

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



**56th EDITION
OCTOBER 2018**



The Christmas Present. Singapore 1943.

**"We looked into space, our hearts pounded,
there did not seem to be enough air to go around ..."**

(With acknowledgement to the Leader Magazine. December 1949.)

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WE COMMEMORATE THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARMISTICE DAY TO END WW1 BUT LET US NOT FORGET V-J DAY - THE TRUE ENDING OF WW2

At War Memorials in every small village and town in this country we see black life-sized cut-out figures of WW1 soldiers flanked by large red poppies. These are fine and fitting tributes to the courage and sacrifice of so many young men who lost their lives in the carnage and madness of World War One. We salute their bravery and must never forget those who died in that terrible conflict and it is right that we remember and commemorate them on the hundredth anniversary of the ending of that war this year.

It is disappointing, therefore, that the 73rd anniversary of the ending of World War Two, on Wednesday 15th August 2018 – V-J Day – passed with hardly a mention on radio or television. It is even more disappointing that the MVG's V-J Day service, which is held annually at the National Memorial Arboretum, attracted so few members this year – 21 family members; 7 friends of MVG members; and 10 members of the public – to give the stark statistics. It is fair to say that it is always the same MVG members who attend every year – some coming from hundreds of miles away, necessitating spending a night away from home. We thank these members for their resolution and determination to remember their loved ones every year on V-J Day and pay tribute to their sacrifice. It is a pilgrimage we can all make - to remember the brutality and suffering our relatives endured during their three and a half years of captivity by a savage and alien foe, and give thanks for their release at the end of WW2. Surely it is the one day we can all put aside each year – albeit during school holiday time – to remember both our military POWs and civilian internees, and to give thanks for the ending of the Far East conflict?

The NMA is only a 1½ hour journey by train from London, and is also easily accessible by car. The Arboretum is well worth a visit in its own right. There's plenty to see in the 150 acre site, and conducted tours by land trains take you round the whole area with a commentary on the various plots you can see. A huge restaurant is now being finished ready for next season. Please put a big red ring round the 15th August on your calendar for next year, keep it free and make the journey to Alrewas to attend next year's V-J Day Service. It will again be held in the Chapel, which can accommodate up to 125 people.

We are delighted to say that our V-J Day service did not pass entirely unreported. There was a lovely report - not, as you might have expected, in a newspaper in the United Kingdom, but in the **New Sunday Times** in Malaysia, thanks to **Zaharah Othman** who attended our V-J Day Service with **Ruth Rollitt**. **Zaharah's** article entitled, "Lesson in Patriotism" is a reminder to us all that we should always remember and commemorate the final ending of WW2. **Zaharah** eloquently states in her report how important it is to remember our shared history from all those years ago, and how she found so many "thought-provoking memorials" in the grounds of the NMA. A copy of her article is included in this newsletter together with the V-J Day service sheet. [Also see report of this year's service on P. 2].

Also, reported in the **Malay Mail** on 16th August this year, was an article entitled, "Emperor expresses WW11 'remorse'." Japan's **Emperor Akihito** expressed "deep remorse" about his nation's wartime acts as Tokyo marked the 73rd Anniversary of the end of World War 11 on 15th August. This annual ceremony marked the last one the Emperor and his wife, **Empress Michiko**, will attend before **Akihito** abdicates next April. Throughout his reign, **Emperor Akihito** has hinted at pacifist views in contrast to the aggressive expansionism his country pursued under his father **Hirohito**, and more recently the revisionist views of Japan's Prime Minister **Shinzo Abe**. Recently **Abe** has softened his rhetoric as he works to improve ties with China, although in the past **Abe** has attracted criticism by visiting the Yasukuni Shrine which honours Japan's war dead, including convicted war criminals. [Hot off the press – "Abe victory will end Japan's pacifist law" **Telegraph** 21/9/18.]

In a report in the **Daily Telegraph** on 24th August 2018, it was stated that **Hirohito** was haunted by his wartime role, according to the diary of his aide, **Shinobu Kobayashi**, 2 years before he died. It may be that **Hirohito's** sense of guilt was passed on to his successor, his son, **Emperor Akihito**.

We are pleased to report that we have been issued with 12 tickets for the Cenotaph Parade on Remembrance Sunday in November, and 12 MVG members have been registered to march to represent the Malayan Volunteer Forces. This year the Parade is expected to number 10,000 – a huge logistical problem for the organisers. As well as the Veterans' Parade, a second procession is taking place immediately after the Cenotaph Parade. Called "The Nation's Thank You," it will allow 10,000 members of the public, selected by random ballot, to process past the Cenotaph to pay their respects and express the nation's thanks to the generations who served and to those who never returned. Those of us who are marching this year will also pay our respects to our relatives who served and to those who died.

We thank **Sallie Hammond** for all her work in bringing together our members in Canada and the USA. Her enthusiasm and help in organizing Canadian members to attend the Remembrance Day Service in Queen's Park, Toronto, is much appreciated. We also thank the **Bill and Elizabeth Adamson** for their work in arranging services in February and August in Perth, WA. [See report on P.23. and inserted "Memorial Address" by the **Hon. Peter Tinley AM MLA.**]

Our thanks also go to **Becca Kenneison** for organizing the MVG's Facebook page. This is her report:

The Facebook page is doing well. It now has 155 members, many from the MVG, but many not, and new posts pop up several times a week. These include interesting photos; links to current news stories (such as the pillaging of Royal Navy wrecks from 1941/42 in the seas around Singapore and Malaysia); varied queries (usually about individuals); and some interesting stories, in particular Jan Beranek's search for information about his great uncle, Silvestr Nemeč, a Volunteer who is presumed to have been killed around the time that Singapore fell. It's proving a useful tool for people to exchange information and help each other out."

FEPOW Art Exhibition

We have received an important message from **Meg Parkes** about next year's FEPOW Art Exhibition. She says:

"The Liverpool School of Tropical medicine (LSTM) has launched a Crowdfunding page today (14/9/18) to raise the final tranche of funding needed for the Far East prisoners of war (FEPOW) "Secret Art of Survival" art exhibition in Liverpool next year.

The Exhibition (opening 19 October 2019 and running to mid-June 2020) is the result of over six years' research to identify and locate previously unseen art works created secretly and kept hidden by British service men during WW1 Far East captivity. To date over 40 artists have been identified; the exhibition will bring together their work for the first time." [See: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/artofsurvival>]

V-J DAY – 15th August 2018

Report by Rosemary Fell

Arriving at the National Memorial Arboretum on Tuesday afternoon, 14th August, **Imogen Holmes** and I made our way down to the Memorial Garden wondering whether the plot had been prepared for our Service on Wednesday, and what effects the hot summer weather might have had on the trees and shrubs. We found the garden plot in good order with the bamboo trimmed and the grass, albeit a bit brown and dry, mown and looking neat and tidy. The birch trees were already losing some of their leaves due to the drought, and there was a bit of leaf debris on the benches and memorial stones, but the NMA had obviously taken care to tidy the plot in readiness for our visit.

Wednesday morning, the 15th August, dawned a bit grey and overcast, but dry and warm. MVG members and friends met up in the Visitor Centre before the service for coffee and a chat. Soon after 11.30am we made our way across to the Chapel ready for our service at 12 noon. It made a great difference to be able to hold the service in the peaceful surroundings of the Chapel, without the noise of the LaFarge machinery. With 28 members and guests, plus about 10 members of the public, including some veterans, we were pleased to welcome, amongst others, former child internee **Olga Henderson** who had made the journey from Eastbourne in Sussex especially to celebrate this day, the 73rd anniversary of V-J Day, and the MVG's 11th annual service. Others had also travelled long distances to attend the service - from as far away as Cornwall, Shropshire, Cheshire, Warrington, London, Yorkshire, Suffolk, Sussex and Bristol to mention a few places. We were also delighted to welcome **Zaharah Othman** to our service. She made the journey by train from London with **Ruth Rollitt** who had invited her to attend the day and meet members of the MVG to hear their stories of pre-war Malaya and tales of their escape from Singapore in 1942. We thank those who regularly attend our V-J Day services for making the journey to the NMA to commemorate the true ending of World War 2, and remember all those who were caught up in the Malayan Campaign and sacrificed their freedom and lives, both military Volunteers and civilians.

It is very disappointing (as mentioned in the Editorial) that more MVG members do not make the effort to attend our V-J Day services, which form such an important day in our list of annual events. The service always takes place on the 15th August regardless of which day of the week it is. The NMA, which covers over 150 acres, is full of memorials of all kinds, covering many conflicts from WW2 onwards to the present day and is well worth a visit. In just over 20 years, it has grown from a small, rough, grassy gravel pit into a huge, beautifully maintained National Memorial. The MVG is proud to be part of that Memorial and recommends that all members should visit the Arboretum and our own Memorial Garden. **Please make a note to come in 2019.** At our service this year, we had the use of the Chapel organ, and the introductory music chosen by our organist was "Nimrod" taken from Elgar's "Enigma Variations." In her opening remarks, **Rosemary Fell** thanked **Gerald Lindner** for kindly offering to play the organ, and **Alison Brierley**, who agreed to link the service in place of **Jonathan Moffatt** who was unable to attend due to his son's wedding. **Rosemary** mentioned that the service had the themes of courage, imprisonment and freedom, and quoted from the views of **Major V.J. Fagan**, an Australian Army Medical Corps doctor on the condition of the returned FEPOW

– an extraordinary view which only commented on their physical state but not on the mental scars which afflicted so many in the aftermath of the war.

We stood as the service continued and **Sandy Lincoln** laid the wreath against the altar, followed by the 2 minutes silence. Accompanied by the organ, we sang the opening hymn, "Abide with Me." **June Jackson** read from Scripture, Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 verses 1-13. Then **Anthony Jackson** read the poem "High Flight" by John Gillespie Magee Jr. an Anglo American fighter pilot who flew with the Royal Canadian Air Force in WW2, but was killed in an accidental mid-air collision aged just 19. The poem is a remarkable evocation of the joyful freedom which flight gives – as experienced by many Malayan Volunteer Air Force pilots in their Tiger Moths.

An extract from Colonel C.A. Scott's Diary, 'Nip and Thai,' was read by **Sandy Lincoln** entitled "A Typical Day in Changi." It gave a very realistic feeling of the ennui felt by the POWs during the early days in Changi Barracks before they were transported to work on the Railway and other places throughout Japan's conquered territories. Following the reading, **Alison Brierley** led the prayers which she had thoughtfully prepared, and she ended by asking us to join her in saying the Lord's Prayer.

The poem, "Invictus," meaning unconquerable, was read by **Bob Hall**. Written by **William Ernest Henley** in 1888 in his first volume of poems, it conveys the theme never to lose hope no matter the circumstances.

Michael Mowat continued with the theme of imprisonment in readings taken from his father **Geoffrey Mowat's** book, "The Rainbow Through the Rain," about his experiences on the Burma Railway.

We all sang "The Captives' Hymn" with words and music written and composed by **Margaret Dryburgh** the English Missionary interned in various camps in Sumatra. This has become one of our regular hymns about captivity which was sung in the camps in Sumatra every Sunday.

The reading which **Anne Hinam** chose was a thought-provoking excerpt from the book, "By Eastern Windows" by William McDougall on the theme of freedom – his freedom from captivity which was tempered by a sense of emptiness and sadness at the hatred which the war had engendered. It was his opinion that we must all stop hating before real peace can be achieved.

The last poem, entitled "Freedom," was read by **Imogen Holmes**. Written by **Lt. Robert Fletcher** on the 6th September, 1945, as he waited for repatriation, it states so clearly that one cannot fully appreciate freedom until it has been forcibly taken away and one has experienced what it is to be a prisoner – especially a prisoner of the Japanese.

We stood while **Julian Beavan** concluded the service for us by leading us in the Exhortation, FEPOW Prayer and Kohima Epitaph.

The closing music played by **Gerald Lindner** was March No: 4 from Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" – often played at the November Festival of Remembrance for the War Widows' entry into the Royal Albert Hall.

The congregation was then invited to walk down to the MVG's Memorial Garden where **Sandy** placed the wreath on the Memorial Stone, and **Alison** said a few prayers. It was a fitting end to our annual service and everyone stayed for a time to meet, chat and take some photographs. We were lucky to have had a fine, warm day which was not too hot. Afterwards, we returned to the NMA centre for a leisurely lunch outside in the courtyard.

Alison Brierley leads the final prayers



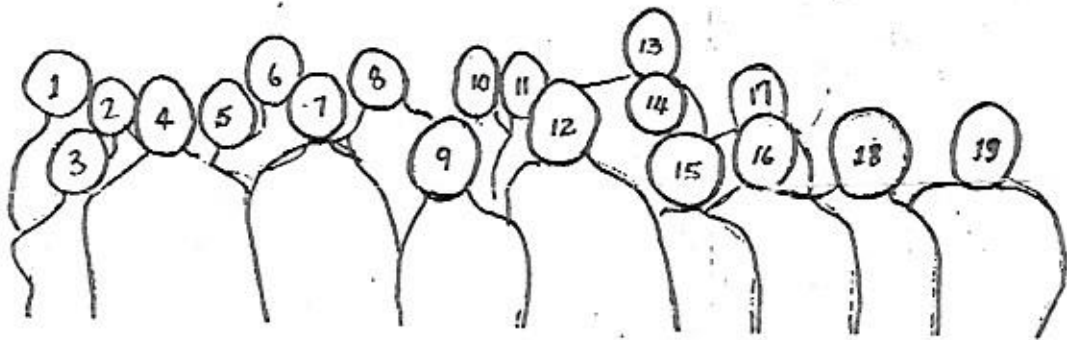
After the wreath laying



L to R: **Jean Goyder, Anne Hinam
Bob Hall, June Jackson and
Anthony Jackson**

DEDICATION OF THE MALAYAN CIVIL SERVICE MEMORIAL IN ST. ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL

[Editor: Does anyone know the date of this dedication? Please let us know.]



1. Charles Letts
2. John Carruthers (one time ADC to Governor)
3. Lady McNeice
4. Sir Percy McNeice
5. Elizabeth Choy (much respected Singapore war heroine survived Kempei-Tai incarceration)
6. Pamela Hickley (one time Secretary to Governor)
7. Sir Michael Pike (U.K. High Commissioner to Singapore)
8. Tan Sri ff Mubin Shepherd
9. Lady Pike (Catherine)
10. John Ede
11. Curly Lee
12. Reverend John Benson
13. Alexander Thomson (son of George Thomson) of BBC
14. Lionel de Rozario (Eurasian Volunteers)
15. Amy Ede
16. Alex Gomez (Eurasian Volunteers)
17. Eric Jennings (one time SSVF)
18. Mabel Hudson (Daughter of Dato S.Q. Wong)
19. Maurice Rozario (Eurasian Volunteers)

TRANSCRIPTION OF INSTRUCTIONS TO RETURNING FEPOWS

With thanks to Lt. Col. Geoff Strivens

This is a personal message from
H.Q. ALFSEA
to all newly-released Allied Prisoners
of War.

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"YOU ARE NEWS NOW AND ANYTHING YOU SAY IN PUBLIC OR TO PRESS REPORTERS IS LIABLE TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE PRESS OF THE WHOLE WORLD. YOU WILL HAVE DIRECT OR INDIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF THE FATE OF MANY OF YOUR COMRADES WHO DIED IN ENEMY HANDS AS A RESULT OF BRUTALITY OR NEGLECT. YOUR STORY IF PUBLISHED IN THE MORE LURID AND SENSATIONAL PRESS WILL CAUSE MUCH UNNECESSARY UNHAPPINESS TO RELATIVES AND FRIENDS. IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN LUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE BEEN RECOVERED AND HAD DIED ANY FORM OF UNPLEASANT DEATH AT THE HANDS OF THE JAPANESE YOU WOULD NOT HAVE WISHED YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO HAVE BEEN HARROWED BY LURID DETAILS OF THAT DEATH IN THE SENSATIONAL PRESS. THAT IS JUST WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE FAMILIES OF YOUR COMRADES WHO DIED IN THAT WAY IF YOU START TALKING TO ALL AND SUNDRY ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES. IT IS FELT CERTAIN THAT NOW YOU KNOW THE REASON FOR THIS ORDER YOU WILL TAKE PAINS TO SPARE THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS. ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR YOU TO TELL YOUR STORY TO INTERROGATING OFFICERS WHO WILL GET YOU TO WRITE IT DOWN. YOU ARE NOT TO SAY ANYTHING TO ANYONE UNTIL AFTER YOU HAVE WRITTEN OUT YOUR STATEMENT AND HANDED IT IN."

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2MPS/E/I

SEARCH FOR SURVIVORS OF THE LISBON MARU

Reports in the Daily Telegraph

Whole page advertisements have been made in the Daily Telegraph during the summer, about plans by a Chinese film-maker, called **Fang Li**, to raise the wreck of the *Lisbon Maru* and make a documentary film entitled, "*The 828 Unforgotten*," about the sinking of the ship, in memory of the 828 POWs who perished. Although some of the families of these men have given the plans a backing, several others have vetoed the idea. One of these men, **Dennis Morley**, survived the sinking but condemns the plan to raise the wreck saying that those who died should be left in peace. He is the only survivor left in Britain.

Hong Kong was captured by the Japanese on Christmas Day 1941, and the soldiers defending the colony were taken prisoner. Nine months later, on 1st October 1942, 1,834 British POWs were herded into the holds of the 7,000 ton *Lisbon Maru* to be taken to Japan. As an unmarked cargo ship, she was torpedoed by an American submarine called the *Grouper* – the crew had no idea that she was carrying POWs until they picked up a signal days later. The craven Japanese battened down the hatches and abandoned ship, shooting at those who tried to escape. However, the POWs fought to break free and local Chinese fishermen saved hundreds from the water, followed by the Japanese themselves. Those who were saved were then shipped later to Japan.

When **Fang Li** learnt of the *Lisbon Maru* tragedy he was determined that the victims should be remembered and

together with the British co-producer, **Tony Banham** (whom some may remember gave a talk at one of the RFH Group's Conferences some years ago), filming for a documentary has already begun. The film-makers want to find relatives and descendants of those on board to help remember them and learn how their families suffered on hearing of their fate.

The wreck of a ship, believed to be the **Lisbon Maru**, was discovered last year near the Zhoushan archipelago, 100 miles south-east of Shanghai. In July this year, divers visited the wreck to find out if it was the **Lisbon Maru**. To date it is not known if the wreck is indeed, this ship.

If anyone is interested in helping with this project, or had relatives on the ship, please contact **Major Brian Finch** on: enquiries@lisbonmaru.org.uk

British ships sunk in WW2 plundered by Chinese Pirates.

Sadly, a month after details about the raising of the **Lisbon Maru** were reported, fresh evidence came to light in another article in the Daily Telegraph on 20th August 2018, about the plundering of British marine war graves by Chinese pirates for scrap metal. Ten ships, which were sunk in WW2 and are the final resting places for more than 1,000 sailors and civilians in the waters off Malaysia and Indonesia, have now been damaged or destroyed. These ships are looted using dredgers which pull up the remains of bodies with the metal. Fresh allegations state that 4 more shipwrecks have been looted. Those known to have been desecrated include the **Prince of Wales** and **Repulse**, the **Tien Kwang**, **Kuala**, **Banka** and **Loch Ranza**, according to a new report.

The **Tien Kwang** (a submarine chaser) and **Kuala** (an auxiliary patrol vessel) were carrying hundreds of evacuees when they were attacked by Japanese bombers off the Riau Islands in February 1942. Also in early February 1942 the cargo ship, **Loch Ranza**, was set on fire in the Riau Archipelago by enemy bombers and exploded killing seven men. The minesweeper **Banka** hit a mine off the coast of Malaya in December 1941 and sank with the loss of 4 British officers and 34 Malay sailors. The wrecks are being targeted for their steel, which is of high quality with little or no absorbed background radiation, thus making it suitable for sensitive instruments.

The Ministry of Defence has launched an investigation into these serious allegations and is attempting to create "special protection zones" around some of the sites.

THE LIEUTENANT THOMAS WILKINSON VC STATUE APPEAL

With thanks to Jonathan Moffatt and Judy Balcombe for the information

Thomas Wilkinson (1898-1942) was born in Widnes, Lancashire, one of 9 children. At the age of 14, he joined the crew of his father's sailing sloop as part of the Merchant Navy. During WW1 he served aboard the **SS Alicinious**, a Blue Funnel Line vessel converted into a troopship. Four years after the Armistice, he joined the Indo-China Steam Navigation Company, and in 1936 he gained his Master's Certificate.

In 1938, **Thomas Wilkinson** became skipper of the **Li Wo**, designed as a river boat for sailing the upper reaches of the Yangtze, working from Shanghai. When the Second World War broke out, the Royal Navy took her over, and she became a ship of war, with the addition of a 4 inch gun forward, a couple of machine guns and a depth charge thrower. **Wilkinson** became a Temporary Lieutenant in the Royal Naval Reserve. He took her out of the sheltered waters of the Yangtze, into the China Seas, and south to Singapore.

On 12th February 1942, he received orders to sail for Batavia with evacuees on board. In the early hours of the 13th, he took her quietly out of Singapore harbour, with another converted river boat, **HMS Fuk Wu**, commanded by **Lieutenant Cooke**. On 14th February 1942 in the Java Sea, **HMS Li Wo**, commanded by **Lieutenant Wilkinson**, sighted two enemy convoys, one escorted by Japanese warships. The lieutenant told his crew he had decided to engage the convoy and fight to the last in the hope of inflicting some damage, a decision that drew resolute support from the whole ship's crew. In the action that followed, off Banka Island, a Japanese transport was set on fire and abandoned, and **Li Wo** engaged a heavy cruiser for over an hour before being hit at point-blank range and sunk. **Lieutenant Wilkinson** ordered his crew to abandon ship, but he went down with **Li Wo**.

According to his surviving 1st Officer, **Richard Stanton**, he saw **Wilkinson** and said, "Aren't you coming?" **Wilkinson** took his Bible and said, "No. This is my day. I'm going down with the ship."

Wilkinson's body was never recovered. He is commemorated on the Liverpool Naval Memorial. He was awarded a posthumous VC after the war. The notice of the award of the Victoria Cross was reported in

The Canberra Times on Thursday, 19th December 1946. His medal was donated to the Imperial War Museum by a member of the **Wilkinson** family. It is now displayed in the **Ashcroft Gallery** at the Imperial War Museum.

Tom Wilkinson VC There were only 8 people from the *Li Wo* who reached the shore, with 92 missing (see **Denis Russell-Roberts** book "Spotlight on Singapore") and only two survivors at the end of the war. One of these was Australian civilian **Richard Leslie McCann**, a gold miner from Pahang, who foraged for ubi roots with MVG's former child internee **Neal Hobbs** in the Belalau Camp. **Richard McCann** died not long after the war from cardiomyopathy. His son, now 86, lives in Perth WA.



THE STATUE APPEAL: Widnes already has statues of two of its three VC recipients and an appeal has started to fund a statue of **Wilkinson**. Appeal details:

<http://www.thetomwilkinsonvcstatueappeal.co.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Tom-Wilkinson-VC-statue-appeal-1334822039949830/>

The appeal was launched in June 2018 and it is hoped that the statue will be unveiled in June/July 2022, subject to the estimated funds of £60 – 65,000 being raised.

The MVG is planning to make a donation to this worthy cause, but if anyone wishes to make a personal donation, please contact **Tony Miller**, the founder and secretary of the **Tom Wilkinson Appeal**, at:

tonymiller27@yahoo.co.uk

"GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD"

With thanks to Dave Croft RAFBPA

The Tjimahi Yeast Factory

A number of years ago, I watched a TV programme where blood plasma was separated out from blood using centrifugal force. Nothing unusual in that, but this was happening in a POW camp on the Death Railway and the centrifuge was the spinning back wheel of a bicycle pedalled by a POW. I used the programme as part of a lesson with my school students (at the time) on blood and a small centrifuge was used to separate artificial blood prepared by the science department's technician, a retired chemist! From that time onwards, I have had an interest in the ingenuity of Far East POWs and Civilian Internees using what was available to help them survive their long ordeal in captivity.

In this respect, I found the article *Chemical Engineering in Changi* (AK 44 October 2015) by **Mary Harris** to be an excellent example of that collective spirit. Also of interest is the story of Dutch internees in a Java camp where, with help, they were able to overcome the problem of bread making when yeast was not available to them. The loss of yeast for the women and children internees of **Tjideng Camp** (an enclosed overcrowded slum forced upon the internees by their captors) during the Japanese occupation meant that though tapioca flour was still available, the staple diet of bread was denied them. Instead, they had to exist on whatever could be conjured up from the flour still available to them, generally a tasteless gruel. Some six miles away, at the men's camp at **Tjimahi**, where many from professional backgrounds were being held, chemists came up with the answer in a yeast substitute produced from urine! At the men's camp, a collection and processing system, designed to provide for large numbers, was set up. The Japanese provided 5-6" diameter bamboo cylinders to be placed in latrines for the men to make their contribution. When full, they were emptied into larger containers positioned around the camp. Signs urged each internee to "Do your duty. Think of the yeast factory. By 8.00am we must have at least two full drums or otherwise no bread." The drums of urine were collected by internees using handcarts and taken to the 'laboratory' (the bread kitchen) for processing. To make the substitute 'yeast' the drums of urine were placed over large wood burning fires to heat the liquid. The process 'transformed' urine to 'ureum' (urea), which in turn became ammonium carbonate (Bakers' ammonia). This residue was used in place of yeast, and it degrades to ammonia, carbon dioxide and water when heated. It is these two former compounds that cause the dough to rise. Quality control for producing yeast substitute was under the direction of the 'chief urinish' **Mervyn Gilbert Hartley**, previously an industrial chemist in sugar production. He also drew the cartoons depicting part of the production process in the **Tjimahi Yeast Factory.**

For six months in 1945, the women's camp received the substitute product, delivered daily in 45 gallon drums on an improvised vehicle purposely fitted with a flat bed for carrying the drums. Although the use of the 'processed' urine doesn't seem 'attractive' in bread making, it appears to have been a life saver over those last months of the war, and quality control using such basic equipment was achievable as described in *Chemical Engineering in Changi*.

On 29th September 1945, armed Royal Navy personnel from **HMS Cumberland** relieved the Japanese guards that had been responsible for ensuring the safety of the Tjideng internees until allied personnel were able to take over the camp.

Two Tjideng Internees

The mother of former MP **Nick Clegg**, her two sisters and their mother were interned in Tjideng in August 1943. His mother, **Hermance van den Wall Bake** was born in the Dutch East Indies in 1936 and following liberation from Tjideng moved to Holland in 1946. Because of the climate of unrest in Indonesia following the end of the war, many former Dutch internees were evacuated to 'safe' countries; the RAF flew many from Batavia to Singapore in Sunderland flying boats of 230 Squadron.

One of these was **Cornelia van Genneep** who, with her mother, had been placed in the civilian internment camp for European women and children. On liberation, **Cornelia** was flown to RAF Seletar in Sunderland PP149'R' of 230 Squadron. On the flight to Singapore she was invited to visit the flight deck and took over the navigator's position for part of the journey. The navigator was **Flt. Lt. Peter Bradford** and, following a search in Singapore to find her by the Sunderland crew, he married her in June 1946.

References:

1. Apa Khabar 44 October 2015
2. Metabolic Pathways 1970 – D.E. Nicholson
3. Urine Bread – online
4. Wings of the Dawning – Arthur Banks
5. Yeast from Urine in Tjimahi Camp – online

TJIDENG INTERNMENT CAMP AT BATAVIA



Picture shows mothers and children at Tjideng internment camp at Batavia, Java, where they existed as prisoners of war. The camp is a fenced off portion of the worst slums of Batavia, in the hottest part of Java. As many as 20 women were forced to live in one house where, before the war, two persons had lived. (Netherlands Indies Information Service)

Batavia: Dutch internees boarding a 230 Squadron Sunderland for Singapore



HIGH FLYERS

With thanks to Dave Croft RAFBPA

Mobilisation of Volunteers

Taken from "Shenton of Singapore – Governor and Prisoner of War," 'Another factor in the Johore battle' (14-22 January 1942), and indeed throughout the campaign, was the insistence of the military authorities that the British Officers of the local (Volunteer) territorial forces, in both the Straits Settlements and the Malay States, should remain with their units for regimental duty once they had been called up for service. All these local forces were embodied during 1940; their British officers were mainly resident in Malaya on a long-service basis, either as civil servants, planters, miners, forest officers, civil engineers or agents of mercantile houses and the like. Their knowledge of the country and its people was very great: they knew all the man-made paths and tracks in the jungles of the central mountain range, and the course and diversity of the many rivers and streams. Their ideal role in the regular armed forces would have been as Liaison Officers with every unit in the Malaya Command, particularly when the need for maps became an urgent priority after Kuala Lumpur fell to the Japanese in January 1942; the map storage depot, containing thousands of maps of every scale and size, was not destroyed in the haste of withdrawal.

This misemployment of expertise was eventually corrected, but far too late to be of real military value, and not before some astonishing anomalies were found. Two of these were:

Sir William Goode, who later became Governor of Aden and of Singapore, was a District Officer when war broke out in 1939. In November 1941, he was mobilised and called up for service in the ranks of "B" Company of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force. He became a Lance-Corporal and spent most of the remaining weeks either on 24-hour guard duty, or digging holes in the ground, and filling them up again because they were in the wrong place. Later it was recognised something was wrong and he was appointed Assistant Commissioner for Civil Defence.

He later became a POW and worked on the Death Railway in Thailand.

Vyvan Frampton, the highly qualified civil engineer who constructed the RAF station and airfield installations at Kuantan, had been enlisted as a private soldier in the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force. After completing the task at Kuantan he was posted for duty with a local territorial unit on the west coast. But he failed to qualify for the lowest grade in rifle shooting and was thereupon "discharged" from the army! In the event, this was a wise decision for he was able to revert to vital employment where he was urgently needed.

Sir William Goode in Singapore



AN INTERVIEW WITH Mr. LAURENCE CHARLES HURNDELL RNZN (Retd)
in February 1995, at his home in Canterbury, New Zealand

[With acknowledgement to Laurence Hurdell's family and to the New Zealand Navy who hold this interview in their archives.]

Did you work out why the native boatmen took you to this particular area. Did they think it was a safer place to get to, was that the point do you think?

Possibly that I don't know, I never gave it a thought, and I never even gave it a thought who paid them to take us there, but they must have been paid somewhere along the line. Probably payment from promissory notes or something like that, I don't know. This is where we arrived at Rengat and we were put in a ward in this native hospital and eventually **Doctor Kirkwood** arrived. He was on the next boat load and he arrived with a couple of English nursing sisters. We were placed in this Malay Hospital, and the women had one wing and the men had the other. We had one or two seriously wounded people who eventually died in the Rengat Hospital because of their wounds. An RN able seaman who was on the same ship as me; one of the three of us who escaped the bombardment on the ship's mess deck died at Rengat. We had a little old chap, **Jimmy Malcolm** who was a Scotsman, he used to be Manager of the Singapore Traction Company in Singapore before the war. He escaped with quite a bit of cash and he spoke perfect Malay. He used to say to all and sundry, "The Japs are not getting my money, we are going to spend it." He sent the Malay orderly out to buy all the booze that he could, and this guy came back with bottles of all sorts of alcoholic liquor. Old **Jimmy** said, "We can't drink it like this," and somebody mentioned the baby's bath in the hospital laboratory and so we got the baby's bath, and emptied all the bottles into the baby's bath, sat around the baby's bath and just drank until we fell off the little low stools which were part of the ward furniture.

All the booze was mixed up in the baby's bath?

Yes, it was the most horrible colour you have even seen in your life, some port wine in it and we mixed it all up and just drank it, it was booze. I had my share but was not as bad as some of the others. Old **Jimmy**, he was away with the fairies.

I bet he was.

The next morning the Japs walked in and we all had hangovers and so then it was a case we eventually became prisoners of war. The Jap Officer walked in, he spoke to me first and held a pistol at my temple, and asked me what was wrong with me and I told him. I thought this is it, "Goodbye Mum and Dad," nothing happened. I opened my eyes and he was doing the same to the next guy and he did it to everybody and finally walked out and said, "You are prisoners of war from now on." I suppose in some ways we were lucky, but that was mental torture. We were lucky.

Did you stay there?

We stayed there for about 6 or 7 weeks until they decided what they were going to do with us and from then on we were separated from the women and food became very scarce. It was hand to mouth existence, we were always continually hungry and they would drop in bread rolls every now and again.

The Japanese?

The Japanese withdrew the guards and they put Indonesian police on guarding us and of course we weren't allowed out of the compound. Eventually one morning, they rounded us all up, put us on the backs of trucks and transported us across Sumatra to Padang on the other coast and we stopped there the night. That was my first experience of sleeping on hard concrete with no clothes.

You were mobile at this stage?

I was getting pretty mobile, I had thrown away my crutches and I was fairly mobile, my wound had healed thanks to the Doc. We were transported from Padang right up through central Sumatra to the port of Belawan, the port of the city of Medan. I think we were destined for the Burma rail road. British submarine activity was pretty strong in the Malacca Strait and the Japs couldn't afford to take us any further and so they imprisoned us in a big camp in Medan, that's where we spent two years.

In Sumatra?

In Sumatra, yes. Medan is the capital of Sumatra.

Now was this a big camp?

It was quite a large camp, and a lot of Dutch people in there.

How many people in the camp?

I suppose there were Australians, British, about five Kiwis and a lot of Dutch, there would be close to 2,000 people. We were billeted in log huts. They were actually Dutch Army Barracks that the Japs had commandeered and all we had to sleep on were hard boards. Each sleeping space was 2 feet x 6 feet and it was hard to get to sleep at times, especially if the guy next to you was restless, but we got used to it, eventually.

Were you put to work during the day?

Yes, we did all sorts of jobs, we did all sorts of things and we became the greatest thieves in the world. You can use your imagination on that one. We would pinch anything, not off our mates in the POW camp, but from outside.

The Aussies were good. I was with the Aussies for quite a while and then the English.

The Aussies were good at that were they?

Oh yes, we all were, I was too. I was tortured because I was caught thieving vegetables to bring into the sick bay. Our Camp Commander was an old farmer. He was a Colonel and he used to get drunk every night and he would wave his sword around. He was quite an eccentric old fellow, but quite harmless. The first few months of prisoner of war life they left us alone, mainly, except for punishment.

Did they?

Yes, they just guarded us and counted us. They used to bring the food in, we got a lot of rice, fish and vegetables and stuff like that for the first three or four months and it wasn't too bad, except we had no clothes, they didn't give us anything.

Were you entirely naked?

Not quite. I had the resemblance of a pair of shorts, that's all and the lice got into them and they used to itch like mad.

Any footwear?

Yes, we had wooden clogs. There was a Dutchman with a bandsaw. He developed a workshop in the camp. This Dutchman was a resident of Medan and apparently the Japs allowed him to bring in a bandsaw and he used to cut these clogs, shoes with a strap across the toe and we used to wear those, but only when we were in Medan. Things started to get tough after that and from then on it is a hell of a long story. The Japs never issued any clothing or footwear to us except a type of loin cloth, a long rectangular piece of cotton cloth with tapes attached to one end, which was worn as a type of 'G' string.

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**We are resuming discussion with Laurie Hurdell on Tuesday, 7th February 1995
at Laurie's delightful house at Lincoln near Christchurch**

I think one of the first things we may have overlooked in the first tape is your number, Laurie?

My number is NZD3012. I have never forgotten it, nobody forgets his official number.

That's right. Laurie, one of the things you told me about when I was here last time was the fact in the early days you and another sailor went to be interviewed by a Naval Officer as to the possibility of your becoming a commissioned officer?

Yes, I can well remember that, we were interviewed by this Warrant Officer a commissioned officer in those days. He called the two of us together, the other person I know very well, he is a friend of mine. He said to me, "What school did you go to?" I said, "Carterton District High School." He turned to the other guy and he said, "What school did you go to?" and the other guy said, "Christ College in Christchurch," He turned to me and he said, "I don't want to see you any more," That's the outcome of that. The other guy became a Lieutenant eventually and was in charge of a gunboat in the Mediterranean somewhere, he is now in Christchurch and I see and play golf with his occasionally.

What is the chap's name, Laurie, do you remember?

Yes, his name is Arthur Wagner.

Just resuming now from our last discussions, tell us about how you got to the main POW Camp in 1942, around March I think it was, wasn't it?

It was March, I was captured in March 1942 at a place I think I mentioned, a town on the banks of the Indragiri River in Sumatra called Rengat. I was wounded and had been in this island hospital, and then I was in hospital in Rengat, a native hospital where the Japanese came in and took us prisoner. We suffered a lot of mental torture at that stage and they were very brutal towards us. They left us alone for a little while, six weeks later they came in and said, "We are moving to North Sumatra." There were 80 of us, wounded personnel and a Medical Officer and they loaded us on to the open truck and we moved to Padang on the other coast of Sumatra, where we slept on concrete for two nights. Then they shipped us on a three day journey to Medan in North Sumatra. We were installed in a camp at Belawan which is the port of Medan, 11 miles from Medan and we were installed there in little huts waiting to be shipped to the Burma railroad. Apparently the submarine activity in the Malacca Strait was so great, we found out later, that they decided to keep us in Sumatra. They transferred us into Medan proper and we were ensconced in a native Army barracks where the Dutch had billeted Indonesian soldiers. It was a huge barracks and we were there for two years. We were sheltered in permanent huts, long huts where we slept on bed boards. We had a galley or very large cookhouse and we lived on rice and whatever food we could get. In the beginning in early 1942 things weren't so bad. They brought in quite a bit of food and fruit to us. The Japanese Commanding Officer at that stage was an old man, an old ex-farmer. He was a Colonel and very ancient and he used to get drunk on saki every night. He wanted us to establish a garden, which we did, but unfortunately we didn't get much out of the garden because as we harvested the crops, the Jap guards would sell it to the natives and so we didn't get a lot out of it, but we used to pinch a lot of fruit and vegetables. Whilst there I was caught bringing into the camp stolen vegetables. I brought them in for the hospital and that was one time that I was tortured and they punished me very severely over that. They hung me up by the arms behind my back with just my toes touching the concrete. I have no recollection what happened after that because I fainted into

oblivion, thank goodness. Eventually I was cut down and taken into hospital. We had one big hut in this compound we used for a hospital. I was cut down by **Dr. Kirkwood** and I still suffer with shoulder injuries, shoulder pain. That was just one of those incidents. We were there for about two years and we did all sorts of jobs like working in petrol dumps. I can well remember filling barrels of petrol from petrol tankers, rail tankers that the Japs had shunted along. There were only two guards at this particular time on us and so we had great opportunities for sabotage. We used to sabotage their petrol, we put sugar in the petrol. We used to get sugar, we used to get stones, gravel, mud, whatever we could find and as we went along we put a handful or two or three handfuls in the drum and fill it up with petrol. We must have ruined many Japanese engines.

Some satisfaction in doing that?

We got some satisfaction out of that, indeed we did. They never twigged, it was amazing. We couldn't believe how stupid they were.

We did all sorts of jobs. We used to work at Belawan, the port of Medan and we would load sisal into Godowns and load scrap iron and all the rest of it. It used to be amazingly funny, these railway trucks would come in and they would be worked by Indonesians, flat tops on their rail. They had a big railway, a big shunting yard at Belawan and they used to gather up this scrap iron. We made a bargain with the Japanese guards that two men carried one piece of scrap iron, because some of the stuff was pretty heavy. It used to look awfully funny with two guys walking along, carrying a tin lid. It seems silly now but those things happened. We did that job for quite a while. We built a race course for them. They were going to have races, what happened I don't know. We cleared a big area of Mimosa scrub for the Japs to grow grass for cattle, they established a cattle ranch. We cleared all this Mimosa scrub and captured a lot of 5 to 8 foot snakes in that area and we supplemented the rations with these snakes. We would tie them on a big pole, take them back to the camp, kill and skin them, gut them and put them in the pot and make a stew.

Take them back alive?

Yes, we would take them back alive and there was a great ceremony of the dispatching of these poor reptiles, but it was protein for us because we didn't get much protein. We got a lot of rice and Tapioca. We used to get, in this particular camp, great sacks of Tapioca flour. The cooks used to make it up into a type of porridge and we had this first thing in the morning. They would boil it and as it thickened it went just like paperhanger glue. The cooks put a little bit of palm sugar in it to try to sweeten it up a bit. We used to get a dollop of that on our plate. My plate consisted of half a pineapple tin I made myself, cut it and bent the edges over and I had a utensil to eat out of. I had a spoon. I don't know where the hell I got the spoon, but I lived fairly well in those days on Tapioca flour. We would go out on a working party and they might bring a bit of rice and fish out for lunch and then we would have rice and whatever at night when we got back to camp.

During those days at Medan Camp, we witnessed some most peculiar things. We witnessed a Japanese Officer who came to the hut one night and called for the hut commander who was a British senior NCO, and from his tunic he pulled out a photo of Churchill. He said, "My present to you." You could never fathom the Japanese mind.

What an extraordinary thing to do!

It was very extraordinary. I just couldn't make this out. Anyhow, we hung the photo up just above the door and he became quite friendly with the Commander of the hut. He used to give us little privileges. They brought a shop in and we used to bargain various bits of clothing for bananas, fruit and that sort of thing. He was transferred from us after a few months and I believe he was hung (sic) as a war criminal because he turned very nasty towards the end of the war. He was in charge of Changi.

Is that so?

Yes, a bloke called **Takahashi**. When we first met him he was quite pleasant, although one day there was a Dutch working party out. They came in and he pulled out his revolver and threatened to shoot three of them. He fired just between their heads with his revolver, but that was just a bit of mental torture.

How many in the camp?

There must have been about three thousand in the camp.

How many New Zealanders?

There were five of us New Zealanders.

Only five?

Yes

Out of those five....?

There are only two of us alive.

Two Navy?

Two Navy. There were four Navy guys in that camp – there was **Charlie Hood**, ex **MONOWAI**, **Ivan Pardoc**, ex **DRAGONFLY**, **Noel Betley** and myself ex **GRASSHOPPER** and a fellow called **Guy McLeod** who was a Malay Volunteer. He was a school teacher in Malaya before the war and so he was captured with us. He was a brilliant guy and he used to operate the radio, the secret radio that we had in the camp.

He was a Kiwi?

He was a Kiwi. He came back to New Zealand and I believe committed suicide within a couple of years. **Ivan Pardoc** died over there whilst working on the Sumatra Railway. **Charlie Hood** was killed on a Jap ship which was torpedoed by a British submarine whilst transporting POWs from Belawan to Singapore. There are now only **Noel Betley** and myself still alive.

[To be continued in January 2019.]

"ESCAPE FROM SINGAPORE."
The Diary of M.C. Hay M.C.S. Ag. Chief Inspector of Mines.
L/Bdr. 7907 FMSVF Light Battery
By kind permission of his niece Alison Keating

On Friday, 25th October 1941, **Brigadier Crawford C.R.E. 3rd Corps**, came into my office and asked me to get hold of six dragline excavators for him. They were to be used in construction of an anti-tank ditch north of Jitra. He said it was extremely important but should be done if possible without interfering with actual tin production. I got several members of the Mines Dept. to work on the matter, ascertaining which machines could most conveniently be withdrawn from the mines, and had my inspectors of machinery vetting them for service. By Monday, 28th October, I was able to ring up 3rd Corps and inform them that I had three excavators available and hoped to get the rest by the end of the week. I was answered by some other officer who appeared to have no knowledge of the matter at all and who, when it was explained to him, said shortly, "We don't want them."

On Wednesday, 30th October, I had an urgent call from **Brig. Crawford** saying that the machines were wanted urgently. We managed to get all that were required, in good working order, delivered within the next ten days.

Early in November, **Lt. Espie R.E.** of IXth Division (sic) called to ask for my co-operation in the matter of securing stocks of explosives on mines. On looking into the records of the Dept., I found that early in the year my predecessor had supplied IXth Division H.Q. with a map showing the location of every stock of explosives over 50lb. held by mines throughout the F.M.S. It took IXth Division some time to trace this map which, I understand, an officer had taken with him on transfer. The Dept. was short staffed and had taken on many extra duties but, with the co-operation of the Police, arrangements were made for securing and properly dealing with all stocks of explosives on mines except on **Sungei Lembing**, which was left to be arranged between the Military authorities and the Manager.

On 1.XII (sic) the F.M.S.V.F. was mobilised including, of course, the Light Battery. I was not called up as I could not have left my office at that moment. Most of the Mines Dept. was called up and on 2.XII the remaining members of the Staff met in my office and discussed plans for carrying on necessary work. For some time past I had had on the stocks a scheme for financing the Mines by advancing against ore, to keep them going in the event of there being no market in Singapore. But it was incomplete as I could not get a decision out of Govt. as to whether the tin was to be stored in the form of ore, or smelted and stored as tin. On this question depended the financial arrangements and the question of storage space available.

On 7th December, the balloon went up. I immediately reported to my Unit and was given one payleave from day to day. There was still plenty of work for the Mines Dept. as we hoped it would be possible to keep the output of tin up to 60% or so in spite of blackout. We arranged to get the aforesaid scheme in force as from 15.XII although there was still a 'market' in Singapore, (to the best of my recollection) all the first week. About noon on Sunday 14.XII the Federal Secretary rang me up to say that all transport of ore was forbidden. By Monday morning 15.XII, the work of the Mines Dept. had ceased, except for A.R.P. and other defence work in which the Staff were acting on their own or under other authority than the C.I.M.

I got in touch with the battery which was then on **Kramat Pulai Mine** (Perak) and informed **Capt. Akhurst**, 2nd in command, that my civil job had 'packed up' and he could call me up, which he thereupon did. I authorized the S.I.M. Selangor to phone my wife, went home and picked up my kit, got a taxi and went off to **Kramat Pulai** and reported at about 18.45 hours and took over my job as G.P.Os 'Ack' Right Section. The gun position was about 6 miles away from the camp on the road to Ipoh, not far from the rock temples. Our O.P. was on one of the limestone cliffs and the entry was through the temple, after which one climbed up to the top floor of the temple then out through a hole and up a rope ladder which had been fixed in position by **Gnr. Dobree**, an expert rock climber.

To avoid giving the gun position away, the gun crews and staff left camp at 5.00 hours and returned after dark. At **Kramat Pulai** we had more comfortable quarters than we ever saw afterwards, the only difficulty was finding one's way about a camp which most of us had never seen by daylight, and in a mine. One morning, as we were going out, we saw an Indian infantry unit halted by the roadside with their M.T. not parked under cover. We thought this looked like inviting air attack and in an hour or two they got it, the Jap planes machine gunning. We saw the results later, several lorries on fire but I don't think there were many casualties.

Before I arrived, the Battery staff was at the bare minimum – one range taker, one B.C. ack., and one G.P.O. ack., so they were quite glad to see me arrive. We had no action in that position only firing a few registering shots. We heard of tank attacks in the North and our falling back from the **Krian River**, and the word was passed round that we were to stay in position whatever happened and "Shoot it out" with S.A.S. if necessary. Enemy planes bombed Ipoh and the oil tanks at the aerodrome, but although they often flew over us, they never

spotted us. We had the guns sandbagged and, of course, nets over them and we were under rubber. We only saw our planes in the air once – Brewster Buffaloes of which we had heard so much – but they were at a manifest disadvantage with the Japanese Recce bombers.

22.XII. We got orders to hand over our 3.7 Hows and take over 18lbs instead. The guns arrived, one ancient relic with wooden wheels and no dial sight which we named "Percy" and three comparatively modern with balloon tyres. We spent the afternoon looking for new gun positions for the 18lbs as a 25lb troop was coming to take over our gun position.

23.XII. But next morning we got orders to retire to Tapah and moved that night with the 18lbs.

24.XII. We rested AM in the school and PM had a little practice drill with the 18lbs and the new 360 degrees dial sight. To co-ordinate this with our old 180 degrees directors took considerable thought. The morale of the Battery was rather low as we felt that taking away the guns we had been trained with for years and giving us these ancient weapons meant that the authorities never meant to make any serious use of us.

25.XII. Next day we continued practice and that evening **A.C. Jomaron**, who was then officiating as D.O. Tapah, and my brother **Alistair** came along and took me out to dinner.

26.XII. The Battery moved early to K.L. but at the request of the D.O., **Sgt. Ross** and I remained behind to assist in collecting and organising Tamil labour. My brother **A.W. Hay M.C.S.** was doing the same thing in regard to Chinese labour. We spent the day visiting estates and villages south of Tapah and found the labour force were demoralised owing to lack of leadership and were living in the jungle and looting shops. We spoke to some of them and they all professed their willingness to work if the 'Duraïs' (Europeans) came back. We advised the Military Authorities through **Major Cockman** (to whom we reported), to get the senior planters out of the L.D.C. and back on to the estates, and to recall one or two who had been told to evacuate and to employ the labour pending its being actually required for military works on digging shelter trenches or any work which would keep them employed and, of course, to give them food and advances. By next morning several hundred were back at work as a result of this policy and as the military authorities announced that they were going to make a stand north of Kampar and hoped to hold the line for six months, we felt we had assisted in a useful job of work.

Unfortunately, the events of the next week rendered it all useless.

27.XII. **Ross** and I left Tapah for K.L. 17.00 hours calling on **Neave M.C.S.** who was then Ag. Resident PK at **Tg. Malim**, and took some dispatches for the Federal Secretary. (**Neave** was later on killed at Muar while acting as liaison officer). We slept that night at my house in K.L. and rejoined the Battery at the Methodist Trade School, Batu Road, next morning. We were pleased to find that "Percy" had been exchanged for a more efficient weapon. The morale of the battery was still rather low when **Brigadier Moir** came round and told us we should shortly have some work to do, and a few minutes after that we got orders to move to Klang, and bivouacked on **Bukit Raja Estate**. We were told we would be attached to a regular troop of the 73rd RA and the CO **Major Tyler** gave us a short and inspiring address. He described the fighting in Kelantan and told us what to expect in the way of infiltration tactics and that we must aim at always being ready to move in 15 minutes, and finally cheered us up very much by saying that he could not wish for a better weapon to co-operate with his own 4.5 Hows than the 18pdr.

28.XII. Next day we moved to Kuala Selangor and for the next few days we were moving constantly and trying to live up to **Major Tyler's** precepts. A battalion of Jats under **Colonel Tester** was in Kuala Selangor.

2.1.42. The Right Section (two guns) was on **Shalimar Estate** (the Left Section having by that time moved to Port Swettenham). At 14.40 hours we got stand to and heard that a Jap convoy was approaching the mouth of the river at Kuala Selangor. We moved off shortly after and occupied a position on Kuala Selangor hill and went into action at 18.30 hours. A number of small boats escorted by a coastal steamer were attempting to enter the river. The 73rd were in position already and were just opening fire as our guns went up the hill. I was left in charge of the ammo. lorry at the foot of the hill so did not see the actual shooting. The Jats, who were holding the village, were putting up small arms fire all along the water front but I could not see whether anything had entered the river or not. The gunners told me afterwards they were certain no boat got in. Jap planes were circling overhead and letting off bursts of m.g. fire at the village and the road, but made no attempt to silence the guns. **Gnr. Tilley** was hit by a ricochet rifle bullet from one of the boats and **Capt. Brenford Jones** of the 73rd was killed in a lorry about half way down the road. These were the only casualties on our side. The ammo. lorry was parked under a heavy canopied tree so the planes never spotted it. An officer of the Jats told me that a small landing had been made, so I had the lorry turned round in case we had to move.

The District Officer (**York**) came up in his car and spoke to me. He had the Treasury cash and confidential documents with him and he asked me (as his senior officer in the M.C.S.) what I thought he ought to do. I told him he should stay in the village and keep in touch with the infantry commander. He said that he had been to see the infantry commander who had said that he was "too busy." I said that though this might be the case at the moment, he would be certain to want some assistance from the local authorities as soon as the action was over, and advised him to stay with me as it was a good central position. Shortly after, the

firing ceased and an officer came along enquiring if anyone knew where a telephone operator was to be found so I referred him to the D.O.

The guns had sunk four boats and hit the steamer which made off with the rest of the boats. Whether any boat did get in I never ascertained.

3.1.42. That night we occupied Kuala Selangor hill and at 3.30 hours some boats were seen entering the river, we opened fire on these and I think scored a hit but it was too dark to see the result. The boats disappeared, whether out to sea or into some creek I could not see.

For the next few days we were moving to and fro generally under cover by day and occupying positions at night. Our officers who, of course, knew the country, told Regulars that the party repulsed at Kuala Selangor would probably try to land at **Sabak Bernam**. No notice was taken of this, and that is exactly what they did. That landing was unopposed. Meanwhile there had been another landing at Telok Anson and a Japanese force was approaching **Rantau Panjang**.

5.1.42. At 19.00 hours the C.O. of the 3rd Indian Cavalry (Armoured Cars) stationed at **Kampong Kuantan** asked our C.O. (**Capt. Walker** ag. C.O. as **Major Wilshaw** was in hospital with malaria) to destroy the bridge at **Rantau Panjang** by gunfire. **Capt. Walker** said he was not able to put down fire on the bridge without even a chance to "reccy" a gun position in daylight. Fortunately, as our troops were still on the further side of that bridge.

6.1.42. I went with **Capt. Walker** on a recce. to **Rantau Panjang** and met **Major "Pat" Hayward** who was trying to organize a stand there. He told me later (in Sumatra) that he would have succeeded "If he could have got the Australians to fight."

7.1.42. We occupied Jeram beach and a good time was had by the sandflies.

8.1.42. A.M. I was in the O.P. on Jeram Hill. Jap planes made an attack on the road and set fire to the village just north of the hill. That P.M. I was at our H.Q. when a Jat orderly came and said that **Colonel Tester** had sent him to see who was at the end of our wire. Our C.O. then got in touch with **Col. Tester** and it appeared that the line had gone back to Klang, the Jats were about to leave and but for **Col. Tester's** seeing our wire on the road we should have been left behind. We heard that a landing had been made near Kapar. No one knew the numbers landed but the highest estimate was SIXTEEN. There are only small creeks running into the mangrove belt at that locality so the landing could not possibly have been very large. We got orders to retire by a circuitous route and moved after dark to a rubber estate just north of Klang. It was one of the features of this incredible campaign that if a handful of Japanese were reported in our rear, the whole British army must perforce retire – infantry, guns and armoured cars – often without firing a shot.

9.1.42. We spent hours waiting for orders. The left section was in action at Port Swettenham. Having an opportunity to use the telephone, I rang up my house in K.L. My boy answered. He said everything was all right. "Mem" had gone to Seremban but was coming back. The two "Tuans" who were staying in the house had had breakfast and gone out. About this time the following verse composed, I believe, by **Puckridge** of the Selangor Battalion was very popular:

"Never before have so many
Been ----- about by so few
And neither the few nor the many
Have ---- all idea what to do."

It was rather grimly near the truth as we were to realize later, but it amused us all at that time. We all believed that soon the "rot" would be stopped and a proper line taken up and held.

10.1.42. P.M. We began to retreat and on 14.1 we arrived at Pontian Kechil and bivouacked two days.

16.1.42. Occupied position at Ayer Baloi with 9-1 Gurkhas, and for the next few days we occupied various positions with the same battalion.

17.1.42. Occupying position at Pontian Besar. There are two bridges, one to the North spans a small creek running about 50 yards inland, easily turned. The other, a little south of this, a large wooden bridge spans the Pontian Besar River running several miles inland and having muddy banks, a real obstacle. We found the sappers mining the former.

Lt. Ward who was commanding our right section protested that the other bridge was the appropriate bridge to mine and the sapper officer said – "But it's such a H... of a job to mine a wooden bridge" (quite true) - but hardly a tactical reason. He was persuaded to change his plans. One day when taking up an anti-tank position we thought it would be a good idea to rig up a dummy gun to draw fire and **Sgt. Ross** put such a good effort that for a moment it took in the C.R.A. who came round with **Major-Gen Heath**. We heard of the taking of Batu Pahat and fully expected an attack down the coast road but none ever came.

23.1.42. We occupied a position on the beach at Pontian Kechil close to the District Officer's bungalow. We were attached to a regular troop, but I forget it's name. We dug gun pits and sandbagged them.

26.1.42. The C.R.A. came round and said, "If we can hold on here for ten days it's in the bag," but the next morning we got orders to move the same night.

27.1.42. About dusk, we opened fire on a vessel moving north which would not answer our challenge, putting one shell across her bows. The Major of the Regular Troop came up and said very angrily, "Who fired that gun?" When told what had happened by our B.C he appeared to doubt the existence of the vessel. We showed it to him through a telescope and at last he said, "Ah yes, I see, well anyhow he wasn't trying to land." His own O.P. had never reported it. By this time it was too dark to fire on her again. Apparently in this campaign one must not fire on one's enemy unless he is actually "trying to land." **[To be continued in January 2019.]**

THE CHRISTMAS PRESENT

By Freddy Bloom

With thanks to Ruth Rollitt

A week after her marriage in Singapore, Mrs. Bloom found herself a captive of the Japanese. There, thrown together in misery, Occidental, Chinese and Sikh found that prison could not confine the human spirit. In Britain on Christmas day, 1949, it is good perhaps to reflect on another Christmas in a far-off land just six years ago

Singapore, Christmas 1943, I woke up and watched them drawing back the last of the blackout curtains from the outside. This meant that soon the glaring lights that had been on all night would go out. I tried to stretch my legs and kicked **Reddy**. He did not stir, and vaguely I wondered whether he was unconscious or just sleeping the deep sleep of exhaustion. It did not really matter; in either case it would do him good.

I turned my head and looked at the Sikh who was lying next to me. Poor **Mahinder Singh**. When they brought him in he was tall and strong and magnificent. Now he was tall and skinny and just very young. His beard and long, coiled hair were no longer sleek and shiny. His smooth brown skin had a greenish hue. Perhaps dark skins turned green when fair skins became pale.

I looked at my own hands. They were quite beautiful. Slender, smooth and white, with nails that I had carefully bitten into a good shape.

Just as well that I could not see the rest of me – except my feet. I had seen so much of them recently. They had made us all take off our shoes as we entered the cell. None of us had stockings or socks. Who would think of wearing such things after 22 months of internment? Anyway, most of the women in Singapore had gone barelegged even before the Japanese came.

I thought of the silly line of shoes parked just outside the cell. Sixteen pairs, all shapes and sizes, but mostly *trompahs*, native wooden-soled, one-strapped sandals. My own were real shoes, white leather with crepe soles, and they would have to last me until the war was over. I certainly was not wearing them out at the moment. Perhaps they would not fit the next time I was called out for questioning. The last time there had been difficulty putting them on. I looked at my feet again. They were white and fat and dimpled, like a baby's. That was beri-beri. The shoes would have to fit. Everybody always made a proper business of putting on shoes when called out. It gave you a chance to do something outside the daily routine, and it gave you a chance to collect your wits and fight the blue funk that filled every inch as you thought of the questioning to come.

"We Would Show Them – But What?"

This was Christmas day. Perhaps nobody would be taken out for questioning. What a hope! The Nips would pile it on thick just to show us. This was Christmas day and we would show them. But what could we show them? This was the Kempeitai, the Japanese Gestapo, and we were their prisoners. Oh well, it was Christmas day and I was going to wash my hair.

I looked across to the w.c. in the corner. **Dr. Choo** was washing. He was always washing. Washing had become an obsession with him. Other things had become an obsession with him, but it was hard to know what they were for he talked so little. Of course, the Nips did not allow us to talk, but he was the only one who did not disobey them. He was scared. So were we all, but it affected each in a different way. He seemed to sink more and more into himself. The other day, when **Mac** had accidentally bumped into him, he had almost shrieked, "Don't touch me. Don't touch me. I'm superstitious." **Mac** has barked back. "I'm no devil, fool."

Mac was a dour Scotsman. Imprisonment had made him more dour, more Scots, and, somehow, more of a man. **Mac** was hard. **Dr. Choo** was not hard. He was just a hard-working Chinese doctor who had suddenly been torn from his work, his wife, and his children. He swore he did not know why. I looked at the w.c. again. **Choo** was now using it. I looked away.

Mahinder Singh woke up. He rolled his head on his stiff neck and started to massage his body. He turned to me and smiled. "*May Kismas, memsahib.*" "*Merry Christmas, Mahinder.*"

"Today Kismas. Today good day. Today all go home. Catch big eating." After 75 days of the Kempeitai, **Mahinder** was still the complete optimist. He was my friend. We had played a great joke on the Japanese. This joke was our bond; it was our strength.

Mahinder and the Mouse.

They had brought the young Sikh policeman in a few days after me and they had insisted that he sit next to me during the day and sleep next to me at night. This, they reckoned, would be most degrading to the proud Sikh and to me, a white woman, the only woman in the cell with fifteen men of different races. Degradation meant nothing to

me, but at the start I was a bit frightened. I tried to stay as far away from him as possible, but that was not easy, with sixteen people in a cell 10 feet by 18.

The first night we lay next to each other I woke because a mouse had slid up between the warped floorboards and slipped up my shirt. My femininity had never included a horror of mice, but to have one scuttling round my ribs under my shirt was another thing and I sat up with a start. We had to lie so close that this woke **Mahinder**, who sat up too. Just then, the mouse leaped out of my bosom and scurried away. I was shaking with horror. The young Sikh put a hand on my shoulder, smiled a lovely paternal smile and whispered "*Thik hai, memsahib. It is only a little mice.*"

At that point the Nip sentry on night duty screeched at us and we both lay down quickly. From that moment we were friends. We never let the Japs know. When they were near, **Mahinder** and I would play at being enemies, and this was the best game we had. When they beat him up, I nursed him. When I was ill, he took off his shirt at night and put it over me.

Mahinder's greatest gesture was when he lent me his comb. The Sikh religion forbids men cutting their hair, so they all have beards and silky black tresses, which often reach below their waists. The hair is then combed up, twisted, and coiled into a knot on the crown of the head and held in place with an adroitly inserted small wooden comb. Ordinarily a turban is worn. They had taken away **Mahinder's** turban in case he tried to hang himself with it (they had removed the elastic from my knickers for the same reason), but had left him his comb. His gesture meant a great deal.

Thereafter, he lent it to me every day, but he would never lend it to anyone else. **Mahinder** had proved himself, as mentioned, my friend and here we were wishing each other a merry Christmas. Then we both looked towards the w.c. That w.c.! How our lives revolved about it. It was no ordinary toilet. It had no wooden seat, and instead of the ordinary flush arrangement, it had a tap that could be turned on fast or slow. When the bowl was full, it automatically drained itself. This was a very practical arrangement, and for a time I thought of having a similar fixture in our home in London, until it occurred to me that in England we did not use toilets for such varied purposes. In the Smith Street lockup in Singapore the w.c. was used for washing, for drinking, as well as for our basic needs.

Initiation

When they had first flung me into the cell with all these strange men, I had sat for some hours until it had become imperative to catch the attention of the sentry who marched up and down outside the bars that formed one wall of the cell. Since he spoke no English, I pointed to the w.c. and then to myself. He obviously understood, for he went out and spoke to the corporal on duty, and within a few minutes a Japanese voice bellowed, "*If the woman wishes to wash, drink, or pass water, there is a toilet in the corner of the cell.*"

The embarrassment of the men about me was so strong that it broke through my own. When I eventually got up, each man seemed to try to disappear within himself. Now, after so many weeks, we all took each other very much for granted.

Across the cell, **Walter** was reading his Bible. **Walter** was, in some respects, a privileged prisoner. He was an Englishman who had lived for years in Nagasaki, spoke fluent Japanese, and understood Japanese customs and manners. He had been our camp interpreter and had done a wonderful job until he had been arrested for running a strictly forbidden radio. Now he still acted as interpreter in our urgent demands for medicines, foods, and the barest essentials of life. Most of the time his efforts were in vain, but any vaguely human touches that were ever shown us by the Nips were almost always due to his efforts. He was a deeply religious man and had somehow obtained permission to bring his Bible into the cell. As I watched him, he looked up and smiled. [To be continued in January 2019]



WATCHING: "*Between the two rows of cells, the Japanese sentries marched up and down. We made rude remarks about them*"

THE JAPANESE ADVANCE

British troops had for some months prior to the invasion been stationed on the west near the Thailand border. The main north-western force was in Kedah, but other forces were in the vicinity of Kroh further inland from which there was access into Thailand by a road which was later used with great advantage by the enemy. The forces were light. Delay took place, possibly due to getting orders, and when the British eventually advanced into Thailand, they soon contacted the enemy at Padang Besar and Betong. The enemy forces were found to be in vastly superior numbers and the British retreated destroying bridges and objects of military value. In their advance and retreat the British had some assistance from trains. In the meantime, reinforcements were being rushed up. The first defence line was established along the Anak Bukit River in advance of Alor Star.

An illuminating feature of the potential value of unofficial civil co-operation was the admirable attempt of a small body of British miners employed on the south-west coast of Thailand near Kedah. These miners had organised themselves for war and possessed a small arsenal with smuggled weapons. Rendezvous was made at each mine and when war broke out, by secret tracks the small force concentrated on the local aerodrome and soon had it under control. With the failure of the British advance into Thailand, their plans collapsed and they perforce had to escape.

The tactics of the British, throughout their retreat from Thailand to Johore was to establish successive defence lines mainly along rivers running from the mountainous interior to the sea with concentrations in the vicinity of roads. The Anak Bukit River runs through narrow and open country most of which is under rice cultivation. Infiltration of the enemy through the loose defence line caused retreat to the Pattani River. Similar tactics forced retreat to the Muda River and left the Alor Star and Sungei Pattani aerodromes to the occupation of the Japanese. The defence line drawn up along the Muda River virtually constituted the defence of Penang.

During the retreat from the north, reinforcements had been regularly arriving from the south and a determined attempt was made to establish a line which would be sufficiently strong to counter any frontal penetrations and also deal with troops who might be able to infiltrate through or around to the rear. The optimism of the British commander of this northeast area apparently induced him to withdraw the regular troops from Penang for the support of his new line of defence.

Reinforcements brought the strength of the British to one division. A road which had been recently completed by the Thailand government was used by the Japanese to pour troops from Thailand through the mountains to the east of the Muda River defence line. This road, though narrow, was capable of carrying motor traffic. The defenders in this area were overcome by vastly superior forces and general infiltration along the right of the line forced the whole line to be withdrawn. The East Surrey Regiment fought magnificently, but suffered terrible losses in trying to hold the enemy. The retreat from the Muda River decided the fate of Penang.

Penang enjoyed an excellent strategic position and commanded the northern approach to the Malacca Straits. For days, Japanese bombed and machine-gunned the commercial areas. Shopkeepers without air protection closed their shops and sought protection in the hills. Citizens without food opened up shops and looted. Labour had not been trained or induced to work under perilous conditions and left their employment. The civil service was not a war service and appeared paralysed. Oriental administration officers looked to the safety of their families. Government and municipal departments ceased to function. The population was bewildered and there was an entire absence of any forceful leadership or control. General instructions to Volunteers in defence positions were that enemy planes were not to be fired on unless orders were given. Orders to fire on enemy planes were never received but on rare occasions the general instructions were disobeyed. Eventually, evacuation was ordered. Civilian wives complained that the wives of the civil servants received priority. Americans complained that the evacuation was advised only to British Europeans. Orientals complained that only Europeans were allowed to get away. What is clear is that guards were placed on the jetty and only Europeans were allowed to leave on the evacuation steamers. Officials of the civil service left without providing for any control of the population pending the arrival of the Japanese. Most tragic was the leaving of the Chinese leaders of anti-Japanese associations to the tender mercies of the Japanese. Disastrous in its effects was a failure to prevent the resources of Penang from falling into Japanese hands. Penang was occupied about the 16th December.

The absence of any real attempt to prevent the enormous resources of Penang from falling into the enemy's possession exemplifies the entire failure of the civil and military authorities to appreciate the probability and the consequences of a successful invasion. Apart from large stocks of foodstuffs which were not distributed, huge stocks of rubber and more than 2,000 tons of smelted tin were left behind and not even destroyed. Well constructed lighters and sampans which, even to the uninstructed, would have great military value, were not even sunk. The wireless station was pouring out Japanese propaganda within the week. There appeared to be no organized attempt to destroy objects of military value or to move essential requirements to safety.

The failure to defend Penang and the nature of the evacuation aroused bitter criticism of the military and civil authorities and provided excellent material for Japanese propaganda. The instructions for the evacuation of Europeans including officials appeared to have come from the military officer in command of the operations in North West Malaya. British prestige suffered a terrible shock. Sir Shenton Thomas, the Governor of the Straits Settlements, convened a meeting which was attended by representatives of the Oriental races. He advised these representatives that the evacuation which had taken place in Penang was without his cognizance and gave assurance against any similar repetition.

After Muda River, the defence line next formed was along the Krian River. This river flows southward to Taiping and the run of the river added depth to the defence line. This line was penetrated by small bodies of the enemy and also outflanked and retreat was again considered advisable.

A determined stand was made along the next defence line. This was drawn up along the Perak River. Ipoh and the famous Kinta Valley were now menaced. The Perak River is very wide and its southwards flow gives it great length. The Japanese concentrated on the east of the line. They poured in from Thailand strong forces along the new mountainous road to Kroh. From Kroh the Japanese got to the right of the British line by using an old narrow road in want of repair which had apparently been entirely forgotten by the British Command. This road brought the Japanese forces to Grik and the British line was turned at Grik. From their concentrations on the right of the British line, the enemy was able to send troops down the river on improvised rafts at weaker sections of the defence line. The defending forces fell back to the Slim and Bernam Rivers. The immediate control of Thailand territory which the Japanese obtained gave them some important advantages in addition to the advantage of being able to direct their attack along the main highway leading to Singapore. One of these advantages was the use of the mountain road referred to. By this road the Japanese were able to bring up large forces by motor transport to within a short distance of the right flanks of each of the successive defence lines along the Muda, the Krian and the Perak Rivers. Whilst these large forces were infiltrating around or breaking through along the east, the Krian and Perak lines on the west were successively threatened by infiltrating troops in small numbers who had landed along the west coast from small craft. These were some of the small craft which the British had left behind at Penang. The retreat to the Slim and Bernam Rivers left the town of Ipoh and the rich alluvial rice fields of the Kinta Valley to the enemy. The Japanese land advance to this new defence line was restricted to the main north-south road and they were not able to enjoy the benefit of any side road as in their attacks on the preceding defence lines. In the fighting in Upper Perak and Kedah, tanks had played a secondary part. At Slim River, they were used with great success. Under cover of darkness and by using estate roads, Japanese tanks evaded advanced positions in the vicinity of the main road and also evaded the anti-tank guns in support of the advanced positions. Proceeding by a circuitous route the tanks rejoined the main road, quickly got across the river bridge and broke through the main British positions. Some of the tanks were destroyed, but the British casualties were heavy. The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders lost heavily in this sector. Many troops were cut off and considerable transport and equipment was lost. Retreat was inevitable. The next line formed was known as the Kuala Selangor defence line. It ran roughly from Kuala Selangor, on the coast, eastward along the Selangor River with advanced positions at the Kuala Kubu crossroads. This line protected the Federal Capital of Kuala Lumpur and the rich rubber and tin resources in its vicinity. The area south of this line had been considerably developed during the previous fifty years and there were many large rubber estates, oil palm and coconut plantations. There were coastal roads and roads connecting coastal villages and towns with Kuala Lumpur and the main road leading to Singapore. Light shore defences had been constructed along the coast, south of Kuala Selangor. Using lighters and small craft which had been left behind in Penang, the Japanese succeeded in landing troops in small numbers at various places along the sea coast between Port Swettenham and Kuala Selangor. It is believed that in some cases the lighters and small craft were headed by specially constructed armoured lighters of shallow draft which the Japanese had brought overland through Thailand. Once landings were effected, the troops infiltrated through the light shore defences and were soon in a position to threaten communications. Landings increased and the threat to communications became much more serious. Again, retreat was decided upon. This retreat was a long retreat and left the whole of Selangor, Negri Sembilan and the settlement of Malacca to the enemy. It is a reasonable subject for comment that the British were not able to prevent cumbersome small craft from landing troops along the west coast. There was no Japanese fleet in the Strait of Malacca but the air supremacy of the enemy made any incursions by British naval vessels very hazardous. There were, however, numerous inlets and creeks along the coast with vegetation which would have provided adequate cover against air observation for fast patrol boats. The British had to depend on their shore defences for protection against landings of the enemy. It is suggested that if the shore defences had been adequate and had received assistance from numerous fast patrol boats operating at night, landings from lighters and small craft would have been made much more difficult and costly. Such landings could not have been unexpected as they had been effected with success along the coast of Perak. The area south of Kuala Selangor afforded much better opportunity than Perak for enemy troops infiltrating from the coast to cause damage. The main line of communication, as such, was nearer the coast, the area was intersected with roads and paths and there was an important aerodrome situated in the vicinity of Port Swettenham. Whilst the Japanese were advancing down the west coast of the peninsular, other Japanese forces were advancing down the east coast and keeping approximately level with the advance on the west. After their defeat at Khota Bharu, the British retreated to Kuala Krai. There is no road connection from Kuala Krai to the south, and for a distance of about 100 miles the railway runs through dense jungle, across wide rivers and through tunnels. The Indian Brigade retreated southward by means of the railway. Bridges and portions of the railway were destroyed by the British in the course of their retreat. The Japanese had air control and they had knowledge of the railway. It is difficult to understand why the Japanese did not destroy portions of the railway early and thus cut off the north eastern force from supplies and transport. Along the east coast, by making use of the seashore at low tide and ferries across rivers, it is possible to motor from Khota Bharu to the important town of Kuantan, in the vicinity of which, a large military aerodrome had been constructed. Trengganu was entirely undefended. A company of the Malay Regiment had been stationed at Dungan, but were withdrawn in the early part of November. With the Japanese in control of the north and rumours of an attack on Kuantan in the south, the resident European officials organized an evacuation for themselves. By means of jungle paths they made their way across country to a central road leading to Singapore. After the departure of the European officials, and before the arrival of the enemy, Malay Police released Japanese civilians from their internment and supplied them with arms. These Japanese civilians took control at Kemaman and Dungan and awaited the arrival of their compatriots.

The only coastal defences between Khota Bharu and Kuantan were just north of Kuantan. A Japanese column advanced along the coast towards the south of Trengganu and bypassed the shore defences near Kuantan by swinging inland. The aerodrome was attacked and occupied, the British forces retreating westward in the direction of Jerantut. Before withdrawal from the aerodrome, attempts were made to render the aerodrome unusable and to destroy equipment. The fact that after Japanese occupation, British bombers had to be sent to destroy such important installations as hangars, suggests that the efforts to destroy before abandonment were not altogether successful. Kuantan was occupied on the 5th January, 1942. From Kuantan, Japanese troops proceeded southward by road to Pekan at the mouth of the Pahang River. Small forces proceeded up river by river transport and penetrated as far inland as Temerloh. The only land access into Johore, south of Pekan, was by jungle tracks and seashore at low tide. Any further transport of large bodies of troops southward along the coast was clearly impossible except by sea.

THE BATTLE OF JOHORE

The peninsular narrows down to about 75 miles to the north of Johore. There is a road linking Muar and Batu Pahat, on the west coast, with Mersing on the east coast. This road runs through Kluang, at which a large military aerodrome had been constructed. Any land advance south would have to cross this road. Mersing on the east coast had direct road access to Singapore. Muar and Batu Pahat on the west coast had road access to the main central road leading to Singapore and more direct access to Singapore by a coastal road which swung around the south-west of the peninsular. Johore is well developed in the west, in the centre, and in the south and there are many intersecting roads and estate roads. The western coastal area is low lying and swampy.

Mersing has always been considered to be of great strategic importance. Its possession by an enemy with naval control would enable an attack to be launched against Singapore from the mainland and the communications of any force north of Johore to be cut. For months, Australian forces had been in the Mersing area. They had prepared strong defence positions mostly overlooking the sea. After the Japanese launched their attack in the north, all the oriental inhabitants in the vicinity of the defence area were evacuated.

The Johore defence line was drawn up along the Muar River with advanced parties at Gemas. Gemas is an important railway junction and is on the main central road to Singapore. The whole line was in advance of the road across the peninsular from Batu Pahat to Mersing. The Gemas area was held by the Australians with Indians in support. The Muar area was held by an Indian brigade. The coastal area to the south of Batu Pahat was held by troops from Great Britain with very little experience of Malaya. The remnants of the force which had been engaged in the long retirement from the north were sent back to Singapore for rest and reorganization.

In the Battle for Johore, the Japanese employed tactics similar to those employed in the battle for Selangor, but they enjoyed better access from the coast to the main British positions. Landings were made from small craft along the west coast and by infiltration, the Japanese acquired control of small areas and sniped at defensive positions. By direct attack and with the use of infiltrating troops, the Japanese acquired control of the ferry crossing at Muar River. An Australian battalion with auxiliary forces was rushed across to retrieve the position. These forces held up the main Japanese advance and destroyed a number of enemy tanks. They soon found themselves surrounded by small bodies of infiltration troops and were sniped at from all directions. A second Australian battalion was rushed across from Mersing, but it also found itself surrounded in the vicinity of the Bakri crossroads. Eventually, after heavy fighting the two Australian battalions managed to combine and together with the remnants of the Indian brigade retired in the direction of Yong Peng to the east. In the meantime, infiltration parties of Japanese had captured the village of Parit Sulong on the lower bank of the river and acquired control of the bridge across the river. Parit Sulong bridge was on the road of retreat and passage across this bridge was necessary if transport and equipment were to be saved and the wounded brought to safety. Many gallant, but unsuccessful, attempts were made to force a passage across the bridge. Casualties were mounting and the enemy was being reinforced. Orders were given to destroy transport and equipment. Escape of the remnants was effected through the jungle.

Whilst the attack was being launched at Muar, enemy landings from small craft were being effected further and further down the coast, and general infiltration was taking place eastward. The coastal area is particularly low-lying and suitable for infiltrating tactics. Control was obtained of road positions and general confusion created amongst the defending forces. There was a general retreat which was largely disorganized. Considerable quantities of equipment and transport fell to the enemy. The long expected east coast attack was not launched at Mersing, but at Endau, 25 miles north of Mersing, and a former centre of Japanese industry. Landings were effected from transports under naval protection with air cover. Attempted interception by Imperial naval and air forces was defeated with heavy loss. Most tragic in these operations was the loss of thirteen out of sixteen slow Wildebeest bombers. These bombers were ordered to attack in daylight without fighter escort. They did not even reach Endau but on the way were met by enemy fighters who swooped down and riddled the whole sixteen bombers. Three of the riddled machines managed to return to Singapore. The command to attack given by Air Force Operations to these bombers was not an error of judgment, but a sacrifice.

The general position of the defence of Johore was becoming desperate. The break through of the enemy at Muar and Batu Pahat had forced the British to retreat from the Gemas sector, and strong enemy forces were pressing along the main road leading to Singapore. Light forces had been landed along the west coast and were infiltrating towards the main road and in the direction of Johore Bahru. On the east coast the enemy were pressing down on Mersing, and by infiltration were threatening to get round the position. Complete withdrawal into the Island of Singapore was ordered and took place. The Japanese acquired complete possession of the peninsular. The Imperial forces reached an area where, in the words of General Wavell, "We cannot be constantly outflanked and the enemy cannot exploit superior mobility."

The offensive power of the enemy was greatly increased during the course of the campaign on the peninsular by the acquisition of available local resources having immense military value, and by assistance received from local inhabitants. The operations of the enemy disclosed great care in preparation and ability in execution. These matters are dealt with under the following separate headings. **[To be continued.]**

FAR EAST RADAR RCAF SPECIAL RESERVE

Information taken from "*Canadians on Radar in 'The Far East'*"

With thanks to Dave Croft RAFBPA

RCAF Special Reserve was created on 14th September 1939.

SR service numbers allocated are as follows:

'C' number for officers, mostly those in the non-flying trade groups.

'R' number for non-commissioned (other) ranks.

'A' number for auxiliary ranks.

Information taken from: "*Canadian Radar Mechanics in the Far East*" and *They Shall Grow Not Old: A Book of Remembrance*" by Les Allison and Harry Hayward.

The following is a list of Canadians who were killed, died while on active service, or were captured during WW11. Published by the Commonwealth Air Training Plan Museum Inc. 1991

Killed in Action

R81057 Corporal **Walter Steele Pink** (from Vancouver) – Killed at Serang, Java 7/3/42

Died as Prisoners of War

R75847 Warrant Officer **Edward William Goodchild** (from Hamilton) - Died on POW ship to Haruku 12/10/44

R80313 Corporal **Charles Robert Moore** (from Boissevan, Manitoba) – Died at Haruku camp 19/7/43

R76883 Flight Sergeant **Charles Ronald Neal** (from Edmonton) - Died on Pulau Moena 2/6/45

R80725 Sergeant **Lloyd George Stiff** (from Toronto) – Died 25/6/45

Prisoners of War who survived

R78698 **Russell C. Adolph** (from Chesley, Ontario)

R80286 **Elmer A. Graham** (from Winnipeg)

C3785 **Donald C. Hanna** (from Westmount)

R84166 **Oswald Luce** (from Niagara Falls) – arrived in Singapore 5/2/42

C3172 **William G. Luetchford** (from Winnipeg)

C3146(R) **Leonard R. Montgomery** (from Lachine)

C3554 **E. William Smith** (from Toronto)

R63697 **Leslie Voynich** (from Galt, Ontario)

Escaped from Singapore

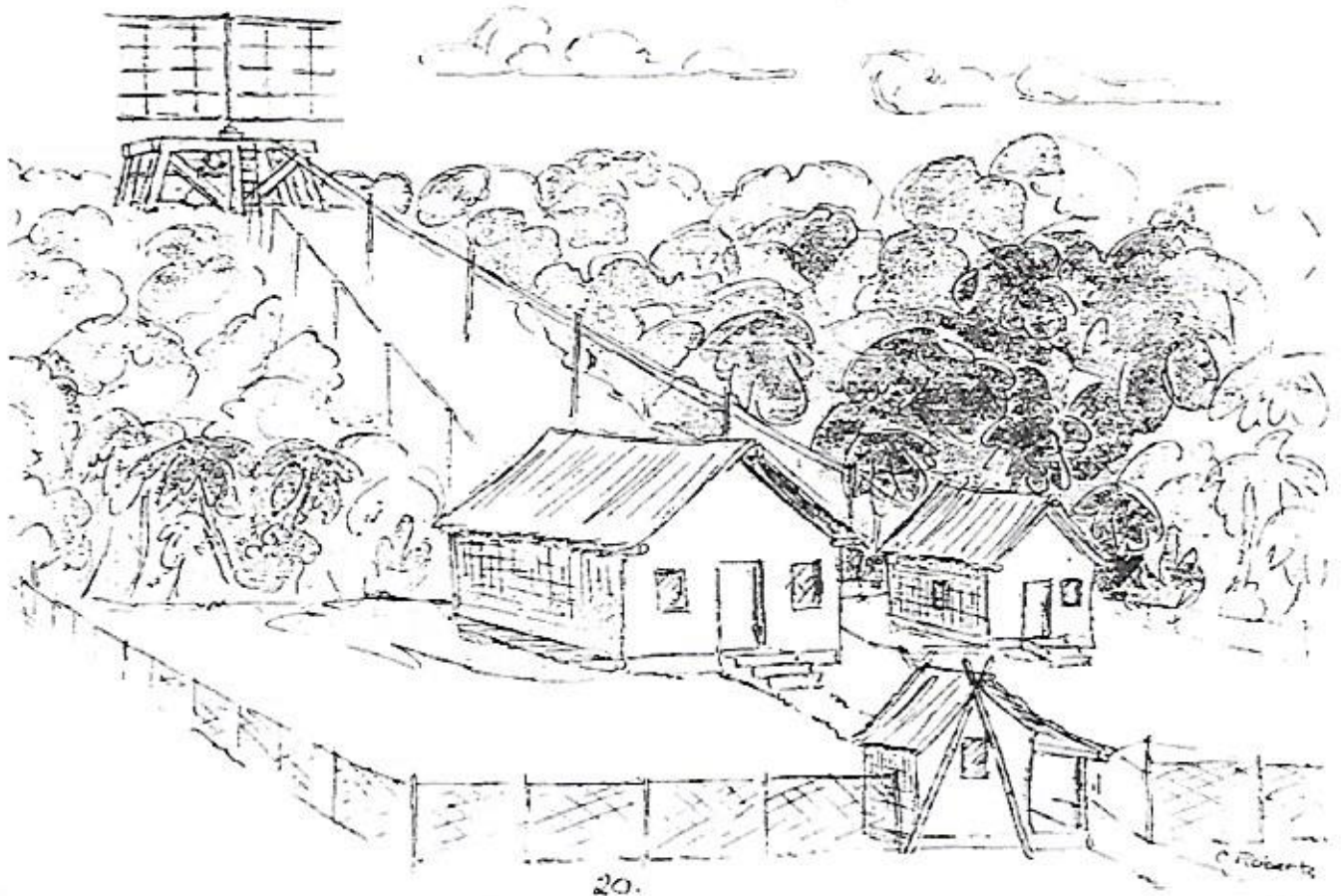
C3173(R) Flying Officer **B.W. (Stan) Martin** (from Kitchner) – arrived in Singapore 4/12/41

Escaped from Java

R76345 **Roscoe S.N. Blanchard** (from Lachine PQ/Bloomfield, NJ) – arrived in Batavia 5/2/42

R84194 **J. Gordon MacPhail** (from Guelph) – arrived in Batavia 5/2/42

Far East RAF Radar similar to those east & west in lower Johore to give coverage to Singapore 1941/42



TALK BY Dr. PAUL KRATOSKA at BADAN WARISAN, KUALA LUMPUR

Report by Liz Moggie

On Saturday, 30th June, a talk was given at Badan Warisan, Malaysia under the auspices of The Malaysian Branch of The Royal Asiatic Society. The title of the talk was, "**The Japanese occupation: Piecing together what happened.**" The speaker was **Dr. Paul Kratoska**, a well known writer on various aspects of the Occupation.

Dr. Kratoska began by noting the sources of his studies, namely the US National Archives, the Malaysian Records Office (Arkib Negara Malaysia), and the British National Archives. Within these bodies, there is a variety of records – official reports, oral interviews, accounts written by Japanese officers (in the US records) etc. One of the reasons for gaps in the Arkib Negara records is because at the end of the war, Japanese officials destroyed files.

He then went on to systematically cover various topics such as food supplies; the attempts to teach Nippongo and instill Seishin (Japanese culture); the lack of machinery and spare parts (which were all imported); the forced "donation" of 50 million Straits Dollars from the Chinese community; the currency and inflation; malnutrition; and the decrease in medical services.

The talk was wide ranging and I note a few points which particularly interested me:

Dr. Kratoska postulated that, contrary to popular belief, the Japanese did not invade Malaya for its rubber and tin (they could get those from IndoChina) – it was because they needed to gain access to the oil in Sumatra and they needed to neutralize the Singapore Naval Base.

One of the main reasons for the imposition of the forced \$50 million dollar donation from the Chinese was to remove surplus cash from circulation and combat inflation (of course they themselves caused later inflation by printing money when they needed it, as there was so little coming in as tax revenue).

Western films were not banned until 1st September 1943 but Chinese, Malay and Indian films continued to be screened. 1,000 pieces of Western music were banned – largely love songs and jazz – but tunes such as Home Sweet Home and Auld Lang Syne were allowed.

It was forbidden to listen to the BBC but allied broadcasts were cleverly filtered in and appeared to come from local sources.

Local subtitles were made for things such as soap, toothpaste and soy sauce. Matches were in short supply – there were 2 match factories in the country, but they could not get the chemicals needed for production. Not being able to light a fire was a great difficulty.

The shortage of rice (because of no imports) led to the resettlement schemes – 30 for the Chinese (Endau is the best known), several for Indians, Eurasians (Bahau) and some for Malays, (Bintang and Karimun Islands). For the most part, people figured out what they had to do to get by - keep their heads down and survive. By the end of the Occupation the prevailing feeling was not fear but tedium. There was a moral deterioration, a loss of purpose.

It was a most interesting and wide ranging talk and was followed by a lively question and answer session.

WEBSITES

Sent from **Rachel Rowe** – Smuts Librarian for South Asian and Commonwealth Studies, Cambridge University.

The links to the cartoons at the Cambridge Digital Library are:

1. Entitled FREEDOM - this was shown on the front of the July 2018 A.K.

<http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-RCMS-00103-00003-00012/269> -

2. Entitled HUT105

<https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-RCMS-00103-00003-00012/262>

From the Malaysia Chronicle - on the Death Railway:

<https://www.malaysia-chronicle.com/?p=130023>

From Henry Langley:

In August, an article in the Telegraph Magazine considered the effect of wildfires, particularly relating to those in Britain and Europe (Greece and Portugal) during this hot summer. A study by Harvard & Columbia Universities in 2016 into the effects of the smoke from fires in Indonesia in 2015, proposed that more than 100,000 premature deaths, mostly in Indonesia but also in Malaysia and Singapore, might be the outcome.

Those of us who were in Singapore in September 2015 also suffered from the effects of the smoke coming from Indonesian fires.

<https://www.seas.harvard.edu/news/2016/09/smoke-from-2015-indonesian-fires-may-have-caused-100000-premature-deaths>

Herdenking 2018 – held every year to remember the Dutch victims of the Pekanbaru and Thailand/ Burma Railways:

<http://www.shbss.org/portfolio-view/herdenking-2018>

From Penny Shehadeh - an interview with James Jeremiah in Penang – the last remaining Volunteer there.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLFzoyzJXQ>

Does anyone have any information about **Harry Cubbins** – buried at Labuan cemetery?

http://www.roll-of-honour.org.uk/.../html/c_database_67.htm

The dark history of Borneo's tourist hotspot Sabah

Extracts from an article published in the Southeast Asia Globe magazine in August 2018

With thanks to Fergus Evans.

The landing strip at Sandakan Airport, where tourists now arrive in Sabah, was built during WW2 by about 2,500 Australian and British prisoners of war. Of these, only six survived the horrors of the camps and a series of death marches. At least 1,787 Australian and 641 British POWs died. The story is told in the Commemorative Pavilion in Sandakan's Memorial Park, the site of the notorious POW camp. A memorial plaque stands on the site of 'The Big Tree' which was a landmark of the camp and which provided shade for sick soldiers.

After the fall of Singapore the POWs were brought to Sandakan to build the airstrip. At first conditions in the camp were tolerable, but after some prisoners, including officers, were discovered to have set up a secret communication network, the officers were transferred to Kuching. Thereafter conditions in the camp deteriorated, and as the war started to go badly for the Japanese food became scarcer and rations were drastically cut. Torture, killings and diseases started to take their toll. By January 1945, Allied air raids made the airstrip unusable, and as the Allies were poised to invade North Borneo, the Death Marches started. 455 ill and sick men were marched 260 kilometres to Ranau through marshes, thick jungle and up the steep side of Mount Kinabalu. Those who could not keep up were shot or bayoneted. Only 190 POWs survived this march, but the unsanitary conditions of the camp combined with the lack of food resulted in the death of all these men from disease and starvation.

On 29th May, 536 men left Sandakan on a second march. Before they reached Ranau, more than 350 men had died. Finally on 9th June, the camp at Sandakan was burned and the third and last march started out with 75 men who were barely able to walk. Those too ill to leave were either massacred or simply left to fend for themselves with no food or shelter. All of them died. Miraculously there were 6 survivors of these marches – thanks to the help given to them by the local tribes and Chinese in Sandakan.

The Japanese also targeted the local people, killing 16% of Sabah's population during their occupation. Despite their appalling treatment, the local people tried to help the prisoners, risking their lives to supply food and arrange escapes. They were praised for their courage by the six surviving POWs.

The first escapee who survived was **Bombadier Richard Braithwaite**, who managed to get away during the second march, and was helped by local villagers before being rescued by an American naval vessel.

The marchers were bombed by Allied air forces in the mistaken belief that they were fleeing Japanese, and during the confusion of one air raid, gunner **Owen Campbell** escaped with four others, but was the only survivor having been helped by local Sabahanians.

During July, one of the survivors of these Death Marches who was left in the Ranau Camp, called **Warrant Officer William Sticpewich**, heard from a guard that all prisoners were to be shot. Together with **Herman Reither**, he escaped from the camp at night and was helped by local villagers who contacted an Allied unit in the area. Sadly, **Reither** died but **Sticpewich** was rescued.

Three other men escaped from Ranau and survived. They were **Private Nelson Short**, **Private Keith Botterill** and **Lance Bombadier William Moxham**. All 3 were hidden in a jungle hut by the local headman called **Baragah** who had found the men. **Baragah** got word to a nearby Australian unit which had been parachuted in to look for any survivors. Despite the fact that the war had already ended, nevertheless, the Japanese in the area were still a danger to any surviving POWs. These men were eventually found by **Mick "Lofty" Hodges** a huge 6ft 7 ins Australian. He cared for **Keith Botterill** for the next three weeks carrying him around as he couldn't walk.

Nelson Short, on hearing the approach of the Australian Unit which rescued them, is quoted as saying:

"We said, 'Hello, what's this? Is this Japs coming to get us? But sure enough it was our blokes. We look up and there are these big six-footers. Z Force. Boy oh boy. All in green.....This is really it. I cried, they all cried. It was wonderful."

To this day, the Australian War Memorial regards the Sandakan Death Marches as "the worst single atrocity against Australian soldiers."

Today's Sandakan is a serene tourist haven with plenty to see and do apart from visiting the Memorial Park. For example, **Agnes Keith's** house is now a museum. As a civilian internee herself, her book, "**Land Below the Wind**" was known to the Japanese who wanted her to write propaganda material for them. There is the Puu Jih Shih Buddhist Temple to see and the world famous Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre where other rescued animals are cared for as well as the young orangutans who are trained for their return to the Kabili-Sepilok Forest Reserve when old enough. The Sun Bear Conservation Centre looks after former babies kept as pets and those kept in small cages and 'milked' for their gallbladder bile – a horrible and painful experience for the bears. Other wildlife can be viewed in the Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary. While those wanting a more active holiday can hike along part of the original Death March route.

[Note: The story of these Death Marches has been told in a book by **Lynette Ramsay Silver** called, "**Sandakan: A Conspiracy of Silence**." It is a book which everyone should read. Gross incompetence by the Allies also failed to rescue these men in time – and to compound this still further, those responsible suppressed the evidence of their incompetence.]

REPORT OF THE SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

(Edited from Bill Adamson's report)

Held on Saturday 1st September 2018 in Kings Park, Perth WA.

[A full report of this service by Bill Adamson will be sent out to members in Australia, but if anyone else would like to read it, please let Bill know and it will be e-mailed to you. The Hon, Peter Tinley's Address is included in the newsletter as a separate sheet.]

The Service of Remembrance for 2018 was held at the State War Memorial Flame of Remembrance in Kings Park, Perth WA, on 1st September 2018 at 11a.m. The service was held jointly by **The Association of Malaysians in WA Inc.; the Malaya Borneo Veterans WA Inc.; and the Malayan Volunteers Group in Australia.**

This Service of Remembrance commemorated Australian, Commonwealth and Malaysian Servicemen and Women, Commonwealth Auxiliaries and family members who fought, were killed in action, were captured and became Prisoners of War or Civilian Internees, and those who served in any of the Malayan, Malaysian or South East Asian conflicts including the World Wars.

The day dawned bright and sunny after a spell of cold showery weather. The park was full of colourful spring flowers and the Flame of Remembrance was surrounded by marigolds. The Queen's tree was full of native birds as the Sub Wardens took their places around the Flame of Remembrance where the flags of Australia, Malaysia, Singapore and Great Britain were flying. They were followed by the wreath layers who took their places and laid 44 wreaths and floral tributes in total before the ceremony commenced. Colonel Geoff Simpson OAM, RED requested the Reverend Jacob Ng to present the "Call to Worship," and this was followed by the "Last Post" sounded by L/Cpl. David Scott.

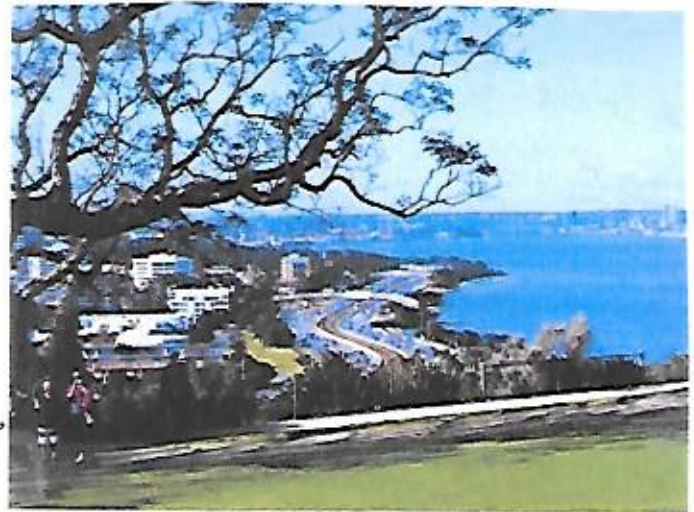
The flags were then raised, lowered and raised again to half mast. Mr. Don Crombie delivered the "Ode to the Fallen" and "The Rouse" was sounded. Flags were raised to the mast heads as the Revd. Ng read the "Remembrance Prayer."

Brigadier David Thompson AM welcomed the VIPs and guests before "The Memorial Address" was delivered by The Hon. Peter Tinley AM MLA, Minister for Veteran Issues, representing the Premier of WA. "The Merdeka Address" was delivered by H.E. Edi Irwan Mahmud, the Consul General of Malaysia. "The Association Welcome" was given by Dr. S. Pushpalingam, President of the Association of Malaysians in WA (AMWA), the main host of this year's service.

The reading from Scripture was taken from John Ch.15 Vs.12 - 17 and the Revd. Ng continued with the following message:

"73 years ago on the 27th August 1945, 12 days after the surrender of Imperial Japan was announced, the Japanese shot the remaining 15 survivors of the Sandakan Death Marches. Among the 15 were two Australian Medical Doctors, Captain John Oakeshott (NX76223) and Captain Dominic Picone (QX6380). These two men would have survived the war had they accepted their transfer with most of the other Allied Officers in October 1943 to the Kuching Camp in Sarawak. Instead, they chose to remain to care for the 2500 men in Sandakan Camp. They survived the camp and the 265 km. trek through the jungle to the foothills of Mt. Kinabalu, 8 km. south of Ranau where they were shot."

"Address for the Fallen" was then presented by Mr. Gary Burgoyne OAM and the service was concluded by the Revd. Ng with Prayers, the playing of the National Anthems of Australia and Malaysia, and the reciting of the "Benediction." Lunch was served afterwards in the Wildflower Pavilion. Thanks to the ladies who prepared and served it.



View from Kings Park

BOOKS

"Lost Warriors – Seagrim and Pagani of Burma. The Last Great Untold Story of WW11." By Philip Davies. Amazon Books. ISBN 9781909242852. An amazing story of courage and conflict in the jungle of Burma during the Japanese occupation.

“ROCKS, RADIO AND RADAR. The Extraordinary Scientific, Social and Military Life of Elizabeth Alexander.” By Mary Harris. To be published in March 2019 by World Scientific Publishing in the U.K. and in Singapore. See Flyer for more details. **[Mary will say more about the book about her mother during her talk at the lunch on 20th Oct.]**

“The Little Captive. How one girl survived a Japanese Prisoner of War camp.” By Lise Kristensen, Published by Pan Books. ISBN 978-1-4472-7356-1

This tells the horrifying story of starvation, illness and brutal treatment meted out by the Japanese to women and children on the island of Java during WW2. Lise's last camp was the notorious LAMPÉRSARIE camp where the only space left for her family - her mother and three children - to sleep was a filthy, oil covered, cobweb-strewn, cockroach-infested store room with only enough room for 2 to lie down. They ended up sleeping on a blue door outside and this became the symbol of their freedom from that stinking storeroom.

“Morning Glory. A History of the Imperial Japanese Navy.” By Stephen Howarth. Published by Hamish Hamilton. ISBN 0-241-11115-3.

This is the definitive history of the rise and fall of the Imperial Japanese Navy – from nothing to a position of world power in the space of ten years, and less than a lifetime later, it had returned to nothing. It existed for a just over 50 years, and in its heyday, was the world's third largest navy, with some of the greatest admirals in history and the largest battleships in history among its surface force. By 1905, Japan's Imperial Navy had defeated China and Russia (at Port Arthur) and had become Britain's ally in WW1. Forty years later, then same Imperial Navy had been defeated by the combined fleets and air forces of the Allies – not just defeated but annihilated.

If you are interested in Naval History, then this is the book to read.

“Singapore Mutiny.” By R.W.E Harper and Harry Miller. No other details.

As a result of the query sent out about R.W.E. Harper in the July edition of Apa Khabar, **Jill Smallshaw** sent the following information about him:

"I couldn't quite believe it when I read your note, as not only did we meet him (RWE) and his wife in the 1960s in Hong Kong, but his son **Mike Harper** served in the Royal Hong Kong police with **Richard** and in South Rhodesia and Nyasaland too, so we therefore know him very well. In fact we had lunch with **Mike** last month. He lives in Wadhurst, south of Tunbridge Wells. Many years ago he gave me one of his father's little booklets called "Mouse Deer: Lord of the Forest" translations from Malay Folk Stories which he illustrated. He also wrote "Singapore Mutiny."

Robert Harper was an Assistant Commissioner of Police in Singapore and spent time in both Changi and Sime Road camps during WW2. All his papers are now in the Imperial War Museum in London where they can be viewed.

“Escape from Battambang: A Personal World War 11 Experience.” By Geoffrey Tan.

In an article in the Community section of the Straits Times, an extraordinary story was related by Singapore resident, 91 year old Geoffrey Tan, who escaped from this camp during WW2. Mr. Tan was replying to an article in the Straits Times on how **OKA 9420 – the local branch of the Japanese biological and chemical warfare research and development Unit 731 –** had been used as a base to breed rat fleas carrying bubonic plague. **Geoffrey** had worked there as a laboratory assistant when he was 16. He provided new and undocumented insight into some of the activities that went on behind the closed doors of the unit, which was located at the College of Medicine Building in Outram. He said that the complex was a hive of activity with about 500 locals employed in various capacities. Also, different animals were bred there – white mice, rabbits, guinea pigs, ponies and mules were bred in outhouses. The boilers were kept running at full steam 24 hours a day for instant sterilization of laboratory equipment.

There was no special biohazard disposal of dead animals. The mice were simply discarded as common rubbish, with no regard for public health. Every day, he would brew a soup of pig's stomach and liver. Acidic chemicals and tetanus bacteria were added to make cultures which the Japanese hoped would provide an anti-tetanus vaccine for their troops. He worked under a tyrant called **Takemoto** who would hit staff over mistakes, including Geoffrey, cutting his lip and loosening a molar. Later he was sent to Bangkok to build bamboo barracks, and then on to Battambang in Cambodia for the same work. With lack of food and clean water and on minimal wages, he and his friends planned their escape. They cut the telephone wires and walked 15 km to a highway and hitched a ride on a bus to Phnom Penh. From there they took a train to Bangkok where he hid for 6 months until the end of the war when he returned home to Singapore.

The 4th Conference on WW2 in the Philippines took place on 22nd September 2018. The Conference was attended by the authors of the following books:

1. **“Rampage: Yamashita and the Battle of Manila.”** By James M. Scott.
2. **“Honor. The Legacy of Jose Abad Santos.”** By Desiree Ann Cua Benipayo.
3. **“Statesman and Survivor. Elpidio Quirino, 6th President of the Philippines (1948 – 1953)”** By Elpidio P. Quirino, Elizabeth Ann Quirino and Constante G. Quirino.
4. **“Under Manila Sky. A Memoir on the Art of Survival.”** By Irene W.D. Hecht.

No other information about these books, but they can be looked up on Google.

OBITUARIES

SIR HUGH CORTAZZI – born 2 May 1924 and died 14 August 2018

Sir Hugh Cortazzi was an accomplished diplomat who spent much of his career in Japan, ultimately as British Ambassador in Tokyo from 1980 to 1984. He spoke fluent Japanese, which he learnt in the RAF on a wartime interrogator's course, interpreting for both Churchill and Emperor Hirohito. He immersed himself in the country's culture and published his first book on Japanese culture while he was still working as a diplomat. After he retired, he promoted trade with Japan and produced more books and wrote for the Japanese press. Despite having relatives who worked on the Burma-Thailand Railway, and having investigated Japanese war crimes, he felt that the time for recriminations had passed. Indeed, when Hirohito visited London in 1988, Cortazzi supported the protest by the Japanese Ambassador about the tabloid press attacks on the Emperor. He was attracted to Japan despite wartime enmity, and when Japan surrendered he was appointed interpreter to General Dempsey – CO of the 14th Army in Singapore, translating for Dempsey and the Japanese commander before the latter withdrew his forces.

He went to Japan in 1946 as an Acting Flt. Lt. attached to the British Forces, and helped the military police tackle black market dealings between the troops and the locals. He was demobbed in 1947 but twice failed his FO exam. Luckily for him, others had failed them too and he was eventually called up and joined in October 1949 and was sent to Singapore. His first posting in Tokyo was in 1951. From then on he was moved to various postings by the Foreign Office throughout the world. Later he helped to arrange for the present Crown Prince Naruhito to study at Oxford.

He was appointed CMG in 1969, KCMG in 1984 and held the Grand Cordon of Japan's Order of the Sacred Treasure.

The death of **Commander Don Sheppard** on 2nd May was announced in the Daily Telegraph, aged 94. He was a Canadian Air Ace and saw service in the Far East towards the end of the war. In January 1945 he flew fighter cover for 100 aircraft from 3 British Carriers on a Fleet Air Arm raid on the oil terminal at Pangkajene in northern Sumatra. Seeing enemy fighters coming towards them, he rolled over to attack one of them and then saw a second fighter which he also shot down. On other patrols he shot down several Japanese aircraft and was awarded the DSC.

Jefferey Palfrey who won an MC during the Burma Campaign, has died aged 97. He served with 361 Field Company Royal Engineers. British Forces advancing through the jungle could not take their Jeeps and Palfrey was ordered to get them to the Chindwin River. He loaded them onto rafts and floated them 60 miles from Sittaung to Mawlaik. Near the town of Kalewa, the river narrowed and the Japs had set up MG posts on both sides. Palfrey waited until there was an early morning mist and he dashed through the gap, and was the first to link up with the main advance force.

Captain Bhagtasing Pun has died aged 101. During WW2 he joined his regiment in Singapore and was taken POW when it fell. He was held for 3½ years in Nee Soon Camp in Singapore where he worked unloading Japanese ships, humping stores and ammunition round the island. In September 1945 he rejoined his battalion in Dehra Dun. During the Malayan Emergency he returned to Malaya with the 1st Battn 2nd King Edwards V11's Own Gurkha Rifles (1/2 GR), and in command of an operation near Batu Anam in Johore, he located a bandit camp and launched an attack. 12 out of 14 bandits were killed and 1 was captured. Pun was awarded the MM with the citation stating that he was largely responsible for the devastating effect of the attack and that during his service in the jungles of Malaya he had displayed the highest qualities of leadership, drive, cheerfulness and initiative.

Shura Shihwarg who has died aged 95, was an unsung Russian Jewish war hero, Japanese prison camp survivor, prolific poet, fluent linguist, brilliant cook and restaurateur and one of the founders of the Chelsea Set with his wife **Joan Wyndham**. Born in Manchuria, his family moved to Tientsin and he was sent to the local English school, but was expelled. He studied medicine in Hong Kong, but in December 1941 joined the British Army. 3 days later he saw action in Repulse Bay and 2 weeks later he became a Japanese POW. During his time as a POW he wrote poetry, and on his release went to Oxford to study PPE. He remained under surveillance by MI5; was denied a British Passport for 13 years despite settling in London where he met his wife. They opened and ran restaurants in London and entertained in their house in Chelsea. It became a haven for poets, playboys, intellectuals and Russian gypsy friends. Later the Shiwargs moved to Fulham Road where they continued to entertain. His wife pre-deceased him in 2007.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

LONDON – Saturday 20th October 2018. Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club, Piccadilly – 12-5pm

Please let **Rosemary** know if you are planning to attend. It is still not too late to book and there are places available – but hurry! A lighter menu, which was much appreciated last year, has been arranged by the Club's Chef. The starter is melon with seasonal fruit compote; followed by a main course of Pork Medallions with baby artichokes, peppers, courgettes, black olives and marsala jus, sauté potatoes and broccoli almondine; with Lemon Tart, raspberries & Chantilly Cream as dessert; followed by tea or coffee with Petit Fours. There is a vegetarian main course option of Polenta cakes, soft herbs, creamed spinach, asparagus and cheese gratin. If the other courses are not acceptable to vegetarians, please let **Rosemary** know at the time of booking, together with any other dietary needs. There will be a pay bar where drinks and wine can be purchased. **The cost is £40 per person.** This cost does include the hire of the Ballroom and for the silver service provided.

PLEASE SEND YOUR NAMES TOGETHER WITH THOSE OF ANY GUESTS & PAYMENT ASAP.

Cheques should be made payable to: **Mrs. R. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group** [see address on P.27]

Payment may be made by BAC transfer to MVG's Bank Account, but please notify **Rosemary**.

We are delighted that the talk is to be given by MVG member **Mary Harris**, entitled, **“Bouches Inutiles. Who were they and what happened to them?”** This will be a fascinating insight into a little known part of the history of WW2 in the Far East. The Ballroom at the RAF Club has been booked for the afternoon, as usual. This is on the first floor and is accessible by stairs or lift. Please give your name to the front desk on arrival. Gentlemen’s coats may be left in a cloakroom on the ground floor, and there is a Ladies’ Powder Room on the first floor almost opposite the Ballroom. Name badges will be displayed outside the ballroom. Please bring a prize for the Draw with you. **This is the final reminder about the luncheon!**

LONDON – Thursday 8th November 2018. Cross Planting Ceremony and Service at Westminster Abbey.

We thank **Alan** and **Karen Harney** for attending this ceremony and representing the MVG at the FEPOW Plot in 2017. This year they will be joined by **Michael** and **Christine Cavender**, and **Jane Neilsen**. Tickets have been ordered from the Poppy Factory in Richmond, together with 2 black 8” crosses, one with the MVG logo and the other commemorating the Volunteer Forces.

LONDON – Sunday 11th November 2018. Remembrance Sunday Service and March Past at the Cenotaph in Whitehall

We have been allocated the 12 tickets we asked for. The tickets will be sent out to **Rosemary** in October, and distributed together with the instructions for the day. Please read these carefully because dispersal from Horse Guards after the Parade is via St. James’ Park due to the second procession taking place immediately following our dispersal. This is “The Nation’s Thank You Procession” and participants will be lining up in The Mall before processing through Admiralty Arch and down Whitehall to pass the Cenotaph. Whitehall is therefore closed, and we cannot cross it to access Westminster Bridge. Therefore a table for lunch after the Parade has been booked in the Cellarium Café in Westminster Abbey. This is the 100th anniversary of the end of WW1, and as it falls on Armistice Day itself, there will possibly be a huge number of onlookers.

CANADA – Sunday 11th November 2018. Remembrance Day Commemorative Service at the Cenotaph, Toronto, Ontario

We are delighted to announce that **Sallie Hammond**, our Secretary in Canada, is laying a wreath on Remembrance Sunday. **Sallie** says that her husband **Alex** and son **Jonathan** will join her. She will lay a wreath for **MVG members in Canada/USA** and is being joined by **Wendy Freeman** and **Vilma Howe**.

Sallie has sent the following information about wreath laying in Canada:

Wreaths may or may not be part of a commemorative service, though they are very common for ceremonies on 11th November. During the wreath laying, appropriate music may be played, such as **“O God, Our Help in Ages Past”** or **“O Valiant Hearts.”** The wreath is usually carried by someone walking alongside the person who is to lay the wreath. The two approach, briefly pause, exchange the wreath, place it (often on a stand), step back, pause for a moment (military personnel will salute), turn to the right and walk off.

Sallie adds that confirmation of where to meet prior to the Service will be sent later. Toronto is a beautiful city even in November – but you will need warm clothing as November can be chilly. She says:

“We will also honour and remember the 27 Canadians who served with the Malayan Volunteer Forces in 1942. Most were captured and placed in POW camps. Six died in captivity. The rest returned to Canada after the war.

As well we will remember **Thera Dielman** from Drunbo, Ontario. She was a Dutch POW in Indonesia 1942-45. She emigrated with her Dutch POW husband to Canada in the 1950s. **Thera** was murdered in 1988 outside her house in Drunbo. She had been widowed for two years and was aged 80. It is a very sad story. Her case was being reviewed in August 2018 in the hopes of finding her killer.

MALAYSIA – Remembrance Sunday Services in KL and Penang – TBA

NMA – Monday 10th December 2018. Anniversary of the sinking of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse.

Please contact **Bob Hall** for details. We hope it will be less cold this year.

LONDON – Friday 29th March 2019. Visit to the National Army Museum in Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea – at 12noon.

As advertised in the July edition of *Apa Khabar* (No:55), the date for the visit to the National Army Museum has now been finalised. If you are interested in going, please let **Jonathan** know. We can only take a small group, but should there be more interested people than we have room to take, I am sure a second visit can be arranged at a later date.

The recently refurbished Museum was re-opened in March 2017 after a £23.75 million redevelopment. The Museum is adjacent to the Royal Hospital, Chelsea and stands close to the Chelsea Physic Garden which is also well worth a visit. The Head of Corporate Partnerships is called **John Palser**, and we hope that our visit will enable us to raise awareness of the role of the Malayan Volunteer Forces during WW2.

LIVERPOOL – 19th October 2019 – June 2020. “Secret Art of Survival”

The FEPOW Art Exhibition is opening next year in October. Organised by **Meg Parkes** and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) it will show some hitherto unseen paintings by over 40 artists. Money is still needed. See details on P.2.

SINGAPORE – 12th September 2020. 75th Anniversary of the signing of the Japanese surrender.

A future date to keep in mind to join the MVG for the 75th anniversary of the end of the war in Singapore. A provisional programme will be announced in January 2019.

V-J DAY SERVICE
WEDNESDAY - 15TH AUGUST 2018



Sandy Lincoln lays the wreath on the Memorial Stone
in the MVG's Memorial Garden
at the National Memorial Arboretum
watched by veterans and MVG members.
Andai nya kita terlupa – Lest we forget

2018 MEMBERS' LIST

It has not been possible to update the present list of members due to several still outstanding subscriptions. There are several changes of addresses and e-mails which need to be made known, and it is hoped to produce this list in January 2019.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

The accounts for the year ending 5th April 2018 have been audited by **SJA Accountants Ltd.** The Income and Expenditure sheet is enclosed with the newsletter, but if anyone would like to see a full set of accounts, please send **Rosemary** a SAE. Our thanks go to **Miss Sara Haines** for giving up her time without charge to the Group to produce these accounts. We are grateful to her for her care and attention to detail, and for her helpful advice on keeping the accounts in good order.

PEACE MUSEUM IN MUNTOK

As agreed, a second donation of £240 towards the cost of electricity and cleaning will be sent to the Museum in December.

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ROSEMARY FELL – Secretary/Editor of Apa Khabar/Membership/Subscription/Donations/Annual Luncheon

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