

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



52nd EDITION - OCTOBER 2017



Olga Henderson's Birthday Card made for her in Sime Road Camp by Tommy Ryan, one of "the Asia Boys".

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V-J DAY REMEMBERED AT THE NMA THE RBL RECOGNISES THE MVG'S RIGHT TO MARCH ON REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

V-J Day this year gave all those who attended MVG's service, the opportunity to see the newly rebuilt and refurbished Visitor Centre at the National Memorial Arboretum. Its clean, uncluttered, rather stark new look appealed to some members, while others regretted the loss of the more intimate feeling of the centre and the War Widows' Rose Garden in the central square – **Heroes' Square** – which is now paved over with just a few trees and small hedges to soften its appearance. The removal of all the military badges from the original 'Arbour Restaurant' was also disappointing, but our request for the return of the Volunteers' badges was carried out, and they are now in our possession.

The service was again interrupted by the noise of **LaFarge's** gravel working machinery – so much so that it was almost impossible to hear the readings and prayers above the noise and we have decided to hold the service in the Chapel next year. A letter received from **Michael Mowat** about the problems of holding the service in our Memorial Garden on a weekday – see P. 4. – summed up the situation very succinctly, and we are pleased to say that the Chapel has already been booked for August 2018. We thank all those members who contributed to the service very much. See report on Ps. 3 & 4.

The **Association of Malaysians in Western Australia (AMWA)** held their annual Remembrance Service in Perth's Kings Park on 26th August. The service was organised as usual by **Bill Adamson**, President of the MBVA WA Inc., in conjunction with the Malayan Volunteers Group in Australia and our secretary, **Elizabeth Adamson**. The full report on the service will be distributed to all Australian members and to any of our other members who request a copy. A shorter report is included in the newsletter on Ps. 6 & 7. We thank **Bill** and **Elizabeth** for their commitment and dedication to this service of remembrance on behalf of the Australian, Malaysian and other Commonwealth service men and women and civilian internees who served in WW2 and in other conflicts which have taken place since.

Following the refusal of the RBL to issue us 12 tickets for the Cenotaph Parade on Remembrance Sunday last year, we wrote letters to **Lt. Col. Bob Gamble OBE**, Head of the Commemorative Events Programme, explaining why we wished to march and whom we were representing. The letters must have been read and subsequently acted upon because we have been offered our 12 tickets this year! These will be issued in October, together with other instructions, and sent to out to all those who have registered to march this year. We feel pleased to have won this battle for recognition.

We are very grateful to **Olga Henderson** for the loan of her wonderful birthday card, made for her in Sime Road Camp by **Tommy Ryan**, one of the "Asia Boys." Dated "26/3/45 Sime Road", and signed by **Tommy**, it is an extraordinary memento of **Olga's** time as a child civilian internee in the camps for the duration of WW2. Written on the back of the card are the words "**Olga Morris. Hut 16.**" (**Olga's** maiden name). We feel very privileged to have been entrusted with this invaluable birthday card – surely one of very few cards to have survived not only the last few months of the war but also for the 72 intervening years. It makes a unique subject for the front cover of this edition of *Apa Khabar*, and is a poignant reminder of the deprivations suffered by the children in the civilian camps in Singapore.

Tommy Ryan was a cabin boy on the *Empress of Asia* and after capture was interned as a civilian, first in Changi Gaol and then in Sime Road Camp. He studied in camp and was coached by members of the Malayan Education Department. He matriculated in camp and, after release from internment, was given a scholarship to Liverpool University to study Medicine. An interesting snippet of news appeared in *The Sun* newspaper in Malaysia on the 16th August 2017 – the day after V-J Day.

It was headed: **ABE DONATES TO WAR SHRINE** and reads:-

"**TOKYO:** Japanese Prime Minister **Shinzo Abe** yesterday sent a donation to a controversial war shrine as the country marked the anniversary of its defeat in World War 11. Yasukuni Shrine honours about 2.5 million dead, mostly Japanese, who perished in the country's wars since the late 19th century. But it is contentious for also commemorating senior military and political figures convicted of war crimes by an international tribunal."

In July's editorial, we announced that the MVG's newly revamped website would shortly be up and running. However, work is still ongoing, but as soon as it is ready for launch members will be informed. The delay is due to the arrival of our webmaster's baby daughter who has taken priority for the moment. We send congratulations to **Luke and Maxine Lawson** on the arrival of baby **Ollia**, born on Saturday, 5th August and wish mother and daughter well.

Enclosed with the newsletter is the up-dated list of members. It would be helpful if members would keep the list for reference – it takes time and effort to compile it every year and it is costly to produce printed copies.

We also enclose the Income and Expenditure sheet from the annual accounts. The full set of accounts is available on request.

APOLOGIES

The Malayan Volunteers Group wishes to make a full and unreserved apology to **Sibylla Jane Flower** for mistakenly and inadvertently referring to her as a journalist. She is, of course, the well known and renowned Historian of the Far East Prisoners of War and we acknowledge her as such. She has written numerous definitive articles on the history of POWs, which are listed below.

Since 1997, **Jane Flower** has conducted numerous interviews with former Prisoners of War of the Japanese in the UK, the USA, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, The Netherlands and Sweden. She has also interviewed civilian internees, diplomats, members of the International Committee of the Red Cross and religious personnel of neutral countries during World War 11. She has also conducted interviews in Japan with officers and men of the former Imperial Japanese Army.

She worked closely with **Rod Suddaby**, head of the Department of Documents at the Imperial War Museum in the examination and cataloguing of acquisitions relating to prisoners of war of the Japanese, 1997-2013.

In 1997, she was invited by **Professor Ian Nish** (Professor Emeritus of International History at the London School of Economics) to join the newly formed Anglo-Japanese History Project, funded by the Japanese Government. This enabled her to travel widely to conduct research into the history of prisoners of war of the Japanese and to take part in history workshops in the United Kingdom and Japan. The results of this initiative were published in the five-volume *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000* to which she contributed two chapters.

ESSAYS BY SIBYLLA JANE FLOWER ON THE SUBJECT OF PRISONERS OF WAR OF THE JAPANESE

1. 'Captors and Captives on The Burma-Thailand Railway', in **Bob Moore** and **Kent Fedorowich**, (eds) *"Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War 11"*, Oxford, Berg, 1996.
2. 'Allied Prisoners of War: The Malayan Campaign 1941-42', in **Brian Farrell & Sandy Hunter**, (eds), *"Sixty Years On: The Fall of Singapore Revisited"*, Eastern Universities Press, 2002.
3. 'Memory and the prisoner of war experience: The United Kingdom', in **Kevin Blackburn & Karl Hack**, (eds), *"Forgotten Captives in Japanese-Occupied Asia"*, Routledge, 2008.
4. 'British Prisoners of War of the Japanese, 1941-45', in *"The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000 Volume 11: The Political-Diplomatic Dimension, 1931-2000. Ian Nish & Yoichi Kibata."* (eds), Macmillan, 2000.
5. 'British Policymakers and the Prisoner-of-War Issue: Perceptions and Responses', in *"The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000, Volume 111: The Military Dimension. Ian Gow, Yoichi Hirama with John Chapman"* (eds), Macmillan, 2003.

CONFERENCES AT WHICH THE FOLLOWING PAPERS WERE PRESENTED BY SIBYLLA JANE FLOWER

1. U.K. CAMBRIDGE: Centre of International Studies. Anglo-Japanese Conference on Prisoners of War, Churchill College.
"The International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva and Allied Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees in World War 11", 1997 (unpublished).
2. CANADA: Society for Military History and Annual Conference, University of Calgary.
"Allied POWs and Japanese Government Policy, 1942-1945", 2001 (unpublished).
3. SINGAPORE: History Museum.
"Allied Prisoners of War: The Malayan Campaign, 1941-42", 2005, published in *"Forgotten Captives in Japanese-Occupied Asia"*, Routledge, 2008.
4. SINGAPORE: Nanyang Technical University.
"Memory and the POW Experience: The United Kingdom", published in *"The Japanese Occupation: Sixty Years after the End of the Asia-Pacific War"*, ed. **Brian Farrell & Sandy Hunter**, Singapore, Eastern Universities Press, 2005.
5. U.K. LONDON: The Royal Society of Medicine, 2006. Conference on 'Medicine, War and Captivity – South East Asia, 1941-45.
"Sources of Aid for the Prisoners: the Official and the Clandestine." Unpublished.

Sibylla Jane Flower has written obituaries of former POWs, Civilian Internees in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand for *The Times* and other newspapers, also book reviews. Compilation of a critical bibliography of books, articles and films on prisoners of war and civilian internees is in progress. She has been consultant on numerous films including *The Real Story of the Bridge on the River Kwai* (2000) for the History Channel, Greystone Communications, California, USA and for Timewatch (BBC).

She was Assistant to the War Pensions Agency of the U.K. Government in validating the claims of civilians in Malaya and Singapore for the ex-gratia compensation of £10,000 awarded in 2000.

We are grateful to **Jane** for her interest in the Volunteers and for the interesting and informative address she gave at the MVG lunch two years ago, when she spoke about the role played by the Volunteer Medical Officers in Thailand – many of whom she had interviewed at length. In **Jane's** words, *"It was a great relief when I discovered the Volunteers with their intelligent comments on all aspects of the captivity."*

We also apologise unreservedly to **John Hembry** for mistakenly stating on the front cover of the 51st edition of *Apa Khabar* (July 2017) that **Charles Edwards'** map of the Thailand Burma Railway had been presented to **Jonathan Moffatt** by **Ian Lewis Hinde** and **John Hembry**. It should have said that **John Hembry** was the sole presenter of this map, which had been given to him by our late veteran Australian member **Charles Edwards**.

V-J DAY SERVICE AT THE NMA – 15th August 2017
Report by Jonathan Moffatt

After a week of unsettled weather, we were fortunate to have a fine, sunny and warm day for our V-J Day Service this year at the NMA. Some 40 persons, mostly MVG members, attended our service commemorating the 72nd anniversary of V-J Day. Those present included one veteran and former civilian internee, **Olga Henderson**. We listened to a recording of "Amazing Grace" sung by the 'Born to Sing Choirs' from Perth, Western Australia.

Jonathan's opening remarks



Jonathan made the welcoming remarks mentioning the 75th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore on the 15th February 1942 and the terrible consequences it held for all those who suffered under Japanese rule for both military and civilian alike. He also talked about V-J Day 1945 which brought liberation to so many. **Eileen and Ken Wright** placed the wreath on behalf of MVG Members and, after observing a two minute silence, we joined in the singing of "Abide with Me" as arranged by **Lisa Ho**, wife of our Malaysian Secretary. The arrangement is dedicated to all Malayan Volunteers who served in World Wars 1 & 2.

Anthony Jackson read Ephesians Ch. 6 Vs. 8-17 then **June Jackson** read childhood memories of evacuation taken from, "My Dear Everyone" – a compilation of pre-war letters written to relatives at home by **Mary Hodgkin** and published by her daughter **Patricia Wood** – MVG member in Australia.

Donald Fell read a Chinese proverb, a favourite proverb of **Rosemary's** mother **Kathleen Reeve**. Then **Alison Brierley** led us in the prayers. **Alison's** brother, **Michael Mowat** read a tribute to the victims of the Sook Ching massacre of the Chinese in Singapore; part of a poem by **Teo Kah Leng**.

The next section of our service contained readings related to POWs and internees in Sumatra. **Imogen Holmes** read "The last Days of Freedom" an edited extract from **John Hedley's** diary of his escape from Johore after Singapore fell. **John** was a POW with **Imogen's** father, eventually ending up on the Sumatra Railway.

We sang "The Captives Hymn", words and music composed by **Margaret Dryburgh**, an English Missionary and civilian internee in Muntok, Palembang and Loebok Linggau, Sumatra. The hymn was sung in the camps every Sunday.

Anne Hinam read "The Commandant of Muntok Prison" an extract from the book, "By Eastern Windows" by **William McDougall** who was an American civilian internee with her father in Muntok Gaol.

Ruth Rollitt read a poem by Gordon Highlanders FEPOW **Lt. Robert Fletcher** who was in Kranji Camp until September 1945. A reminder to us that liberation for many POWs did not come till weeks after V-J Day.

Bob Hall, whose father was an HMS Prince of Wales Royal Marine and Sumatra POW, concluded our service leading us in the Exhortation, FEPOW Prayer and Kohima Epitaph.

To conclude the service we listened to "Largo" from the New World Symphony by Dvorak and sung by the 'Born to Sing Choirs' from Perth, Western Australia. Then we greeted each other and chatted, eventually making our way back to the NMA cafeteria for lunch.

[Editor: During this time, we were approached by **Phil Beynon** with one of the albums he had compiled for display in the FEPOW Memorial Building, containing details of individual FEPOWs which visitors could look at. He wanted to assure MVG members who had sent biographical details to him about their FEPOW fathers, or other relatives, for inclusion in these books, that the albums were all safe and now in his care. He explained that he had been asked not to continue his work in the building by the current COFEPOW Chairman and Board of Trustees and that



Anne Hinam reading from "By Eastern Windows"

they claimed ownership of the albums which **Phil** had compiled at his own cost and in his own time, including the provision of a book case on which the albums were displayed. Understandably upset at this treatment, **Phil** decided to remove the albums for safe keeping until a suitable new location could be found for their display. MVG members are assured that they will be available to look at again as soon as this new venue has been identified. We will keep members informed about the situation. We feel sad that this has happened to **Phil Beynon**, who has worked so hard on this very worthwhile project, and we fully support his decision to act in the way he has.

We also report that we continue the fight for recognition of all members of the Malayan Volunteer Forces who were British subjects, and therefore should be included in the lists for projection on the walls of the FEPOW Hut.] With regard to future V-J Day services in our Garden Plot, we have had several comments about the difficulty of holding the service against the background noise of the gravel machinery workings behind the plot.

The following letter was received from **Michael Mowat** soon after the service, with several excellent suggestions about how we may present our services in future years:-

“Dear Rosemary,

Thank you for your appreciation of the small part played by Alison and myself in last Tuesday’s MVG service of remembrance. Preserving this annual moment does help to keep in perspective the supposed ‘difficulties’ of our own comfort-zoned lives, and the resourcefulness of our forbears under hardship is an inspiration. So thanks to you for, as ever, so beautifully preparing the high-quality service sheets and networking with so many friends to present the material you draw on to make up the service.

The grinding of the quarry working, however, possibly even louder than it used to be, now seems to overwhelm our efforts to maintain a time that truly honours these important memories. Silence and the sharing of carefully prepared and thought-through words have become impossible.

Although my hearing is (still, I believe) as good as ever, I was struggling to hear almost every speaker, and as you were probably aware, at least three were unfortunately inaudible. I feel that the straining to listen (or, in the case of many of us gathered) the acceptance that it would not be worth trying to follow the words said, has altogether undermined the effectiveness of the memorial event.

I am, however, sure that we must follow the example of the men in the camps, and adapt imaginatively any basic and maybe unorthodox materials that come to hand, in order to create something that still speaks to our human spirit and memories. As inspiration, I would take some sections of chapters five and six of Peter Rhodes’ remarkable memoir, “To Japan to Lay a Ghost”, in which he uses his initiative to create complex technical support for the Changi Entertainments; after one of which he is told that General Yamashita himself ‘wishes to compliment you on the show. He thinks it is very clever!’

There is great importance in the central moment of laying the wreath and the words of dedication special to Burma Star veterans and all who fought the Japanese with arms and with their inner spirit of resistance. Even if we can’t really hear these words spoken, we know them by heart, and the laying of the wreath is a visible element of the service that cannot be lost. I would dare to urge, strongly, that this moment be kept as a tribute separately, at the memorial stone, before or after the rest of the service takes place elsewhere. We would all willingly give the extra five minutes or so needed to walk to or from a service held elsewhere. I would very much hope that we could (until the gravel workings cease or move further away) borrow a bit of space from one of the associations sited near to the FEPOW Hut, where we would not have to strain to speak or to hear.

I would be pleased if you would share any, or all, of this ‘letter’ with others who may help in considering what to do about this overwhelming problem.

Best wishes,
Michael Mowat.”

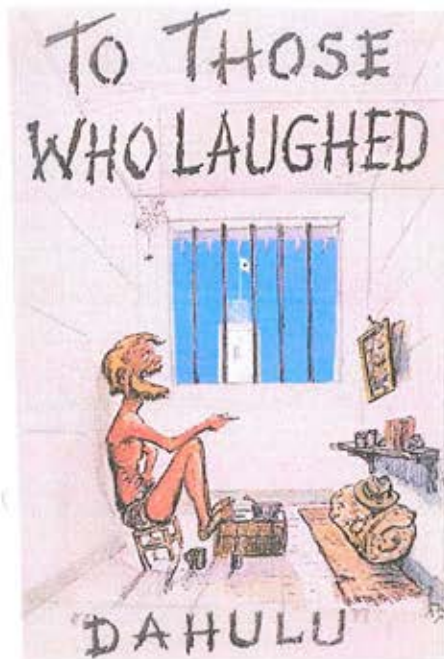
As a result of Michael’s letter, we asked the NMA how much it would cost to hire the Chapel for our service next year. The terms seemed very reasonable, and less than anticipated. So for 2018 we have booked the use of the Chapel from 11.30 – 13.30 for our private use, at a cost of £175. This includes the use of the P/A system set up in the Chapel. The usual order of service will have to be adapted so that the two minutes’ silence and wreath laying take place in our Plot after the Chapel service, and those who wish to take part can process down to the Plot afterwards. We hope this will be acceptable to those who regularly attend our V-J Day services, and that other MVG members who have never been to the NMA or attended these services, may be encouraged to come as well.

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY VISIT – 11th August 2017

Report by Jonathan Moffatt

On a bright sunny morning 15 MVG members, at the invitation of **Rachel Rowe**, Smuts Librarian for South Asian & Commonwealth Studies, arrived at Cambridge University Library to attend a very special event: an introduction to the two year project, sponsored by the Wellcome Trust, to restore and digitise the British Association of Malay records relating to the civilian internment in Changi Gaol & Sime Road Camp, Singapore; a guided tour to see the work being done; and the 'launch' of the digitised records on the Cambridge University Library website.

VOICES OF CIVILIAN INTERNMENT WW11 SINGAPORE



Stephen Walton, Keeper of Documents at the Imperial War Museum also attended the session and MVG member, historian **Jane Flower** was able to attend the afternoon session. Unfortunately, ABCIFER record keeper **Ron Bridge**, was unable to join us. In the Milstein Seminar rooms, **Rachel** spoke of the many organisations including the MVG, involved in the project. She introduced three members of her team who each gave short talks. **Dr. John Cardwell**, Archivist of the Royal Commonwealth Society Collection, spoke of the work of **Hugh Bryson MCS** in gathering British Malayan records and showed us some of the source material such as FMS Police Officer internee **R.W.E. Harper's** cartoons including a wonderful picture of **E.O. Shebbeare** and his snail farm. He also mentioned the Changi records kept by **John Weekley** and accounts by **Tony Churchill MCS**. [See postscript.] Civilian internee newspapers including the Changi Guardian were also digitised. Some material was from Salvation Army records.

Emma Nichols spoke about her conservation work. The majority of items could not be safely handled in their current condition. Wood pulp paper browns and deteriorates and 'onion skin' paper used as typing paper was extremely frail 70 plus years on. Adhesive, pins etc. created problems with cellotape degrading and creating cross-lines on the paper. Moisture damaged nominal rolls were the focus of **Emma's** bursary. **Maciej Pawlikowski** of the Digital Content Unit explained the task of digitising to date 8,686 images and the various lenses and filters used. **Maciej** mentioned how finding the name of a Polish internee, the

commercial artist **Adam Nowicki** had given him some personal identification with the project. The talks were followed by a guided tour to the map room where numerous accounts by civilian internees and camp nominal rolls were on display; to an area where **Emma** demonstrated preservation and restoration techniques; and a photographic area where items were digitised. We saw books from **Charles Darwin's** library in there and on a shelf nearby **E.J.H Corner's** photographic slides awaiting digitising. MVG member **Olga Henderson** showed us a signed birthday card presented to her by Changi/Sime Road women internees. [Ed: see editorial.] **Rachel Rowe** wished to emphasise that she is still very interested to hear from civilian internment families who may not yet have contacted her and have documents and artifacts relating to captivity.

To conclude - a little task for you to undertake: simply go to this link page <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/civilianinternment> and you will see the digitised documents come up. Two very interesting, detailed reads are **D.S. Ainger's [FMSVF Armoured Cars]** account of the Fall of Singapore and life as a Changi POW, and **Tony Churchill's** 'To those who laughed.' [See Cartoon above.] Thanks to **Rachel** and team for this work and a thoroughly interesting visit.

Postscript:

W.F.N. [William Foster Norton] Churchill, known as '**Tony**' [1898 – 1963] was an experienced member of the Malayan Civil Service by 1942 and Adjutant and Deputy Commander, Selangor LDC which became part of the Special Security Unit, Singapore, in late January 1942. **Tony** spent 3 days (15th – 18th February 1942) assisting at Singapore General Hospital before helping to move 6,000 wounded out to 'Miyako', the mental hospital. A Changi and Sime Road internee, he was repatriated on the **New Holland**. Returning to Malaya he was British Advisor to the Sultan of Kelantan. (See photo with the Sultan and Crown Prince.) He retired in 1952 to Horsham, West Sussex.

Obviously, the question occurs – was he related to **Winston Churchill**? In the photo below with **Adrian Clark MCS** in Selangor LDC uniform, the answer is there for us to see.

Tony Churchill, (left) with the Sultan of Selangor and the Crown Prince



Tony Churchill (right) with Adrian Clark MCS



SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE 2017 – KINGS PARK, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

[N.B. The excellent report on this service by Bill Adamson, President of the Malaya Borneo Veterans WA Inc. (MBVA), will be sent out in full to all MVG members in Australia. If other members would like to receive a copy, please let Rosemary know and it can be e-mailed to you. A shorter version of the report follows.]

Under the umbrella of AMWA (The Association of Malaysians in WA Inc.) the MBVA WA Inc, and MVG in Australia jointly presented their annual Service of Remembrance 2017 on Saturday 26th August 2017 at 11 a.m.

The service specifically remembered – “Australian, Commonwealth and Malaysian Servicemen and Women, all Commonwealth Auxiliaries and their family members who fought, were killed in action, were captured and became Prisoners of War or Civilian Internees, serving in any of the Malayan, Malaysian or South East Asian Conflicts, or World Wars from the region.”

The setting for the service in Kings Park, landscaped so beautifully overlooking the City of Perth, the Swan River and surrounding districts, must be one of the most gorgeous for any Cenotaph. The weather was sunny and calm and the public and ex-service personnel started arriving from 10 a.m. More than 250 people attended the service.

At 10.45, Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson AC, the Governor General of Western Australia, arrived and was met by Wing Commander Christine Pittman, State Warden of Kings Park Memorial accompanied by Mr. Bill Adamson. Carrying wreaths they walked to meet up with the rest of the wreath layers – 33 in all. The wreaths were laid at the Flame of Remembrance under the guidance of Col. Geoff Simpson OAM, RFD acting as Master of Ceremonies. This was followed by a short service conducted by the Revd. John Marshall CHAP RANR.

HE the Honourable Kerry Sanderson AC then gave the “Memorial Address” in which she started by acknowledging the Noongar people on whose traditional land Kings Park has been created. She paid tribute to those who had served in wars and conflicts; to those who had paid the ultimate sacrifice or been injured physically and mentally during conflicts; and to those who had suffered as prisoners of war. She spoke about the first Merdeka commemoration which had taken place in Perth in 2001, and commended the MBVA, MVG and AMWA for continuing the tradition of holding these annual services of remembrance. She ended her address by quoting Benjamin Disraeli who said, “*The legacy of heroes is the memory of a great name, and the inheritance of a great example.*”

The Consul General of Malaysia, Mr. Nazarudin Jaafar, presented the “Merdeka Address” in which he honoured fallen heroes, especially those Australians who fought with such dedication and sacrifice in Malaya and later Malaysia. He mentioned visiting the War Memorial in Parit Sulong where 110 wounded Australians and Indians were brutally murdered by enemy soldiers in WW2 – not to open wounds but as a reminder ‘Lest we Forget’ of the horrors of war. He went on to commemorate Malaysia’s 60th Merdeka Anniversary on 31st August with their theme of *Negaraku Sehati, Sejiwa* meaning *My Country, One Heart, One Soul*.

President of the Association of Malaysians in Western Australia, Dr. S. Pushpalingam followed with his "Association Welcome", in which he gave the background to the Association, which provides a wide variety of services to all Malaysians and former Malaysians regardless of race, religion and culture, living in WA (of which there are over 30,000), and has been in existence for over a decade becoming incorporated in 2005.

Finally, **Elizabeth Adamson, Secretary of the MVG in Australia**, gave the "Address for the Fallen" on behalf of **Mr. Gary Burgoyne OAM** who, although present, was unable to present it for health reasons. His address also remembered the 60th Anniversary of Merdeka in Malaysia, and commemorated those members of Malaya Borneo Veterans who saw service during WW2, the Emergency, the Borneo Confrontation, the Thai border unrest and in Timor. Men from other commonwealth countries also fought to assist Malaysia in defeating the communists, and he commemorated these too.

The service concluded with the National Anthems of Malaysia and Australia and the Benediction.

MC Col. Geoff Simpson thanked the large crowd for their attendance and invited everyone present to partake of a light lunch provided in the Wildflower Pavilion near the Forrest Monument. The food was provided by **Mrs. Margaret Tate** and family and by **Bill and Elizabeth Adamson**. Over 200 people stayed for lunch, including **HE Kerry Sanderson** who mingled with the crowd and posed for selfies with families.

2017 Honoured Guests – "Flame of Remembrance".

Right Flank :



Official wreath tributes were placed by :



H.E. K. SANDERSON AC
Governor General of WA



Bill ADAMSON – E. ADAMSON – Dr PUSHPALINGAM.
MBV WA Inc MVG Aust AMWA Inc



Mr W. TARR
RSL WA



Mr D. WATSON.
D.V.A

My Story, by Allan Proctor Jnr

Foreword: The following brief account was written by Allan and sent to friend and fellow MVG member Robert Gray. Allan intended to write further about his later life, but passed away in Cornwall in November 2016 aged 82 years before he could complete it. Allan's father, Electrical Engineer Allan Proctor Snr, was mortally wounded in action with the *Johore Volunteer Engineers* in the defence of Malaya and Singapore. After being evacuated to Australia, Mrs Freda Proctor, along with son Allan and daughter Hilary, travelled on to New Zealand where they had relatives.

The P&O liner *Stratheden* rolled heavily in the bay of Biscay and I promptly vomited into my breakfast porridge. The steward was surprised when I asked for more. It was 1939 and I was five years old and on my way to Malaya with my mother to join my father Allan. However here I must step back a few years to 1934.

I was born in Newcastle upon Tyne in the month of June. Father had taken his first job after graduating from Cambridge with a degree in electrical engineering. We would go camping in the lake district traveling by motorbike and sidecar. I would be bundled into a little fur lined sleeping bag improvised out of an old fur coat. I would still come out blue with cold by all accounts and early photos evidence my discontent both in the sidecar and tethered to the tent pole.



Before I was a year old we moved to Surrey and a new job for my father, my mother set up a small but successful hairdressing business and I was looked after by Elsie ("I don't like that Elsie"). I also spent time with my paternal grandmother, a widow from the first world war. During a visit we went to sail a little boat on the village boating lake; it had a slippery sloping edge and I went in. It was cold and implanted my earliest memory. Grannie came to the rescue but went in herself, fortunately it was only about two feet deep and an old gentleman hoisted us out with the crook of his

walking stick. I was bundled in to a taxi and home for a hot bath.

In 1938 my father sailed to Malaya where he had been offered a good job, my mother and I were to follow later when he had settled in. War was looming and I recall an anti-aircraft battery being set up in the field behind our house, also the horrible experience of being fitted with a gas mask, nasty rubbery smell and feeling of being suffocated. During this time my uncle David, father's younger brother, visited us often in father's Wolsey Hornet two seater which he was using until it could be shipped to Malaya.

So, we are on our way to Malaya and sadly I don't remember much at all of what was probably the last peacetime voyage of the ship soon to be requisitioned as a troopship. My mother certainly enjoyed her first voyage to the east visiting Port Said, Bombay and Columbo. I was fitted with a small solar topee branding me as a pukka sahib.



Next memory I'm at the rail of the ship searching for Daddy among the crowd on the quayside at Singapore. We were to live initially in Johore Bahru on the mainland just across the strait from the island of Singapore. My first taste of sailing in a small boat was with my father in a racing dinghy with a fresh wind; I was scared stiff which was strange as sailing was to become a passion in later life.

Before long we moved to the small inland town of Segamet where we were the only Europeans apart from rubber planters on their remote surrounding estates. I would play with the Malay children and was soon fluent in the language, translating for my parents who were learning in a more formal way. I have a memory of driving at night on a jungle road and seeing a tiger cross in front of us caught in the headlights.

Eventually we moved to Muar on the west coast and with the threat of invasion from the Japanese my father joined the Johore Volunteer Engineers as a Sapper. I was sent off to a Catholic boarding school in the Cameron Highlands as it was considered more healthy for European children at that time; I hated it and was horribly homesick, the French nuns were not at all affectionate and the Chinese servants were too busy to bother with us. I recall that we were out walking in a crocodile with the nuns when someone disturbed a hornets nest, we all ran for it with the nuns hoisting their habits which were flapping like crows wings. Another time we are on our way home by bus winding down a jungle road and all of us joyfully singing "there'll always be an England". We were a long way from the war at that stage but it was soon to change.

My much loved sister Hilary Clare was born in April 1941 and my mother engaged a Chinese amah to look after us children. She proved to be a courageous and resourceful friend and I became very fond of her. My mother was anything but the conventional colonial memsahib and made many Malay and Chinese friends. She also did voluntary nursing work in a native hospital under an Indian doctor much to the disapproval of the establishment. She wrote many articles for *The Straits Times* on fashion and more controversial subjects such as engaging more with the native peoples, Malays, Chinese, Indians and, yes, Japanese who were soon to be interned .

Finally the attack came in the far north of the country and the enemy advanced rapidly with light tanks, bicycles and much superior air power. Our polyglot forces had nothing more than Bren gun carriers and a few obsolete fighters and bombers. My father was mostly in uniform these days and busy with preparing the demolition of the power station to deny it to the enemy. Government broadcasts were stating that we were holding our own but it soon became evident that our forces were being overrun and outflanked; my father decided that it was time to get his family out of the country before it was too late. We had a girl of my age, Nola [Baron-Gray], staying with us whose parents [Donald & Betty Gray] were on home leave in Australia. Father took us all to Singapore together with Amah who insisted on coming to help us get away despite the fact that the city was being bombed; he saw us installed in a school converted to a hospital and then had to return to his duties with the army. My mother then had the task of haunting the shipping companies in the hope of getting a ship out. The first night the city was bombed and the walls shook and plaster fell, a red glow filled the sky where the oil dumps had been hit. There were no air raid shelters. Amah was a great comfort to my mother and us children, mother was free to look for a ship.

Amah had been caught up in the civil war in China and told the story of how she was in her village when the enemy was approaching; the villagers closed their shutters and barricaded their doors but Amah opened her doors and windows, she sat on



her doorstep with her sewing when they came and they left her alone while they pillaged and raped in the other homes.

We slept under the beds during the nightly bombing, Nola and I always felt safe with mother and amah, little Hilary was only eight months old and a good baby but of course had to be fed, changed and bathed in primitive, crowded conditions.

Eventually mother found a berth on the famous Orient liner "Orion", it was "women and children only with what you can carry". "Orion" had just come out of dry dock having suffered damage to her bow in collision with one of our own warships that had developed steering problems. The scenes were chaotic at the docks with the wharf crowded with soldiers just disembarked from a nearby troopship. We were struggling up the gangplank with mother carrying Hilary and all of us with what luggage we could manage (which was not a lot with a baby and two seven year olds) when Amah, who was not allowed onboard, pushed her way through the crowd calling " Mem, you have forgotten the baby food". As she tried to get to the gangplank a soldier blocked her way and hit her with his rifle butt. Mother dumped Hilary in my arms and ran down to slam him with her handbag. We never did see Amah again although Mother tried to trace her after the war, a last letter from my father confirmed that she got back to Muar.

Onboard "Orion" the rule was to carry your lifejacket at all times and the lifeboats were swung out and lowered to boat deck level for quick access as we were in danger from enemy aircraft, submarines and warships until we were well clear of the islands. The escape route was to the south, through the islands and the notorious Banka Straits where the Japs knew we had to go. We were fortunate to have an escort of two destroyers for a couple of days and got clear into the Indian Ocean without incident heading for Adelaide via the west coast.

Afterword by Robert Gray

In November 1944, towards war's end in Europe, Mrs Freda Proctor returned to England with her children Allan and Hilary, and stayed with relatives. After Victory in the Pacific (when husband Allan's death was finally confirmed) Freda subsequently married her husband's younger brother David who had served with the RAF in Burma. She and David moved back to NZ with the children to live from 1947 to 1951, after which they returned to UK...except for Allan Jnr who stayed on in Auckland NZ until 1957 to complete his apprenticeship as a boatbuilder. Allan Jnr had a career with the computer company NCR in UK and continued his enthusiastic involvement in boat building and sailing including, after retirement, 25 years spent sailing and living mostly on a his 30' yacht based in Cornwall. Allan's mother Freda passed away quite young in 1970 while younger sister Hilary continues to live in the UK. Allan also had children and grandchildren from an early marriage and our condolences go out to them and to Hilary and her family.

I would like to pay tribute here to the kindness and bravery of Mr Allan Proctor Snr and Mrs Freda Proctor for taking my sister Nola under their wing in very difficult and dangerous circumstances, and to Mrs Proctor in particular for delivering her to safe haven in Australia.

WHO ARE THE BACHELORS OF AMOY? – By William Shore

I have been fascinated by family history since I was about 10, and when I turned 15 I got very much into it. Now that I am 27, I am very keen to solve the many mysteries, the BOA being one of those mysteries. I live in Cumbria, having recently moved from Cheshire, and previous to that I lived further south, having been born in Berkshire and living in Leicestershire for about 4 years.

This whole mystery of the Bachelors of Amoy came about when I had inherited a silver salver from my late grandparents. The silver salver was presented to my great uncle Charles Thomas Evans and his wife Audrey Francis Greenfield on their wedding day, by the Bachelors of Amoy. Charles and Audrey were married in April 1939 at the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Shanghai.

Audrey's father was James Albert Greenfield the Postmaster General of Shanghai who, with his older brother Joseph Nathaniel Greenfield, set out to the Far East to run the Post Office with Sir Robert Hart.

Charles was born the eldest son of Charles Leopold Evans and Bianca Evans nee Nitschke, in 1907 in Malta. His father was the Chief Dockyard Inspector for HM Government. He appeared to travel to many different places as recorded from the births of Charles's younger siblings, and from the memories shared by my late grandfather. Charles Thomas Evans first appears in the China region in 1922 when his father was posted out there, and from various sources it suggests he was educated at the University of Hong Kong.

His career took off in 1925 when he became an Audit Clerk with Lowe, Bingham and Matthews in Hong Kong. Three years later he is working for Boyd and Co. as an accountant in Amoy, and by 1932 he is director for that company – a position he holds until 1941 when he becomes interned at Stanley Camp by the Japanese, and later he is moved to Shanghai and again interned in both Yangchow Camp A and Chapei Camp.

Further research with aid from the Norwegian National Archives reveals that Charles served as Vice Consul to Norway from 1935 until 1947 in Amoy. He chose to resign in 1947 due to bettering his career overseas.

At the victory of the allied forces in the region Charles worked for UNRRA and the US Army briefly before leaving for Australia. He returns to Shanghai with UNRRA for a brief spell. By 1953 he is a Shipping Manager with the Borneo Company, again travelling all over and based in London, Singapore and China.

He returns to Portsmouth, England, at some point in the 1960s and dies in 1975 having lived a life of many adventures, and with lots of ups and downs having lost his mother at a young age and being interned for a long period in various camps in Hong Kong and Shanghai.

Now that you have read about Charles's many travels and career moves, the thing which puzzles me is – Who were/are the Bachelors of Amoy?

I have done many researches online and nothing clear comes up with that name. However, some of the signatures (and there are lots of them) are legible and I have found some information about each signatory.

The only thing, though, they have in common, other than being named on the plate, is that they are based in the Far East in some capacity. Some held positions with governments, some served as civil servants and some were in the SOE.

If anyone can shed some light on who the BOA are, it would be much appreciated as I am looking forward to learning as much as I can about them. I have wondered whether it is some kind of secret organization which is why nothing comes up?

I also wondered why Charles never served in any service during the war years unlike all his siblings of an eligible age? Being an accountant/manager for a shipping company cannot be classed as a 'reserved occupation' – or can it?

If you can help me find answers to anything above, or wish to learn more about Charles or what I have found so far, please feel free to contact me via e-mail at: williamrshore@aol.com or write to me at: 40, Carleton Meadows, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 8UR.

Mr. C.T. Evans



W.B.E. Petersen, Danish Planter turned Jungle Soldier

With thanks to Dave Croft - RAFBPA – for this research and article

In 1937, 25 year old **Willy Borge Erik Petersen** left Denmark for Malaya to take up a post as Assistant Planter at the Mount Austin Rubber Estate in Johore State. Within a few days of arriving, he joined the Johore Volunteer Engineers (JVE) having previous military experience through National Service (in Denmark) undertaken in the summer of 1933(1) with the 10th Battalion of the 7th Danish Regiment. Following Agricultural School (1934-37), he later trained as a Coastal Lieutenant Second Class with the Coastal Defence Reserve, joining in October 1937 and then sailing for Malaya in December 1937.

It was during his early years in Malaya that he met **Ethel Wilkinson Lamont**, daughter of **Dr. G.F.M. Lamont** from New Jersey. They were married in Singapore on the 2nd September 1939 and their daughter **Ingelise (Ings Grace)** – Danish in origin), was born sometime around the start of hostilities in the Far East. Both wife and daughter left Singapore for the USA shortly before the Fall of Singapore in 1942.

1941-42. Prior to the start of the Far East War Erik Petersen was keen to become involved in the Allied fight against Germany, but instead was recruited by **Hans Tofte**(2) as a *Free Dane* attached to the Chinese Oriental Mission(3). He attended the Special Forces School in Malaya, which would appear to be the 101 Special Training School, sited at Tanjung Balai on the Jurong River in Singapore.

The school specialised in training agents for clandestine activities behind enemy lines. Erik Petersen completed the course in December 1941. After 101 STS he was posted to Rangoon, followed by a spell at the Bush Warfare School situated at Maymyo, an army training school used for preparing small numbers of specialists (in secret) to be in position to pass on their expertise to **Chiang Kai Shek's** army whose headquarters were based in the mountains above Chungking in southern China. Moving on from the BWS to Chungking he was involved, presumably in intelligence gathering, with the 'Flying Tigers' [Ed: See article in A.K. 50 P.25] although information of this phase of his career is somewhat lacking! It was while at Chungking that Petersen received a commission in the Royal East Kent Regiment (The Buffs)(4).

In the summer of 1942, the 'Flying Tigers' were disbanded and Petersen was posted to the 13th King's (Liverpool) Regiment at Secunderabad, India. Shortly after his arrival the regiment was moved to Saugor to begin training for Operation 'Longcloth', the first Chindit Expedition planned to cross into Japanese occupied Burma. Petersen was promoted to Captain and was involved in the training of his soldiers in jungle tactics and self-reliance in a potentially dangerous environment. The Chindit training was no picnic as RAF Chindit Wireless Operator **Sergeant Arthur Willshaw**, from the first expedition, describes:

"Wet, miserable, bedraggled we reached Brigade Headquarters – just a few tents in a jungle clearing. All around people seemed to be living in trees and the surrounding water was deep enough in places to swim in and so began three months of hard and bitter experience. How I hated it – used to the comforts of barrack life, it became a fight for existence. We were paraded before daybreak, plunged into icy cold rivers, taught how to build bridges, how to cross lakes and fast flowing rivers, how to shoot, how to handle explosives, how to be amateur Tarzans swinging on ropes from tree to tree. How to travel in the jungle and, above all, how to live off the jungle. The explosives tent was always open – take what you want and learn how to use it. We lived off the jungle, no food except biscuits – if we wanted food we foraged for it. We ate snakes, frogs, lizards, fish, roots, leaves, in fact we tried everything at least once. We learned by experience which leaves, when dried, made a tobacco substitute and which leaves to use for other vital necessities. One of my most painful recollections was the time when, somewhat in a hurry, I picked the largest leaf handy only to find, too late, that it was covered with small flat hairs that when crushed caused a nasty itchy rash. I never made that mistake again!"

W.B.E. Petersen – JVE



And so after 3 months of this type of living we had toughened up considerably to be exactly what Brigadier Wingate the brigade commander requires – an efficient jungle warfare force.”

(1) *National Service in Denmark, even to this day, lasts from between 4 – 12 months*

(2) *Hans Tofte – born Copenhagen, escaped Denmark 1941, joined a British-Danish intelligence organization, followed by transfer to the Far East and espionage behind Japanese lines in 1942. In 1943 he was transferred to the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS).*

(3) *Oriental Mission – code name for SOE action based intelligence gathering in the Far East.*

(4) *The Buffs had a strong link with Denmark being originally named (in 1708) the Prince George of Denmark Regiment. The Buffs had a large contingent of 'Free Danes' during WW2.*

1943. Wingate's first expedition crossed the Chindwin River into Burma in February 1943. Captain Erik Petersen was made the deputy tactical commander of Column 7 of 77th Indian Infantry Brigade, and was one of the many Chindits who crossed the river over a period of 24 hours before reforming and marching into enemy held territory towards Tonmakeng to receive a supply drop by the RAF. Shortly after Tonmakeng, he was put in charge of a unit from the column with orders to intercept the Japanese at Simlamaung. In his own words, "When we left Tonmakeng, I was ordered, with two light platoons and a Pioneer group, to be the rear guard of the Brigade which started to march towards the town of Pinlebu. We were hoping to lure the enemy into an ambush when he came out of his garrison approximately 30 km from where we were. I was ordered to establish a road block in a suitable place to prevent the enemy force escaping when our troops attacked Pinlebu. I had orders to withdraw the road block in the middle of the next morning, which I did, and we marched along the said path. After some time the path disappeared, having become completely overgrown by jungle – this caused us to miss the agreed rendezvous with brigade."

Military Cross Action. The decision was taken to continue the march eastwards in the general direction taken by the brigade. It was on this march, made over several days, that they made contact with another group of Chindits as they approached the railway near Nankan on the 6th March where the sound of demolitions could be heard, courtesy of Major Calvert's 142 Commandos. A roadblock had been set up by Gurkhas to counter any attack by the Japanese responding to the demolitions, and it was here that the story of Erik Petersen's Military Cross action is well described by Gurkha Subaltern, Harold James. *"My platoon and Calvert hurried back towards the station, the sound of firing growing louder as we approached. Suddenly, as we reached the path which we had used earlier from our bivouac, I looked up and stared into a bearded face. There was a brief pause as I tried to adjust my mind to this unexpected appearance, then the man said quickly and anxiously in a Scandinavian accent, 'Don't shoot! Longcloth, longcloth!' Behind him, I could see a long line of more figures, all with beards. 'I believe it is Petersen' said Calvert. It was, and he was accompanied by two platoons who had been separated from Column 7 and they had been following our tracks in the hope of catching us up. You're just in time for a bit of action, if you wish,' said Calvert, never one to lose an opportunity. 'Sounds as though the village is full of Japs.' 'I think we would like that.' said the Dane who also was a man always ready for a fight with the Japs, and there was a murmur of agreement back down the line from his men."* Following a successful action by his platoons, Petersen and his men re-joined the main body after a three day march to catch up with them.

Petersen's main task with routine column activities was to cover the outer perimeter during supply drops. He also excelled in leadership and in keeping his group together, noted during the period of separation from the main body leading up to the Nankan engagement. He eventually caught up with them in time for the crossing of the Irrawaddy River where he and his men were first over to form a protective screen against enemy interference. By the 18th March the river had been crossed and on the 22nd March the remaining columns made camp on the hillside near Baw. Due to the presence of a large Japanese garrison at nearby Mabien, local paths and tracks were well secured, with cover of the Mabien road being the responsibility of Captain Coughlan from Column 8. Column 7 platoons, including Petersen's, were responsible for securing the drop zone area as a supply drop had been requested.

Unfortunately, the Column 8 party failed to secure the road and stumbled into a Japanese patrol. This was followed by enemy action against Column 7 and the possibility of compromising the supply drop. **Captain Petersen** took instant action and cleared the Japanese from his sector, and then went on to rescue **Captain Coughlan** and his platoon by using his mortar section to cover his advance, aided by a flanking manoeuvre led by another officer, and leaving his Bren gun team to despatch the enemy snipers positioned in the tree tops.

However, there was still a strong Japanese presence that threatened the supply drop so Column 8 and **Petersen's** platoon went into action and succeeding in making the area safe for a supply drop but towards the end of the engagement **Petersen** was shot in the head by a sniper! Seriously injured and slipping in and out of consciousness he was removed from the action, being carried on his service horse and supported by the men of his platoon. He said, *"My wounds were so serious that I could not march. My service horse, which had often been carrying the sick and wounded during the expedition, now carried me. Thanks to my horse and my trusty batman, Harry Harding, who worked tirelessly at my side and helped me in every way, I managed to follow the column as it continued east. When we later reached the mountains of the Chinese border, I began to feel better and slowly I could begin to march once more. After the expedition was over I gave Harding a silver cigarette case with the inscription - TO HARRY HARDING FROM CAPTAIN W.B.E. PETERSEN - INDIA - BURMA - CHINA 1942-43, AS A THANK YOU."*

The citation for the award of the **Military Cross** to 221724 Lieutenant (temporary Captain) **Willy Borge Erik Petersen** (Free Dane) is as follows:

"OPERATIONS IN BURMA – March 1943.

On 6th March 43, **Captain Petersen** was in command of two British infantry platoons which were returning from an independent mission. On the way towards their column they met a detachment of a Gurkha column which was about to attack a village. Although **Captain Petersen's** men had been without food for three days and were extremely weary, he immediately placed himself and his detachment under the command of **Major Calvert**, the Gurkha Column Commander, who allotted him a role in the attack. In the course of the fighting, having surprised the enemy on his front, he captured his objective and beat off the subsequent counter-attack, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy and destroying valuable motor transport, without loss to himself. The vigour and dash displayed by his tired and hungry troops in this spirited action was largely due to **Captain Petersen's** own example. Subsequently, marching to rejoin his own column, he met and attacked an enemy patrol and again inflicted casualties.

On 24th March at BAW, this officer again played a leading part in the protection of a vital area against enemy attack, although seriously wounded in the head**. The devotion and affection which he had inspired in all ranks was demonstrated by the attention with which they now cared for him. Unable to sit on his horse without help, he was supported in the saddle by relays of men for a march of several hundred miles, until he was sufficiently recovered once more to walk and fight, and ultimately reach CHINA."

Erik Petersen and his Column 7 Commanding Officer, **Major Ken Gilkes**, had, for some time, discussed leaving Burma at the end of the expedition through the Chinese border of Yunnan Province and so it was to be, across the fast flowing waters of the Shweli River and turning north-east into Kachin country, followed by a Japanese patrol that had been tracking them for several days. **Petersen** and his platoon were tasked with Column rear-guard and eventually successfully ambushed the patrol.

On crossing into China, the Chindits were made welcome by the Chinese troops as they marched through Yunnan Province. At Poashan, after a few days rest, they were taken to the nearby USAAF airfield at Kunming, where on the 26th June they were flown back to Assam.

Back in India, following a spell in hospital, **Erik Petersen** left the 13th King's (Liverpool) Regiment and took up a post in Special Operations Executive (SOE) where he had some involvement with reconnaissance for the second Chindit Operation (Operation Thursday) followed by service with Force 136 where he recruited and trained partisan groups from northern Burma and conducted clandestine operations against the Japanese.

**Much later, the Medical Officer for Column 7 examined Petersen's wound more closely and found the Japanese bullet had made a deep furrow along the skull but had not actually penetrated it. Later, in 1956, a medical examination revealed internal complications caused by the wound and these were corrected by neurosurgery that same year.

1944 – 1963. By late 1944, now a Major, Erik Petersen was working for Force 136 at 14th Army HQ at Comilla in Assam as an Intelligence Officer. In January 1945 he was posted to England and joined the Scandinavian Department of SOE in London. At the end of hostilities he became Assistant to the Danish Military Attache until February 1946 when he was discharged from the British Army with the honorary rank of major. On his return to Denmark he joined the Danish Life Regiment, retiring in 1963. He died on the 14th July 1999.

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Note: *The online article used the book, *Burma Peter*, (1998) by Knud Rasmussen as a reference source. The book is about the life of Willy Borge Erik Petersen and is written in Danish – an English translation doesn't appear to exist.

The book is still available from online sources but needs a translator.

As a young man in Danish uniform

Major Willy Borge Erik Petersen MC



Quote from Wilfred Burchett's book, "*Wingate's Phantom Army*."

"Willy Borge Erik Petersen, with his drooping wheat-coloured moustache and cornflower blue eyes, looks like a story book picture of a Dane. Like the Vikings of old he's a dour fighter and "Fighting Dane" inscribed in red letters on his shoulders describes him well. He left his village near Copenhagen when he was 25 and went to Malaya to manage a rubber plantation in Johore. With his naïve smile and his pleasant slow speech, he was quickly popular with the rest of the planters. He joined the Malayan Volunteer Forces three days after his arrival.

In May 1940, the Germans invaded Denmark. The next day Petersen enlisted in the regular British Army. He hoped to get back to fight the Germans in Europe, but was kept in Malaya. Three days before the Japs attacked Singapore he was sent to Burma to join the Scandinavian Commando School training under the red-bearded Swedish Giant George Saudebaum. Two months later he went up the Burma Road into China to continue his training. Petersen began to think the war would be over before he had a chance to fire a shot, or blow a demolition charge. Little did he know how wrong he was to be."

My Father and the Capture of the Mata Hari in February 1942 – Part 4

By kind permission of his son Phil Hogge

The survivors go their separate ways cont.

Jock Brodie was also interned in the Muntok gaol, then in Palembang at the same oil refinery and then back to Muntok again. Towards the end of the war, he was moved to another camp further inland. He seems to have remained in relatively good health, but he describes in his lengthy diary how most of the other prisoners suffered.

“I had now joined as a ward attendant and I carried out these duties right up to the days of liberation. My experiences in this hospital I shall never forget. Many men had all three troubles together, and with Beri-Beri and Dysentery added to Malaria, the patients required a great deal of attention. Beri-Beri is usually caused by lack of Vitamin ‘B’ and the patient swells up to an enormous size. Normally it can be treated and cured ‘if so desired’, but under the conditions of our living, with the almost complete disregard by the Japs of the needs of the sufferers, there was never a great deal of hope. The body seems to rot away and terrible putrefying ulcers appear on the legs. When that did happen, the end was near.”

He continued, after quoting some numbers, *“That was a very high mortality rate, and represented a rate of over 400 per thousand per annum.”* Later, his weight dropped to 6 stone 10lbs (94lbs – 42.6kgs). In the last camp in early 1945, he said, *“Over the whole period 109 British died out of a total of 196 which is 55.6%, an exceedingly high percentage, and represents the real truth of Jap methods and treatment.”*

- *All the foregoing is a simple sketch of my experiences ‘under the occupying authorities’ in Sumatra. There is perhaps much more I could write about, but that is better kept from print, and I dare not enlarge on such facts and details. I am but one of the thousands who endured hardships at the hands of the Japanese.”*

At the end, after he summed up his many impressions of his times as a prisoner, both good and terrible, he said, *“I was determined during the ordeal to keep alert, to work and keep fit enough to get out. To relinquish one’s hold on one’s self was a victory for the Japs. I brought to bear all the mental forces I could muster to defeat defeat. I thought so much of what it meant to get out, and see all at home, and hear from all in Bonnie Scotland and elsewhere. I felt I had something yet to live for, and my interest in living was not going to end.”* My mother told me that my father’s thoughts were similar.

Captain Carston, in his detailed report after the war, described working on the airfield before being transferred with all the other prisoners to the Pladjoe Oil Refinery. He remained there until August 1942 when he was sent on the tanker *Yoyo Maru* to Singapore and may have met my father again on board the *Mata Hari*. In his report, he wrote of the days between 20th & 23rd September, *“Aboard ‘MATA HARI’ for passage to Japan. The First Lieutenant, all Engineer Officers and a few Ratings had been forced to remain in the ship; the ship had taken part in the capture of ‘RENGAT’ and had carried troops to Borneo. All personnel had been transferred to work on oil-tanker prior to my boarding.”*

For whatever reason, **Carston** did not go to Japan on the *Mata Hari*, but on the *SS Tokyo Maru*. On his arrival, he was put into a transit camp near Sasebo where they worked on camp upkeep and road repair. On one occasion, he said, when no ox was available, they were hitched to a plough and made to tow it round the rice fields.

In 1944, he was transferred to Fukuoka Camp No. 1, where the prisoners were employed in building an airfield, and at the end of the year sent to Fukuoka Camp No. 5, where they worked in the coal mines. Of this latter camp, he wrote, *“Except for the extremely hard and wet work in the mine, this was a good camp, for we had two good Commandants.”* In April 1944, he was moved to Hiroshima Camp No. 5. Here, the prisoners were made to work longer hours doing heavy work in the shipyards on a diet of merely 360 grams of rice or beans per day.

He said nothing about the atom bomb, their camp was about 50 miles from Hiroshima on the other side of some hills. He was liberated by the US 8th Army on 13th September 1945 and repatriated to Calcutta. Eventually, he retired to his homeland of New Zealand where **Russell-Roberts** visited him to obtain the information for his book.

My father in Singapore

Meanwhile, my father, after being ordered under guard to take the *Mata Hari* back to Singapore, continued to work the ship with **H.M. MacGregor**, the second engineer. I have a thin folded blue airmail sheet, attached to his notebook

by a rusty paperclip. It indicates, in the briefest possible way, the dates and movements of the ship. They seem to have spent most of their time either in the Seletar naval facility near the RAF base on the north shore of Singapore island or at the Keppel naval base in the Singapore dock area or sailing between Port Dickson on the west coast of Malaya and Sambas on the eastern tip of Borneo and several points in between. Exactly what they were doing, I cannot find out. On 25th August, he was painted by a Japanese artist who promised to try to get word out that he was a POW. I do not think he succeeded, but I have in my possession a drawing that appeared in a Japanese newspaper, presumably by the artist in question.

Throughout my father's time on the *Mata Hari*, he and his crew must have been under considerable duress. On one occasion, on 7th September 1942, they were put in front of a firing squad and made to sign parole forms. Not long afterwards, on the 3rd December 1942, he joined the *SS Dowgate* and was subsequently transferred to Changi POW camp.

I have no record of his time in Changi, and he told my mother very little about it. However, as Japanese prisoner of war camps went, Changi was not too bad. Certainly, not as bad as Muntok. He grew a white beard which made him look much older than he was – perhaps it was this that saved him from the Burma railway. As long as you were not sent there, the main problems were disease and malnutrition. They were fed on inadequate supplies of polished rice and, as a result, they all suffered badly from beri-beri and tropical ulcers. Most had dysentery and malaria as well. My mother told me they were given hardly any fish or meat and that rats were considered a delicacy. Apparently, he smoked cigarettes



The drawing of my father as a POW in 1942

made of grass wrapped in the pages torn from the Bible! She also said that older married men with wives and families coped better than the younger men. And I have since read that those who had lived in the Far East before being captured understood the oriental way of thinking and fared better than those who were fresh out from England or Australia.

She said my father was a fairly phlegmatic man who did not anger easily. There were many occasions when he saved **'Mac' MacGregor**, who was more volatile, from losing his temper and thus more likely to receive a beating. The main difficulty, apart from disease and malnutrition, was boredom. Books about life in Changi describe how the prisoners arranged entertainments, ran courses in various skills and educational subjects, but hardly ever tried to escape. Those who did were summarily executed. At great personal risk, some kept diaries (for which they too would have been executed) and some built and hid wireless sets, passing around news on the progress of the war, for which again the penalty was death. I believe that one man had built and concealed a wireless set in a secret compartment in a bamboo structure of some sort – apparently, the owner listened to it with a stethoscope.

My mother in Australia

My mother was by now sharing a house in Perth with **Nancy MacGregor**, **Mac's** wife and my godmother; they stayed together throughout their time in Australia and the voyage back to England in 1945. After the fall of Singapore, neither of them received any news of their husbands until letters arrived from the Navy Office, dated 9th April 1942, stating, **".....I regret to inform you that your husband has not arrived at Colombo and he is believed to be missing."** The first news that their husbands were still alive came in letters from the Red Cross dated 11th October 1943, saying, **"We feel sure it will interest you to know that the Central Red Cross Bureau has been notified that the above named is a prisoner of war in Japanese hands."** One whole year and eight long months without knowing whether their husbands were alive or dead.

During the next two years, my mother received only four small postcards – I have them now. For the whole time he was a POW that was all she had. The first reads in capital letters:

"DARLING, I AM VERY FIT, VERY WELL, ALIVE AND HAPPY AND BEING WELL TREATED.

PLEASE DON'T WORRY. GOD BLESS LITTLE PHILIP. ALL MY LOVE SWEETHEART." Signed

Arthur. The next three say little more, but acknowledge the receipt of some letters and photographs. How very little in three and a half long years. During this time, she and **Nancy** kept body and soul together, my mother taking in dressmaking and **Nancy** working as a secretary.

Towards the end of 1944, with the war beginning to be won, my mother's fear was that she would be stuck in Australia

when my father was repatriated to England. It might be difficult to obtain a passage home and she did not want to risk yet more years of separation. They managed, through her uncle in London, to book berths on the *RMS Athlone Castle* for the voyage across the Pacific, through the Panama Canal and then by convoy across the Atlantic to Liverpool. We left Australia in February 1945 and arrived home on 29th March 1945, shortly before the end of the war in Europe – and that is yet another story!

I remember well the V-E Day celebrations on the 8th May 1945 (I was not quite 4 years old), when my mother said that we could not celebrate yet, as the war in the east was not over. Japan did not surrender until the 15th August 1945, after the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was not until the 12th September that Singapore came back under British control. V-J Day passed almost unnoticed by most of the country, but we celebrated on the 3rd October when my mother received a cable saying, "*Arrived safely Colombo. Hope to be home soon.*" And another on the 16th, "*Probably arriving Liverpool 22nd.*"



My Father after his release from Changi, probably taken in Colombo in October 1945

I remember seeing my father on the platform at West Moors railway station near Ferndown. It was fortunate that he had returned slowly by sea, because it had given him time to recover some of his strength, but he was still very thin. I can clearly remember seeing him standing in the bath (I was not supposed to go in) and being shocked at how emaciated he was with his legs covered with the most horrible purple scars. I think he also spent some time in hospital, but I do not have any details.

My father buys a small farm in Devon

By now he was 42. He had been at sea since 1921 and spent three and a half years as a POW. After all these experiences, he decided not to go back to sea again. He had had enough. We went down to Devon and stayed on a farm during the winter of 1946/47, the coldest winter for three centuries. I loved it because only tractors could get through to where we lived. And I couldn't go to school for many weeks. My parents then found a house near Tiverton where my brother was born and two years later bought a small 20 acre farm. It consisted of four fields, some outbuildings and barns, and a very primitive Devon cottage; no electricity – we used oil lamps and candles; no mains water – only a well and a hand pump to fill the tank in the roof. We kept chickens, ducks and geese, selling eggs and dressed poultry to the local butchers. I remember him in a small hut at the back of the house with clouds of feathers everywhere as he plucked the geese to be sent to market for Christmas. I also remember crawling under the hedgerows collecting eggs laid by the more scatty free-range hens. We grew our own vegetables and supplemented our meat ration with rabbits shot in the fields – he taught me how to shoot. I think it must have been a hard life for my parents, but I loved the freedom of living in the countryside.

I remember my father as a kindly man, but a strict disciplinarian. He was a stickler for making me eat every last morsel of food on my plate, even when I hated brussel sprouts. At the time, I bitterly resented this but, looking back now, it must have been infuriating for him to see me toying with food and leaving it on the side of my plate. He knew what it was like to starve.

In 1951, he developed a bad cough, eventually diagnosed as lung cancer, and was given only six months to live. By this time, I had discovered aeroplanes and was madly building model aircraft of all kinds, built of balsa wood and tissue paper and powered by elastic bands and later by small diesel engines. I remember proudly showing them to him as he lay upstairs in bed and describing the many crashes and also my small successes. He died on the 5th February 1952, aged only 49 – a result of heavy smoking during his life at sea, most likely exacerbated by the privations of war.

I dearly wish I had known him better. I think of my parents' very brief married life together (1939-41 and 1945-52), and of their anxiety during the war years and his illness and death, and of my mother's struggle to keep the farm going, which she did. I also think of how he must have felt – surrendering on the *Mata Hari*, then being forced to work the ship for nearly 10 months before being interned in Changi. The humiliation and waves of doubt must have cut deep and been difficult to bear. And then those long, long years as a prisoner.

But I remember most of all an idyllic childhood in the wilds of the Devon countryside and the way my mother somehow managed to continue to run the poultry farm for many years, and successfully bring up two children.

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS FOR RAF MALAYA - The Special Technical Corps

With thanks to Dave Croft RAFBPA

In the chapter, *'Prelude to War'*, from his book, *"Lions in the Sky"*, Squadron Leader Neville Shorrocks (Education Officer, RAF Seletar, 1966-68) introduces the reader to the Special Technical Corps, formed in 1940 at RAF Seletar: *"The civilian ranks began to swell from March 1939, when volunteers began training on Operation Room procedures. Within a year civilians were being instructed in different aspects of service life, and subsequently, when the Special Technical Corps was formed in 1940 they went into uniform. Unfortunately, the methods of recruitment were occasionally unscrupulous. One Scottish gentleman who had enlisted locally was given the job of recruiting men because of his ability to speak Chinese and Malay. He was an immediate success but was later replaced when it was discovered that his incentive was to assure all recruits that they would become sergeants in five months. His successor had a few awkward moments trying to explain the position when promotion time came! An even bigger scandal was caused by the first volunteer, a Pilot Officer, who insisted on touring Malaya in a Group Captain's uniform.*

However, the Special Technical Corps, mainly a mixture of Chinese, Indians and Malays, served the Air Force very well and were held in high regard. When the time came to leave Singapore they were given the option of taking off their uniforms and remaining behind or of continuing to serve overseas. About 100 decided to continue as members of the Royal Air Force and all of them were ultimately captured in Batavia. [Ed: There were 120 Chinese Volunteers in the RAF.] Such was their loyalty that they refused the Japanese offer to release them and they had to be marched out of their prison camp in Batavia at bayonet point; but they didn't go far away. At the end of the war, over 90 of them marched back into camp with their new wives and families to report for duty!"

Of those 100 mentioned by S/Ldr. Shorrocks that stayed with the RAF was 785505 Corporal **Ho Cheng Wan**, an aircraft fitter in the STC. Born in Penang on 16th May 1915, he attended Trade School⁽¹⁾ and following his 'apprenticeship' he joined, in August 1940, the Special Technical Corps at RAF Seletar and trained as an aircraft fitter (Fitter 11E in RAF parlance), Later being attached at No. 151 Maintenance Unit on the base, a unit formed on 1st June 1941 as part of the pre-war expansion of Selatar. Here it is most likely he was involved in the assembly of Brewster Buffalo, and later Hawker Hurricane, fighter aircraft shipped in to boost the air strength of RAF Far East Command.

When war reached Singapore, **Ho Cheng Wan** chose to remain with the RAF and was evacuated to Java. He became a Prisoner of War on the 8th March 1942 surrender of Allied Forces to the Japanese on Java and in November 1942 was transferred to Japan, via Manila, on the hell ship *Tofuku Maru*⁽²⁾.

With other POWs from the Surrey Regiment, RAF and Special Technical Corps⁽³⁾, he arrived at Mitsushima POW Camp on the 27th November 1942, nine days after the camp was established. *N.B. Ho Cheng Wan and the other STCs on board the vessel were not among those forcefully 'released' from the Batavia prison camp as mentioned by Neville Shorrocks!*

At Mitsushima, the POWs were set to work on a twin-tunnel hydro-electric project, and whilst a number of the POWs remained for the duration, **Ho Cheng Wan** was later transferred to the Hitachi Copper Mining Camp where he remained until released at the end of the war. He was awarded the 1939-45 Star, Pacific Star and Defence Medal on his return to Malaya. The discharge papers for **Ho Cheng Wan** from the STC on the disbandment of the force is dated 15th January 1946 and stating he was attached to No. 153 Maintenance Unit for the period 19.8.40 to 9.2.42. This is incorrect as 153 MU was at RAF Kuala Lumpur and its life span for this period was short lived, just June to November 1941.

Post war, he found employment with the engineering side of Singapore Cold Storage starting as an engineering clerk and working his way up the company until retiring in 1981.



Ho Cheng Wan

(1) Trade Schools (for mechanics) were opened in KL, Penang, Singapore and Ipoh in the pre-war years and provided a three year apprenticeship for educated young men in general engineering skills. The schools were equipped with machine, fitting and repair shops, also drawing and lecture rooms, providing a high level of training similar to that found in UK engineering apprenticeships.

(2) Tofuku Maru was torpedoed and sunk off the east coast of Honshu by the American submarine USS Gurnard on 24th December 1943.

(3) STCs who were transported at the same time on the Tofuku Maru and released at the end of the war are named as: J.A.Diaz (AC2 RAF STC); D.T. D'silva (AC2 RAF STC); A.S. Keasberry Cpl RAF (STC); Lim Teong Sin (AC2 RAF STC); Tan Keng Liag (or Liat) (AC2 RAF STC). Also found in the POW lists as 786088 AC2 Tan Kok Yen – transferred to Hakoda Main Camp in May 1943. The service number suggest he was also a member of the Special Technical Corps.

Notice of disbandment postwar in January 1946

From :- H.Q. A.C.S.E.A.
 To :- Whom it may concern
 Date :- 13th May, 1946.

ROYAL AIR FORCE
 SPECIAL TECHNICAL CORPS

The force known as the Special Technical Corps has been disbanded w.e.f. 15th January, 1946, and it is certified that 786088 Cpl. Ho Cheng Wan, who was a member of that force is now free to seek alternative employment.

Mr. Ho Cheng Wan
 155 Maintenance Unit
 9th February, 1946.

Taken Prisoner of War in Java on 8th March, 1944, and sent to Japan in November, 1942.

Jeffery L. South Carter
 for Air Marshal
 AIR OFFICER in Charge Administration,
 HEADQUARTERS, AIR COMMAND S.E.A.

War Medals awarded to Ho Cheng Wan

1939/45 Star
 Pacific Star
 War Medal



On Her Majesty's Service.

SINGAPORE
 CASE SHOW YOU
 SINGAPORE
 ON HER MAJESTY'S SERVICE
 ON YOUR NOTE

Mr. Ho Cheng Wan
 11, Makota Road,
 Telok Anson

ECONOMY LABEL

POWs at the Hitachi Copper Mining Camp after surrender (Ho circled) All Chinese Volunteers from the STC



LOCAL LADS BACK FROM JAPAN Report in The Straits Times 20/10/45

Deprived of the medical supplies contained in their Red Cross parcels, standing out barefoot and without warm clothing in the snow during winter mornings, branded with red-hot iron spikes on the back on every occasion they reported ill..... these were some of the experiences of the Malayan lads of the RAF ground crew taken prisoner in Java and sent to Japan for internment and work as POWs.

111 of these lads – Chinese, Malays, Indians and Eurasians – arrived at Singapore yesterday by ship from Manila, to which city they were flown by the American Air Force on their release. Most of them are being billeted in Meyer Flats adjoining Sea View Hotel. Today they will receive their back pay and most of them will be making their way to their own homes.

While in Japan, the lads worked in shipbuilding yards in building hydro-electric dams and in copper and coal mines. Six of their comrades died.

References:

- Handbook to British Malaya – R.L. German MCS
- Lion in the Sky – Squadron Leader Neville Shorrocks, 1968
- Buffaloes over Singapore – Brian Cull 2003
- Hurricanes over Singapore – Brian Cull 2004
- That's Life: My Father – World War II Prisoner of War (online)
- [N.B. Malayan RAF POWs in Japan were also listed in the Sunday Tribune (Singapore) 21st October 1945 on Page 3.]

PRISONER OF THE JAPANESE – Part 3

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.

I don't think I have mentioned so far that we had tea to drink with all our meals. It was a thin, very pale kind of tea and sometimes the chaps could be heard complaining about it and saying we might as well have hot water. One of the snooping guards must have overheard this because without warning we started to get hot water instead of tea. It was odd how we missed that tea, weak though it was. After complaints to **Col. Emoto** the service of tea was resumed. In winter when the weather was severe and the sea too rough for the barges, we were taken off our usual work and given odd jobs to do like clearing snow off the roads and chipping hardened cement off machines and various parts of the factory. From early December to early April the weather was Arctic. Winds blew from North East Siberia, snow fell on many days and there was continual frost. April started with some snow falls, then in mid-April this turned to sleet, and towards the end of the month the rain came and the snow which had been melting in the thaw disappeared. From May to September we had lots of sunshine and the weather was very pleasant and really warm at times. Once or twice in August we were allowed to bathe in the sea and found it quite warm.

In winter we wore our British greatcoats over our dirty green uniforms. Under these we had our own shirts and shorts and underclothes. We were issued with furry little ear pieces as protection against frost bite and Japanese gloves with one space for the thumb and one space for the other four fingers. For footwear, we kept our boots as long as we could but when they wore out at last, we were given canvas shoes with rubber soles, the same as the Japanese workmen wore, and like our gloves with one space for the big toe and another for the rest of the foot. They were not very comfortable. By the time I reached Japan my pyjamas had worn out, and all the time I was in Japan I slept naked, as most of us did. The huts were warm enough with stoves on all night and with a greatcoat over the blankets I slept warmly enough. The trouble was the diuretic effect of the rice diet and, I suppose, lack of protein. Every hour or two I had to get up, put on my greatcoat and rush to the latrines which were outside but fortunately under cover. There was a constant stream of chaps on the same business. In the cold weather often with snow falling it was decidedly unpleasant.

Sometimes we would have surprise searches. One or two of the Japanese guards would come in, usually on Sundays when we were all in the camp, and order us to stand beside our beds, or rather sleeping places in the day time for the blankets then had been folded up. They would go through our kit, I suppose to see if anything like a radio set was hidden. So far as I can remember nothing of that sort was ever found, but if anyone was keeping a diary and it was found, it was taken away for perusal and not always returned. Watches one had to be careful about for it wasn't easy to keep your watch if a Japanese soldier saw it and took a fancy to it. I was lucky in managing to retain my Rolex wrist watch throughout. The strap it was on broke at some early stage and thereafter I kept it in a trouser pocket. During the first winter when we were doing some odd jobs near the railway station the watch fell through a hole in my trouser pocket into the snow. I didn't notice this happening and only discovered it later. I thought my little watch was gone for good. A week or so later one of the chaps found it by sheer chance under the snow and knowing it was mine returned it to me. To my amazement when I wound it up it went again, though ever afterwards it was a bit erratic and had to be checked from time to time. Still, it lasted me till I was free again.

News was very difficult to come by in Japan. At first, we were allowed to have a few copies amongst us of an English language Japanese newspaper, the something "Shimbun". Those gave us news of fighting in Burma near Imphal which the Japs said they were winning and it also referred to fighting in North Africa and how **Rommel** was keeping the allies at bay. There was one issue, however, which had an obscure paragraph mentioning a landing by the Allies in Italy. After that we stopped receiving any issues of the "Shimbun". Our interpreter in the main camp, **Oswald Wynd**, managed to glean some news from Japanese language newspapers that the guards had left around and from that source we heard of the Allied landings in France in June 1944 and the Italian surrender, and later of the German surrender. Before the German surrender, however, I had been moved from the "Cemento" camp to the main camp at Hakodate. This was soon after Christmas 1944. On Christmas Day we had a concert and one or two of the Jap guards looked in to listen to it but did not interfere. We had special rations that day but I don't remember what they were. There had been another American parcel just about that time, one per man, and we kept most of the contents for that day. Also the Japs issued us with fifteen oranges each. They were small oranges, a little bigger than tangerines, and quite sweet.

We hadn't seen fresh fruit for a long time and it was difficult to resist the temptation to eat up the oranges quickly. There was an outbreak of diarrhoea throughout the camp the following day.

On the subject of fresh fruit, there was a time in September or October 1944 when some of us had an opportunity of stealing a few apples. The line along which we pushed trucks filled with cement bags passed a wooden hut where stores were kept for Japanese workers. A plank had come loose on the outside wall and someone discovered that if you put your hand through the opening there was an open case of apples on the other side. This was meant for the Japanese workers but as we passed the spot, which was hidden by a wooden fence on the other side of the rails, we managed to abstract the odd apple and to eat it surreptitiously. I can always remember how that first apple bucked me up. I felt so much better after it. It was, however, rather a dangerous thing to do and the Jap workers must have discovered that their apples were disappearing. We got a fright when two fierce little Japanese policemen wearing large swords turned up and started noising around. Fortunately nothing happened, but we stopped pinching apples. Curiously, there were one or two of our chaps who did not approve of our taking the Japanese apples and that was on purely moral grounds. They argued that stealing was always wrong even from your enemies. We had some heated debates on the subject. I have not so far mentioned that the Japs, professing to abide by the Hague Convention, paid us for our work. We got 10 sen a day, a sen being a tenth – or is it a hundredth? – of a yen and so worth a small fraction of an old penny. Occasionally, we were given the opportunity to spend our accumulated funds on small articles like a portion of bean curd or bean jelly.

Sometime between Christmas and New Year 1944 three of us, **Eddy Barry**, **Pat Wilson North** and I, were transferred from the "Cemento" camp to the main camp at Hakodate. We did the journey by train taking our kit bags with us. So far as I can remember we had to stand all the way. There was, however, a stove at each end of the carriage and we kept close to one of these. It was a short journey and then we had to march through the snow to the camp. The reason for our transfer was that **Col. Emoto** wanted our assistance in the preparation of a book to be called, "Japanese Phrases for British Prisoners of War". **Oswald Wynd** was in charge of operations and our workplace was a little room in the main hut called the library. There were quite a few shelves of books there and one of our jobs was to keep a record of books borrowed by fellow prisoners and see that they were returned. I cannot remember that we ever did very much work on **Col. Emoto's** book. I spent quite a lot of time browsing amongst the library books. We had to look busy, however, when a Japanese guard or the Japanese interpreter looked in. He had to be shown how we were progressing and **Oswald Wynd** generally had something to show him. I think **Co. Emoto** must have become disenchanted with our ability to produce what he wanted, or there may have been some other reason, because after about two months on this job we were taken off it and except, I think, for **Oswald Wynd** and the typist, we were sent to work at the docks. The dock work generally was not particularly arduous but in March and April it was most unpleasant. There was one windy day when we had to unload bags of cement out of the hold of a ship. Grains of cement were whirled about by the wind and got into our eyes. I found the next morning that I could not open my eyes. They were glued tight shut by moistened cement. There were several of us in the same condition and we got off work that day while the doctor treated our eyes with some kind of solvent. By the end of the day I could open my eyes again but the discomfort of having cement in them lasted for some days.

About the middle of April that year, my legs started to swell up. Oedema, the doctor called it, due to lack of protein and several vitamins. Our doctor in the main camp was **Dr. Bristow**, an Australian from Melbourne, who, like **Dr. Baumgarner** at "Cemento", did all he could for us with the limited means at his disposal. I was given a respite from work and some extra rations including an occasional small glass of milk and some Wakamoto Pills, the Japanese equivalent of DCL yeast tablets. I also had tonsillitis about that time and so spent quite a time in the camp's sick bay. There was a Japanese military doctor who inspected us from time to time and decided whether we should stay in hospital or go back to work. We dreaded visits from this doctor and did not trust him. There were one or two stories of him getting drunk and beating up prisoners but I am glad to say I had no personal experience of this.

About the end of 1944 or the beginning of 1945 we were issued with brand new American greatcoats, a big improvement on our old, worn British ones. They were quite a boost to our morale. Unfortunately, however, we were not allowed to keep these very long. The story we heard was that Japanese civilians (and no doubt some of our guards) who saw us marching through the streets of Hakodate wearing these new, warm woollen coats complained to the Japanese War Office that we were better dressed than the Japanese and, so it was said, laid the blame on **Col. Emoto** who was accused of being pro-British. Whatever the truth of that story it is certain that we lost our American greatcoats and **Col. Emoto** was replaced by another commandant who, as far as I know, spoke no English at all and whom we hardly ever saw. Our old British greatcoats were restored to us.

I ought to have mentioned earlier that every morning before we went off to work in Japan we were lined up and made to repeat these words (I think they must have been written out for us):-

*"I hereby promise that I will do my work willingly and constructively,
Take good care of my health and every precaution against accident."*

Had the Japs known English and listened carefully they would have learnt that these words were not always strictly adhered to, a common variation being:-

*"I hereby promise that I will do my work unwillingly and destructively,
Take no care of my health and never a precaution against accident."*

There weren't in fact many accidents at any of our places of work but there was one explosion at the cement factory when a Japanese worker was killed and one or two of our people injured. One Singapore volunteer, **Alec Morrison**, was quite badly injured and was laid up for some weeks. He recovered completely, however, and I met him once in Edinburgh after the war looking very hale and hearty.

Hair cutting at Hakodate camp where there were about 400 prisoners was done, in my case at least, by a Dutch Eurasian prisoner who had been caught in Java. We also had a dentist in the camp, a large ebullient American known as **Captain Brown**. He was a very capable dentist as I can testify since he extracted two or three of my teeth. Teeth and gums went soft with the diet we had. When I became a prisoner I had all my teeth with only a few fillings here and there. The first tooth I ever had out was at Changi and it was a Singapore dentist and fellow Volunteer, **Tom Calhaem**, who did the extraction. He did at that time have some kind of anaesthetic, not a very powerful one, and I think **Captain Brown** must have had one too. Certainly I don't remember any violent pain though my teeth were probably in any case quite loose

Strong rumours of the German surrender reached us towards the middle or end of May. We were specially mustered one evening in May after returning from work and told by **Col. Emoto**, who must have been brought back to make the announcement, that the Germans and Italians were now out of the war and Nippon stood alone but he had every confidence in the ultimate Japanese success. In its thousand of years of existence no invader had ever set foot on the sacred soil of Japan and none ever would. His speech, I suppose, was meant to depress us and stop any rejoicing or insubordination by the prisoners. In fact, of course, there wasn't any but we thought the day of our release was now in sight and we could afford to wait. At the same time there were some who saw in the speech a warning that the Japanese would fight to the last man to defend their sacred soil and we would all be killed in the process. Two RAF prisoners did try to escape about this time but they weren't at large very long. They were brought back to the camp, their wrists tied with ropes, and paraded round as an example of what would happen to anyone who tried to escape. We thought they might be shot but it seems they were sent to a tough correction camp in Honshu and I believe they survived the war.

One day in early June 1945 instead of going to work we were told to prepare for a move. Nearly the whole camp was mustered complete with kit bags and marched down to the station at Hakodate. There we got on a train with black cloth on all windows so that we could not see where we were going. It was a three or four hours' journey that we had and then a short march to our new camp. This comprised the usual wooden huts which had been recently built and conditions were much as we had become accustomed to. The rumour was that we were to work in the coal mines. For the first week or so, however, we had a comparative rest, doing odd jobs about the camp. The countryside here was quite beautiful and the weather was warm and sunny. We must have been in central Hokkaido and there were mountains very close to us. When working at Kamiiso and at Hakodate we used to see a volcano in the distance generally with smoke coming out of it but that particular mountain was not visible from our new camp.

We were joined at this new camp by our friends from the "Cemento" camp and we now had our two doctors, **Baumgarner** and **Bristow**, **Captain Brown**, the dentist, **Oswald Wynd** as interpreter and there was an American naval officer, **Bill Sterling**. We started a kitchen garden at this camp and there were always a few not able for one reason or another to work in the mines whose job it was to look after the garden, such as it was. The soil seemed fertile and things did grow. After our first few days of rest, however, most of us were marched off to the coal mines each morning. After the first few weeks half of our labour force was put on night shift and half on day shift week about. At first some of the chaps opted for night shift, thinking it would mean an extra meal, but their hopes were shattered when they found there would be no mid-day meal for them during sleeping time in the camp.

The march to the mines about a mile away was quite a pleasant one though, of course, we much preferred the walk back, whether it was in the evening or in the morning. The mine itself was a surprise. It was not underground in the usual sense but in the middle of a mountain range and we were taken from the entrance to the coal face in little electric trains. We were issued on arrival at the entrance to the mine with a miner's hat with a lamp in front lit by electricity. These were handed in at the end of each stint for re-charging. The train journey took about ten or fifteen minutes in open cars built for Japanese. The mine was all electric. The pneumatic drills we used and the little bogies that we shovelled the coal into were powered by electricity. The pit props, however, were timber and it was always ominous to

hear the cracking noises that came from them from time to time. I can remember only one dangerous fall, however, caused by prop failure and one of our chaps was quite seriously injured by it.

There were one or two Koreans in charge of our mining operations and they were rather nasty and most unpopular. We worked on the coal face with pneumatic drills and then shovelling the coal which had been drilled out of the seams into bogies which moved along rails in a constant stream. Often before we started work with the drills the Koreans would plant charges of dynamite into holes in the coal face, ordering us to retreat to a safe distance while they exploded these. Masses of coal fell down as a result and work with the drills was made easier on the seam, the coal having been loosened by the explosions. Sometimes I worked on the drills but more often I was shovelling coal into bogies. There was a certain amount of stone amongst the coal we were shovelling and, thinking it might be a good idea to give the Japs some stone for their fires, we tried when the Koreans were not looking to put as much stone as we could into the bogies. This was arduous, however, since the stone was much heavier than the coal and so our efforts in that direction rather tailed off. For our lunch or mid-night meals in the mine we had binto boxes of rice with pickled vegetables as a rule. We worked in only one part of the mine which seemed to be a very large one. Koreans worked in the other parts but we did not mix with them. The Japs kept us apart. To reach our coal face we were generally able to walk part of the way upright but always there were some low passages to crawl through and these were often wet. The man in charge of the boilers was a Singapore friend who got the job on the plea, supported by the doctors, that he had a hernia and was not fit for heavy work. I got him to wash my shirts for me at two cigarettes a time.

On the 14th – or was it the 15th? – of August I developed a temperature and was feeling thoroughly unwell. I was due to go on nightshift. **Dr. Baumgarner** thought I should not be going to work but he had to refer to the Japanese medical orderly – not a qualified doctor – for permission. The orderly refused to give permission and ordered that I should be given two aspirins by courtesy of the Japanese Army – or words to that effect. So, feeling pretty awful, I was lined up with the other chaps ready to march to the mine. Just before we set out, however, we were told to return to the camp and would not be going to work that night because there had been a fall of rock in the mine and the passage in was blocked. When the day shift came back about half an hour later they were surprised at our news and said there was no blockage when they left and the Koreans were seen going into the mine in the usual way. We thought this a bit odd and were still more puzzled when next morning the day shift were told that they would not be going to the mine that day nor would the night shift since there had been an outbreak of some infectious disease in the village and we were to stay in camp meantime. When we heard that day that one of the guards had been seen coming out of the guardroom, where there was a radio, with his face streaming with tears we were pretty sure that this was IT. From that day the guards were noticeably less officious and our rations were increased, but we were never told why. Then a few days later some American 'planes flew over the camp and waved to us and we waved back. Then we were mustered for an announcement to be made. This was about a week after the 15th. **Col. Emoto**, who must have been brought back specially for this task, climbed on to an upturned packing case and told us that he was happy to announce that an armistice had been declared between the Japanese and Allies and that we would soon be on our way home and to celebrate the occasion he would like us to have a glass of beer with him. Bottles of Japanese beer were then produced and distributed but it turned out there was only one bottle of beer for each four of us and we had to drink it from the bottles.

We stayed on in this camp for another three weeks or so. The Japanese guards were withdrawn and two Royal Scots officers came from another camp to help maintain discipline. We were allowed to roam the countryside and call on the little farmsteads where we acquired eggs and chickens in return for our blankets and odd bits of clothing that we would no longer require. Several times American 'planes flew over and dropped canisters of food attached to parachutes. We had to be careful of these because occasionally a parachute failed to open and one of our chaps was seriously injured by a too rapidly falling canister. The weather was perfect and a lot of cooking went on in the open air. We also had American newspapers dropped from the skies from which we found out about the atom bomb and the total surrender of the Japanese.

[To be continued.]

NEWS IN BRIEF

1. An interesting report from The Star newspaper about Bukit Chandu.

v.speldewinde@gmail.com has shared "This colonial bungalow has an amazing WW11 story to tell" with Star2.com Bukit Chandu was built by and remained, until about 40 years ago, the residence (indeed, the operations centre) for **Jardine Matheson** at Singapore. Until about 30 years ago it was the residence of **Charles Letts** (former MVG member) who until about 1977 used it as his headquarters before he moved to his very central house off Scotts Road/Tanglin Road, where he lived until he died quite recently. Who except **Jardines** would be so bold as to name the bungalow after their stock-in-trade 1856-1942? Only **Charles** would dare to combine the post of "our man in Singapore" with the post of **Jardines'** representative in

Singapore. His first major coup for **Jardines** was in 1975 when, following the first major crude oil price hike of c 1974, after the expulsion of all foreign oil operators and the deposal of the Shah from Abadan, Iran, **Charles** offered to provide seven sheikdoms along the Persian Gulf (for the first time) with their own modern harbour facilities. Five sheikdoms eventually agreed to buy prefabricated "Mulberry Harbours" all of which were constructed at **Jardines'** rented shipyard in Singapore and each floated to its destination. Salesman for "Mulberry Harbours" was **David Behar** – known as "the golden spanner kid" of United Engineers, Sandakan, until it was taken over by UMNO. **Charles'** second and, of course, major coup was the purchase of Cycle and Carriage, the Mercedes agents in Singapore as the forerunner of **Jardines'** entry into the pre-1980 'closed shop' in Indonesia (i.e. the exclusive province of US trading). "**Pak**" **Harto** agreed to admit the Mercedes agency, then **Toyota** under **Jardines'** "good behaviour guarantees". This allowed them to set up domestic Indonesian manufacturing facilities – leading to the formation of **PT Astra** which today, including its plantations, represents Indonesia's largest commercial conglomerate – even larger in value than **Jardines** in Hong Kong.

<http://www.star2.com/culture/design/2017/08/11/reflections-bukit-chandu-wwii-battle-history/#KeufylHs4y5js2ed.03>

2. Opening of "Witness to War" exhibition at The National Museum of Singapore.



We are grateful to MVG member **John Corner** for sending this information about the opening of this exhibition at the NMS in Singapore.

We did meet 2 of the organizers of this exhibition during our visit to Singapore in February 2017. We asked them to send the MVG information about the material they were seeking, and the stories they were planning to cover about the families caught up in the Malayan Campaign, so that we could pass this on to our members. However, we did not receive any more information from them. We are sorry that members were therefore unable to send in information which could have been included in the exhibition.

The exhibition opened on 23rd September 2017 and runs until 25th March 2018.

3. A recent visit to Singapore by MVG member Lt. Cdr. Michael Doncaster.

Michael writes:

"Thank you for the very informative Apa Khabar. I note the date of the proposed service at Kranji in September 2020 to mark the 75th anniversary of the Japanese surrender. **Sandy** and I will try to be there and bring our two cousins, direct descendants of **John Owen** and **Reginald Tyndale-Powell**, whose names are on the wall at Kranji. It would be lovely to share the moment with the two boys. I was in Singapore recently for work, and the Republic of Singapore Navy arranged for me to go out to Kranji to place poppies against the TP names. I try to get to Kranji whenever I am in Singapore to honour the memory of my family.

My aunt died recently and in her documents were the original discharge papers, certificates of service and some other documents, all originals and all signed by the various bureaucrats who were in the various Federated Malay Central Records Office in KL before Independence. Some of them have not been seen for over 60 years, so I am working through them to get them preserved and then I will scan them and share them with you because I am sure there are probably not very many copies of such documents around."

4. Mary Harris adds more to the E.O. Shebbeare story.

I enjoyed your piece about **E.O. Shebbeare** [See A.K. 50. April 2017. **Jungle Border Patrol. Ps 10 & 11.**] Did you know – that because of his prowess and reputation in handling Big Game, he was put in charge of the snail farm in Sime Road Camp. This valuable source of protein kept escaping over razor blades, broken glass etc. so in the end **Norman Alexander** stole electricity from the Japs by making a transformer and building an electric fence round it!

5. Dave Croft sent this information.

Pilot Officer 88508, Acting Squadron Leader **Cecil John Longmore** was the senior RAF representative on **Wingate's Chindits** column. Research reveals that he was an ex-rubber planter from Malaya and the first person to loop a glider. He was awarded his gliding certificate from the Furness Gliding Club in 1931. He appears to have joined the RAF (Reserve?) in Malaya/Singapore and his training as a Chindit is described by fellow Chindit – RAF Wireless Operator Sgt. **Arthur Willshaw**. **Longmore** was captured by the Japanese and spent time in Rangoon Jail.



Another interesting RAF figure is **Robert Thompson**, who was a member of the MCS and learning Chinese at Macau when Hong Kong was attacked. He made his way across China and ended up in Burma and, having joined the RAF in Singapore pre-war, he was put on active service. He also played a major role in the Chindits, winning the Military Cross for the role he played in action. He returned to the MCS post-war and was later recognised as an expert on rural guerrilla activity.

6. News from Muntok Peace Museum – sent by Judy Balcombe.

Judy has been in contact with **Mr. Fakhrial** from the Timah Tinwinning Museum in Muntok about the installation of electricity and air conditioning in the Peace Museum. It is estimated that this will cost Rp. 23,465,000 – **about £1,360 sterling**. This does not take into account any maintenance costs or staff wages which we have been asked to fund. We have suggested that instead of paying wages, we make an annual contribution to towards this.

We consider the installation costs to be acceptable, and have given permission for this to go ahead. To date, we have not heard any news or sent any funds.

Judy also mentions news of **Lynette Silver** who has worked for many years to locate the families of POWs killed in Borneo and take them to visit their graves. Her concept of trying to 'bring the POWs' spirits' back home to Australia and make sure they are remembered is an interesting one. It is reported in the July 2017 Edition of **NEWS FROM BORNEO**.

7. Knitted Poppies – a message from Eileen Wright.

Thank you for the poppies – they are gratefully received. At our Committee Meeting we were told that we have received over 6,000 (knitted) poppies. We are now attaching them to a piece of netting and it is a wonderful occasion. Tourists/visitors from all over the world and children visiting the Parish Church have joined in with the work. It has become quite a social gathering with a lot of chatter and coffee breaks. Two visitors who came from Canada were in tears while watching.

[Editor: The 6 knitted poppies displayed above the Memorial Stone in the Memorial Garden on V-J Day were sent to Eileen for inclusion in this display.]

8. Two stories from the New Sunday Times.

On 30th July, the story of "Nepti" – the silent one in Gurkhali – appeared. She was a tiny tiger cub found in the jungle near Bahau and the Ladang Geddes rubber estate, managed by **George Booker (Merilyn & Jane's father)**. The family took her in, but when she became too large she was returned to the Gurkhas and subsequently was sent to London Zoo.

On 20th August, a report by **Zaharah Othman** appeared in the 'News' section about the joint British Malaysian Society & MVG meeting which had taken place in April 2016 at the Malaysian High Commission in London. In it she gave the background to the MVG, its aims, its quarterly newsletter & mentioned the wartime experiences of several members present at the meeting.

[Editor: The next joint meeting is planned for April 2018 at the Malaysian High Commission – date to be announced.]

OBITUARIES

ELIZABETH DHARMA (BETH) OKEYBY

We send our very sincere condolences to **Mason Nelson** and his family for the loss of their beloved sister who died on 29th July 2017 in her 92nd year. **Beth** spent her childhood in Singapore and went to the Tanglin School from 1928 – 33 which in those days was located at the Tanglin Club. **Mason** was also at school there until 1931 and still has a postcard from 'Miss Griff' dated 1933, showing the whole school assembled. According to a report in the Straits Times, while at school **Beth** took part in the 1935 production of the pantomime 'Toad of Toad Hall'. In later life, some 52 years ago, she played a prominent part in the development of the Taupo Botanical Gardens which are now a show piece.

MARSHALL DOUGLAS

Our thoughts and prayers are also with **Velvet** whose beloved husband died suddenly after a very short illness on 10th September. We send our heartfelt condolences to her and her family.

We also report the death of **Lt-Cdr Henry 'Nobby' Hall** who died in June 2017, aged 95. He was probably the last survivor of the heavy cruiser, **HMAS Canberra**, which was in the Solomon Islands in August 1942 with an American and Australian fleet, when she was attacked by a strong fleet of Japanese destroyers. The Battle of Savo Island ensued – later called the Battle of the Sitting Ducks. He was mentioned in despatches for his skill, resolution and coolness in helping the dying and wounded. **Alastair Gavin** who was awarded an MC in Malaya in 1951 has died aged 86. He was a troop leader serving with 45 Commando Royal Marines near Bidor when reports came in that bandits had been seen. He was ordered to take a patrol of 13 marines to deal with this. 5 bandits were flushed out – 3 killed, one wounded and 1 escaped. Guns and ammunition were recovered and 10 suspects arrested. Later he became a barrister and sheep farmer in Ayrshire. Finally, we note the report of the death of **Dong Jimin** aged 113, the oldest living veteran of China's struggle against the invading Japanese from 1931 to 1945 in Manchuria.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

LONDON – Saturday 21st October 2017. Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club, Piccadilly – 12 – 4p.m.

Late bookings with payment of £39 pp can be taken until Monday 16th October. Please let **Rosemary** know asap. We hope a few more of you will decide to attend this main annual event in our calendar.

LONDON – Thursday 9th November 2017, Cross Planting Ceremony, Westminster Abbey – Garden of Remembrance.

Tickets have been ordered for those who have requested them. MVG's 8" black cross is planted in the FEPOW Plot. Visitors to the Garden can obtain small wooden crosses from the RBL stand beside the Abbey. The display is well worth a visit.

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

We are pleased to announce that the MVG has been allocated the 12 requested tickets for this year's Service and March Past. These will be sent out to all those who have asked for them, together with other information about entry to Whitehall. Tickets are personalised and non-transferable, and entry is only permitted on the presentation of a photo identity document.

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

Please contact Bob Hall (details in the list of members) if you wish to go to this service. Bearing in mind it is December – the weather may be inclement and the service is held outside at the Memorial.

MUNTOK – FEBRUARY 2018 – "Walk for Humanity" on Radji Beach.

Michael Noyes – nephew of one of the nurses killed on Radji Beach in 1942 is organising this walk next February. He hopes that other family members will join him. More information about the trip can be obtained from Michael - noyce@me.com

LONDON – APRIL 2018. Joint BMS/MVG meeting at the Malaysian High Commission. Date TBA.

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

Please keep this date in mind – the 75th anniversary of the signing. The MVG plans to attend and lay a wreath on behalf of the Malayan Volunteer Forces. Other events will be announced nearer the time.

LIST OF MEMBERS

An up-to-date list of members is enclosed with the newsletter. Please would you check your entry for accuracy, and let Rosemary know if there are any mistakes in addresses, telephone numbers or e-mail addresses – or if you would like to change the biographical details listed.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Enclosed is the Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 5th April 2017, provided by SJA Accountants Ltd. If anyone would like a copy of the full set of accounts, please send Rosemary a SAE. Once again we thank Miss Sara Haines for giving her time freely to audit these accounts for the MVG. We are very grateful to her for the interest she shows in the Group and for undertaking this task annually.

WEBSITE

As mentioned in the Editorial, the work on re-vamping the website is ongoing, and we hope that by the end of the year it will be up and running. Back copies of the newsletters will be available to read. We have decided not to use a password for access to these, but the current newsletters will not be available to read immediately.



**V-J Day Service
Tuesday, 15th August 2017
MVG Memorial Garden
at
The National Memorial Arboretum**

**Bob Hall reads
The Exhortation
Fepow Prayer and
The Kohima Epitaph**

**Lest we forget
Andai nya kita terlupa**

CONTACTS

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

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