several days and some things were handed to the cooks to prepare as an extra with our rice. One odd memory I have is of one of the chaps opening a tin of butter and eating it solid. It made me feel slightly sick.

We had our own cooks who boiled the rice and beans for us in the camp kitchen and who kept the water hot for our bath. In the "Cemento" camp we had a hot bath every second day when we came back from work and before supper, and we bathed Japanese style. There was a separate hut that contained a large deep bath of hot water and buckets were lined up on the platform beside the bath. We dipped the buckets into the bath and used that water to clean ourselves with, using soap if we had any. Then we poured the water over our bodies and climbed into the large bath where we soaked for some minutes. We walked to the bath house with only great coats and slippers on. Slippers (Japanese style) had to be left outside the bath house. In the freezing cold this was unpleasant, and sometimes someone would omit to discard his slippers at the door and go inside with them on, leaving them in a corner inside. If a Japanese guard came in and spotted these slippers he would hold on to them until the owner claimed them. The owner would be shouted at and slapped in the face in Japanese fashion. This happened to me once and the slapping sent my tortoiseshell framed glasses to the floor and smashed them. In those days I could have managed without glasses except for reading. Still, life would have become even more uncomfortable. Fortunately, I had kept a pair of steel framed glasses that I'd had specially made to wear with my gas mask and I wore them from then on.

Reading was a solace, and it was lucky we were able to amass a small library from the odd books we had brought with us and some supplied by the Americans and delivered like the parcels through the Swiss Red Cross. It was then I was introduced to the Perry Mason books and acquired a taste for "Whodunits". I have mentioned the Swiss Red Cross and once or twice during our sojourn in Hokkaido we had visits from a few of their representatives. We were lined up to be looked at by them. Whether they were allowed to speak to any of the prisoners, I am not sure. Certainly none ever spoke to me. Occasionally we were allowed to write postcards containing not more than 25 words and these were handed to the Japs for sending to the addresses given. Most of these postcards did reach the addresses. We were also occasionally allowed to receive similar 25 word postcards and I can remember receiving some from home.

It was, I think, before Christmas that a new colonel came to take charge of our three camps - the main one at Hakodate, our one at the cement factory, and the other at Muroan. This was **Col. Emoto**. He was quite a different type from any Jap we had met before. He spoke English fluently indeed he was rather proud of his English though I believe he had never been to Britain. We understood he had at one time been military attache in Hong Kong and had probably perfected his English there. He used to take twenty or so of us at a time and give us lectures on Japanese customs and Japanese history, telling us how the Japanese were winning the war. The correct way to bow was one of his lessons. We were told that on going into the office of a Japanese superior, we had to bow at the door, advance up to officer's desk and bow again before speaking to him. We soon learnt how to do this properly because if we didn't we were smartly slapped. **Col. Emoto** brought some improvement to our lot. Discipline was less severe. Sundays became the regular rest day instead of one day in eleven. It became easier to get off work if you were unwell. We had an American doctor with us at the "Cemento" camp, **Dr. Baumgarner**, who had been captured in the Philippines, and he was good about seeing we got sick leave from work when he thought we needed it.

There was, of course, illness in the camp, and there was one death from pneumonia. I had a few days off with a temperature - 'flu I think it was. Boils were a common complaint. Whole crops of them would sprout up. The armpits were a favourite place for them. I had one large boil or carbuncle at the back of my thigh, and I can remember **Dr. Baumgarner** getting me to bend over while he lanced it with a safety razor blade. This was painful, but the most excruciating pain I suffered was when he tore off a big toe nail. This had gone black after it had been hit by a sliding panel coming down hard on it. [To be continued in October.]

THE SINKING OF THE SS TANDJONG PINANG – 17th February 1942

By kind permission of Sir David Lewis

Report in the Straits Times, Wednesday, September 23, 1936

NEW STEAMER FOR STRAITS

Arrival of Tandjong Pinang

The fleet of the Scon Bee Steamship Company (Singapore) Ltd. of Telok Ayer Street, received a new addition last night, when the motor vessel *Tandjong Pinang* arrived in the harbour from Hong Kong.

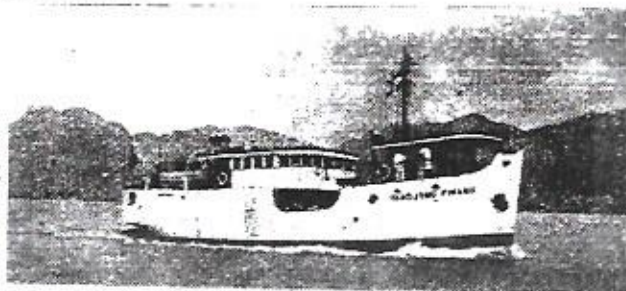
The *Tandjong Pinang* will carry cargo and passengers on the Straits-Rhio service and with the advent of this new fast unit the service with the Dutch island will be speeded up. Two years have passed since any local line has received a new unit.

Tenders for the construction of the *Tandjong Pinang* were called for at Singapore, Batavia and Hong Kong. Hong Kong winning on account of her favourable exchange.

During trials in Hong Kong the vessel accomplished a speed of 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ knots, and has maintained a speed of over 9 knots during her successful passage to Singapore.

She is one of two new motor vessels being built in Hong Kong by the Taikoo Dockyard and Engineering Co. to the designs of Messrs. Ritchie and Bisset, Consulting Engineers of Singapore, while the Diesel machinery of the Deutz type was also supplied through Messrs. N.V. Straits Java Trading Co. together with the motor windless and motor winches.

She will take up her regular service next week. Those who boarded her this morning declared her to be a fine ship.



The new ship during her trials in Hong Kong waters.

17th February 1942.

[The report below reflects the testimonies of the very few survivors including Able Seaman J. Baird (who was interned in Palembang Camp & survived the war), Able Seaman Archer (who was wounded and died in Palembang Camp on 17/8/1945), Malay Seaman Ali Bin Rafi (who survived and rejoined the Navy in 1945), Able Seaman Hissey (who died in Palembang Camp on 26/7/1945), and Able Seaman Richardson (survivor from HMS Prince of Wales, who ended up on a raft for eight days and was picked up by a Japanese cruiser and was interned in Palembang.)

This very small 97ft. converted tug was trying to make its escape with about 160 women and children on board plus about eight wounded men from Pom Pong Island where they had been shipwrecked; it also had on board five ocean shipwreck survivors who had been plucked from the sea on the day before. Almost all these people were survivors, including many wounded, of the earlier sinking of the *SS Kuala* which had sailed from Singapore on 13th February, and had been bombed by Japanese planes at Pom Pong Island, so that they had already experienced the horror and pain of one sinking. There is no official record of all those on board but it is thought that there were at least 160 on board and there could have been as many as 208 passengers and 17 crew crammed on the deck and into the hold in the dark of the night of 16th February. There are also numerous Chinese and Eurasian women who are thought to have been on board too, but there are no records of their names.

The ship left from Pom Pong Island at dawn on 17th February. One crew man said a lifeboat had ferried people from Pom Pong Island to the ship eight times, carrying 20 people each time except for the last trip of 12 people. Another crewman said there were 250 passengers on board. The ship was stopped at sea about 30 miles north of the Tanjung Ular lighthouse off Banka Island at about 8.30pm that night by a warning shot across its bows. Whilst some women and children were being lowered in the ship's only two small boats (there were no real lifeboats), a Japanese submarine or torpedo boat opened fire at point blank range whilst its searchlights were trained on the *SS Tandjong Pinang* directly hitting the starboard side ship's boats and setting the ship on fire. Six rounds were fired. The ship sank within five to ten minutes taking down many of the women and children passengers who had been trapped in the hold and cabins.

Only about 15 to 20 women, children and babies are known to have reached land. For those who managed to leave the ship the flotation devices were only four small rafts (initially with about 40 people both on them and hanging on to the edges at one stage), a pram dinghy, two small boats and a Carley raft. On the Carley float with a few of the ship's crew (Able Seamen Baird, Hissey and Archer) were seven Sisters of which six died with exposure and Sister Black landed on Banka Island but later died of a wound. Those who reached land included the ship's Captain Lt. Basil Shaw NZRNVR (who was murdered with Able Seaman Young by the Japanese on Banka Island on 21st February), plus between five and eight crew members, three European nurses, one civilian European woman and three Eurasian women. One seaman was killed with the Captain, one nurse died and two crewmen plus one nurse and a civilian died in captivity.

"LEGACIES OF FAR EAST CAPTIVITY"

Report on the Researching FEPOW History's 6th International Conference

in association with the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine

9th - 12th June 2017

Those of us who have attended most of the RFH Conferences over the past 11 years will have heard many speakers covering a wide range of subjects in connection with the Far East captivity of military and civilian personnel. Talks have ranged from harrowing accounts of torture and senseless deprivation to the lighter side of captivity with tales about stage productions and entertainments provided in the camps. This year's conference was no exception in providing us with a feast of wonderful speakers, each an expert in his or her own field. The two and a half days were packed with interest and every delegate at the Conference had a story to tell pertaining to family members who had been interned in the Far East.

21 MVG members and relatives attended this year's Conference - most had been to previous Conferences but we were delighted that **Edwin** and **Hilary Green** joined us this year, as well as **Anne Read** and her sister **Lucy Smith**. Those of us who stayed at the Liner Hotel found it to be very comfortable and welcoming and within walking distance of both venues for the Conference - the current building housing the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, and the former, now historic, Liverpool Medical Institution with its two-tiered lecture theatre and its portraits of former lecturers on the walls.

After registration on Friday afternoon, 9th June, we were straight into a fascinating talk by **Jeya Ayadurai**, Director of the Battlebox and Changi Museum on the beneficial effects of reconciliation between wartime enemies. MVG members had already experienced this spirit of reconciliation at the Kranji Service in Singapore in February this year, which was attended by the Japanese Ambassador as well as those representatives of the former Allied Forces. Part of the service was shown during **Jeya's** presentation. Following on, we heard from **Jon Cooper** on the work camps in Singapore between February 1942 and 1943. Having been taken by **Jon** to Adam Park and Sime Road camps as well as to Mt. Pleasant Road and Hill 105 where one of the last battles raged, we were able to follow his talk with a better understanding.

Two post-graduate students gave us a good insight into their studies - **David Hardacre** with his research into Changi POW camp and **Bridget Deane** on her work on Far East Evacuees which resonated with one of MVG's aims to commemorate this much overlooked group of civilians fleeing the war. It was interesting to know that **Bridget** was using MVG's **Patricia Woods'** book, "If This Should be Farewell" as one of the references for her research. The afternoon session was concluded with an interesting talk by **John Cardwell** and **Emma Nichols** from the Cambridge University Library about the conservation and digitisation of WW2 civilian camp internment archives from Singapore. Members who have arranged to go to the meeting in Cambridge in August with **Jonathan** will meet both **John** and **Emma** there. It should be a good opportunity to look at these archives first hand.

After an official welcome from the Director of the LSTM, it was a quick breath of fresh air and a dash to the historic building of the Liverpool Medical Institution for the evening film session, preceded by drinks and supper in the upstairs dining room. **Roger Phillips** from BBC Radio Merseyside introduced **Bob Jackson** whose film about Squadron Leader **Aidan MacCarthy** was shown. It was quite a sobering film with some shocking wartime scenes. As with many RAF personnel, **Sqn Ldr MacCarthy** was captured in Java, taken back to Singapore and from there sent to Thailand and finally to Japan where he witnessed the flash caused by the dropping of the atomic bomb. Mention was made of the Samurai sword which can be seen in MacCarthy's bar in Co. Cork and the recent research to discover its origins.

A very full day on Saturday started with **Stephen Walton's** update on the FEPOW collection at the IWM. It revealed quite a shocking fact that the IWM is very short of staff and that over 200 FEPOW documents are still waiting to be catalogued. However, there are plans (much overdue) to tell the FEPOW story in new ways. But the new exhibition is far from being ready for viewing. Sadly, no-one has taken over the specific job of the irreplaceable **Rod Suddaby** as Keeper of Documents at the IWM. The current curators seem to be involved with all aspects of the IWM exhibitions.

Australian **Frank Taylor** gave us a very interesting insight into the British Camps in Borneo. Living in Stirling, Perth, Western Australia, we hope he may link up with other MVG members living there. We then heard from **John Tulloch** about the Java Party comprised of RA and RAF personnel who, after capture, were sent from Singapore to Borneo (British North Borneo and Sarawak). The morning session concluded with a talk on **Lt. Champion's** diaries and artwork by his sons **Stephen** and **Nick**.

At the start of the afternoon session we heard the horrific story of **Dr. Nigel Stanley's** father's incarceration and

torture by the Kempeitai as a result of the "Double Tenth Incident" resulting in his untimely death at their hands. Many of the perpetrators of war crimes were not brought to justice after the war due to the lack of hard evidence, and the huge numbers of war crimes which had been committed by the Japanese military.

Geoff Gill spoke about his new book co-authored with **Meg Parkes**, "Burma Railway Medicine: Disease, death and survival on the Thailand-Burma Railway 1942 - 1945." It was interesting to hear mention of **Drs. Robert Hardie and Stanley Pavillard** who were both Volunteer doctors, and who, together with doctors in the Indian Medical Service, were much more experienced in dealing with tropical diseases than their RAMC counterparts straight out from Britain.

We were privileged to learn more about "The Liverpool Experience" in dealing with the medical and psychological aftermath of Far East POW imprisonment through the eyes and conversations of **Drs. Nick Beeching, Kamal Khan and Geoff Gill**. Partly light-hearted in its approach, nevertheless, their talk conveyed a serious message about the depth of suffering many FEPOWs went through on their return home, with very little help. After a break for book signing, the afternoon session continued with an open discussion until about 5p.m. We then returned to the Liner Hotel for a delicious buffet supper followed by a fascinating talk by **Patricia Davies** about her family life and father, **Col. Cary Owtram** who was the CO of the Chungkai Camp in Thailand. She and her sister have just published her father's memoirs in a book called "1000 Days on the River Kwai." Now in her 90s, Pat talked with the bare minimum of notes and held us all spellbound as she gave us an insight into her extraordinary life and her father's wartime experiences.

As mentioned in the editorial, **Flora Chong** opened the Sunday morning session with an in depth account of what ALPHA stood for and how it educates Canadian school children about the Far East War, including the moral issues surrounding the dropping of the atomic bomb. It was a very interesting and informative talk and one felt that this type of educational programme should be available in Britain, where so little is known about WW2 in the Far East by the present generation.

Michiel Schwartzberg gave a talk packed full of information about Japanese POW and CI registration and how to research it. His examples were interesting and showed how easy it was for the misinterpretations of people's identities and how they could be misfiled.

After a break and questions for **Flora** and **Michiel**, it was my turn to give my presentation. My brief had been to give a potted history of the **Malayan Volunteer Forces**; how the MVG started with its aims and achievements; plus give some personal details about my family. In 20 minutes this was quite a tall order, but after cutting out various details, the end result was just under the 20 minutes allocated. I am grateful to **Lizzie Oliver**, whose presentation followed mine, for kindly clicking on the slides as I spoke. I could not have managed both without a hitch! **Lizzie's** talk was also interesting about Civil Resettlement Units (CRUs), which were residential stays offered to returning POWs, and designed to help POWs adjust to post-war civilian life. Sadly, the project was not very successful as far as the FEPOWs were concerned as their problems were far greater than those POWs from the European theatre of war, and at that time not well understood.

We all found the **Farrell Family's** talk about the Sumatra Railway fascinating. The whole family was involved with making the film which showed how they tracked the course of the railway through the jungle, oil palm plantations and over rivers. Nothing of the original railway remains now except for a few old rusting engines and rails. The railway was never used to any extent after the war and was soon torn up by the local people and the materials used for other purposes.

The final session on Sunday afternoon included an original piece of research about the airfield camp at Ubon in northern Thailand by **Ray Withnall**, who lives there and has been able to uncover parts of the old runway. Then it was the turn of **Rod Beattie** to give us an update from the TBRC and keep our interest alive until the final moments of the conference. We now know that **Rod** has included some information in the TBRC about the Sumatra Railway, and that they are continuing their research work particularly at the Burma end of the Railway. Together with **Frank Taylor**, visits have been made to Burma and they have trekked along that part of the railway. As usual it was a most interesting talk and a wonderful ending to the 2½ day Conference.

Monday morning saw a few hardy souls travelling to Manchester to the IWM North, where the very last session of the Conference took place, with presentations by **Sally McQuaid** and her son, and by **Stephen Walton** of the IWM. After saying our last goodbyes, **Liz Moggie, Yvonne Wurtzburg, Imogen Holmes** and I left the Museum at about 1.30pm. We dropped **Liz** and **Yvonne** at the station to catch the London train, and **Imogen** and I set off on the long drive back to Cornwall, via Exeter where she dropped me to catch the train back to Axminster.

With many thanks to **Meg Parkes** and her team for a most successful & enjoyable Conference.

Report by **Rosemary Fell**.

PROPOSAL

Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) FEPOW art exhibition

The Art of Survival in Far East POW camps

This exhibition tells the fascinating and powerful story of survival and the ingenuity of WWII Far East prisoners of war. Research carried out by LSTM in recent years has revealed many more illustrations than were previously known about, created during captivity by British servicemen who were also artists.

This contemporaneous artwork was produced in secret and kept hidden at great personal risk. It provides an extraordinary record of conditions in captivity. The wealth of newly-discovered visual material enhances what is still a largely unknown part WWII history, increasing our knowledge and understanding of Far East captivity. As a medical history it is unique and complements the pioneering work of LSTM's scientists and doctors who have cared for Far East veterans over the past 70 years.

Many of the exhibits are in private family collections, only a few would be loaned from institutions in the UK. The exhibition will explore the following themes:

1. **INTRODUCTION** – the story of a wartime city, the departure and homecoming port for tens of thousands of servicemen who became Far East POW and home to the world's oldest tropical medicine institution. LSTM has been training doctors and nurses for military service overseas since before WWI. Liverpool has played a pivotal role in the lives and health of Far East captives.
2. **CAMP LIFE AND SURVIVAL** – maps/plans drawn in captivity; overview of stats, ie numbers British captured, numbers in camps and conditions, death rates; medical problems, descriptions of main causes of illness; ways of raising morale, ie importance of entertainments, faith, education; overcoming isolation, coded messages to families.
3. **INGENUITY** – including medical and artists' materials. The "citizen's army", making the most of what was available; artefacts, illustrations, descriptions; recreating some items, eg items made from bamboo, or the self-retaining ileostomy tube with clamps, re-constructed from typewritten contemporaneous instructions and illustrations.
4. **ENVIRONMENT** – tropical landscapes, camp environs, plus a wide range of botanical and ornithological drawings and sketches done by captives as a vehicle for keeping mind and spirit alive. This work is of great significance to the psychological health of not only the individuals who created it but to countless others who they may have shared it with at the time.
5. **ARTISTS** – professional/trained, as well as amateurs. Biographical details for many of the artists, including a selection of stories, portraits and photos, supported by a touch screen facility enabling access to many more artists eg Ashley George Old's work much of which is in the State Library of Victoria, Australia.
6. **MEETING AND LEGACY** – tell the story of LSTM and FEPOW since late 1945, initially with in-patients at Smithdown Road Hospital (later known as Sefton General), Mossley Hill Hospital and Liverpool Royal Infirmary. 1979 - 2000 scientific and medical research by staff at LSTM not only increased medical knowledge but also influenced new diagnostics and treatments. More recently it has influenced the way the military cares for personnel returning from overseas tours of duty; cite psychiatric research (Dr Khan) and work of Professor Thomas Wilson (LSTM 1961-70) a former FEPOW who contributed to medical knowledge during captivity and post-war.

Available resources:

- 68 digitised interviews (and typed transcripts) with British FEPOW veterans (plus a CD of FEPOW interviews recorded at a national conference in 2008 – to be dropped at VG&M next week)
- Wellcome Trust's Mosaic Science 50-min audio documentary (based on *Captive Memories*) entitled, *Unspoken: The Forgotten Prisoners of War* (<https://mosaicscience.com/story/far-east-prisoners-of-war>)
- video interviews (Prof Gill in conversation with FEPOW artist Jack Chalker and also with FEPOW psychiatrist Dr Kamal Khan)
- newspaper cuttings
- two books co-authored by Geoff Gill and Meg Parkes, *Captive Memories: Far East POW and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine* and *Burma Railway Medicine: Disease, death and survival on the Thai-Burma Railway 1942-1945* (with a third book planned, based on the artwork)

FEPOW artefacts at LSTM include:

- original loin cloth, known as Jap Happy
- dental forceps used in Thailand
- ID dog tags made from wood (and bamboo - Parkes)
- original camp diary/medical reports/research papers
- original rail spike from Thailand-Burma railway

FEPOW artefacts loaned from other sources include:

- home-made Perspex mah-jong set (Audus family)
- home-made chess set (Coxhead family)
- dental forceps (Margarson family)
- bamboo tube (for hiding paper)
- neurological case notes (Peach, Java; Peach family)
- Captain Duncan's diaries (Parkes)

Artefacts made for display:

- facsimiles of medical/dental/utility items

Feedback/participation kiosk during exhibition:

- Remembrance area - leave memories, information exchange
- interviews with family members (involve student volunteers), oral history study
- touch screen links to digital collections and other sources of information
- "have-a-go" sessions – write a 25-word postcard to a loved one (the word limit for POW and their relatives), post on display board in exhibition

OBITUARIES

JEAN MOFFATT – 1920-2017

We send our very sincere and heartfelt condolences to **Jonathan, Sutti**, his sons, **Peter and Paul** and to all his family for the loss of their beloved mother who died recently. **Jean** had been a wartime nurse and an army wife in Taiping and Penang in the early 1960s. Our thoughts and prayers are with them at this sad time.

NOLA HUDSON – 1914-2017

Our thoughts and prayers are also with **Nola's** family and her son, **Michael.** **Nola** died on 1st April this year at the remarkable age of 103. She was one of our Honorary Life Members and the wife of **Dr. Jack Hudson** who was interned as a civilian POW in Changi and Sime Road. She was evacuated on the **USS West Point** with her son Michael to South Africa. Others of her family were evacuated on the **Mata Hari**, and interned in Muntok on Banka Island. It was as a result of their internment that **Nola** and her cousin **Deborah Crow** expressed a wish for there to be some sort of memorial to these civilian internees in Sumatra, resulting in the presentation of a Plaque to the Changi Museum on the 22nd February 2014. [See A.K. 30 April 2014]

FRED SEIKER – 1916 – 2017

We received a letter from **Fred's** wife **Elizabeth** to say that **Fred** had passed away on 31st May aged 101. **Fred** was a former member of the MVG and contributed several articles to "Apa Khabar" in its early days, with stories of his treatment during his time on the Railway. His well-known paintings, showing the ill-treatment of POWs by the Japanese, were on display at the NMA for several years. They can also be seen in his small book, "**Lest We Forget. Life as a Japanese P.O.W.**" **Fred** was an outspoken critic of the Japanese throughout his life, and his talks were always listened to in absolute silence.

We are also sorry to announce the death of **George W. Duffy** aged 94 in February in the USA. **George** served in the US Merchant Marine in WW2 and after his ship was sunk in the south Atlantic by the German Navy, he was handed over to the Japanese and spent nearly 4 years as a FEPOW. His story is told in his book, "**Ambushed Under the Southern Cross.**" We well remember **George's** visit to one of our Conferences at the NMA.

Iris Hogg, who died in March aged 89, was captured with her parents on Sumatra and interned there. Her father was the manager of a British-owned rubber plantation. **Iris** and her mother were first put into a camp in the native hospital at Siantar and her father went into the men's camp next door. Later they were moved to a former Dutch school at Brastagi where the conditions were appalling (1500 held in a place which normally held 200) resulting in beriberi, meningitis, jaundice and starvation. After her experiences in this camp, **Iris** decided to become a nurse, and she devoted the last 20 years of her life working as a night midwife. She was repatriated with her parents, who both survived the war, on the **SS Orontes**.

We also announce the death of **Vice-Admiral Dick Wildish** who died in April this year, aged 102. He was a junior engineer officer on the battleship **Prince of Wales** from her building until her sinking in 1941. He was therefore with the ship at the Battle of the Denmark Strait in May 1941 when the ship was hit 7 times by German shells causing extensive flooding. As a result, **Wildish** designed the "splinter box" made of steel, which could be fitted over holes to limit the damage to a ship. This is still used today - but made of glass-reinforced plastic. In September 1941 the **Prince of Wales** joined Force Z with the battlecruiser **Repulse** with the intention of defending Singapore. He was at his action station when the **Prince of Wales** was attacked by Japanese torpedo and high-level bombers. She survived the first attack, but during the second, the ship suffered irreparable damage, and **Wildish** was seriously wounded and evacuated from the ship on a Carley raft. Rescued by **Electra**, he was treated at the Alexandra Hospital but, luckily for him, was discharged before the Japanese massacred the inmates. He was then ordered to blow up the Singapore fuel depot before being evacuated with General Wavell's staff to Ceylon on the river-steamer **Kedah**.

James "Lionel" Brooke's death, aged 76, was announced in the Telegraph. He was known as "Lionel" to avoid confusion with the first White Rajah of Sarawak – also named **James Brooke**. Lionel lived an extraordinary life which was overshadowed by his failure to succeed to the throne of Sarawak according to the will of the first White Rajah. Son of **Anthony Brooke**, who was the nephew of **Rajah Vyner Brooke** and his heir apparent, **Lionel** spent some time as a small child living at the Astana (the Rajah's official residence). He was evacuated with his family and a Malay amah in December 1941 just before the Japanese invaded Sarawak and left Singapore on one of the P.O. Liners. His father, **Anthony**, was attached to **Mountbatten's** staff in Ceylon and led the discussions over the future of Sarawak with the Colonial Office. He failed to dissuade the British from making Sarawak a British colony, thus terminating the White Rajah's reign over the territory. Unable to settle to life in the U.K. Lionel tried his hand at many occupations at various times – racing driver, woodsman, poet, artist, lawyer and psychotherapist. He was most happy in later life in the highlands on the north-west coast of Scotland where he lived with his family.

WEBSITES TO VISIT

http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/a-prison-that-both-chills-and-fascinates?utm_source=email&utm_medium=social-media&utm_campaign=addtoany - Changi Prison – A prison that both chills and fascinates.

With thanks to Tina Howe – Vilma Howe's daughter.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04b6bs3> - Thanks to Henry Langley who sent this website which records a programme aired on BBC Radio 4 called, "My Dad's Diary." It is the story about how part of a Japanese war diary, found on a beach in Japan in 1945, was eventually returned to the writer's daughter, 6 years after his death. The programme features the daughter, **Mary Kiehn**, whose father, **Noel Good**, wrote the diary.

BOOKS

"MY DEAR EVERYONE: Echoes from a Colonial Life." By Patricia Wood. Published by a local firm in Perth WA – eText Press Publishing. ISBN 978-09943290-4-2 Also available on Amazon. Price in the U.K. £16 or \$AUS 35

The book is about Patricia's parents' experiences of colonial life in Malaya in the ten years before the Pacific War started, as recorded in her mother's letters home to her English families from Kuala Lumpur, where she lived with her husband and 4 children – 3 boys and a girl – who were all born there. Most of the regular letters were kept by the two families and returned to Patricia's family after the war when they visited the U.K. The wartime letters, used to create Patricia's first book ("If this should be Farewell") about **Ernest** and **Mary Hodgkin's** wartime experiences, were also returned. These told the story of **Mary's** new life in Perth W.A. from 1942 to the end of the war and **Ernest's** life as a civilian internee in Singapore. Thus, "My Dear Everyone" is really a prequel to **Patricia's** first book which came out in 2003 and was compiled by **Patricia's** son **Adrian Wood**.

Patricia Wood says:

The picture on the front of the book is one of **Mary Hodgkin's** own watercolour paintings. The book includes three Appendices – including one by **Mary** of her experiences of Colonial Etiquette and one about my own memories of our escape from Malaya in 1942.

Invitation to a Book Launch

The Wood and Hodgkin families invite you to the launch of

"My Dear Everyone" by Patricia Wood.

The launch will be held at The Grove Library,

1, Leake Street,

PEPPERMINT GROVE.

On Wednesday, 24th May from 6.30 to 8.00pm.

Michael Hodgkin, Patricia's youngest brother, who will come from Canberra for the occasion, will launch the book.

[Editor: We received this notification too late for inclusion in the April newsletter. Obviously the book has now been launched and is for sale in the U.K. on Amazon.]

"BURMA RAILWAY MEDICINE. Disease, Death and Survival on the Thai-Burma Railway, 1942-1945." By Geoff Gill and Meg Parkes. Soft back. 255 pages. ISBN 9 781910 837092 Published by Palatine Books. R.R.P. £14.99

Meg Parkes says:

"This book is a first. No other book has analysed, from a British perspective, the medical crisis facing FEPOW doctors, orderlies and patients in Thailand and Burma. Nor has there been such an in-depth analysis of the post-war medical aftermath. Geoff Gill has worked with FEPOW patients for almost 40 years. There is nobody better qualified to have researched and produced this book; it has been written for anyone with an interest in this still little-known aspect of WW2 history."

As mentioned in the report on the Liverpool Conference, it is interesting to read the references to the Volunteer Doctors such as Drs. Hardie and Pavillard who were well versed in tropical medicine unlike their counterparts from the RAMC straight out from Britain.

MVG members have been offered the following discounts by ordering the following books directly from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine's Library and paid for by cheque ONLY. [N.B. This applies to U.K. sales ONLY.]

Burma Railway Medicine - £12 plus £2.50 p&p

Captive Memories - £10 plus £2.50 p&p

Captive Memories and Burma Railway Medicine - £20 plus £3.50 p&p

To order your books directly from the LSTM Library, write to:

Library – Burma Railway Medicine
Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine
Pembroke Place
Liverpool L3 5QA

Please state clearly which book/books you wish to purchase and enclose your address for posting plus your cheque made payable to: **Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine** and write on the back **Book: BRM** or **Books: CM/BRM**

VETERAN REMEMBERS JAPANESE INVASION

I will fade away but I hope my recollections will live for ever, says Jeremiah



War and peace: Jeremiah with a collection of photographs of those who served during the Malayan Campaign during a commemorative service at the Cheras Road War Cemetery in Kuala Lumpur.

Report in **The Star** newspaper – Wednesday 3rd May 2017:

The Malayan Campaign of WW2 is long over but war veteran **James Jeremiah** still vividly remembers the first time he felt a bomb explode.

"I was 18 then and had only seen war in the movies. I was stationed at the old Bayan Lepas airport in 1941 and Japanese troops were invading Penang.

A bomb exploded at the airport and I remember the ground shook so hard, it almost scared me to death," he said while recounting his experience at the 75th anniversary of the Fall of Malaya Memorial event yesterday.

Now 93, **Jeremiah** is the only surviving WW2 veteran of the Eurasian "E" company of Penang, a volunteer force similar to the British Home Guard.

The Malayan Campaign was fought between the Allied and Axis forces from December 8th, 1941, to January 31st 1942. It began with Japanese troops landing in Kota Baru and invading Malaya on bicycles.

It was a disaster for the British, Indian, Australian and Malayan forces defending the colony, with 138,708 casualties among the Allied troops compared to 9,800 Japanese casualties.

During yesterday's commemoration service at the Cheras Road War Cemetery, **Jeremiah** thanked the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) for maintaining the grounds.

"Today we continue to remember the sacrifices made and you are keeping alive the memory of my comrades' courage and their suffering, lest we forget.

Old soldiers never die, they just fade away. I am 93 years old, soon I too will fade away but I hope the recollections I have will live forever," he said.

The Cheras Road War Cemetery is the final resting place of 156 Commonwealth servicemen, along with other servicemen and their dependents not involved with WW2.

The High Commissioners of Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, representatives of the Malaysian Armed Forces and veteran groups laid wreaths at the cemetery to honour the fallen.

Children from Garden International School, Kuala Lumpur and the Asia Pacific International School also placed flowers at the graveside.

Later that day, a similar commemorative event was held at the newly renovated Seremban Gurkha Cemetery, a non-World War site managed by the CWGC.

It is the final resting place of 169 Gurkha soldiers, many from the 7th Gurkha Rifles, who served during the Malayan Emergency, and their dependents.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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

This year, the Service will reflect the 75th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore and its terrible aftermath, as well as celebrating the 72nd anniversary of the end of the Pacific war. The service will take place, as usual, in our Memorial Garden – weather permitting. As mentioned in the editorial, it is no longer possible to hold our communal picnic. We can either use our own plot, or find other public places in the Arboretum where there are benches available. There is a restaurant and coffee shop. Please let **Rosemary** know if you are coming, as we have to give the NMA numbers of attendees. If anyone has a special request for a reading, please also let **Rosemary** know with the details.

PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA – 31st August 2017. Merdeka Day Service in Kings' Park.

Please give **Elizabeth** your name if you wish to attend this service.

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

This year we have chosen a lighter menu which we hope will be to everyone's taste. The starter is Baked Goats Cheese with pistachio nuts, pear salad and quince jelly; followed by a main course of Vol-au-Vent Princess with chicken, mushroom and asparagus in a Supreme Sauce with seasonal vegetables; with Crème Brulee as dessert. Coffee or tea and Petit Fours will be served at the end of the meal. The main vegetarian course option is spinach and ricotta tortellini. Please notify this requirement, together with all other dietary needs at the time of booking. The cost is **£39 per person**.

Please let **Rosemary** know if you wish to attend the Luncheon this year, together with the names of any guests you wish to bring. We need to have **NAMES AND PAYMENT BY THE END OF SEPTEMBER, PLEASE.**

Cheques should be made payable to: **Mrs. R. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group**

and sent to the address on P.27. If payment is made by BAC transfer to the MVG's bank account, please notify **Rosemary**. We are delighted that **Roger Willbourn** is to give us an illustrated talk about his grandparents' lives in Malaya for over 40 years, leading up to WW2 with his grandmother's loss on the **Giang Bee** after evacuation from Singapore, and his grandfather's time on the Railway. **Major Eric Willbourn (1/FMSVF)** was Director of the Geological Survey in Malaya, and **Roger's** talk is appropriately entitled, **"A Survey of the Surveyor."**

As usual the Ballroom has been booked for the Luncheon. This is on the first floor and is accessible by stairs or lift. Please give your name to the front desk on arrival. There is a ground floor cloakroom, where gentlemen can leave their coats, and a Ladies' Powder Room on the first floor opposite the Ballroom. Name badges will be provided outside the Ballroom.

Please bring a prize with you for the Draw. **This is the final reminder about the luncheon.**

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

Please contact **Rosemary** by August if you wish to attend this ceremony. Our 8" black cross with the SSVF logo and dedication to the FMSVF and UFMSVF forces will be planted as usual in the FEPOW Plot with the kind permission of the **Revd. Pauline Simpson NFFWRA** and FEPOW Chaplain. For anyone attending this ceremony for the first time, or visiting the Garden of Remembrance afterwards, there is a board at the entrance giving the number of every plot. The layout is the same every year and the FEPOW Plot is easy to find along the pathway nearest to the Abbey in the central patch of grass.

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

12 tickets have been applied for but at the time of going to press, the MVG has still not been notified whether this number will be allocated to us this year. Having written letters to the RBL explaining exactly who the Volunteers were and that, as WW2 veterans, very few are still alive let alone able to march (as required under the new criteria set out by the RBL!), we hope they will have a more enlightened approach to ticket allocation this year.

If we are unable to march as the Malayan Volunteers Group, we have been offered the chance to march with the Units of the Far East Air Force, by kind invitation of **Tony Parrini, Chairman of the RAFBPA** and MVG member.

We now have the names of 12 members wishing to march, together with their details. These will be sent in as soon as the application forms are released by the RBL. Please note that tickets are now personalised and non-transferable. Entry to Whitehall is by ticket and the presentation of a photo identity document giving the same details as on your ticket.

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 service which takes place outside at the Memorial.

ADVANCE NOTICE

SINGAPORE – 12th September 2020. Service at Kranji CWGC cemetery to mark the Japanese surrender in 1945.

We are planning to attend this service to mark the 75th anniversary of the signing of the Japanese surrender in Singapore. Other events will take place – along the lines of the visit in February this year. Please keep this date in mind.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

A big thank you to everyone who has paid their annual subscription promptly.

UP-TO-DATE LIST OF MEMBERS

We regret that it has not been possible to compile a new list due to the substantial number of members whose annual subscriptions are still outstanding. It is planned to issue the new list in October.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO HONORARY LIFE MEMBER BRENDA MACDUFF
CELEBRATING HER 103rd BIRTHDAY ON 4TH APRIL WITH HER SON IAN**



CIVILYUN AN' SOJER TOO

(From "A History of the Singapore Volunteer Corps" with apologies to Rudyard Kipling)

As I was a-strollin' roun' Collyer Key – by the orfices mercantile,
I seed a man in a karki soot of a semi-Regular style,
'E 'eld 'imself up like a sojer-man, an' I sez to 'im – "Oo are you?"
Sez 'e, "I'm a gunner, a Volunteer gunner – Civilyun an' Sojer too."
'Is own work starts at nine or ten, an' 'e works the 'ole day through,
An' afore an' after an' in between 'e learns wot a Tommy should do,
'E's a kind of a giddy amphidextrum – Civilyun an' Sojer too.

An' after I met 'im at Katong Camp – adoin' all kinds of work,
Like draggin' about a Maxim Gun – w'ich is wot most men would shirk,
'E'll sleep in a tent w'en 'e can't get a 'ouse, and to give the feller 'is doo,
'E drills like a jolly 'Er Majesty's Tommy, though 'e's a Civilyun too.
There ain't a thing on a Maxim gun the feller don't know an' do,
'E can draw a bead on a bald mans pate an' riddle it through an' through,
'E's a regular juggling prestigidatrix – Civilyun an' Sojer too.

[To be continued]

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ROSEMARY FELL – Secretary/Editor of Apa Khabar/Membership/Subscriptions/ Donations/ Annual Lunch

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