

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



**58th EDITION
APRIL 2019**



YMCA Building, Stamford Road, Singapore, HQ of the Singapore Branch Malay Kempeitai of the 4th Branch Kempeitai, Southern Army. This is probably the most notorious Kempeitai interrogation and torture centre of the Second World War.

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INTERESTING AND INFORMATIVE "MERONDAS" MADE BY MVG MEMBERS IN MALAYSIA, THAILAND AND SARAWAK ONGOING RESEARCH INTO THE MALAYAN CAMPAIGN OF WW2

Two very different trips have been made by MVG members in February and March this year. The first was made by **Colin Hygate** who went to Sarawak in search of his father's POW work camp at a place called **Poak**. **Colin's** father, **Len Hygate**, who served with the 1st Battalion Straits Settlements Volunteer Force, was transferred from Changi to Kuching in April 1943 as part of "E" Force. We are pleased that our network of contacts within the MVG enabled **Colin** to find out more about his father's movements in Sarawak and in particular more about the location of this work camp. His interesting report is included as a supplement with this newsletter.

Secondly, **Richard** and **Susan Brown** accompanied by **Liz Moggie** and **Rosemary Fell**, made a pilgrimage to the north west battlefields in Malaysia where **Richard's** father, Band Sergeant **Bernard William Brown**, fought with the 2nd Battalion The East Surrey Regiment. This was later amalgamated with the 1st Battalion of The Royal Leicestershire Regiment, which had suffered heavy losses in the fighting at Jitra, to form The British Battalion. We were very fortunate to have the services of **Zafrani Arifin** as our guide. **Zafrani** is not only a member of MVG but also a member of the Malaysian History Group which specialises in military archeology and jungle memorials. His knowledge of the exact areas where battles raged from Jitra and Gurun down to Ipoh and the battle of Kampar is exemplary. We saw pillboxes (known in Kedah as British Forts) of all shapes and sizes – some camouflaged; some standing on their own in paddy fields; some sited at strategic positions looking down main roads and some guarding airfields. We climbed up part of Green Ridge – the only area where the battle of Kampar took place which is still covered in jungle – accompanied by two other members of the Malaysian History Group dressed in WW2 British Army uniforms. They had cleared a path through the vegetation for us so that we could climb up the first part of the Ridge to find the area where the Headquarters had been set up and fox holes dug for the look-outs to check for enemy infiltration. We visited various schools where the East Surreys and Leicesters and later the British Battalion had been housed, and everywhere we went we were given a warm welcome and lunch in true Malaysian hospitality style. **Colin's** full report is included as a supplement.

Remembrance Sunday and the Royal British Legion

The MVG has received notification from the Royal British Legion about this year's Remembrance Sunday Cenotaph Parade. It is quite clear that the RBL is attempting to change this march into a "Veterans only Parade." Those of us who march in memory of our fathers and other relatives who were captured by the Japanese and became Far East Prisoners of War are only entitled to do so if we are (and I quote from the latest information received) "**bereaved and first generation dependents.**" Grandchildren are no longer eligible to march, nor are spouses of dependents, unless they are carers. The reasons given are that "**..each year there are more applications than spaces and every space given to a non-veteran takes a place from an eligible veteran or dependent.**" After 74 years since V-J Day, there cannot be many fit veterans from WW2 who are able to march, and even many "**first generation dependents**" may find the march daunting. But this is not the point – the point is what does REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY stand for? Is it not Remembrance Sunday any more? Is it now to be re-named "Veteran's Sunday?"

After the many events which took place last year to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of World War 1 in memory of the sacrifices made by the millions of young men, surely we must not forget those who fought in World War 2? We hope that the MVG will be allocated the 12 tickets we have applied for and received each year since 2005 (except in 2016 when only 2 were allocated) and that 12 members will come forward to march in memory of all those caught up in the Malayan Campaign whether military or civilian. If our grandchildren are not eligible to march, then we the "**first generation dependents**" must continue to march as long as we can to keep the memory of our loved ones alive.

We are grateful to **Bill** and **Elizabeth Adamson** for organizing the "Fall of Singapore Commemoration Service" in Perth WA. A short report has been sent by **Elizabeth** for inclusion in this newsletter. If you would like to read the full report, with photographic details, please contact **Elizabeth** whose e-mail appears on the last page.

Our thanks also go to **Sallie Hammond** our secretary in Canada/USA who keeps in contact with MVG members there and sends information of interest to them and about the Malayan Campaign of WW2.

Visit to the National Museum of Singapore

Those of you who attended the unveiling of the Sime Road Plaque at the Changi Museum in 2015 will know that it was highly polished and very shiny. Sadly, the plaque has subsequently become very tarnished, and it has been necessary to consider what can be done about its condition. During a visit to Singapore in March, **Liz Moggie** and **Rosemary Fell** met

Jermaine Huang and **Rachel Eng** who are members of Singapore's National Heritage Board working at the National Museum of Singapore on the refurbishment of the Changi Museum. The MVG had offered to pay to have the plaque refurbished and lacquered so that it doesn't tarnish in future. However, during discussions it became clear that, although the plaque was made according to the specifications given by the Changi Museum, the metal is probably too thin for the plaque to be removed from the wall without buckling. It is most likely that if this happens the plaque will have to be replaced. Discussions are taking place with the curators of the Changi Museum about which material should be used for the replacement plaque. The plaques which **Judy Balcombe** had made in Australia for presentation in Sumatra and on Banka Island were in matt aluminium and they have weathered well without tarnishing. An alternative material is black marble with the lettering in gold. In view of the cost of replacement rather than refurbishment, the MVG has offered to pay a contribution towards this but nothing has been agreed as yet. The date of the re-opening the Changi Museum is still not known. We hope it will be ready before the 75th anniversary of the signing of the Japanese surrender in Singapore on 12th September 2020.

Annual Subscriptions

Despite the increasing costs of printing and postage, we have kept the annual subscription at £20 per annum. Subscriptions are due in April. Many of you have already paid for this year, and this has been a great help. Thank you all very much indeed. Please would those who **haven't** paid do so as soon as possible – & ignore the enclosed subscription letter if you have paid.

Apologies to Mary Harris

The editor would like to make an unreserved apology for the typing errors in the report on **Mary's** talk at the Annual Lunch in the 57th Edition of *Apa Khabar* (P.2) and in the title of her talk on Page 24. The title of the talk should read, "**Bouches Inutiles. Who were they and what happened to them.**"

Message from Meg Parkes & Lizzie Oliver of the RFH Group

See P.21 for a special message about "*The Secret Art of Survival*" – and details about the RFHG Conference – June 2020

THE FALL OF SINGAPORE COMMEMORATION – 16th FEBRUARY 2019

Report by Elizabeth Adamson

The Malayan Volunteers Group (MVG); The Malayan Borneo Veterans Western Australia; The Association of Malaysians in Western Australia (AMWA); and The Singapore WA Network (SWAN) came together again this year to Commemorate the Fall of Singapore.

It turned out to be a typical sunny Perth day, not too hot and we had a good attendance of 111. It was a mixture of military, veterans and families, and once again we had the honour of hosting trainee pilots and their commanders of the Republic of Singapore Air Force, operating from the RAAF base at Pearce, WA. Our master of ceremonies once again was **Colonel Geoff Simpson OAM., RFD.**, whose general oversight of the day's proceedings kept things running smoothly. We were honoured that the Ode was recited by **Brigadier Duncan Warren AM., RFD., Retd.**, Patron of the Royal Australian Regiment Association (WA Branch) Inc., taking over at very short notice the responsibilities of his Association Secretary who was on the sick list. The three National flags, Singaporean, Australian and Malaysian, were manned by our Sub Wardens from the State War Memorial, and the Last Post and Rouse were sounded by a visiting bugler this year. Speeches were delivered by **The Hon. Pierre Yang JP., MLC.**, Government Whip in the Legislative Council representing the State Premier, and **The Hon. Michael Mischin MLC.**, Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council representing the Leader of the Opposition. Both made relevant and poignant speeches. Our regular Chaplain, the **Rev. John Marshall RANR.**, spoke meaningfully about the horrors of war and the blessing of the peace won for us. **Mrs. Elizabeth Adamson** delivered a short Memorial Address. Our "Event" was posted in advance of the occasion in "The West Australian" newspaper where quite a few new attendees saw it, and as a result of the success of the occasion a few are already keen to further their knowledge of their families' war time experiences and join in membership with like-minded people of somewhat similar backgrounds.

MVG members in attendance were: **Bill and Elizabeth Adamson, Robert and Glenice Gray, Bob Paterson, Tony Brand, Janet Zanetti and Ian Johnson.** Apologies were received from our local WA members: **Kaye Bruechle, Janet Robinson, Sheena and Geoff Wheeler, Sandra Clough, Patricia Giudice, Rhuwina Griffiths, Terrence Edmett, Warren and Janet Harvey.** Apologies were also received from Eastern State members: **Robin Polglase, John Corner, Emily Malone, Bill McKern, Peter Burford, Richard Burford, Michael Doncaster, Neal Hobbs, Dr. Liz Thornton, Dr. Judy and David Balcombe.** The man behind it all was **Bill Adamson**, whose computer ran hot for many week days and nights, organising the invitations, confirming attendances, the laying of wreaths, listing logistics for all involved and finally preparing the programme for the day. It is entirely due to him that our Commemoration is run so well. The Associations have the great advantage of **Bill's** knowledge of military procedure and his immense personal contacts.

At the end of the service all were invited to have some curry and rice, Malaysian noodle dishes and cool drinks supplied by AMWA. **Bill's** daughter, **Mrs. Margaret Tate**, made and dished out her famous Malay curry. Our AMWA friends helped prepare for the event and pack up on the day, manned the registration table and the Malaysian food table. It was a great mix of friends from WA, Malaysia and Singapore. This was the time for informal talks with everyone and the exchange of family stories. Camaraderie was very strong this year. 2.

THE VYNER BROOKE TRAGEDY COMMEMORATION SERVICE – Report by Robert Gray

The annual service, held in Perth, Western Australia, on Sunday, 10th February, this year, commemorated the sinking by Japanese dive bombers of the *MV Vyner Brooke* in February 1942. The small vessel departed Singapore just two days before The Fall, with hundreds of civilian evacuees, mainly women and children, including 65 Australian Army Nurses.

Many evacuees, including 12 nurses were lost at sea, and those who made their way to shore on nearby Bangka Island, clinging to the few surviving rafts and flotsam, were held captive until war's end in atrocious Japanese prison camps and suffered a very high mortality rate. Twenty one nurses were tragically massacred by a squad of Japanese commandos on Radji Beach.

The Applecross Sub-Branch of the Returned & Services League of WA and the City of Melville sponsor and organize the commemoration. The guest speaker at this year's service was **Commodore Brett Dowsing, RANR**, Senior Naval Officer WA. *The Born to Sing Choir* sang appropriate tunes and there were moving contributions also by girls from Santa Maria College who had prepared information displays, gave readings during the service and acted as ushers. Likewise, the congregation much appreciated the stirring playing of the Presbyterian Ladies College Pipes and Drums.

[Editor: Michael Pether's Commemorative Address, delivered at the Service of Remembrance for those killed on Radji Beach on 16th February 2019, gives more details about the sinking of the Vyner Brooke as well as some of the other small ships which left Singapore between 13th and 15th February 1942. Michael's report and powerful address is included in a separate booklet.]

Highlights from an Historical "Meronda" to Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore.

This is not intended to be a detailed report about a visit to the north-west of Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore. I leave this to others whose research has been more detailed than mine. It is just a series of memories which form the highlights of a fascinating and enlightening adventure and personal pilgrimage to these three countries in three weeks.

In the company of **Richard and Susan Brown** and **Liz Moggie**, the adventure (for this is what it was for me) started on Sunday 17th February with a visit to the Cheras Road Cemetery in Kuala Lumpur. From the entrance gate, the vast area of graves stretched out in front almost as far as the eye could see. We searched and found a grave where a WW2 member of the Leicester Regiment lies buried and, close by quite by accident, a member of the MAAF. This was the first of many finds. Driving on to Kuala Selangor to see the War Memorial, we found the obelisk to be little changed from previous visits. We hope the final names can be identified and the plaques, bearing the names of men who died in WW1 and WW2, restored around the memorial. We returned via the Selangor River where the men from the recently formed British Battalion had rested and camped out on the Sungai Rambai Estate - now planted with oil palms - during their retreat down the peninsula. We also visited that part of the river where fireflies (*Kelip-Kelip*) can be seen at night.

On Monday 18th February Liz and I drove to Fraser's Hill, a hill station which my parents visited in pre-war days, although I don't know where they stayed. We travelled to Fraser's Hill via Kuala Kubu Bharu where the narrow two-way road winds up through the mountain ranges with spectacular scenery and jungle still pressing in on each side of the road. It was on this the road that Sir Henry Gurney was killed in an ambush by Communist Guerrillas – the approximate site marked by a very rusty old sign board written in English and Malay with half of the writing now torn away and illegible. The area had been well chosen by the bandits – a difficult, winding stretch of road well hidden by undergrowth on both sides.

The Gap Resthouse, where the road becomes one-way, is now derelict – but it still has the aura of having seen better days. This is the place where **Spencer-Chapman** met other SOE members during the Second World War. From this resthouse, the road up to Fraser's Hill is narrow and winding, and on the other side of the hill station, the one way down is equally difficult. We stayed at **High Pines Bungalow** – a lovely pre-war bungalow set in a large garden with wonderful views across the mountains. It was quite cold and one needed a wrap or jumper. Sadly it rained for much of the second day, so we were unable to do any walking, but we did have time for a Devon Cream Tea (although the Cornish way is jam first and then pile on the cream!) at the Old Smokehouse, sitting on the terrace with birds and monkeys to keep us company. Perhaps this is where my parents stayed, and enjoyed the same experience – who knows!

Two days later, we travelled on to Ipoh where we met the **Browns** at a small Heritage Hotel with the intriguing name of "**Sarang Paloh**" converted from a pawn shop-house. The name doesn't have a particular translation from the Malay, but as each room is named after a Malaysian bird, and "*sarang*" means "*nest*" perhaps it could mean "*a nesting place*"? For our car drivers, **Richard** and **Liz**, the small garage was not easily accessible as it was on the other side of a busy one-way street with fast moving traffic. The other draw back was the lack of a restaurant and no breakfast provided. So we breakfasted in our room on cold curry puffs, nuts and raisins washed down with mugs of coffee made from an instant 'all-in-one' packet of

coffee which included the milk powder. It all tasted delicious!

On the afternoon of Wednesday 20th February, we met up with **Zaf Arifin**, our MVG member from Kota Bahru, who was to be our guide for the next few days. He drove with us to visit St Michael's Institution, the school where the British Battalion was formed from the remnants of the 2nd Battalion The East Surrey Regiment and the 1st Battalion The Royal Leicestershire Regiment. The school head, teachers and alumni turned out in force to meet us, show us round and generally make us feel very welcome. They were as keen to learn about **Richard's** father as we were to see the classrooms where the soldiers had been billeted, and the games field where they had played football. The visit ended with a full lunch which they laid on in the staff dining room. Afterwards we made a brief visit to the Muzeum Darul Ridzwan where we saw two WW2 air-raid shelters – still in reasonable condition after all these years.

Dinner at the Ipoh Club was an amusing evening. We met MVG member **James Devadason** and his wife **Melanie** there. To begin with the service was almost non-existent despite the fact that the dining room was empty! And when we asked for the wine list we were just offered "red or white" ('take it or leave it!'). We were also entertained by a spectacular rainstorm over the padang during dinner.

Thursday was the day we went to Kampar – as explained in the editorial. But before we went we visited the Anglo-Chinese School in Kampar where the British Battalion had also been billeted. The new head master was very keen for us to see the school and he not only arranged to give us a short talk with slides to tell us the history of the school, but also he arranged for the school band to play for us. They were excellent and it was a very polished performance from start to finish. We also saw the small Museum which the head had started this term showing old photos of the school and other exhibits. Of course we were invited to partake of refreshments in true Malaysian hospitality style – a proper meal with starters, main course and puddings! We had come to expect this by now. By this time, we were long overdue for our arranged meeting time with **Zaf** to take us to Green Ridge. Imagine our surprise then, to be greeted not only by **Zaf** but also two of his History Society friends dressed in WW2 British Army uniform – as also explained in the editorial. Our visit to Green Ridge was distinctly eerie – I'm glad we didn't go there at night. Even the leeches seemed subdued, but they did find some uncovered flesh just below my knees despite the long socks!

The next day we drove to Taiping and firstly visited King Edward V11 School where the East Surreys re-grouped after their retreat from Gurun and Penang. The original wonderful old school buildings are not in use at present because they are in danger of falling down! But as Heritage Buildings, they are due to be restored so that they can be used once again. We were told by one of the teachers that during the war the Japanese hung severed heads from the cross bars of the rugby posts. It must have been a horrible and gruesome sight.

One of the main reasons for going to Taiping was to visit the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery where so many of the East Surreys and Leicesters are buried. **Richard** took a photograph of each and every grave. It was about midday when we started – no wonder the saying about mad dogs and Englishmen etc! It was about 37°C. But we soon developed a good routine – I pointed out each head stone, **Richard** photographed it and **Susan** ticked the name off her list. It was also good to visit the grave of **Arthur ("Pongo") Scarf RAF., VC.**, who is buried in this cemetery. He was a contemporary of our Canadian Secretary's father, **Sqn. Ldr. Harley Boxall**, both of whom were based at Alor Star. Later we drove on to the Kamunting Road Christian Cemetery where another lone East Surrey is buried. Then it was off to Alor Star – not via the north-south highway but along a much smaller road inland which wound its way through spectacular countryside in the Lenggong Valley, hugging the Perak River with its lakes for much of the way. In the 1950s, before the road was built, it was only possible to get to Lenggong by boat up the Perak River. I did this with my mother in 1953 when she was the Health Matron based in Kuala Kangsar and visited outlying kampongs to hold clinics. This road now goes all the way to the Thai border at Betong, but we turned left before the border and stopped in Baling where we met up with the **Browns** once again. It was in this town where **Chin Peng** met **Tunku Abdul Rahman** in 1951 but without reaching an agreement on stopping their guerrilla war. Our promised ice-cream at the petrol station was denied as they didn't have any Magnums, so we had to go without! From Baling we took an even more scenic route through wonderful countryside via Sik and Nami, arriving in Alor Star after dark. Fortunately **Richard's** car had sat-nav, and we found our way to the Hotel without getting lost.

First stop the next day, Saturday, 23rd February, was at Sultan Abdul Hamid College with its lovely grounds where **Richard's** father had played football. We then drove towards Jitra where the first battles of the Campaign took place. **Zaf** took us to see the area where the Jitra Defence Line was prepared – this ran for about 35 miles W to E about a mile north of Jitra itself along the river. It is hardly surprising, looking at the terrain, that it was so difficult to defend. We also saw numerous pill boxes in the area including a camouflaged one near the air base at Kepala Batas. This was an RAF base during the war but is now a Royal Malaysian Air Force base. As mentioned in the editorial, the pill boxes were all shaped and sizes – some looking down country roads, some near waterways, some now in people's gardens, but in my view the strangest one of all was standing on a bund between paddy fields with a commanding view all around and a dead tree growing from the top – of course this had not been there in wartime. It was certainly not camouflaged and could be seen for miles around.

On Sunday we drove south, again looking at battlefield sites particularly in the Gurun area at the base of Gunung Jerai (Kedah Peak). Despite the fact that everything now looks totally different from those wartime days, Zaf knew exactly where the battles had taken place.

Liz and I arrived in Penang via the ferry from Butterworth and made our way to the City Bayview Hotel. Monday was spent in George Town visiting various places of interest such as the Australian Hong Kong bar which is now rather rundown. That evening we were invited to have dinner with MVG members Richard and Terry Parry at their flat in Tanjong Bungah with its wonderful views over the sea, looking towards the mainland.

Tuesday 26th February was the day we flew to Thailand. I am very grateful to Liz for agreeing to come to Thailand with me. It was great to have her company on the Pilgrimage which had been arranged for me by Terry Manttan at the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre Museum (TBRC) and also to visit my parents' grave. We were met at Bangkok airport by taxi and driven to Kanchanaburi where we stayed in a delightful guest house, aptly named "The Luxury Hotel" – booked for us by Terry at the TBRC. Having stayed at "The Luxury" before, we were welcomed with open arms and warm smiles despite the language barriers and a 4 year gap since my last visit.

Early on Wednesday morning we met Rod Beattie for the day's pilgrimage to follow in my father's (Lt. Eric Reeve 4/SSVF) footsteps on the Railway. Rod picked us up in an air-conditioned mini-bus complete with guide (not that she did the 'guiding'!) He explained how we would be following the route my father had taken with Group 4 and Letter Party "U" together with many other Volunteers who had arrived with the same Group. Group 4 was detailed to work on the railway from Tha Sao to the Kannyu areas, Hintok and Kinsaiyok. We first visited Temple Camp where the party had stopped on the long march to Tha Sao and Rod pointed out the actual road along which they would have marched. We drove further along towards Tha Sao and stopped at a road side stall in Nam Tok for delicious coffee and peanut biscuits. Driving on, we saw the areas where Upper Kannyu camp had been set up, then Kannyu 3 and Malay Hamlets – all areas of fairly level ground but near the river which they would have needed for their water supplies.

We said we would like to go to Hellfire Pass (despite Rod's unspoken misgivings!), but I was shocked to see how it has changed out of all recognition since I last saw it - and changed completely since the first time I saw it in 1996. Then there was no Museum - just a bit of grassy land with very steep concrete steps leading down into the cutting, and a flimsy wooden look-out above the Pass. This is how I described it in 1996:

"Hellfire Pass is a forbidding place even now. It is not a place one would want to visit alone. It was totally quiet; dark and brooding; oppressive and humid; eerie and uncomfortable..... we collected at the foot of the steps leading down into the Pass, and Rod laid a wreath and said a few words. It was an incredibly moving moment – never to be forgotten."

Now Hellfire Pass is anything but quiet. It is buzzing with people. The whole area has been sanitized – so much so that it no longer has the air of utter desolation and eeriness it once had. Buses deliver (dare I say 'tick-box') tourists (for that is what many of them are) by the hundreds and they all troop into the Museum and down into the cutting where the rail bed has been widened and covered with small stones to make walking easier. Then they all troop back onto their buses and are whisked away in air conditioned comfort. I confess we also travelled in an air-conditioned mini-bus, but I have done it the hard way as well! I don't begrudge people wanting to see Hellfire Pass, but it has now become so easy to get there - more like the proverbial "Piccadilly Circus" than Hellfire Pass. It has completely lost its former sense as a place of Pilgrimage. It seems to me that visitor numbers should be reduced or limited in some way to preserve the unique atmosphere of the area as a memorial.

Sadly, the Museum itself is also a travesty of what it once was. It has been re-vamped and is no longer a place where there are artifacts and memorabilia to see and informative boards to read. The entrance into the Museum is down a short, narrow corridor with an image of rail lines projected onto the floor and men's first names written over and over again on the walls on each side. They are not even the names of real men who died or worked in the cutting – just names. The only item on display in the main room of the Museum is a cage of stones, purporting to be the amount of stone each man had to move per day, and a bowl containing a handful of artificial rice beside it. Round the walls are photos of Australians with a small amount of information – but nothing about the British soldiers or the Volunteers who also worked in the cutting and on the railway.

Thankfully, Rod took us to a part of the railway bund which has not yet been sanitized and where we could see the original track shorn up at the sides with carefully laid stones – still in pristine condition - on one side. The track was covered with ash and the debris of dead wood from the small fires which had been lit to burn the vegetation and regenerate the jungle. We had to pick our way carefully along the remains of the old track – but this was the original part of the railway - off the beaten track - one might say - and away from the milling hordes. It was a sobering walk to see this area still quite far from human habitation, and to imagine what it must have like toiling in the heat and humidity on starvation rations and under a cruel regime all those years ago.

After a good lunch of Thai noodles at one of the small food stalls near the newly built car park, we drove on to Kinsaiyok and

walked quite a long way into the Park to find one of the railway embankments which is still beautifully preserved. The embankment stops where there was obviously a small stream or gully over which they had to build a bridge – the remains of which have now gone. Only the embankment of stones and a concrete base for the bridge now remain together with remnants of a couple of concrete piles down on the bed of the gully. One could see the holes where the men had dug up the stones for the embankment – gradually getting closer to the foot of the embankment as it got higher. The precise way in which this embankment was built without mechanical means was a very clever feat of engineering as **Rod** explained to us. We left the Park via another path which took us across a small stream where there is a shallow waterfall – the Kinsaiyok Falls. I was expecting something much bigger – but there hadn't been much rain recently which may have caused the Falls to dry up to a certain extent. We returned to our comfortable "Luxury Hotel" feeling rather overwhelmed by the day's visit. The next day, Thursday, 29th February, after a good breakfast of fruit, bacon and eggs and toast, cooked for us by the ladies of the guest house, we walked to the TBRC - a 5 to 10 minute walk away. **Liz** and I had a good look round the Museum and noted the new board with details of the Sumatra Railway which we had visited in previous years. **Rod** arrived mid-morning to take us out to Chungkai to visit my parents' grave, together with a Dutch Army Colonel who was researching some Dutch graves. We drove in **Rod's** original battered old red pick-up (in which **Donald** and I had first been driven to visit Hellfire Pass in 1996!), now a smart and un-battered vehicle painted in battleship grey. After our visit to the cemetery we all went to **Rod's** favourite local coffee shop for a leisurely lunch and chat. On our return and after a final look round the Museum, **Liz** and I visited the main cemetery in front of the Museum to look for other Volunteers' graves and at the Portland Stone Memorial Arch bearing the names of those men who died from cholera and have no known graves. We returned to the 'Luxury' for our last night before flying back to Penang on 1st March.

Singapore was the last stage of my historical tour – again I am indebted to **Liz** for her company and for her help in organising our travel arrangements. The main point of going to Singapore was to meet the current members of the National Heritage Board who are working on the refurbishment of the Changi Museum, to discuss what to do about the Sime Road Plaque which the MVG presented to the Changi Museum in September 2015. Its present state is so bad that it is completely illegible. We met **Jermaine Huang** and **Rachel Eng** at the National Museum of Singapore and as already explained in the Editorial, we have 2 options – to refurbish the original plaque or replace it. When we hear from the team in charge of the museum's refurbishment we will let members know what has been decided. While we were at the Museum, we looked round the "Witness to War" exhibition which is due to close on 25th March 2019. We watched the short film about former MVG member George Hess'e and read the panel about E.J.H. Corner, John Corner's father, as well as looking round the other exhibits. We have been asked by the Museum to supply information to them for the refurbished Changi Museum. The details are given in the information sheet on P.9. If you feel you can loan or donate objects for their exhibition, please contact – Changi_Museum@nhb.gov.sg (There is an underscore between 'Changi' and 'Museum')

While we were in Singapore we visited the Old Ford Factory which has an excellent display about the Japanese invasion and the subsequent problems faced by Singapore's inhabitants during the occupation. It is a long way out of the city but it can be reached by bus or by MRT. The bus ride is very pleasant and can be recommended! We visited St Andrew's Cathedral and saw the brass plate (now well polished) with the names of those members of the MCS who died in WW2, and other plaques. Outside and above the East door there is a stone plaque in the fabric of the building bearing the Volunteers' badges. This is difficult to see this due to an awning over the door but can be seen from a distance. Between this door and the Visitor Centre there is a pathway with information boards about various prominent people from WW2 such as **Bishop Wilson** and **Elizabeth Choy**. They are well worth reading.

Our quick trip to Singapore would not have been complete without visiting the Battlebox. Our guide was very professional and interesting and it is good to note that it is now one of the most successful Museums for visitors in Singapore. Our only regret was that the plaques which have been removed from the Changi Museum, including 2 presented by the MVG, still haven't been installed in the Battlebox. However, when we visited **Jeya**, he explained that they would eventually be installed in the long corridor which leads to the "Cat-escape ladder." We also discussed with **Jeya** the problems about the refurbishment of the Sime Road Plaque, without coming to any definite conclusions.

On our final morning in Singapore we went to the Haw Par Villa which is due to be taken over by **Jeya's** company. It is easily accessible by MRT which has a stop right next to the Villa. In its pre-war heyday, the Villa and gardens must have had a wonderful view across Keppel Harbour. It is sad to see it in its rundown condition now – the villa has gone but the gardens with their exotic figures and somewhat gruesome scenes are still open to the public and free of charge. Sadly the restaurants and shops are closed. One wonders what the plans are for refurbishment which is desperately needed.

As my three-week "meronda" came to an end, I looked back over an interesting and informative time. I am enormously grateful to **Leo** and **Liz Moggie** for their wonderful hospitality in Kuala Lumpur; to **Liz** for driving the huge distances in her car; and for accompanying me to Thailand and Singapore; and am very grateful to the **Browns** for allowing me to join them in their pilgrimage to the north-west WW2 battlefields of Malaysia.

VISIT TO MALAYSIA, THAILAND AND SINGAPORE

Kuala Selangor War Memorial, Malaysia



Kempeitai Interrogation Room at St. Michael's Institution, Ipoh, Malaysia



Pillbox on bund between paddy fields near Alor Star, Malaysia



Area where Konnyu 3 and Malay Hamlets camps were built, Thailand



Stonework on part of the original bed of the Burma-Siam Railway, Thailand



Hellfire Pass today, Thailand



Front of the SSVF Drill Hall, Beach Road, Singapore



Entrance to Haw Par Villa and Gardens, Singapore



CHANGI CHAPEL AND MUSEUM

A message from Jermaine Huang of Singapore's National Museum and National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board of Singapore has taken over the management of the Changi Chapel and Museum (CCM) from April 2017 from its previous operator, The Changi Museum Pte. Ltd. (TCMPL). I am sorry that your contact and history with the Museum was not shared with us [Editor: i.e. MVG's previous contacts with the Changi Museum]

Except for the bronze plaques mounted outside the Museum (i.e. MVG's Sime Road Plaque), the other plaques belong to TCMPL and I understand will be on display at the Battlebox (as mentioned in the Editorial), another WW2-related site managed by the company.

We (the CCM) are currently making an open call for stories and objects related to Changi from the time period of 1900s to 1950s – see the information below.

Stories of POW and civilian internees at Changi Prison will go into our multimedia database for viewing in the gallery. As for objects, we will submit all information to the curatorial team for review and assessment before taking them. We hope you will understand this matter.



Share Your Stories, Donate an Object

Dedicated to telling the stories that unfolded in Changi during World War Two, the Changi Museum and Chapel aims to inspire younger generations while honouring the spirit and resilience of those who lived and fought in this period of Singapore's history.

The Changi Chapel and Museum will be closed to the public for its first major redevelopment in more than 15 years since its opening in 2001. The redevelopment will happen in two phases – the closure of the Museum from 2nd April 2018, followed by the closure of the Chapel from 2nd January 2019. Both the revamped Museum and Chapel are scheduled to re-open to the public in September 2020, in conjunction with the 75th anniversary of the surrender of the Japanese in Singapore.

Were you, your family member or your friend a prisoner-of-war (POW) or civilian interned at the Changi Prison? Do you have letters, photographs or keepsakes from relatives or friends who were interned here? Share with us your POW stories and personal objects so that the Changi Museum can collect, preserve and share them to help future generations understand the realities of war.

Your stories and contributions are important to us!

If you would like to share your stories, or loan or donate an object to the Museum, please write to: Changi_Museum@nhb.gov.sg (note the underscore)

We are currently working on a POW database and it would be great if you would share the information with us using the table on the next page, especially those related to civilian internees.

DATABASE TABLE FOR THE CHANGI MUSEUM AND CHAPEL

Please return to the Changi Museum - Changi_Museum@nhb.gov.sg (underscore)

Or contact Jermaine Huang for more information on –
Jermaine_HUANG@nhb.gov.sg (underscore)

Full Name of internee:	
Nationality:	
Date of Birth:	
Military Unit:	
Military Rank:	
Internment Camp:	
Period of Internment:	
Registration No.	
Date of Death:	
<i>Any story you know about the time when he was interned and what happened after the war:</i>	
<i>Objects related to the internee's experience in Changi (you could share information and images, and also indicate if you are keen to donate the object):</i>	
Name of Contributor / Next of Kin:	
Relation of Contributor to POW	
Email Contact of Contributor	

MARGERY JENNINGS' WAR – Survivor of the “Mata Hari”

By Sally Jennings

[Ed: On 27th February, Sallie Hammond, MVG's secretary in Canada, and her husband watched the film, “Paradise Road” in which Sallie says that one of the wives portrayed in the film mentioned that her husband had joined the “Malayan Volunteer Forces.” Sallie then informed members in Canada and the USA about the film and suggested that they may like to watch it. As a result, Sally Jennings wrote this article about her father's first wife who died in Loebok Linggau.]

When **Mick Jennings** was on his first tour in Africa (Sudan) as a surveyor, he began to think about getting married. He wrote to girls he knew in Yorkshire and **Margery** replied regularly, so he thought she should be the one. When he went back to England on leave, they got married.

Margery came from a well-esteemed family in Otley, Yorkshire. Her father was the mayor and after her mother's death she stood in as mayoress for him. She was a good pianist and **Mick** bought her an upright double-strength piano as a wedding present which could survive the trip to the Gold Coast (Ghana).

With **Mick** often away surveying, **Margery** spent a lot of time playing the piano and became an accomplished musician. This talent served her well in POW camp in Sumatra (see the film 'Paradise Road').

In the Depression, **Mick** was recalled from the Gold Coast and times were difficult. One day, **Mick** walked past a baker's shop, saw **Margery** working there and felt so ashamed he couldn't provide for her. He later got work surveying in Kent and then was offered the position of Town Board Building Inspector in Kuala Lumpur in 1935. When they moved to KL, **Margery** became involved in playing music for the church and local radio station. They sang on the radio, both having lovely voices. **Margery** was quite religious and had missionaries as her friends.

Still playing for weddings in January 1942 in Singapore, she was also a member of the Medical Auxiliary Service (MAS), nursing in Kandar Kerbau Hospital. The decision for **Margery** to evacuate was not made until February 11th when she boarded the ‘*Mata Hari*’ with many other women. The Japanese bombed the ship and the women were forced to land in Sumatra and go into POW camp for over three years.

Mick escaped separately with other soldiers, sailing to Sumatra and making their way to Padang on the west coast from where he and another soldier attempted to sail to Australia. The monsoons were against them and their journey became a nightmare of starvation and hardship. After 127 days, they landed 120 miles down the coast from where they had started. They were put into hospital to recover and then into POW camp in Palembang, not far from **Margery**. In camp, **Margery** put her Christian principles into practice, helping others and leading services. She also played the piano, when they had one in the first camp, and was involved in the musical life of the camp.

May 1942. “Every Saturday night the Sisters living next door give community singing concerts for all and sundry to air their lungs. These concerts have improved each week and now the variety of items could not be improved upon. English **Mrs. Jennings**, with a glorious voice, sings many songs; we make her sing “Little Silver Ring” more than others. **Mrs. Jennings** also plays the piano well and cheers us up by playing everything we know so that we can sing to our hearts' content. **Miss Dryburgh**, an English missionary, also plays accompaniments for the camp's best singers, **Mrs. Murray**, **Mrs. Jennings**, **Mrs. McLeod** and **Mrs. Chambers**, who are all very generous with their glorious voices. **Miss Dryburgh** or **Mrs. Jennings** conducts the singers and their efforts are really marvellous. How everybody enjoys it!” (*Betty Jeffrey, 'White Coolies'*)

Armistice Day, 11th November 1942. “We had an impromptu service in our house conducted by **Sister Jean Ashton** and **Mrs. Jennings**. We all wore our ragged uniforms with limp white collars, but as we haven't any footwear we were barefooted. This service was a bit harrowing and I think we were all glad when it was over.” (*Betty Jeffrey*)

On 1st December 1942, **Margery** learned that **Mick** had survived his escape attempt by boat only to land back in Sumatra and go into POW camp in Palembang. She saw him marching past on work parties and they managed to exchange a few letters but they were not to meet again.

In 1944, **Margery** was elected block captain, in charge of all the women in her hut. The job of block captain was complex and difficult, trying to satisfy people and keep feuds under control. Jobs had to be allocated and rotated.

They included rice picking, cooking, sorting out rations, cleaning out drains, chopping wood and fetching water. Often women who should have done a particular job were sick and others had to fill in. **Margery** felt the responsibility keenly and believed it contributed to her poor health.

Continually sick and starving, she made **Mrs. Hinch** her executor in mid-March 1945, writing in her diary: "Wrote out my list of requests in case I died while interned by Nippon. Hope it will never be needed. Have no feelings or premonition and am just taking the precaution of getting my few things to the right people if I don't come through." Women were dying all around her, exhausted by the long internment.

Margot Turner, a fellow POW, talks about the strange myth that grew with the number of deaths. She says that women were turning their face to the wall in alarming numbers. "These women usually died during the night, just before dawn. Those who witnessed their demise were often haunted by the strange tune of a tropical jungle bird that seemed to sing at their passing. The bird was eventually nicknamed 'the death bird' and all manner of ghostly stories and myths were invented around this jungle creature." (*Penny Starns, "Surviving Tenko: The Story of Dame Margot Turner."*)

Margery succumbed to fever in May 1945 and is buried in Loebok Linggau. **Mick** was in Singapore by this time, at Changi Gaol. He learned of **Margery's** death from another woman who had been in the same camp, asking her if she knew what happened to **Margery Jennings**. The woman answered, "Oh, she died."

Later a kinder woman contacted him at Raffles Hotel, the clearing house for all the POWs, and gave him **Margery's** wedding ring, notebook and Bible (both were diaries) and his gold cigarette case, and told him about **Margery's** last days. He was repatriated in September 1945 on the *S.S. Antenor* sailing to Liverpool.

Philosophy

I go my way singing
What e'er fate be bringing
I go my way singing.
The world's my friend
O life's not for sorrow
No trouble I'll borrow,
A fig for the morrow.
I'll sing to the end.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission listing:

Nurse, Medical Auxiliary Service. Daughter of the late **Arthur Coates Hellewell (1875 -)** and **Florence Beaumont Hellewell (1873 -)** of 2, Kirkgate, Otley, Yorkshire; wife of **Captain Cyril Oswald (Mick) Jennings**, Royal Engineers. Died at Loebok Linggau.

A memorial service was held at the Otley Trinity Church on 18th November 1945 at 10.30a.m.

Her poem, "*Solace for Grief*" written on 3rd April 1944 was included.

The way is long when life is dreary,
To travel on, footsore and weary,
This is my task. Press on I must,
Though low I lie, head in the dust.

God in control, supplies my need,
Bruised and hurt, heart and feet bleed.
Turning to Thee, I find relief,
Strength to go on; Solace for Grief.

Rise, lonely soul, look to thy God!
Be not downcast, this road Christ trod!
Lonely and sad, His strength He drew
From the true source; Courage anew.

The story will be told in full in "**At Liberty to Escape**" to be published in October 2019 by Pen & Sword Books, U.K. My sister and I have compiled two books written by our father and **Margery's** diary (held in the IWM, London) to reconstruct the whole story.

FREDDY BLOOM

War Camp survivor who changed the way we think about the deaf

[Editor: Following the article by Freddy Bloom in A.Ks 56 & 57 entitled "The Christmas present" this report gives some interesting information about her life.]

Report Saturday 22nd July 2000

Freddy Bloom, who has died aged 86, was a New Yorker who, after a searing three and a half years in Japanese prison camps during the second world war, made her home in London. The mother of a daughter born profoundly deaf, she subsequently devoted her life to the needs of deaf children.

She was born **Elfrieden Wenzel**, the only child of **Robert**, a German consular official, and his wife **Emmy**, a journalist. She graduated from Barnard College of Columbia University, New York, and took a further degree at Trinity College, Dublin, after her parents moved to Ireland.

Her first marriage was to a medical student who became the medical officer to a regiment of the Indian Army. When war broke out, her husband was posted to Malaya where, almost immediately, he contracted pleurisy and died. **Freddy** found a job as a journalist in Shanghai and, while living there, met **Philip Bloom**, then a major in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Nine days after they were married, Singapore fell, and **Freddy** and her husband were interned in different Japanese camps. It was an ordeal from which many failed to emerge and in which a few displayed immense heroism. **Freddy** was one of the latter; she was indomitable and raised the morale of her fellow prisoners through a camp newsletter called **Pow Wow**, which she started.

That was to lead to the most agonizing experience of her incarceration. Because of her editorship of the publication, she was suspected by the Japanese of involvement in a spy ring. She was removed from the women's camp for interrogation, and held for five months, from October 1943, in a Singapore prison. There, she shared a cell 17 feet by 10 feet with 15 men. All were forced to sit cross-legged throughout the day and at night were permitted to lie down on the floor. There was no furniture and a single lavatory as the only source of water.

Released because of a near-fatal illness, **Freddy** was returned to the Changi women's camp, where she remained until the Japanese defeat. Despite the unspeakable privations she had endured, **Freddy** never expressed, nor appeared to harbour, any bitterness towards the Japanese people, and, in 1994, accepted an invitation to visit that country. She regarded it as an occasion for reconciliation and for establishing personal relationships with a number of Japanese.

After their release in 1945, husband and wife, with little but what they stood up in, came to London, where **Philip** set up a consultancy practice as an obstetrician and, later, a psychiatrist. **Freddy**, incapable of sitting still, ran the Youth Book Club, a non-profit enterprise to encourage teenagers to read good literature. That occupation was interrupted the following year when her daughter **Virginia (Ginny)** was born.

Because of the malnutrition **Freddy** had suffered in the Japanese camp, **Ginny** was born profoundly deaf. At the time, children in that condition were regularly described as "deaf and dumb", but **Freddy** was determined to change that conception. It was a decision which transformed her own life and benefited thousands who were born with the disability. **Freddy** dedicated herself to teaching **Ginny** how to speak, and her unstinting devotion of time, effort and patience was rewarded. **Ginny** is so articulate that it is almost impossible to believe that she cannot hear. **Freddy** brought her experience and determination to a small society concerned with deaf children which she expanded into the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS), of which she was the chairman until 1965 and vice-president until her death. She devoted herself unstintingly to this organization – lecturing, broadcasting, advising and editing its magazine. It was entirely through her efforts that the NDCS received national and subsequently international recognition. For her services to deaf children, she was awarded an OBE in 1966.

During her internment, **Freddy** had kept her own sanity and preserved a record of events by writing frequent letters to **Philip** which, however, she could never send. In 1980, these letters of understated horrors and experiences were published under the title of, "*Dear Philip: a diary of captivity, Changi 1942-5.*" Most of her other published works, such as, "*Our Deaf Children*" (1963) offered help and advice to parents.

Until the very last, **Freddy** retained her inquiring mind, dauntless spirit and an infectious humour. She never asked for sympathy and one of her constant refrains was: "**Who said life has to be fair?**" She was at her most relaxed with a cigarette in one hand and a glass in the other. Straightforward and a ready and patient listener, **Freddy** was one of those spirits who instantly inspired trust and affection. She leaves **Ginny**, and a son, **William**, as well as a host of friends whose lives she enriched. Her husband died in 1984.

Freddy (Elfrieden) Bloom, journalist and author, born 6th February 1914, died 20th May 2000.

[N.B. MVG member **Vilma Howe** remembers **Freddy** as one of her teachers in Changi & Sime Road Camp.]

BOUCHES INUTILES – Part 2

Unedited talk given by Mary Harris at the MVG lunch on 20.10.18

Bouches Inutiles, who were they and what happened to them?

But the situation was much more complicated than evacuating the defined population of garrison families because so much of the essential administration and intelligence work on which all three services depended were women, some of them wives of services people, some not. But they were all European and preferably from families of the armed forces because the colonial authorities did not trust anybody else. But it was never necessary to write these European women out of history. Neither **Peter Elphick** [*Far East Intelligence File, 1977*] nor **Michael Smith** [*The Emperor's Codes, 2000*] whose books are both thoroughly well researched and very important accounts, seem to have seen any reason for omitting such essential people. Many women worked under cover for the Far East Combined Bureau (FECB), which had arrived in a hurry from Hong Kong in August 1939, just as the Japanese sub-section of the Government Code and Cipher School in London moved into Bletchley Park. Many Navy families had had to move off the base to make room for the new arrivals who needed to be close to the Admiralty's wireless intercept station at Kranji. Though the word was omitted from its bland title, the FECB was an intelligence organisation, the word 'Combined' indicating that in 1935 British intelligence operations across all services in the Far East had been merged, but FECB in Singapore had a wider brief than it had in Hong Kong. A large part of the task in Singapore was to build up a picture of Japanese naval forces, which included their air forces because at that time, and like the USA, both the Japanese army and navy ran their own air forces. The Bureau's expanded responsibility was for gathering intelligence from an area that stretched from Panama to Suez and for keeping track on all enemy and Allied vessels between it and its three base locations on Singapore Island: The Wireless Intercept (Y) Station at Kranji itself; the joint naval and military Cryptanalysis Section at Seletar; and the various offices within the Naval Base itself including the drawing office where **Elizabeth (Alexander)** began her intelligence work.

Keeping the equipment at Kranji going were 40 – 50 civilian shore Wireless Telegraphy operators, but it was always short of intercept staff. Local Malayan signallers from the Royal Navy Reserve were trained in Singapore, and in England the Womens Royal Navy Service (WRNS), known universally as Wrens, were trained as wireless telegraphists to take down Japanese Morse before being sent to Singapore. Training was given by civilian operators at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, under the charge of Second Officer **Betty Archdale** – in civilian life a barrister, captain of the Women's Cricket Team to tour Australian the 1930s and much else. By the end of 1939, there were 30 WRNS Chief Petty Officer Telegraphists at Kranji. 10 more arrived later, but a third draft was killed when their ship was torpedoed on the way out from England. But the FECB also used civilian sources. Anybody who had come to Singapore from Shanghai or Hong Kong in the 1930s who had been in business, in a government-sounding service, in journalism or in the military is likely to have run a private sideline there, and among the most recent arrivals in Singapore, already very familiar with dark arts itself, were naval officers with at least two jobs, at least one of which was never mentioned and a surprising number of them spoke Japanese. The new arrivals included **Captain and Mrs. Pender-Cudlip** and **Major J.G. Ewens**. **Mrs. Pender-Cudlip** was a modern languages graduate, a fluent Japanese speaker and expert at typing military reports, who worked as **Ewen's** secretary. A **Mrs. Wingfield**, about whom almost nothing is recorded, added greatly to the Bureau's staffing problems when she left to join her husband six months after the Bureau arrived in Singapore.

Among the civilians who worked for FECB were Temporary Women Assistants, TWAs, recruited from staff families whenever possible. But who today remembers **Mrs. Burnett**, **Mrs. Barham**, **Mrs. Merry**, **Mrs. Colgrave**, **Mrs. Mortimer**, **Mrs. Bennett** and **Mrs. Habdich**? One local recruit was **Molly Beegan**, the oldest of the three daughters of **Sergeant Harry Beegan** of the Royal Engineers, stationed at Kitchener Barracks on the Changi peninsula. She was working as an assistant teacher where she was recruited to work on the Japanese desk at the Naval Base, whence she transferred to Colombo and thence to Bletchley Park. Again my source is through MVG, this time in the form of **Shirley Waldock**. Two TWAs known to my own family were **Janet Whitaker** and **Eileen Collings** whose anthropologist husband **Dennis**, knowing that the incoming army would ignore the local knowledge of the Volunteers, joined the regulars and later appeared as a rather subversive translator between Japanese, Malay and English at Tanjong Priok. **Janet** and **Eileen** shared a house somewhere in the Tanglin area where they alternated shifts so that there was always one of them at home in air raids. **Dennis** has dug a shelter into the hillside large enough to accommodate both families and the families of all the servants. **Eileen** was evacuated with the Navy families but **Janet** was promoted to a higher grade of TWA and was moved to Ceylon with the FECB people in the beginning of January 1942. I need to find out more about the TWAs but that would mean more months in archives in Portsmouth and I haven't got time, but they seem never to have held formal rank, did not wear uniform and therefore did not qualify for any award at the end of the war, however important or heroic their work. A further factor was that, by the time Singapore fell, the Japanese army's reputation for particular brutality to women was well known, and real efforts were made by the

military to destroy any written record that could identify them. The FECB remains a shadowy organisation: what records there are in National Archives are scattered within the Admiralty, Foreign Office, Colonial Office and War Office records and some of them have significant breaks in their numbered pages, a situation that feeds a certain cynicism. As Elphick himself wrote, “..the FECB has been unjustifiably mired as one of the easiest organisations to scapegoat when Singapore fell.” The Wrens and other women staff of FECB left for Ceylon early in January, and would, of course, had time off (unlike the local wives whose other job was family care) to go into town, ‘carouse, socialize and dance’ if they wished (and why shouldn’t they?), but they had been gone a month before 4th February. I do need to say a little more about the ladies who danced to the end however, before I return to identify who actually was meant by ‘*bouches inutiles*’ at the end and what happened to them, for I have to mention Lady Brooke-Popham’s slanderous accusations, published in the press only a few days after Singapore fell. I have not checked South African newspaper libraries, but both Australia and New Zealand now publish past newspapers online and her words are quoted in all of them: “*People continued with their parties, bridge and dancing until the very last.*” This does not concur with Megan Spooner’s letter to The Times of 29th July 1942 when there was still little details available about what had happened to people: “*Until the very end, noble women stayed at their posts of duty when they might easily have left the country ... Out of all the women might I mention five with whose work I was familiar? Mrs. Dickinson, wife of the Chief of Police, who ran the blood transfusion service; Mrs. Dawson, wife of the Secretary to the Minister of Defence, who, in spite of the frailest of bodies, worked unceasingly in casualty clearing stations; Mrs. Cherry, who was head of the St. John’s Ambulance Brigade; Mrs. Prentiss, who collected and sent to England thousands of pounds from the profits of her ‘war market’; and Mrs. Nunn, wife of the Head of the P.W.D. who, although for many years an invalid, organised nearly all the entertainments for the troops in Singapore. [My emphasis] The first two have remained with their husbands to continue to look after and work for the Asiatic population among whom they have lived for so many years. The other three, I am grieved to say, lost their lives through enemy action when they were finally persuaded to leave.*”

In spite of the large body of evidence to the contrary, Lady Brooke-Popham’s remarks still linger in poorly researched books wanting to be seen as Literature B and it is difficult to find rational reason for it. Her allegations added considerably to the hostility with which some of the surviving, escaping women were met when they eventually arrived in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. It is understandable that a woman who had just come from blitzed England and all the work she did to help out, found a very different social situation in Singapore before the Japanese invaded, but the status of a very senior officer’s wife does carry with it responsibilities to her husband’s current post, rather than his previous ones. Molly Reilly, Shenton Thomas’s cipher clerk, was met by hostility when she eventually got to Melbourne and her account is in the Imperial War Museum: “*Lady Brooke-Popham is reputed to have slated the women of Singapore and said she could not get any help, as we were too busy playing golf and tennis!! All I can say is if Lady Brooke-Popham met with refusals it was because we were already working eight to twelve hours a day when she visited Singapore shortly before war with Japan broke out – and we must sleep sometimes! I know I had to refuse when she asked me to help with her Canteens, which met trains at the Station, because I was already working every day and all day and on many occasions all night too. I cannot think of a single one of my friends who was not doing a war job – many of them, like myself, on call night and day; and most of them had started their work when war broke out with Germany.*” And as Aileen Wallace reminds us in AK 16, the Brooke-Pophams were not there at the end, for they occupied one of the comfortable top deck cabins of her evacuation ship which left on New Year’s Day, six weeks before the end. Mrs. Wallace’s account tells us how badly the Brooke-Pophams behaved towards the other evacuating wives packed more tightly on the lower decks, *for not staying at home to back up their men, quite unable to take in the fact that their homes were way behind the enemy lines and that they had no idea where their husbands were.*

There are many accounts like Megan Spooner’s letter to The Times, of people who were there at the end, or very near it, who refute the allegation of carousing and socialising, the sort of behaviours which, in London, were judged as a courageous carrying on as normal, exactly the opposite to the way they were judged in Singapore. But the most revealing account of actual dancing at the end, for me anyway, comes from another who was actually there and again the record is in AK, this time AK 28, page 14, in an interview with 1st Lt. Bill Bevis of the MRNVR by Audrey McCormick.

“One of the most irritating of impressions carried to outsiders of civilian behaviour in the last days of Singapore – is the tale recounted of how ‘everyone’ was out enjoying themselves – in particular, dining and dancing at Raffles to the end, while Rome burned about their ears... The truth was different. You had to realize the position of mothers with young children and what the civilian men were undertaking at the time... Upcountry refugees were crowded into homes, or hotel rooms sleeping on floors with their children, desperately seeking news of lost husbands in the Volunteers... The civilian men were working every hour they could remain awake: they were on watch duties; they were dealing with the vanishing water supplies; fire-fighting with lessening pressure in the hoses; keeping vital supplies going... They also needed to say goodbye to their families and, if possible, help them board ships where last partings took place...

I have spared readers the next details but this small, searing passage has a ring of authenticity, far removed from the spiteful, passing swipes at Europeans written 70 years later... *"At Raffles, the music was by only two or three of the most elderly musicians of the group originally contracted to play, and who had no other employment. When they finally left, a gramophone was found. The husbands and fiancées there were saying goodbye to their loved ones and for some it would be for the last time... I saw the 'dancing' at Raffles among silent dancers. They were evidently making their farewells as best they could, and it was tragic and brave. I felt heart-broken for them."*

But I also found something in AK 24 and 25 about dancing to the end which intrigued me because I had not seen its significance the first time I read it. **Daphne Davidson** had worked on high security plans while a private secretary in Singapore Police HQ. Very soon after the surrender while still in her office, she was interviewed by a Japanese officer with fluent English who asked, *"Is it true, Madam, that the English were dancing at their exclusive Tanglin Club the night before Singapore fell?"* In fact he was a newspaper correspondent attached to the Japanese military, but his information was strangely out of date given that the Tanglin Club had been behind his own lines for about a week. There are records in **Literature A** that indicate that by New Year's Day, the Tanglin Club ballroom was a store for stretchers and emergency beds in premises taken over as a medical post. But it occurred to me for the first time, to wonder if the myth of the dancing white women actually began in the Japanese anti-white-women propaganda, which was usually nastier than mere dancing, but easier to believe by people already prejudiced. The many cultures of the Far East, at that time, were more traditional than the European in the way they managed their women and tended to see the freer behaviour of white women as extremely loose, particularly as portrayed on the ubiquitous American movies. The tale of the dancing women might not have created a culture where having a go at white women was accepted, but it certainly exploited it. I feel I need to subdivide my **Category A** into those who know what they are writing about and those who write superficial, romantic piffle, based on gossip and race and gender prejudice. There are, of course, other huge literatures in my **Category A** which don't fit my new sub-category at all, and that is interesting work for the future. My main point now is that **Literature B** seems only to talk to itself, sometimes unaware that it is actually talking nonsense.

What happened to them?

Both **Literatures A** and **B** do contain a lot of good analyses about evacuating civilians, notably the work of **Joseph Kennedy** and the more recent work of **Kent Fedorowich**, but a few things struck me as I read the War Office report (above), which I did not subject to detailed academic analysis because it has already been done. Firstly, the original intention of Whitehall seems to be genuine concern for the welfare of women and children and it had said so before Christmas 1941; secondly, there is a time lapse of 10 days between sending the most significant cable from Singapore and receiving it in London, which raised eyebrows in London which has been examined in **Literature B** but still leaves matters wide open to conspiracy theories; and thirdly, Whitehall was soon becoming so out of touch with the speed of the Japanese advance and conditions on the ground, that it seems to have had little choice but to go along with the results of political spats in Singapore and agree, uncomfortably, to a politically and racially charged evacuation idea, because it never developed as policy, which could not possibly have worked in practice. How can you impose a non-racist scheme on a society that is already so deeply racist that there was no means of doing it? The 21 pages of the *"Bouches Inutiles"* record comes across to me as an example of administrative procedures desperately trying to carry on in the normal way, but quite detached from reality. It seems to degenerate into the sort of sad bureaucratic exercise that makes it look as if you are doing something when you don't know what to do. What is unforgivable is the effect of political point scoring in Singapore on the lives of women and children of all races. All that was achieved was to pile one catastrophe on top of the existing catastrophe and we will probably never know how many women and children it actually killed.

We can update ourselves on what had happened to the concept of *'bouches inutilites'* by the end, in **William Orr's** account. He was Veterinary Officer in Singapore and hosting not only the vets from the Malay States but the thousands of Bali cattle, originally imported to feed the Indian troops, which they had driven down the peninsula just ahead of the Japanese Army. Like everyone else, **Orr** had a second job. His was with the police, hunting down fifth columnists and Japanese agents, so he had access to up-to-date information on where the enemy actually was. He updated **George Rocker**, one of the vets who wrote an excellent book on the episode and his escape which **Jill Smallshaw** (daughter of vet **Ronald Wright**) introduced me to, again via **MVG**. [*George Rocker: "Escaped Singapore, Heading Homewards" 1990*]. **Rocker** wrote that, *"...up at Fort Canning they think that there are far too many European women here: they classify them rather inelegantly as 'bouches inutilites'. But the main trouble is that when the end comes, these white women will be fair game..."* and then he uses some adjectives about Japanese soldiery. The concept has moved from traditional military necessity to protecting white women from rape. The remark of an officer on board *"Orion,"* heard by **Mrs. Page**, **Sandy Lincoln's** mother and recorded in **AK17** is also realistic because he, too, was there at the time. *"This ain't no war. It's a blitz on women and kids."* Right at the end there were people who knew that the sea was as dangerous as the land, and if the Royal Navy really didn't know that the Imperial Japanese Navy was already out there, then there was something very wrong with its Radio Direction Finding still running from Fort Canning. **[To be continued in July]**

WRENS AND TWAs

With thanks to Dave Croft RAFBPA

[Editor: Wrens, TWAs and FECB have all been mentioned in Mary Harris's talk. This article, kindly sent by Dave Croft, gives additional information about these three organisations.]

Far East Combined Bureau – Kranji

25th August 1939 – the Far East Combined Bureau (FECB) staff at Hong Kong, together with twenty lorries carrying secret documents, boarded *HMS Birmingham* and sailed for Singapore. On arrival in Singapore, the main body of the Bureau was set up at RAF Seletar with the intercept operators being based at Kranji Wireless Station. Within a few days, the Bureau was operating although the teleprinter links were not operational until later – messages were relayed between both sites by motorcycle dispatch riders.

The main role of the FECB was intelligence gathering using traffic analysis of routine enemy wireless communications aided by direction finding (DF), where each station (in this case Kranji) in the region had an array of wireless masts that were used to provide the bearings of enemy transmitters.

The greater role of the FECB in its new setting, when compared with that at Hong Kong, led to a need to increase the number of intercept operators: this was initially done by retraining Royal Malayan Navy signallers [sic]. However, finding good intercept operators was difficult, leaving the Royal Navy having to train **Wrens** (Women's Royal Naval Service) as wireless telegraphists for service in Singapore. Following a three month course (originally six months) in London, the Wrens were sent to one of three Royal Navy UK intercept sites to gain experience.

Several months later, after completing a further course at the Royal Naval College in Greenwich, the newly qualified intercept operators left Greenock on board *SS Nestor* in a convoy bound for Singapore. A few days out of port, the convoy was attacked by a lone German aircraft without causing any damage but resulted in two Wrens consuming a whole box of Black Magic chocolates so as not to waste them should the ship have been sunk!

On arrival at Singapore, the newly qualified Wrens joined the watch system in operation at Kranji, where they were split up into four watches alongside British Army (known as Special Operators), RAF and RMN personnel. As one Wren recalled: *"Kranji was a very happy ship. We all mixed very happily together, except in the station swimming pool where no mixed bathing was permitted. Our mess and quarters had been built specially for the Civilian Wireless Service personnel, but were re-allocated to us. The buildings were on six-foot concrete pillars and six of us were accommodated in each block, each with a well furnished room, bathroom and small veranda. A Chinese amah was provided for each block for cleaning and dhobying. The space under the block was a happy hunting ground for frogs and was presumably to discourage snakes and to keep out the flooding caused by tropical downpours."*

Regardless to which service they were in, the intercept operators worked Royal Navy watches; these consisted of four to eight hours on, with a similar number of hours off duty. Daytime temperatures inside the enclosed operation room were high, very high! *"You had to be there to believe the heat, no air-conditioning, constantly manned so that it was never aired, additional heating from the sets and a haze and smell of smoking that could almost be cut with a knife. We went on watch with giant flasks of iced lime water and small towels to wrap around our necks to absorb as much as possible of the constant sweat. The tropical heat outside seemed almost cool by comparison."*

In July 1941, the number of female intercept operators was increased by a new draft of ten Wrens from the UK.

Temporary Women Assistants (TWAs)

To help alleviate shortages of 'essential' administrative staff, Temporary Women Assistants were taken on from the local military and expatriate [sic] communities. Early in January 1942, the RN members of FECB prepared for moving to Colombo (Ceylon), embarking on *HMS Devonshire* on 5th January. The TWAs were given the option of also travelling to Colombo with the RN staff; a few accepted, many opted to remain with their families. The RN codebreakers and intercept operators arrived at Colombo on the 14th January and moved into Pembroke College, inland of Colombo, which had been requisitioned to operate as a codebreaking and wireless interception centre. The Wrens were housed in a hostel where they found the kitchens were *'most unhygienic with piles of raw meat covered with flies lying on the floor.'*

TWAs were again recruited at the local level to fill the essential administrative positions – an example of recruitment is given by an Army wife who worked at the Abbotabad intercept site on the North-West Frontier Province of British India. *"My husband was in the Indian Army and he was sent off to Iraq in 1941, leaving me behind in Secunderabad. A friend who was married to a Gurkha officer had said: 'If ever you're abandoned come and visit me in Abbottabad.' So I went to see her and while there stayed at the Abbott Hotel, which was a collection of chalets scattered over a fairly wide area. I was going over to the dining room one day when a man I didn't know stopped me and said, 'Can you type?' Well, I'd done a course of typing and book-keeping after I had left school but I'd never actually had to work. He said, 'Why don't you come along to the mess tonight, have a drink and meet the head of the Wireless Experimental Depot, Colonel Tippett?'*

Colonel Tippett asked me a few questions to make sure I was suitable – they didn't want anyone who drank, who might talk, you see – and then told me I should start the next day at a salary of 100 rupees a month. This was only about £7 but I thought it was marvellous. What did I know, I'd never had to work before in my life. I was picked up in a car the next day, along with four others, by one of the men who worked there and he took us a couple of miles outside Abbottabad to the Wireless Depot where I was given a typewriter and told to start typing these intelligence reports. After a while, I was put on ciphers, sending messages to Bletchley..."

The Easter 1942 raid on Ceylon prompted the withdrawal of the RN Eastern Fleet to Kilindini (Kenya) taking both the naval codebreakers and intercept operators as well. A brief description of the voyage was given by one of the Wrens. *"We*

embarked in the AMC (Armed Merchant Cruiser) 'Alaunia,' surrounded by many ships of the Eastern Fleet ... and as the voyage proceeded we took part in many naval manoeuvres. On deck one day, when the rum ration was being issued, we asked, 'What about us, don't we get any?' 'No love,' the Master-at-Arms said, 'You are on the ship's books as boys, and while you're in the tropics you'll get your share of lime juice, same as the young lads.'

The female members of the party were accommodated in a hotel in Mombasa – the Lotus Hotel. The local authorities proved to be stubbornly difficult, insisting that female clerical staff (TWAs), mostly codebreakers wives that were accompanied by children, were to be moved up-country despite it being explained that they were essential to the running of the unit. The women solved the problem themselves by refusing to leave the Lotus Hotel (women power!). Eventually the TWAs were able to take up their administrative duties at a requisitioned school just outside Mombasa, where they continued to provide a very essential service to the war effort.

In addition, the voluntary role of women in the Far East war was also recognised by Air Commodore Vincent when the RAF in Java took over a house at Tjilitan and converted it to an Operations Centre in February 1942. In addition to the Dutch works personnel converting the premises in a very short time, he added, *"A squad of some twenty Dutch girls were trained in a week to become our (aircraft) plotters and filterers. A very attractive collection, they were most keen to wear uniform. They paraded before me in their creations for selection: drill blouses with short skirts, long trousers or mini shorts. I chose the trouser. One item they all agreed on – could they wear the RAF fore and aft caps? I said they certainly could if they made them, as we had none in our stores!"*

However, they never had the chance as events rapidly overtook the country.

References:

"Hurricanes over Singapore – RAF, RNZAF and NEI Fighters in action against the Japanese in 1942"

"The Emperor's Codes – Bletchley Park and the breaking of Japan's secret ciphers."

"Wings of the Dawning – The Battle for the Indian Ocean 1939-1945."

Kranji Wireless Transmitter Station - 1939



Sikh Guard at Krani c. 1939



WOMEN IN THE SERVICES – With thanks to Dave Croft for this article.

Wrens and WAAFs (Women's Auxiliary Air Force) and nurses rarely appear in war histories, perhaps because their extremely valuable work, as clerks or signallers, goes on behind the scenes. The Navy certainly relied on large numbers of the Women's Royal Naval Service in the naval base at Kilindini, Mombasa, at Colombo and even (See the *Khedive Ismail* tragedy) at the Fleet Air Arm base, RNAS Tanga, south of Mombasa, when 58 Wrens were among the 1,500 drowned. **Colin Stones**, of 205 Squadron, in a long article for me, showed that the Wrens' company was appreciated by the RAF. This despite having officially to 'book' a blind date collectively. **Arthur Davies** of 212 Squadron, Karachi, sums it up:

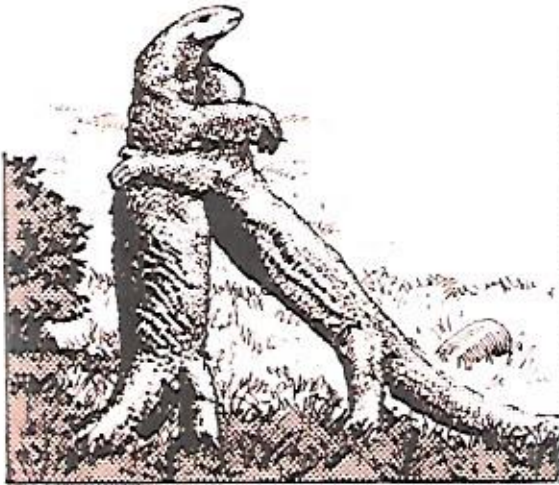
"212 escorted the convoy into Bombay which carried on board the first Wrens to serve in India. This paid a few dividends as the crews were invited to an open house at their Wrennery. It enabled some of the smoother ones to get a date with some of the Wrens. It wasn't quite like a normal date as one had to sign them out and in and explain what you intended to do and where you were going. This naturally caused the truth to be bent a little ..."

Turning to the WAAFs, I was kindly given a small glimpse into their daily life at **Koggala** by an LACW (Leading Aircraftswoman) who was 'out there.' In early 1945, in Ceylon at least, the WAAF contingent was sent to work in **Koggala** alongside the men, roughing it in the dripping heat. LACW **Nancy Barnett**, later **Mrs. Worrall**, who had come from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, sailed for Ceylon in a Dutch troopship, the **Johan van Olden Barneveldt**, out of convoy."

"This led a handful of WAAFs to a sumptuous style of life from the one we had left. Real food on real tables and so much we usually took Gateau, wrapped in our serviettes, to the boys on board. We were full of apprehension when we were told there was a sub in the area but nothing happened."

Courtenay Elliot, who had been an agriculture student near Guildford and was then a Pilot Flying Officer, adds to the tale:

"I believe it was Christmas Eve and we had emergency Boat Drill. I was put in charge of a group of WAAFs who were formed up on the starboard side of the open Boat Deck. It was nearly pitch dark as we waited for further instructions. The WAAFs sang carols – and how they sang. Since that night, fifty Christmases have come and gone, and on each one, without fail, whenever I have heard or sung Silent Night it has reminded me of that dark Christmas night in the Med and those WAAFs."



'There, there, did those WAAFs frighten you?' A pair of Kobragoyas at Koggala

(Courtesy of **W.H. Davies**)

It was a relief to go on leave up in the hills at Nuwara Eliya, in the cool English-type atmosphere and enjoy the luxury of guest-houses run like a country house with log fires in the grate and other comforts. Then back to the damp heat of the palm plantations, the snakes and the minor dragons at **Koggala**, backing up the flying boats out on patrol.

"The Sunderlands and Catalinas looked a fine sight on the lagoon – how I would have liked a trip in one, but never did – we just sent out messages." Nancy later married in Ceylon.

AN INTERVIEW WITH Mr. LAURENCE CHARLES HURNDPELL RNZN (Retd)
in February 1995, at 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.]

What sort of equipment were you given for this sort of exercise, pick and shovel?

No, we used to have things like a huge steel hoe on a handle, we used to chop away with that and carry everything in baskets.

No wheelbarrows?

None, everything had to be in a basket, fill it up with earth, it was slave labour.

We would be drafted to different gangs, we would all line up in the morning and the Japs would come along and count so many along, right you are in that gang, we didn't know what we were going to do. They had tools there, spanners that type of thing and crowbars. If you were chosen for the rail gang you carried the rails on your shoulders. What used to happen was, there would be the sleeper party, they would bring the sleepers up to the railway tracks already built and you would have to go back and get the sleepers and put them on your shoulder, walk up ahead of the rail gang and place the sleepers. Some of them were made of Jarrah, hardwood, and you would need two of you to carry a sleeper and the Jap at the end would give you a little ticket and when you had carried so many sleepers you could knock off, but that didn't really work because you just carried more and more. There was a party cutting sleepers we used to try and choose all the trees that we knew about. We even chose kapok trees, which if you made a sleeper out of kapok tree the first railway engine over it would go wham and crush it. Then the Japs got wise to that and they made us just cut hardwood. Most of the Australians were on cutting down trees

and trimming for sleepers. The rail party would come along, there would be one gang on each side and a gang on the rail truck. The gang on the flat top would lift the rail onto the shoulders. You can imagine we had no clothing, we used to put a bit of matting on our shoulders and as you walked up this other gang would take it off your shoulder and drop it down onto the sleepers and that happened both sides. Then the front spikers would come along to put the first spikes in to hold the rail while the train went ahead and these flat tops were all shunted. The Japs had diesel lorries with railway wheels on them and they were way at the back, they would shunt these flat tops up with the rails on them and we would be laying this railway track. Then there were the back spikers who used to come along to spike the rails into position. They had about 6 guys loading up baskets of super spikes, and dropping them along the track, then the back spikers coming along putting the spikes in with large hammers. Then there were the spanner men who would fit the fish plates on and tighten up the bolts. I copped that job several times, spanner man. Then there was a Jap engineer coming along with the back gang straightening all the rails with crowbars.

Laurie, what sort of country were you going through at this stage?

We were going through the jungle.

Undulating?

No, there were cuttings made by gangs who went ahead, they employed a lot of Indonesian labour, Chinese labour and they put cuttings through and we laid the railway track. Oh gosh! One day I can well remember, there was an Indonesian Dutch Army, they remained loyal to the Dutch, he was a spanner man the other side to where I was this side and I was tightening bolts. This big Jap sergeant came along and said, "*That plate is not tight.*" I said, "*That is not my side, this is my side, that's his side.*" He was rushing through and he wasn't tightening them properly. The Jap Sergeant just looked at me and he had a pick handle in his hand and he went bang on my head, and I went out like a light. I was out for three hours and they got somebody else to carry on and I was left lying on the track. The medical orderly brought me round eventually, gee, I had a headache for a long time after that.

I bet. Laurie each night would you go back to the camp?

We would go back to the camp. I will tell you this, in the final stages of that railway, the last four months we never saw the camp in daylight. We were up in the dark in the morning, they would give you a bit of paperhanger glue to eat and you got nothing else until you got back to camp after dark at night. We were starving, skinny as bloody rakes.

You would have lost a lot of blokes at that stage?

Blokes were dying right, left and centre. We got back to this particular camp, which was on the banks of a stream. We had joined up this railway and there was a big ceremony. We were sent out of it and told to wait, and we had to wait for four hours just doing nothing while the Japs had this drawn out ceremony with tons of saki and what have you and then the guards came back and loaded us on to the trucks and took us back to the camp. They said, "*Yasume,*" meaning rest tomorrow. So we had the day off, couldn't understand this. Now the war finished on the 14th August, this was the 22nd August.

This is a week later, 22nd August '45?

Yes, we got back to base camp and the wood cutting party went out to gather wood for the cookhouse. The normal Jap guards were on duty manning different posts around the camp, there was no barbed wire or anything, just jungle. We had no means of getting through it. One guy in the wood cutting party, an English guy I knew – **Jimmy Roo** an AB who was on the **DRAGONFLY** – he came back and said, "*Hey, this Jap guard is talking about the war being over,*" and, of course, there were rumours that started to fly around all over the place. An announcement came through. The Commanding Officer was a Dutch Naval Officer and said, "*We want everybody in their huts.*" This was 9am and so we all gathered in our huts. Apparently this officer and the senior British Officer had approached the Jap Commander who lived just across the river from us. They went across to see him and confronted him and he said, "*You are free.*" They came back and told us and it was the most emotional thing I have ever experienced. By midday, the Japs had doubled the guards, by mid evening they had tripled the guards, there were three guards to each post. We were staring to ferment by then, we were going to knock them off and the officers came in then and said, "*No, we have come this far, we can go home now, don't do anything stupid.*"

Your own people said that?

Yes, our own people, the British Commanding Officer, **Commander Whelham, RN**, went right through with us, I don't know whether he is still alive.

Then we woke up next morning and there wasn't a Jap to be seen anywhere. Just left to our own devices. We were told to go and cut huge palm leaves and point them as arrows to the camp and the first plane we saw come over was a Liberator. They came around and there were other aircraft and they started dropping supplies. We needed food and medicines.

How marvellous.

It wasn't much because they had arranged for us to go back to **Pakanbaru** (sic) which was quite a number of hours journey. We left before daylight and we got to **Pakanbaru** after midnight. The food was coming in, there was masses of rice after the Japs had left us, but there were no vegetables, there were just green chopped up bananas and we made a stew of them, bitter as hell, but we ate them because we were starving. Then we got back to this base camp in **Pakanbaru** and the RAAF dropped in supplies and we got our first cigarettes, gee it was marvellous. Because most of us guys were naked at that stage, we just had a loin cloth. The paratroopers came in, that's right, there was a South African paratrooper Major [**Ed: Gideon F. Jacobs**]

And he said, "I don't want you guys to do anything silly," he said, "You are confined to camp, you are not going outside the camp, no raiding the natives, there is food coming in, we are parachuting stuff in," he said. "You have come this far and you want to go home." That was sensible.

Most of the blokes went along with that, Laurie?

Yes, most of the guys went along with that. Some walked outside the camp and created a bit of trouble. The senior officers put Indian guards on to keep us in camp. We were mucking around in that camp, there was nothing to do, it was boring, and we were all sick with tropical diseases, i.e. beriberi etc. All of a sudden one day a shout went up, "Women in the camp." God. You have never seen blokes move so fast. **Lady Mountbatten** arrived with quite an entourage. They got a plane down on an enlarged private air strip, and she arrived and they found some transport from this place to the camp. She arrived with an entourage, high ranking officers and nurses. I have never really forgotten. She was walking around amongst the men, she was a beautiful woman, she really didn't mind, neither did the nurses, we were naked and skinny. We were standing in a group there and I remember this Colonel who was talking to us, suddenly he put his hand in his jacket and pulled out a silver cigarette case which he opened to take out a cigarette and suddenly realised what he had done and handed them round and, of course, he lost all his cigarettes in the end. He lit our cigarettes, and that was our first decent cigarette. Although right through the prison camp we were able to get tobacco, it was native tobacco and if you could beg, borrow or steal it, we used to roll the tobacco in the very thin bark of a palm tree and smoke it that way.

What happened then, after Edwina left?

After she was there, she wasn't with us very long and the RAAF started to fly us out next day.

You fellows went to Singapore?

The day before I was flown out of Pakanbaru camp I lost my best mate. He died from malnutrition and beriberi, he had just wasted away. I tried to feed him with soupy rice etc. but he was beyond taking nourishment. He was among many we buried that afternoon. It was a bitter blow as we had been friends for a long time. I never knew his Christian name, his surname was Drake and he was always known as Ducky. He was a leading signalman aboard **HMS PRINCE OF WALES** and after her sinking was drafted to **HMS GRASSHOPPER**. He went right through the prison camps and died the day before we flew out of Pakanbaru. Many POWs died before we were released on 16th September 1945, three days before my 23rd birthday. There was a huge cemetery at Pakanbaru.

We flew back, Aussie Air Force flew us out, they got DC3s down and I was one of the first to go out fortunately, thanks to **Claude Thompson** of the New Zealand Air Force. He was a sergeant pilot who was flying these old Wildebeests, and he arranged our flights. I was told, "You are on the first flight or second flight." I am not sure which it was. We just piled into these DC3s and they just counted out the numbers in the plane. There was nothing in the plane, just bare boards. I can remember the flight sergeant, as we started to go down the runway, said, "Get forward until we get the tail up, you will be right then." They flew us out to Kallang Airport in Singapore where the big sports stadium is now and we landed there and they didn't know what to do with us. There were two Air Force guys **Claude Thompson** and **Ron Reid**, so actually there were five of us New Zealanders. It was the two Air Force guys we met up with on the railway when we went on to the railway proper and they had been captured in Java and were transported to Singapore to Changi and then across to Sumatra to work on the railway, they were both Sergeant Pilots. Anyhow, we got there and they didn't know what to do with us. There was an Aussie officer, I can't remember his rank, he said, "Put them in with the Australians, they are going to St. Pats." We were taken to St. Pats High School in Katong, Singapore, which had been converted into the 18th Australian General Hospital and I was there for six weeks.

You were telling us that the Australian nurses were brilliant?

They were marvellous and, of course, we went through the delousing stage and got rid of what clothes we had been issued with, they cleaned us up and treated us. We had six meals a day, just little tiny bits each time. They wouldn't give us big meals. We just ate small meals all the time we were there. There were things like malt, marmite, peanut butter galore.

You were saying that the doctor was worried about your not gaining weight?

I wasn't gaining weight until one day, I don't know whether they gave me any treatment, I can't remember, but I passed a huge, massive round worm. I showed it to the doctor and he said, "Now you will put on a bit of weight." I did start to put on a bit of weight after that. After that we were flown home to New Zealand and I tell you the pilot who flew us home all the way was **Jack Register**. He was responsible for flying those aircraft a few years ago, four engine jobs, NAC had them, Viscounts. **Jack Register**, I don't know whether he is still alive, but he was a market gardener, on retirement he grew glasshouse tomatoes.

You landed in Auckland?

We landed at Whenuapai after 5 days. We flew from Singapore to Labuan in North Borneo, and then from Borneo to Morotai in the Celebes and then to Darwin, and Darwin to Brisbane for three days and then they flew us across the Tasman. A lovely little Wren in a naval car met us, there was just Noel and I, we were the last to leave, the others had gone ahead. She said, "I am to take you to Devonport" and I said that's fine. We jumped in the car and we were both dressed in Australian Army battle dress with slouch hat and gaiters, green tropical battle dress. They got us into Davenport and, of course, the doctors wanted to see us straight away.

Did you have a stop on the way, you were telling me?

Oh yes, this Wren said, "Would you like to first taste New Zealand beer?" I said, "I would love to." She pulled into a little pub, but I can't tell you where it is, pulled into this pub and she came in and she bought three pints, three big handles, she had one herself. Noel had one and we drank it down, it was 'beaut', and then she said, "We will go to Devonport."

What was Noel's other name, Laurie?

Noel Betley, he is still alive.

You went to the Base Hospital there, did you?

We went to Philomel Base Hospital, stopped there the night and, of course, we got there in the afternoon. The Naval Doctors wanted to see us and they examined us and said, "You are fit enough to go home," something like that, but you have got to get kitted out with Navy gear. So down to the stores, they issued us with survival gear and they gave us a suitcase and everything was packed, so we stayed in this jungle battle dress. We went back and we slept the night in the Devonport Naval Base Hospital. We had to get up at 5 o'clock in the morning to catch a plane to Wellington, a DC3, we flew to Paraparaumu. There was a car there waiting for us to take us into the big depot. I can't remember the name of the place, it was on the wharf. We walked in there and there was a big Chief Petty Officer who looked us up and down and said, "Why aren't you in naval uniform?" I said, "I haven't had a bloody chance yet." He said, "You are supposed to be in naval uniform." - a bloke called **CPO Bull**. And there was an officer standing by us, a Lieutenant Commander, and he said, "Come on **Bull**, use your brains. These guys have just come out of prison camp. They haven't had a chance of doing anything yet." And this **Chief Petty Officer Bull** quietened down. Fancy being treated like that. Anyhow this Lieutenant Commander came over to me and he said, "I am taking you home." Poor old Noel had to catch the train to Fielding. So we went home, this Lieutenant Commander was married to a girl from Carterton and he wanted to stay the weekend, this was Friday. I was supposed to go into Masterton Hospital straight away, I had orders from the Doctor in Devonport. I said, "To hell with this, I want three or four days home for a start!" and I did that, and I went up to the Hospital on the Tuesday - I got home on the Friday. I was in Masterton Hospital for eight weeks.

Were you, Laurie?

I was based at Shelly Bay, they gave me three months sick leave and three months foreign service leave, so I had six months all told. I finally got out of the Navy in April '46. That was the end of my career. I settled down and got married and went to work.

Well that is an amazing story, Laurie, and I think we are going to conclude now, but I want to say, and I'm sure I can say this, on behalf of Geoff Hopkins and his staff at the Naval Museum in Auckland, thank you very much for your time . It has been tremendous.

(End of interview)

Message from Meg Parkes

"The Secret Art of Survival: hidden artwork by British Far East Prisoners of War, 1942-1945. [Victoria Gallery & Museum, Liverpool.] 19th October 2019 – 20th June 2020.

There will be a special weekend of events for FEPOW descendants taking place in Liverpool in November this year, associated with the art exhibition. LSTM realised that they could not invite all FEPOW relatives who might wish to attend the official opening in mid-October, and therefore they have arranged this special weekend of events from 16th-18th November 2019. This is the same weekend as the NFFWRA's autumn weekend break in Liverpool. **See separate sheet for info.** Further information about this weekend may be found on: www.captivememories.org.uk

Message from Lizzie Oliver RFH Group

The 7th International FEPOW History Conference will take place from 5th-7th June 2020 in the LSTM [Liverpool] Entitled "Making and preserving memory: widening perspectives on Far East captivity."

Registration is now open.

The Conference is co-hosted by the Researching FEPOW History Group (RFHG) and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM)

The conference will encourage delegates to think of objects, poems, artworks and stories that resonated with prisoners and enabled their narratives to endure for many decades post-war.

Confirmed speakers include:

Mark Dapin – award-winning novelist

Damien Lewis – acclaimed history writer

Also Representatives from the CWGC, British Red Cross, IWM and WarGen history project

PLUS more family researchers, academics, photographers and writers

Spaces are limited and offered on a first-come, first-served basis. Registration includes details on fees, and a special discount code for **The Liner Hotel** in Liverpool. Forms & deposits to be returned by **30th June 2019** to the address on the registration form. For more information visit the website: <http://fepowhistory.com>

THE JAPANESE CONQUEST OF MALAYA – Part 4 – by MARK MORRISON

THE BATTLE OF SINGAPORE contd.

From about 8 P.M. further strong Japanese forces pushed up the River Kranji. The Kranji estuary is wide and the river takes a long sweep round to the right. This brought the enemy to the rear of some of the defensive positions. Branching out westward from the river are three tributaries. These served the enemy as avenues of attack. For some distance up stream, the banks of the river are covered with mangrove. Following closely in the wake of the barrage, the enemy forces by midnight effected landings on the head waters of the Sungei Tengah, near the Tengah aerodrome and on the banks of the other tributaries of the Kranji River. These landings brought the enemy into the very heart of the defence artillery positions. From one of the tributaries the Japanese were able to get across the main Lim Chu Kang Road and thus isolate the entire British forces north and east of this point.

Towards the extreme west of the Australian positions near Sungei Berih, landings were effected much later, probably in the early hours of Monday. The confusion caused by the earlier landings probably simplified the enemy's efforts.

At daylight Monday, small bodies of Australian troops reconnoitering, found large bodies of Japanese streaming south and east into the island. In a few cases, the Japanese spotted these groups but made no attempt to interfere with them, but simply continued their advance. Generally when acquiring their landing areas, the enemy did not attempt to mop up but ignored everything not in their direct path.

Japanese coming in from all directions, effected a concentration of forces in the rubber estates surrounding the Tengah aerodrome and were able to repulse a counter attack made on the afternoon of Monday. In the meantime, reinforcements were pouring across the straits. After repulsing the counter attack, the enemy forces proceeded eastwards during the night along the right bank of the Kranji River and by early morning got to the rear of the Kranji and Woodlands defence positions in the vicinity of the Woodlands/Mandai road junction. This cut communications to the Causeway, and the enemy soon acquired control over the Singapore end of the Causeway.

On the west, Japanese forces worked south from Sungei Berih and Chua Chu Kang Road and by Tuesday morning had reached the western portion of Jurong Road. Isolated units from these forces avoiding the roads, penetrated as far as Bukit Timah Village. This advance party was soon accounted for by a party of Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Bukit Timah Village is only 7 miles from the Singapore Post Office.

From the Causeway, during Tuesday, Japanese forces worked east along the coast to the Naval Base and along Mandai Road to its junction with Seletar Road and by early Wednesday, advanced parties came out on the Serangoon Road, about 9 miles north east of the Post Office. Other forces proceeded from the vicinity of the Causeway through the jungle of the reservoir catchment area in a southeasterly direction and emerged during Tuesday night on the Royal Singapore Golf Course. By Tuesday night, Japanese were bringing their armoured force across the Causeway. By Wednesday morning, Japanese columns had advanced south of Bukit Timah and by 9 a.m. were as far south as Farrer Road. Artillery brought across the Causeway was firing into Singapore; the first shells falling in the vicinity of Newton Circus.

From Farrer Road, isolated units of Japanese proceeded westward. Avoiding roads, these units emerged at Buller Camp and in part of the Alexander Cantonments. By 4 p.m. on Wednesday, some of these men reached a point N.E. of Mount Faber. This crest was held by British troops and throughout the afternoon these troops were subjected to intense dive bombing and machine gunning. They held their positions.

The thrust of the Japanese forces in the direction of the dock area seems to have been unavailing. No considerable penetration was made in this area. About Wednesday afternoon or Thursday morning, the enemy attempted to advance along the West Coast Road, but this attempt was unsuccessful. This area had good fixed defences and was dominated by guns on Blakan Mati.

As far as can be ascertained, the Japanese ceased their advance when the outskirts of the town were reached. They contented themselves during Friday, Saturday and Sunday with shelling and bombing the town area. On the Friday, the bombing and shelling of the town area was particularly heavy.

The final line held by the Imperial forces appeared to have extended from the sea in the west, across the gap thence along Buona Vista Road to its junction with Holland Road. From Holland Road, the line extended to Farrer Road from where a salient projected along the water pipeline to the race course. The south side of the racecourse was held by Imperial troops. From the racecourse the line is reported to have run along Lornie Road to Thomson Road to Braddell Road, across Serangoon Road to Kallang Road via Aljunied, thence along Tanjong Katong Road to the sea.

During the fighting the whole of the civilian population had fallen back into the southern area which was still defended by the Imperial forces. Civilian casualties from bombing and shelling were heavy. Any attempt to escape from Singapore was attended with danger. Ships which left Singapore were constantly bombed. On Friday afternoon numerous troops and civilians attempting to leave Singapore from Telok Ayer suffered heavy casualties and on the same day numerous ships which had managed to leave Singapore were sunk. The attack of the enemy on Palembang in Sumatra disclosed that strong enemy naval forces were between Singapore, Sumatra and Java. The General Officer Commanding Malaya capitulated at 9.50 p.m. on Sunday the 15th February 1942.

CRITICISM OF THE DEFENCE IN RESPECT OF THE LANDING

The Japanese in crossing the Straits of Johore to effect their original landing, sustained few or no casualties. Their losses during the actual landing were not considerable. It is suggested that the potential value of the 1,000 yards of level water which the enemy had to cross was great for the defence position. With this defence asset no landing should have been effected, except at tremendous cost, despite the lack of fixed defences and the enemy control of the air.

Landings were made from small craft which must have been accumulated in one of the creeks on the Johore side of the Straits.

prior to withdrawal from the mainland, particular care was taken by the British to destroy all small craft along the Straits of Johore. The small craft used in the landing must either have made their way secretly at night along the Straits from the east or west coasts or have been brought overland to Johore Bahru. The speedy landing of troops from Johore must have formed an essential part of any plan for an attack on Singapore from the mainland. It is most probably that the small craft used were especially constructed armoured boats of shallow draft which had been brought overland and secretly launched in some of the numerous hidden creeks which are near the Johore Bahru main road.

The official army correspondent of the Australian forces, **Sergeant Ian Fitchell**, wrote on 5th February as follows:

"Commanding officers in Singapore have been instructed to impress on all troops that in Tobruk our complete control of no-mans land was a major factor. Here, leaders are determined that we will control indisputably what is Singapore's no-mans land, namely the narrow stretch of water separating this island from the mainland. In addition, our men have been busy patrolling the lonely creeks and estuaries that cut into the foreshore of the island. There will not be one spot that will be unfamiliar to the men guarding the area, and mobile patrols will deal surely with any Japanese attempt to steal small parties across in efforts to create a bridgehead. Movement by night will be one of the main features of this work and the Australian forces will have cause to be thankful for their long weary hours of night training in the jungle during the past year."

This report was published in Sydney on the 7th February, the day before the landing. Despite the optimism expressed by **Sergeant Fitchell**, he has clearly expressed what should have been done on the night of the 8th February and what was not done on that night. "No-mans land" was not at the time of the crossing under control of the Australian force or any other British force. Patrols were not operating along the Straits. Scouts were not present in the Straits nor were spies conveying information from the Johore side. Apparently reliance was placed on searchlights in the face of mortar batteries placed on eminences opposite. Once night fell, and the searchlights were knocked out, the defence was blind to the happenings in "no-mans land."

Reliable witnesses who escaped from the vicinity of the Kranji foreshore advised that although a patrol boat periodically proceeded along the Straits, none was to be seen before the landings, nor were signals received, nor were the troops in the advanced positions advised to expect or await signals.

Pulau Obin, (sic) an island in the Straits of Johore on the left flank of Changi was occupied on Saturday night (7th Feb) apparently without opposition. The enemy troops who occupied Pulau Obin (sic) may not have been considerable, nevertheless the occupation of the island necessarily required some transport across the water. On rare occasions the enemy was observed in an unwieldy small craft and on one or two occasions the small craft was sunk. Although great care was taken not to leave any small craft available to the enemy, opportunities afforded to the local inhabitants by inlets and mangroves to hide small craft were considerable. It may not have been very difficult for the enemy to obtain sufficient transport for the occupation of Pulau Obin. In any event, the occupation of Pulu Obin must have drawn the attention of the British Command to the fact that the enemy had some means of transport. What is clear is that the Japanese with their great capacity for detailed planning would not have depended on the small craft resources of the Straits of Johore for so important an operation as the landing on Singapore.

When the enemy forces had succeeded in getting across the Straits of Johore, they were opposed by an entirely inadequate line of defence in country suitable to their infiltration tactics. Apparently, strength had been sacrificed to depth. In the case of night attack, depth always suffers from any disorganised retirement. Any advantage of depth along an extensive line in mobile warfare depends on the ability of the local commander to bring with expedition a sufficiently large force to bear down on any sector. Such ability depends on the organisation of communication. On the night of the 8th February, communications failed lamentably. Greatest failure of the night was the lack of any immediate artillery response.

UNUSED RESOURCES. MEN AND EQUIPMENT

The Imperial Forces in Singapore when capitulation took place must have totalled about 70,000. An extraordinary number of these troops were non-combatant troops. Staffs were remarkably large and the staff machines contained many weak but willing cogs. Of the combatant troops that were in Singapore, remarkably few were engaged until Wednesday (11th Feb). On the Tuesday afternoon (10th Feb), when the counterattack was launched against the enemy near Tengah, many thousands of troops were still in their billets and quarters. Some of them were the recently arrived reinforcements. It is appreciated that the attack along the northern shores might not justify troops in defence positions on other parts of the Island being withdrawn from their positions for use against the enemy. There was, however, adequate transport and it is difficult to understand why some of the troops not in forward positions were not thrown into the battle. The only possibility of success for the defence at this stage was a successful counterattack which would clear the Island of the troops that had landed and regain control of the Singapore end of the Causeway. The counterattack failed and the Japanese were in the position to pour reinforcements, tanks and artillery into the Island in ever increasing numbers and quantities. The question of surrender became one of time only.

Non-combatant troops numbered many thousands. These troops were part of an organisation to maintain long lines of communication and the supply of forces of diverse requirements throughout the peninsular. When all effective units had been withdrawn into Singapore, the services of most of the non-combatant troops were not required in their regular duties. On Tuesday and Wednesday (10th & 11th Feb), many of these troops sought shelter from bombs in the basements of town buildings. Some of them complained that, as they were not rendering any useful service in the defence of Singapore, they should be evacuated. It is believed that in the last few days, after the forces had been withdrawn to their final lines, some non-combatant troops were used in direct operations.

The defending forces clearly had superiority of artillery in weight and number. It is doubtful whether any of the artillery, including 25 pounders and 4.5 howitzers, were ever in action at least early enough to affect the position.

The bulk of the Japanese barrage would appear to have been from mortar batteries. Intense enemy artillery fire in support of

landing, other than mortar fire, was not brought into play until about 9 p.m. Field artillery and howitzers were apparently used by the Japanese only on artillery positions and road junctions.

CAPITULATION

Formal capitulation took place at the Ford Factory at Bukit Timah Road. The British were required to provide a force of 1,000 armed men to maintain order until the Japanese took over. One distressing feature of the surrender was the handing over intact of all equipment.

In a final telegram sent by **General Percival to General Wavell**, casualties suffered and the lack of food, oil and ammunition, are given as the reasons for intended capitulation. There was believed to have been one year's supply of food on the Island at the end of January and enormous supplies of ammunition. A long siege of Singapore was expected after the Japanese had made their early advances down the peninsular. A large ammunition dump in Tanjong Katong Road, in the southern part of the Island, was fired on Wednesday (11th Feb). Petrol stocks were destroyed all over the Island during the last few days to prevent them falling to the enemy. Water can easily be obtained by digging wells. The Japanese enjoyed an advantageous military position which was being consolidated and reinforced. The hundreds and thousands of civilians who had fled to the southern area were without adequate protection against shells and bombs. With their air control, enemy planes and artillery were able to cause enormous casualties. These facts would have supported a better explanation for capitulation.

MORALE

The morale of the forces engaged in the battle of Singapore could not be regarded as high. After withdrawal to Singapore, the great majority of the troops who had fought on the peninsular had a defeatist complex. They were pedantically critical of the command, the defence fortifications and measures, and not of themselves. As early as Wednesday (11th Feb) morning, disorganised troops were seen coming into the town from a number of directions. Later in the same day, small bodies of troops sought escape on ships. The ships were intended for purposes other than the transport of deserting troops; and in some cases there were ugly scenes. Many buildings were broken into to obtain drink. The recital of these facts must not be taken as a general condemnation of the forces. The great majority of the troops engaged had sufficient regard of discipline and of the offensive spirit to fight back under tremendous handicap and very often gallantly.

GENERAL

FORTIFICATIONS - PENINSULAR AND SINGAPORE

The plan of campaign of the Japanese enabled them to evade or bypass most of the fortifications of the British. To effect a landing on Singapore, the Japanese directed their attack against the unfortified north-west shore and by this back door got to the rear of many of the fortified positions. Penang had shore defences and also had guns covering the sea approaches to the Straits of Malacca. The withdrawal of the Penang garrison to reinforce the Muda River defence line, and the subsequent evacuation of Europeans, including Volunteers, left the island entirely undefended. The shore defences and fortified areas at Kuantan were not directly attacked. The enemy, by advancing down the coast and turning inland, managed to get to the rear of the positions and withdrawal was forced. The shore defences along the west coast were inadequate to prevent troops being landed at night in areas suitable for infiltrating troops. Infiltration tactics forced the withdrawal from northern Kedah, including withdrawal from a line of pill boxes. The Japanese did not land at Mersing, but at Endau, about 25 miles north of Mersing. Their southward advance nullified most of the defence preparations and threatened communications. Apparently the only frontal attack made in force during the campaign against prepared shore defence positions by the enemy, was at Kota Bahru on the 8th December. The enemy sustained heavy casualties but the frontal attack, supported by warships and aircraft and aided by surprise, was successful.

According to the Sydney Morning Herald published on the 17th December 1941, a Brigadier is reported to have stated to an official war correspondent as follows:

"Apart from odd spots where we have planned to fall back to the main line of defence from advanced outposts, we have no plan of withdrawal, here we are and here we fight. They will never get through these men."

This was a statement in respect of the Mersing defences. Like many statements made in newspapers, this report may not have been a correct report, but it does express an attitude that appeared, unfortunately, far too common amongst defence leaders charged with defence measures. Against an enemy able to exploit light mobility with naval and air control, the defence presented isolated fortified positions without mobile defences between these positions. It was clearly impossible to ring Malaya with a chain of prepared defences; indeed there was no justification for doing so. It was not, however, impossible to ring Singapore with a chain of steel; and there was every justification for doing so.

During the Battle of Singapore, the fortified positions at Changi were dive-bombed and machine-gunned and suffered somewhat from sporadic shelling and mortar fire from Pulau Obin, but no attempt appears to have been made by the Japanese to mount an assault on these fortified positions. Also there does not appear to have been any surface fighting over the fortified areas of Pulau Tekong and Penggarang, the defences of which covered the sea approaches to the Naval Base. The fortified island of Blakan Mati also was not attacked by the enemy. It appears to have been a much greater source of trouble to the enemy than the other isolated fortified areas mentioned in this paragraph.

CIVIL DEFENCE SERVICES

Chinese, Indians and Malays did magnificent work in the services organised for civil defence. Most of these persons were British subjects of the clerical class. From the beginning of the campaign to the capitulation, the great majority enrolled for service and did not waver in their efforts to assist. Most of the officers were intelligent European civilians. Air raid wardens, demolition squads, auxiliary medical workers, roof spotters, volunteer police and fire fighters all did splendid work, often in great danger. They were inspired by a genuine desire to assist the war effort and their excellent conduct will remain one of the few bright features of the unfortunate campaign.

[To be continued in July.]

"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 (nee Hay)

Night of 15.2.42. contd.

On the way, I noticed that water was running in the street standpipes. In **Bras Basah Road** I noticed a crowd of Indian soldiers round a standpipe and with them a Chinese girl without her trousers. The whole town was swarming with soldiers. The wagon lines were just beside a hospital in **Queen Street**. The hospital was said to have suffered badly by shell fire. Troops were bivouacked in the five foot way. Just opposite was a burnt out house still smouldering. It was then about 18.30 hrs. and the shelling seemed to have ceased. We reported to **B.S.M. Patterson** and told him what had happened at the gun position. Then we had a meal and drank our fill of water of which there was plenty. In a house across the road, we found an outside bathhouse with water running and electric light functioning and I had a bath, the first since 12th February and my last for several days. **Sgt. Harley, Bdr. Oppenheim** and **Gnr. Charlesworth** proposed to join us if we were going to escape and we explained the position to them. No-one at the wagon lines seemed to know the facts about the surrender, though it was common knowledge that terms had been asked for.

Bdr. Oppenheim got permission from **Capt. Ackhurst** for himself and me to go and make enquiries. We went off about 20.00 hrs. and just as we went I heard a long 'all clear' siren. **Oppenheim** and I made first for the Marine Police as he had an acquaintance there through whom he had hopes of getting a launch. As we went we were challenged at various points by sentries, mostly Indian. I concealed my stripe and spoke to them in Hindustani and we passed without difficulty. When we got to the marine Police H.Q. we found it deserted and someone from across the river started potting at us with a rifle.

We walked to **Clifford Pier**. It was wired but there were gaps in the wire. There were no boats or launches to be seen – small wonder by that time. One or two small steamers in the harbour were afire. This part of the town was full of Australian troops, many of them in cars. An Australian soldier, wearing a top hat driving a car full of Australian soldiers, asked us what we thought of his car which he said he had borrowed. I was told afterwards that that party had been in town for several days.

We then decided to call on the Master Attendant whose office was in **Fullerton Building**. There was a British guard on the building. I persuaded the Corpl. that I had important business with the M.A. and he took us up to the office which overlooks the harbour. There were two gentlemen there. The office was in darkness and they warned us to keep away from the window as a sniper had been potting at them. After we had tactfully got rid of the Corporal, I explained who we were and what we wanted. The second man who is, I believe, Senior Boarding Officer did most of the talking. They told us that the surrender was a fact, "**We packed up at 8.30,**" they said. They also told us that the ban on Govt. officers leaving the Settlement had been raised by **H.E.** They advised us to go to the end of **Arab Street** where there were some sampans and get out to where some sailing boats were moored. We should steer for **Pulau Samboe** which could be seen blazing to the S.E. and then keep down the main strait.

The minefields, they said, were four feet below low spring water. They urged us to take plenty of water and wished us good luck. We owe a lot to their advice.

I am still in the dark as to the exact time when the surrender took effect. I have since seen in the papers a Jap communiqué giving the time as 6.30 p.m. and this agrees with the time the shelling ceased. The Master Attendant's 8.30 might have been a mistake for 18.30hrs. On the other hand the 'all clear' sounded at 20.00 hrs. suggests that this was the official time.

On leaving the MAS office, about 21.00 hrs, we jumped a lorry which appeared to be one of a convoy. The driver asked me to show him the way to the **Cathay Cinema**. I asked him why he was bound there and he said all lorries were being collected there to be handed over to the Japanese. I could hardly believe that, so at the first halt I jumped down and boarded the foremost lorry and asked the driver where he was going. He said, "**The lorries are all to collect at the Cathay Cinema and then they're going to bring in the b....y Japanese.**" This dispelled any lingering doubts about the reality of the surrender and also indicated that a speedy move was desirable. At **Bras Basah Road** we dismounted, put the driver on his way to the **Cathay** and hurried back to the wagon lines.

Capt. Akhurst was in the road. He asked about our intended escape and who the party was. I told him, also what the M.A. had told us, and about the lorries. He said that strictly he ought to forbid us to go but wished us good luck, stipulating, however, that no others but those I had named, should accompany us. I undertook not to increase the party, indeed I had no desire to, as I thought success depended on keeping the party small.

We got the party together and took a gallon can of water and what extra food we could carry. **Gnr. H.R. Ross** and I took our rifles and bandoliers, none of the others had arms, I should have liked to have rescued a

few possessions from my kit bag which was somewhere in the wagon lines but there was no time for this. We left the wagon lines about 20.00 hrs. on foot and made for **Arab Street** at the bottom of which is the New Reclamation. There was a strong guard with Tommy guns at the bottom of the street, but they let us pass after a challenge, evidently thinking we were under orders to take up a position on the Reclamation. We marched on to the Reclamation area and passed the wire on the seaward side and then made along the sea wall to a landing stage where we hoped to find a sampan. At the landing stage we met **Maj. Gen. Gordon Bennett**, his staff **Major Charles Moses** and his A.D.C. **Capt. Gordon Walker**.

They had found a sampan but could not find any oars and appeared to have no idea how to row it. They told us their plan was to make for the coast of Johore and get ashore and work up to Malacca in the hopes of finding a boat there big enough to take them across to Sumatra. They had a Chinese with them who had guided them to the sea but did not wish to go any further. They informed us they had driven down to the beach in a car.

I told them our plan was to find a sailing ship in the harbour and make straight for Sumatra and suggested that they should join forces with us, to which the General agreed. We found the oars for their sampan in the bottom of the boat, and the **Gordon Bennett** party, **Gnr. H.E. Ross** and I then set off in the sampan to find a larger boat.

There were some small twakows (sic) lying just off shore and we secured one of these and a better pair of oars and I then proposed to return to shore and embark the rest of my party.

The General wanted to start out to sea at once. I pointed out that this was not the plan and that the object of our coming to find the larger boat was that the parties should proceed together. He said, "**Very well, but you come along with us, there is no time to lose.**"

I said I did not propose to leave my friends ashore and that if he wished to go off alone he could put me and **Ross** aboard another boat and we would return to our party.

Major Moses then intervened and said that the whole party should stick together as agreed and we rowed back to the shore. The whole party then got on board the twakow and we rowed out into the harbour and presently saw three junks at anchor.

We boarded one of them (No. 433) and found a number of British officers and other ranks on board, who told us that they had tried to induce the Chinese crew to put to sea but they refused saying they would sail at 7 a.m. to-morrow. I found the Taikong (sic) just settling down for a pipe of Chandu, so I removed his smoking materials and told him I would prevent him from enjoying a smoke until he got under way. He then said he was willing to start if he could find his sampan which someone had removed, and at my suggestion **General Gordon Bennett** then gave him 100 dollars and we got under way at about 0.30 hrs. on 16.2.42.

I told him to steer for **Pulau Samboe** (sic) easily distinguishable as it was on fire, and he did so.

Having got under way we took a look at the town of Singapore. From about the top of **Robinson Road** down to the end of **Tanjong Pagar** docks was a solid sheet of flame which appeared to extend some distance inland. In other parts of the town isolated fires were burning. Over **Pulau Bukon** (sic) hung a thick pall of smoke. **Pulau Samboe** was still blazing fiercely.

A few small steamers in the harbour were burning.

At 3.00 hrs. the Chinese asked for permission to anchor as they said they could not get through the minefields in the dark. They said the junk drew 7 feet and that it was loaded with shells. (This latter was true). Realising that it was probably only an excuse to get their deferred smoke, we agreed to anchor and most of us took a short nap.

Having then made a thorough examination of the junk and come to the conclusion that she did not draw more than 3½ feet, we woke the Chinese crew about 4.30hrs. and made them get under way again. At about 6.00 hrs. we were outside **P.Samboe** and I then told the Taikong that we intended to carry on to Sumatra. He said that he wanted to go ashore at **P.Bulang** to get a supply of opium for the journey and we agreed this. He brought another Chinese aboard who said he would pilot us to Sumatra for 20 dollars. So we gave him ten down and took him on. The General would not agree to any of us going ashore at **Pulau Bulang**. We learned afterwards that there were quite a number of British troops there.

Just as the junk was leaving **Pulau Bulang** a sampan crashed alongside and two other ranks boarded us. One was **Bdr. Ray**, American born, domiciled in Australia. He had escaped from **Blakang Mati** - he said via **Pulau Samboe**. He later told us that he had swum to **Pulau Samboe** and spent night there and another night on **Pulau Bulang**. He must have left **Blakang Mati** on 14.2 at latest and was therefore a deserter. He was quite a useful man to have in the party and contributed materially to our success. His companion was an A.A. Gunner and said he had been cut off when the enemy took **Pasir Panjang** (12.2) and escaped in a fishing boat; which may have been quite true.

Our party now numbered twenty-one, and only about half had brought any food or water. **Major Moses** took a list of the names.

Our Pilot threaded his way among the islands quite efficiently but we soon noticed that his course was more E.N.E. than anything else. We asked him why he did not head S.W for Sumatra and he said he had to get

clear of the islands and rocks. This was reasonable but he was not heading for the main strait at all. Several times, we saw tempting channels through the islands leading S.W. and asked him why he didn't follow them. He gave some plausible excuse – there were shallows, or rocks, or the tide was too strong. For a time we accepted these excuses, but as he kept making more Easting and Northing we finally decided that he had not the slightest intention of taking us to Sumatra, and we degraded him to the rank of A.B. and kicked him down below.

Ray, J. Harvey and I took charge of the junk and set a course for Sumatra aiming to make landfall somewhere between **Kampar** and **Jambi**. North of **Kampar** and south of **Jambi** we judged might be unhealthy as the Japs were attacking both ends of Sumatra.

We soon got into comparatively open water and had a good breeze, making about five knots. The breeze died away towards midnight and **Ray** who was steering the boat insisted on going between two islands and collided with a fish trap. In trying to get clear, he got into a gybe – manoeuvre for which a junk's rig is not suited, and the sheet and tiller got into a hopeless tangle which we felt unable to deal with in the dark. The Chinese refused to do anything but lower the anchor. The wind had practically died by the time this happened so we slept till dawn. That day, we had seen a number of Jap planes patrolling. We took care to keep well out of sight leaving only one or two men on deck wearing Chinese hats. None of the planes interfered with us.

General Gordon Bennett told me during the voyage that he had known for days past the surrender was inevitable.

17.2.42. We made slow progress, wind was S.E. but light. We threw a few cases of shells overboard and improved the trim of the junk a little. We went ashore at an island after dark and got some water and a little fruit.

18.2.42. Off Sumatra coast a little S. of **Kampar River**. Bought some dried fish and coasted South.

19.2.42. **General Gordon Bennett** and staff boarded a motor launch manned by some Australians and left us. During the day we saw several junks and launches full of escaped personnel. We put in at **Kuala Belaras** and got a few provisions and were advised to make for **Rengat** on the **Indragiri River**. We took an 'Orang Laut' as pilot.

20.2.42. Made the **Indragiri River** at daybreak. Met a Dutch naval patrol who told us to carry on up the river to **Tambilahan** (sic). We went on slowly until the tide turned, and anchored and waited for it to turn again.

21.2.42. Arrived **Tambilahan** 7.00 hrs. We left the junk giving the Taikong 50 dollars which **General Gordon Bennett** had left with me for him, and subscribing a few dollars each for the crew. We also gave him a letter saying that he had helped us to escape and a statement of the number of ammunition cases thrown overboard and the reason.

The Chinese Taikong and crew, after their initial obstinacy had been overcome behaved very well, shared their scanty stores of rice and coffee with us and cooked for us such food as we had. The conduct of the pilot we took on at **Pulau Bulang** was inexplicable. I cannot believe he was really trying to take us back to Singapore. I made it quite clear to him if he played us false (and we had the means to carry out the threat!) I would kill him. After demoting him we made him do all the heavy work and he worked very well.

At **Tambilahan** we joined a motor launch already packed with service personnel and proceeded upstream.

Captain Pooler R.A.S.C. was in command of the party. Some British Officers (including **Major Pritchard H.K.S.R.A.**) had already got a scheme working for dealing with refugees, and a series of camps was established across Sumatra – **Rengat, Air Moelok, Sawah Loentor** (railhead) and **Padang**.

When we reached **Rengat** we were put into a Customs Warehouse surrounded by barbed wire, guarded by N.E.I. Home Guard with fixed bayonets. The Dutch Controleur visited the place and we asked him the reason for this severity, and were told that parties of Australians had been coming through Sumatra for about two weeks and behaving very badly.

27.2.42. We reached **Padang**.

1.3.42. At 23 hrs we embarked in **H.M.S. Tenedos** and next morning just before daybreak we were transferred to **H.M.S. Danae** and reached **Colombo 5.3.42.**

[N.B. The spelling of the names of all islands and places has been kept as in the diary.]

WEBSITES TO VISIT

http://www.legal-tools.org/doc/db09c8/pdf/?fbclid=IwAR1xvXsaxQKGH_jWA_byPPhB_fivcnZjMcG42zbfnpbiiJitP8HDAI5-bBC
War Crimes trial relating to the forced march from Nakom Nyok to Pitsanuloke. [See Dr. C.J. Poh's SSVF Affidavit – P.26]

https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/236760?fbclid=IwAR2E9uY5FRJADJI52ZHS7eR_rVp8fC8IDA36CJk4HbPaGwWx75I3ALdN4 This petition asks that V-J Day should be created as a Day of Remembrance.

http://1cha.co.uk/pat-holmes/pat-holmes-a-memoir/chapter-7/?fbclid=IwAR2QVaLRXc4MuDRMEDwZnfiZkTi21_Uft6g8Gu6wfoR_k7JhvZ1K7jB6Znk

the memoirs of P.E.M. Holmes
Patrick Edward Michael HOLMES was an engineer with Gammon [Malaya]. His experiences in Singapore, including his evacuation, are covered in Chapters 7 to 10. He was evacuated in February 1942 to Batavia on board **Franco** and then on the Dutch Hospital Ship "**Oranje**" to Colombo. His wartime letters are also in the memoirs.

In 1940 he was a Sapper (13401) with SRE[V].

NA KEW DOCUMENT WO 235/916

"Weary" Dunlop described this document the following way:

"An epic story was a six weeks march of 800 British soldiers for some 600 km. (375 miles) from Nakon Nyok to Pitsanuloke carrying their sick on rice-sack stretchers. Due to the devoted work of the medical officers, Capt. C.J. Poh SSVF and Capt. T. Brereton, AAMC, only three died on the march."

Dr. Poh was awarded an OBE [Military] - although the recommendation/citation has been lost in the archives.

**IN THE MATTER OF JAPANESE WAR CRIMES
AND IN THE MATTER OF ILL-TREATMENT OF
BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR ON THE MARCH
BETWEEN NAKON NYOK AND PITSANULOKE
BETWEEN 3 JUNE 1945 AND 16 AUGUST 1945**

AFFIDAVIT

I, **Chee Juay Poh**, Captain, Medical Officer, of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Forces now residing at Kinghorn, Fife, Scotland, make oath and say as follows:

1. I was captured when serving with the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force at Singapore in 1942. I was one of the two medical officers on the march of 800 British prisoners of war from NAKON NYOK to PITSANULOKE in the summer of 1945. The other medical officer was **Captain Brereton A.I.F.** but he did not make the whole journey.
2. The march began on the 3rd June 1945 and ended on the 16th August 1945.
3. Before setting out the troops were promised new clothes and equipment by the Japanese. They were however supplied only, when the time came, with rubber boots most of which were misfits, and secondhand shirts and shorts in very bad condition. The effect of the boots was to cause serious blistering in many cases.
4. The medical supplies for the march were totally inadequate. We were for instance only given three-quarters of a pound of quinine to last the whole journey. Two motor lorries accompanied the column but they (were) only used to carry the Japanese kit and such medical kit as we had was not allowed on these but had to be carried by my medical orderlies. These lorries only went as far as LOPBURI.
5. The food issued was also quite inadequate in spite of the fact that there was ample to be had in the countryside. For the first seven days we only had pork once and fish twice and were given one pint of rice a day. No sugar, oil or salt was supplied and when we were resting at LOPBURI where there was ample food available, we were only given 125 eggs a day between the whole party.
6. As a result of this treatment, tropical ulcers developed and by the time we reached LOPBURI there were 150 of such cases and 10 cases of dysentery. 14 sick only were allowed to be carried in the lorry, the remainder were forced to march including men with temperatures of 103 degrees. It is surprising that only 4 of the original party died; 3 of dysentery and one of smallpox.
7. The conduct of the guards was quite brutal. It was an every day affair for men to be beaten with bamboos and rifle butts and the sick were driven along like cattle.
8. I persistently complained to the Japanese but could get no satisfaction and matters came to a head at PAKNAMPHO when because of my complaints, I was beaten by the medical orderly **WADA**, who made me stand to attention in front of the guard while he laid about me with his fists and his feet. I complained about this to the Officer in charge of the march **Lieutenant DAIMON** but got no redress. Indeed, **Lieutenant DAIMON** said that **WADA** had acted rightly.
9. I have the following comments to make about Japanese personnel on the march.
 - (a) **Lieutenant DAIMON** who was in charge, was a brutal type who gave orders to the guard to beat prisoners including the sick. He could quite easily have obtained better rations and done a great deal to alleviate conditions. He was responsible for compelling the sick to march, and it was only through the intervention of a Japanese Senior Officer that at last 150 of the worst cases were sent back to NAKON NYOK.
 - (b) **Sergeant NORI** - This man was the liaison N.C.O. between the guard and the base camp NAKON NYOK. He was supposed to travel to and fro by motor lorry and obtain supplies. He it was who would not tolerate men being sick and refused to allow them to travel on the lorries, although he himself with slightly blistered feet rode on a wagon pulled by the prisoners.
 - (c) **WADA** - This man was medical orderly and was a most brutal type. In addition to my beating up he was responsible for the beating of many other men.

SWORN by the said **Chee Juay Poh** at 6, Spring Gardens, City of Westminster this 17th of January 1946. Sgd. C.J. Poh, Capt
BEFORE ME - **F.G. Fletcher**, Captain, Legal Staff, Military Department, Office of the Judge Advocate General

BOOKS

"THE MEN WHO LOST SINGAPORE 1938-1942." By **Ronald McCrum**. ISBN 978-981-4722-39-1 Published by **NUS Press (National University of Singapore)**.

The British military failure against the Japanese invasion of Singapore in 1942 is a well-documented and closely examined episode. While attention is frequently drawn to the role of the Colonial Governor and his staff during this period, the actions of the civil authorities have not been subjected to the same rigorous scrutiny.

In this book, **Ronald McCrum** undertakes a close examination of the role and the responsibilities of the colonial authorities both in the lead-up to the war and during it. He contends that the colonial government by pursuing different priorities, needlessly created distraction and confusion. Additionally, the poor, even hostile, relations that developed between the local government and the British military hierarchy impeded a joint approach to the growing threat and affected the course of this campaign. **McCrum** displays how the inept management of the civil defence led to unnecessary loss of civilian life.

Brian P. Farrell, Department of History, National University of Singapore says:

"Despite the many books written about the Fall of Malaya and Singapore in 1941-42, not one focused on the role and influence of the civilian governments. **Ronald McCrum** brings that glaring oversight to an end in fine style, providing fresh considerations that every student of the Malayan Campaign, not to mention the war between the British Empire and Imperial Japan, will need to ponder."

MALAYA MEMORIAL



In the north cloister of Westminster Abbey is a large Roman Stone Mural Slab commemorating those who served Malaya. Designed by **S.E. Dykes Bower**, the Abbey Surveyor and unveiled by The Queen Mother, Queen Elizabeth, on 1st November 1962. The Inscription reads:

"To commemorate the works of all those men and women of the British race who served Malaya 1786-1957. They shall come from the east and from the west and shall sit down in the kingdom of God."

At the top is the painted Royal arms achievement.

On Remembrance Sunday this year, after lunch at the Cellarium Café, we can look for this memorial plaque in the Westminster Abbey Cloisters.

OBITUARIES

JUNE WINGATE (nee LANDON) Born 28th June 1922, died 7th March 2019



June being interviewed by Thai TV, 60th Anniv VJ Day Commonwealth War Graves Kanchanaburi.

It is with enormous regret and sadness that we announce the death of **June Wingate** on 7th March, aged 96. **June** was a much loved founder member of the MVG – very supportive of all we have tried to achieve, and kept in regular touch by letter and phone calls. She travelled out to Thailand with a group of MVG members on the 60th anniversary of V-J Day to attend services in the Commonwealth War Graves Cemeteries in Kanchanaburi, and laid wreaths together with **Sandy Lincoln** on behalf of the Malayan Volunteer Forces.

In June 2008, **June** attended the Researching FEPOW Conference at the NMA, together with her niece **Jen Howe**. We travelled together and **June** was the life and soul of the party, especially at the dinner held at a Thai Restaurant on the Saturday evening where we were all squashed in like sardines. Afterwards we became totally lost driving back to our hotel.

June's parents, **James** and **Penelope LANDON** lived and worked in Malaya pre-war and both **June** and her sister lived out there. Her father joined the **Perak Local Defence Corps and Observer Corps** and was interned as civilian in Changi Gaol. Her mother was evacuated on the ill-fated "**Kuala**" and, sadly, was killed when the "**Tandjong Pinang**" was bombed by the Japanese.

After the war, **June** married **David RINTOUL** and had a daughter, **Jeannie**. As a Chemist with ICI, **David** joined the **SSVF SRA[V]** as a Bombardier and was sent to Thailand with 'D' Battalion in October 1942. He survived the war but, sadly, was killed in an industrial accident. **June** later remarried, and her son, **David Wingate**, is also a very supportive member of the MVG. We send **David** and his family our very sincere condolences for their loss. With her infectious laughter and cheerful personality **June** will be sorely missed by all of us who knew her.

We also announce the death of **Colonel the 2nd Viscount Slim**, aged 91, in January 2019. Son of "**Bill**" **Slim the 1st Viscount** who commanded the 14th Army in the Burma Campaign, **John Slim** rose to command 22 Special Air Service Regiment. He was involved in pioneering techniques of re-supply by helicopter, parachuting into jungle canopy and river patrolling in inflatable boats. He commanded an SAS squadron during the "Confrontation" between Malaysia and Indonesia before assuming command of 22 SAS in 1967. He was President of The Burma Star Association for over 40 years and President of the SAS Regimental Association from 2,000 – 2011.

Commander Bill 'Kiwi' Smith aged 96 died on 2nd December 2018. He was at the controls of midget submarine **XE3** during 'Operation Struggle' when she began her attack on 2 Japanese Cruisers in Singapore harbour just before midnight on 30th July 1945. Cruiser **Takao** was severely damaged but the other ship was not. For his part in the operation, **Commander Smith** was awarded the DSO. Their voyage took 52 hours and they kept themselves awake for most of that time by means of orange juice and Benzedrine.

We also report that, after a long and colourful life of 37 years with the army, **Colonel "Runce" Rooney** has died, aged 96. In 1943 he was with the 4th Battalion 1st Gurkha Rifles (4/1 GR) in the Arakan, in west Burma. His first success was to bring the heads of 4 Japanese soldiers killed by a patrol to the brigade commander who said that he wanted prisoners taken alive. He nearly died when shot in the chest in 1944. As he was being evacuated from the field of attack they came under fire and he was dropped in a paddy field. Later he survived when the Japanese overran the medical centre, where he was being treated, and massacred all the patients and doctors in the main ward. After the war he spent 12 years with the 1/7 GR in Malaya, including 4 tours in Kalamantan and Sarawak during the Confrontation.

Major Ian Gibb who died on 15th December 2018 aged 92, served with the Seaforth Highlanders and won an MC for operations during the Malayan Emergency.

NEWS IN BRIEF

"**Many slam "monumental mistake"** – was the headline in the Star newspaper in Malaysia on Monday 25th March 2019. Outrage has occurred in Malaysia, leading to numerous comments and posts on Facebook and elsewhere, on reading the report which appeared in "The Star" newspaper about the unveiling of a new monument to 3 Japanese soldiers who have been hailed as heroes. The soldiers were killed during WW2 when they tried to blow up the Alor Star bridge to cut off Allied Forces from advancing across it. The granite memorial has been set up in Jalan Raja by the Kedah State Museums Board together with the Kedah History Society and the Japanese Consulate-General in Penang. Photos of the opening ceremony on Facebook have caused outrage.

Datuk Cheng Lai Hock, Kedah Chinese Assembly Hall President said it was an insult to the victims of the Japanese Occupation. He said, "They were our enemies. How can we classify enemies as heroes?"

[Editor: In our recent visit to Alor Star, we saw workmen restoring this monument beside the river and bridge.]

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

BATAAN LEGACY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING – Saturday 6th April 2019 at the Golden Gate National Cemetery.

This is in Commemoration of the 77th Anniversary of the Bataan Death March and the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Leyte Gulf. It will honour the Fleet Admiral **Chester W. Nimitz** and World War Filipino and American Veterans of WW2 in the Philippines/Pacific Region.

WYMONDHAM – Sunday 12th May 2019. Annual FEPOW Service at the Church of Our Lady & St. Thomas of Canterbury.

The Service starts at 12.30pm and a finger buffet lunch is served afterwards. To view the names of your loved ones in the Books of Remembrance which are housed in the FEPOW Chapel attached to the Church, please contact **Peter Wiseman** the Church's Archivist and Historian phandtmwiseman@gmail.com The MVG will be represented this year by **Liz Moggie**, **Olga Henderson** and **Rosemary Fell**, and a wreath laid to commemorate the Malayan Volunteer Forces & civilian internees.

LONDON – Monday 10th June 2019. RFHG Workshop at The Institute of Historical Research, Malet Street, WC1E 7HU.

Entitled "**Captivity, internment and forced labour across the Far East during the Second World War,**" this one day workshop is the prelude to the RFH Group's 7th International Conference next June 2020.

Venue: Wolfson 1 Room (the Wolfson Conference Suite) at the Senate House.

Nearest tube stations: Euston Square (Circle, Hammersmith & City, Metropolitan Lines); Goodge Street (Northern Line); Russell Square (Piccadilly line); Warren Street (Northern and Victoria lines)

Timings: The workshop begins at 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Please arrive from 9.30a.m. onwards for registration. Hot drinks will be provided but you are advised to bring a packed lunch as there will only be a short break for lunch. There are several coffee shops & other food outlets nearby. See: <https://fepowhistory.com/2019/03/10/rfhg-workshop-10-june-2019/> for programme.

NMA – Thursday 15th August 2019. V-J Day Annual Service. 12 noon in the Chapel & wreath laying in MVG's plot.
PLEASE NOTE THIS DATE. The Chapel is booked from 11.30-13.30. The service will take place at 12 noon but we can use the Chapel from 11.30a.m. after the 11a.m. daily service. The service takes about 40 – 45 minutes and this is followed by a parade to the Memorial Garden for wreath laying and a few final prayers, weather permitting. Due to the refurbishment of the Visitor Centre, there is no-where suitable for our usual communal picnic, but we can use the outside tables and chairs from the café for lunch afterwards. Please let Rosemary know if you plan to come, as we have to give the numbers to the NMA. *We very much hope to have a better attendance this year. 15th August 1945 was the most important day in the lives of our FEPOWs and civilian internees and we must remember them and the many who did not live to see that day dawn*
PERTH WA. August 2019. Merdeka Day Service – Kings Park. Date TBA

LONDON – Saturday 12th October 2019. Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club, Piccadilly – 12 noon to 5pm.
Please note that this is a week earlier than usual. We do not have details of the menu or cost to date, but these will be announced in July. The luncheon will take place in the former Ballroom, now re-named The Sovereigns' Room. It will give those who missed seeing the fabulous new stained glass window dedicated to the Women of the Royal Air Force, a chance to see it this year. The window is outside the Victoria Bar opposite the Sovereigns' Room. We are delighted that Dr. Hilary Green is giving the talk this year. Entitled, "*Malaya – A Family Affair,*" it is about her grandparents' lives and their work in pre-war Malaya.

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

The Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) in partnership with the University of Liverpool's Victoria Gallery and Museum (VG&M) are putting on this new major exhibition of previously unseen and unpublished documentary art, created secretly by Far East Prisoners of War during WW2. Treasured by veterans, this "documentary art" illustrates many aspects of their captivity from disease, medical ingenuity and laboratories to faith, humour and survival. See P.21 and LSTM's "*Captive Memories*" website – <http://www.captivememories.org.uk>

LONDON – Thursday 7th November 2019. Cross Planting Ceremony at Westminster Abbey.

More information in July. But if you wish to attend, please let Rosemary know.

LONDON – Sunday 10th November 2019. Remembrance Sunday Service & Veterans' Parade at the Cenotaph Whitehall.

In view of the new rulings laid down by the RBL about this march, please would you let Rosemary know in good time if you would like to march this year, bearing in mind that spouses cannot march **UNLESS** they are Carers! I think our long serving spouses would make very able "carers." At present I don't know the criteria require for the registration for tickets, but I shall try to obtain our usual 12 tickets.

CANADA, MALAYSIA and AUSTRALIA. Remembrance Sunday Services TBA.

NMA – Tuesday 10th December 2019. Anniversary of the Sinking of HMS Price of Wales and HMS Repulse.

More details in July.

2020 DATES:

LIVERPOOL – 5th-7th June 2020. 7th International FEPOW History Conference.

The conference is titled, "*Making and preserving memory: widening perspectives on Far East captivity.*"

It is as usual, co-hosted by the Researching FEPOW History Group (RFHG) and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM). **Registration is now open.** For more information and a registration form, please visit RFHG's website. **Forms and deposits are to be returned by 30th June 2019.** Places will be limited, and will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis. Speakers have already been confirmed – see P.21. See: <https://fepowhistory.com/> for further details.

NMA – Saturday 15th August 2020. V-J Day Service to mark the 75th anniversary of the Japanese surrender in 1945.

SINGAPORE – Saturday 12th September 2020.

Kranji Service to mark the 75th anniversary of the date in 1945 of the Japanese surrender in Singapore

Events and dates to be announced later. Please keep the week before and after 12th September free if you wish to attend.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions are now due for ALL members unless you have recently joined. Enclosed is the subscription letter as a reminder, explaining how payment may be made. This will be sent out to everyone – please ignore it if you have already paid. It would be helpful if those paying by Standing Order could make sure that payment is made in April. Thank you very much to everyone who has already paid. This has been a great help and is much appreciated. Please would all those who have not yet paid, try to pay before July.

LIST OF MEMBERS

This is a reminder to please check that your entry – including e-mail addresses and telephone numbers to make sure they are correct. If not, please let Rosemary know. This list does take time to prepare, and is useful to keep for reference.

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