

# APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

[www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk](http://www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk)



**59th EDITION  
JULY 2019**



**Plaque designed and presented to Kampong Menjelang, Muntok, Sumatra, by Dr. Judy Balcombe in memory of the women, children and army nurses who were interned there**

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**MVG MEMBERS ATTEND THE FEPOW SERVICE IN WYMONDHAM, NORFOLK; RFH GROUP'S WORKSHOP IN LONDON; GOD'S LITTLE ACRE SERVICE, BATU GAJAH; AND SERVICES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**"We must never forget the 'debt of honour' we owe.**

**The FEPOW Memorial Church in Wymondham stands as a sign that we will not forget."**

This is the wording on the front of the FEPOW Memorial Church appeal leaflet which is more relevant today than ever before. Despite the huge amount of work which is still being done by FEPOW groups, there is still a great deal of ignorance about the Second World War and, in particular, about what happened to those caught up in the Pacific War and were taken prisoner. The annual Service of Remembrance at the Catholic Parish Church of Our Lady & St. Thomas of Canterbury took place on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May this year. The service was attended by five members of the MVG, **Richard and Susan Brown, Olga Henderson, Liz Moggie and Rosemary Fell**. Without a car, **Wymondham** is not an easy place to get to, especially on a Sunday when there are no trains running. Despite all the difficulties, **Olga Henderson** travelled on her own from Eastbourne to Wymondham in time for the service. This entailed a two night stay in Norwich, a change of trains to get to and from Eastbourne, and a bus ride from Norwich to Wymondham, such was her determination to attend this service. We should all be very humbled at her incredible act of remembrance in the face of such a difficult journey. We also thank **Richard and Susan Brown** and **Liz Moggie** for attending, together with **Rosemary Fell** who laid a wreath on behalf of the Malayan Volunteer Forces.

The Books of Remembrance, which can be viewed in the small FEPOW Chapel at the side of the Church, contain the names of every military FEPOW – those who died and those who returned. The names in these original books were lovingly handwritten by local members of the congregation and are now kept in a glass cabinet. Books containing typed names can be looked at as wished. [See P.2 for a full report.]

MVG members also attended the RFH Group's one-day London Workshop at the Institute of Historical Research in Malet Street. An interesting range of speakers and topics kept our attention from start to finish. The first session entitled "Cultures" dealt with how the Japanese treated POWs of different nationalities. **Kevin Noles** spoke about the Indian POWs about whom very little is known; **Martin Sugarman** gave an insight into the way in which Jewish prisoners were treated and a Japanese researcher, **Chie Inamoto**, talked about multi-culturalism and nostalgia for a homeland in POWs camps.

The three speakers in the second section before the lunch break dealt with "Generations." **Terry Smyth** dealt with the way in which objects, some made by FEPOWs in the camps, or other material can bring back memories to family members. **Paul Murray** spoke about his father who was a doctor with the RAMC in Changi and Hokkaido, and finally **Phyllis Livingstone Pettit** told her family story through letters written by her mother to her father during his time as a FEPOW.

After the lunch break, there were 2 more sessions, the first was called "Medics." **Paul Watkins** gave an excellent talk about the work of **Dr. Bill Frankland** who is still in remarkably good health at the age of 107. **Dr. Cicely Williams'** work in healthcare while in captivity was the topic for **Magda Biran-Taylor** who is researching pioneering women in pre-war Malaya. The final three speakers covered a variety of topics – **Chris Best** spoke about his father's internment in Fukushima – a little known POW camp; **Ashley Prime** spoke about his father of the same name who was in the Royal Signals Corps; and **Ken Hewitt** gave a fascinating talk about the "other steel bridges" which POWs had built over other rivers on the Burma side of the Railway. After each session there was time for questions and answers. It was a full and interesting day.

The Service in God's Little Acre in Batu Gajah was attended this year by **Richard and Terry Parry** and **Liz Moggie**. A wreath was laid on behalf of the Malayan Volunteers by **Richard Parry**. We are delighted to announce that **Richard** has agreed to take over the job of secretary in Malaysia and Singapore. Those of you who travelled to Singapore in February 2017 may have met **Richard and Terry** there. We hope that more members will make his acquaintance during the events to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Japanese surrender in Singapore in September 2020. Once the MVG's account has been set up, members who normally pay their subscriptions in Ringgit and have not yet paid for 2019 - 2020, can pay **Richard**. We will keep members informed and look forward to working with **Richard**.

We send our congratulations to **Alex Hammond**, husband of our secretary in Canada and the USA, **Sallie Hammond**, on his retirement and award of Emeritus Professor in the school of Radiation Oncology. His award was presented to him on 17<sup>th</sup> May at the University of Western Ontario with the 2019 Medical School Graduates.

We are grateful to **Bill and Elizabeth Adamson** for attending military services of commemoration in Australia on behalf of the Malayan Volunteer Forces – on 25<sup>th</sup> April, ANZAC DAY in Guildford, WA; on 7<sup>th</sup> May, the Battle of the Coal Sea; and on 29<sup>th</sup> May, the Indigenous Service of Commemoration. [See P.3 for a report.]

**Michael Pether's** powerful address at the Commemoration Service in Muntok on the 16<sup>th</sup> February this year, set out the scale of the tragedy which unfolded on Banka Island during those few days surrounding the Fall of Singapore. The sinking of so many of the small ships resulting in the deaths of hundreds of innocent men, women and children should have been investigated as a war crime. It has had very little recognition except by the few whose family members were lost so tragically. We are truly grateful to **Michael** for his tireless research into what happened to those ships and to recording, as far as possible, the names of those on board. Three more ships, with their passenger lists, have been added to the MVG's website under the heading "Evacuation Ships" – "Elizabeth", "HMS Dragonfly" and "HDML1062."

As **Michael** pointed out, it was disappointing that there was no official British representative from the military, navy or government at the service in Muntok, despite the fact that most of those killed or captured on Banka Island were British. It was suggested that the MVG should write to the British Embassy in Jakarta and the High Commission in Singapore to request that their Defence Attaches should attend in 2020 – the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WW2 in August 1945. Letters were sent by Air Mail to the relevant addresses, and replies have now been received. Sadly, the Foreign Office has **NOT** replied to our letter sending the Foreign Secretary copies of replies from the British Embassy and High Commission, except to send a 'fit-all' automated e-mailed message. [See p.4]

#### **Award of the British Empire Medal**

As secretary of the Malayan Volunteers Group, it is a great honour and privilege to have been awarded this medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours in June this year. I am very grateful to everyone who contributed to the application for this award and thank you all very much. Since the announcement was made, many of you have sent me messages of congratulations and cards which are very much appreciated. Thank you to all of you who have given me such wonderful support. I feel very overwhelmed and humble at receiving this award, which I accept, not for myself, but in honour of all those who suffered throughout the Far East during World War Two. It is to their sacrifice – the POWs, civilian internees and local people of all races and creeds - that I dedicate this award. In the words of the FEPOW Church in Wymondham,

**"We must never forget the 'debt of honour' we owe."**

### **ANNUAL SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE at the FEPOW Church in Wymondham – report by Rosemary Fell**

It is easy to forget why the annual Service of Remembrance takes place in May. On the back of this year's service sheet several facts were given about the Church and Service which are worth remembering.

The Church was built in 1952 by **Father M.L. Cowin** who, as a FEPOW in Thailand, vowed to build a Living Memorial to all POWs who died in the prison and internment camps of the Far East under Japanese Control.

**Fr. Cowin** said daily Mass for the War Dead for the rest of his incumbency. The annual services were started in 1992, and on the advice of FEPOW groups, the service date was established as the Sunday nearest to the 14<sup>th</sup> May which is the anniversary of the Relief of Rangoon in 1945. Not only did this avoid clashes with other remembrance services, but it was also appropriate to commemorate the 18<sup>th</sup> Division, Territorial Army Battalions of mainly East Anglian Regiments who fought so bravely to prevent the Japanese advance into India at Imphal and Kohima.

The service started with the wonderful hymn by **William Kether** "All people that on earth do dwell." After prayers, led by the parish priest, we all sang the responsorial psalm, "The Lord is my Shepherd." The singing was led by **Peter Wiseman**, Archivist and Historian to the Church, who has a beautiful voice. **Peter** also gave the following Memorial Epilogue:

*Two minutes silence is not enough, but perhaps all that society can afford. Amidst death, the 'busyness' of life frequently drives a confusing need to both forget and remember. Our purpose has been to fulfill the Unknown Warrior's plea to those they left behind, and us who follow:*

*"Be healed of your need to forget and give my sacrifice a point! GIVE MEMORY TO OTHERS..."*

*The circumstances that caused inhumanity beyond comprehension to be inflicted upon fellow man are ever present. We REFLECT also, on how fortitude in adversity bred resilience and inspired courage.*

*We RECALL that so many "...died in misery, often agony, upon no bed, with nothing but a sack to cover them..." But RECALL too, that when Pandora's box of evils was opened, the small voice of hope was left behind. It was hope that sustained a vision of beauty in the future and enabled them to endure such terrible conditions.*

*The Kohima Epitaph's demand is a debt of honour we should all comply with: "Tell them of us and say, For your tomorrow we gave our today..." This is why we keep the flame of REMEMBRANCE burning bright.*

*REMEMBER, our church is a "Living Memorial" to ALL FEPOWs and Civilian Internees of the Far East in that global conflict. It was built and paid for by those who loved and cherished their memory. Every service is a tacit action of remembrance. In this way, we, as 'the OTHERS', can know and experience "...those things they never knew in their last days: peace, quiet and cleanliness amidst the cool, soft air of prayer, in the presence of him whose suffering was greatest of all."*

We sang the hymn "The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended" and after the Act of Remembrance, wreaths were laid in the FEPOW Chapel against the short altar rail – each organization being individually announced. The FEPOW Prayer was said, followed by the Last Post, two minutes silence, Reveille, the Kohima Epitaph and final blessing before the last hymn, "I vow to thee, my country," by **Cecil Spring-Rice**.

Afterwards **Liz Moggie, Olga Henderson, Richard** and **Susan Brown and Rosemary Fell** joined the rest of the congregation for a splendid buffet lunch, prepared by the ladies of the Parish. We are grateful to **Richard** and **Susan** for driving us back to Norwich station for our train, and **Olga** to her hotel. My apologies to **Olga** for not laying the wreath with me, due to a misunderstanding by the organizers. **Next year's service is on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May at 12.30p.m.**

It would be good to have a bigger group from the MVG attending, next year. Please make a note of the date.

### **Wreaths laid during the service – MVG's wreath 4<sup>th</sup> from the left**



### **SERVICES OF REMEMBRANCE IN AUSTRALIA** **Attended by Bill and Elizabeth Adamson**

The annual round of military commemorations has started again. We did not go into central Perth for the big Anzac Day Parade and commemorations on 25<sup>th</sup> April this year, but instead we attended the Anzac Day Service in Guildford, WA which is much smaller but still a lovely way to remember. Guildford is a small town which is quite historic in WA terms as it was one of the early settled places after Captain Stirling arrived in 1829. The Swan River is navigable up to and quite a distance beyond Guildford, so the river played an important part as a means of transport in the early days. They have kept it small with a village 'feel', many houses dating from the early 1900s and are heritage listed. Many have a poppy plaque attached to the front gate post being a house that sent off a soldier to the First World War.

The next commemoration was the Commemoration of the Battle of the Coral Sea on the 7<sup>th</sup> May which is always hosted by the American Navy. We attended this service and I laid our wreath on behalf of the MVG at the State War Memorial in Kings Park. The northern hemisphere may not have heard of this battle but it stopped the Japanese Fleet in the Coral Sea just off Queensland. A few weeks later, the battle of Midway put paid to any Japanese ambitions of invading Port Moresby and Northern Australia but, of course, it did give rise to their decision to have a go overland on Papua, New Guinea – hence the fighting on the Kokoda Trail.

The next commemoration is the Indigenous Service on 29<sup>th</sup> May, which we will attend. The veterans and associations all attend each other's services, so it gives an overall picture of just what a vast enterprise war is! There are huge stones in Stirling Civic Garden where we hold the Fall of Singapore commemoration annually (and where our plaques are to be found) each of which bears a plaque commemorating the various wars in which Australians have been involved. The plaques start with the Boxer Rebellion and finish at the other end of the row with a plaque for the Peace Keepers.

**LETTERS FROM THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN JAKARTA  
AND HIGH COMMISSION IN SINGAPORE**

As mentioned in the Editorial, following the report in the April newsletter by **Michael Pether** about his visit to Banka Island, Sumatra, for the Service of Commemoration on Radji Beach on 16<sup>th</sup> February, it was suggested that letters should be written to the British Ambassador in Jakarta and the High Commissioner in Singapore to enquire why there were no British representatives at this service. As his report made clear, it was disappointing that no formal representative from the British military, navy or government attended, yet Defence Attaches from Australia and New Zealand based in Jakarta attended, as well as the Director of the Dutch War Graves in Indonesia. A wreath was laid on behalf of the hundreds of British war casualties by **Bruce Bird**, a retired Australian Naval Officer – a generous and voluntary gesture by him to ensure that the British dead were not forgotten.

We are grateful and pleased that notice has been taken of our letters, and that we have received assurances from the British Embassy in Jakarta that the new Defence Attache will be attending next year. The reply from Singapore showed that our original letter had been misunderstood and was, in contrast to the Ambassador, far less conciliatory. Had it been read? It is interesting and disappointing to note that only automatic e-mailed replies to copies of our letters, the Ambassador's/High Commissioner's letters and **Michael Pether's** report have been received from the Foreign Office and the Foreign Secretary from his office in Westminster. Perhaps this is another indication of the forgotten nature of this theatre of World War 2, for which we are trying so hard to raise awareness?

**LETTER FROM HIS EXCELLENCY MOAZZAM MALIK – BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN JAKARTA**

Dated 28<sup>th</sup> May 2019

Dear Mrs. Fell,

**MUNTOK COMMEMORATION SERVICE – BANKA ISLAND**

Many thanks for bringing this to my attention and I apologise for the slight delay in responding. Whilst we have been without a Defence Attaché since October 2018 until recently, I agree we should have been able to field someone from the Embassy both in 2018 and 2019. I am assured by the new Defence Attache, Group Captain Michael Longstaff OBE RAF, that he will be attending in 2020. I would be grateful if you would contact him directly to arrange the detail closer to the event. Finally, please accept my sincere apologies for this oversight and rest assured we take very seriously our responsibility to commemorate the sacrifice of our servicemen and civilians during WW11.

Yours sincerely,

Moazzam Malik

**LETTER FROM THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER IN SINGAPORE – SCOTT WIGHTMAN**

Dated 30<sup>th</sup> May 2019

Dear Ms Fell,

I am now in receipt of your letter dated 29<sup>th</sup> May 2019. I am very sorry these important events were missed, as we would have very much liked to have been involved. I am afraid we have no trace of receiving your original letter dated 26<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

Acts of remembrance are very important to us. We organize the Remembrance Day Service annually and are involved in various acts of commemoration throughout the year here in Singapore. We most certainly would have been represented if we had received the original letter. We note from HE Malik's reply that the Defence Attache from Jakarta will attend the events next year.

Yours sincerely,

Scott Wightman

British High Commissioner

[Ed: A puzzling reply. We asked why the British had not been present on 16<sup>th</sup> February – it was not an invitation to attend 2 months after the event!]

## REPORTS AND NOTICES

### VISIT TO THE NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM – 29<sup>TH</sup> March 2019 – report by Jonathan Moffatt



Left of table: Dr. Nigel Stanley, Mary Harris, Yvonne Wurtzburg, Jane Flower.

Right of table: Jonathan Moffatt (standing), Anthony Cooper and Andrea Maiolla

Searcy's cafeteria. I did hear that three of our party stayed there chatting for so long that they had to be shown the door! For anybody contemplating a full day in Chelsea, the Physic Garden and Saatchi Gallery are nearby.

Nine of us gathered at the National Army Museum for our guided tour of the new look National Army Museum with **Sophie Stathi**, the Museum's Senior Collections Development and Review Curator. The Galleries contain a remarkable collection of uniforms, medals, weapons and posters. We saw strong sections on the Napoleonic, Crimean and Zulu Wars; the two World Wars and contemporary conflicts.

The exhibitions are designed to appeal to young people with activities and 'what it felt like' experiences.

While the main Malaya content in the exhibits is on **Templer** and the Malayan Emergency, the archive contains WW1 and WW2 Malaya material which can be searched online at:

<https://collection.nam.ac.uk/inventory/objects/>

The National Army Museum was first conceived in the late 1950s, and owes its existence to the persistent hard work of **Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer**, who did most of the fund raising for it.

See: <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/gerald-templer-smiling-tiger>

The Museum archive is called the **Templer Study Centre**. We hope to build a good relationship with the Museum archivists in the years ahead.

Our visit concluded with a tasty, inexpensive lunch at the Museum's

### VISIT TO THE NMA – ANNUAL GARDENING DAY, SUNDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> MAY

We are very grateful to **Keith Andrews** and **Jonathan Moffatt** for giving up their Sunday to spend the day gardening in the our Memorial Garden plot at the Arboretum. Due to illness and other commitments, other regular helpers were unable to be there this year.

The weather was good for gardening and this is **Jonathan's** report:

*"When I got to the NMA, Keith had already put in a couple of hours cutting back the bamboo. I did the mulching and cleaned the name plaques. Some sanding of the benches was done too – one bench is quite rotten now. Neither of us had brought oil to apply to the benches, so that and the general weeding needs attention if anyone does visit in the next few weeks.*

*Keith and I felt that the NMA should be doing more to cut the grass close to the memorial plot i.e. within the 'V'. It would just take a small mower.*



Our two intrepid gardeners

### NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA WEBSITE – Singapore evacuation lists

**Jonathan's** research has revealed that the National Archives of Australia have now made available the 1941-1942 'Singapore evacuation' lists for **arrivals in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide** on their website. This means that hundreds more names can be added to our own evacuation lists and this has enabled him to resolve several enquiries from families wanting to find out the names of their evacuation ships, including some of our own members.

We will add the following information from **Jonathan** to our website so that everyone has access to the lists:

For several years the **Western Australia passenger arrivals lists** have been digitised and searchable for free on the **National Archives of Australia website**. These have proved very useful for 'Malaya' and evacuees' research and enquiries. The National Archives of Australia has now digitised the following:

**Volumes of inward passenger lists – ships – April 1940 to March 1942 AND March 1942 to August 1945 covering Melbourne arrivals and also passenger lists, inwards ships, Sydney [Form M308] [January to December 1942].**

**They contain the names of hundreds of evacuees from Singapore.**

## BIRTHDAY WISHES

On the 4<sup>th</sup> April we sent our very best Birthday Wishes to **Brenda Macduff**, our wonderful veteran civilian internee in Bankinang Camp, Sumatra, on her **105<sup>th</sup> Birthday**. **Congratulations to her!**

Her son, **Ian Macduff** sent us the following message:

*Thank you so much for your kind thoughts. I'll pass your greetings to Mum when we see her again at the week-end. I called in on her birthday, but, as expected, she'd been popped into bed after lunch and was sound asleep. I called in again yesterday morning – Mum was not really aware that it was her birthday, but I was able to read a few cards to her and remind her of who's who in the family tree, sending her cards. Your card was there. She'll certainly know who the MVG people are.*

## ASSISTANCE REQUESTED TO FIND THE OWNER OF A PRE-WAR ROBINSON'S FOB WATCH No: 2029877fob

A series of e-mails were forwarded by **Judy Balcombe** concerning the discovery of a pre-war watch on Banka Island by **Bruce Bird**. The watch had been purchased in Robinson's Store in Singapore and the attempt to find the original owner by **Bruce Bird** was sadly unsuccessful, but if anyone can shed any light on the watch, please let **Judy** know.

E-mail to: [ROBSG.RCCustService@alfuttain.com](mailto:ROBSG.RCCustService@alfuttain.com)

To Whom It may Concern

Recently I came across a Robinson's fob watch in a village in Banka Island, Indonesia, and I would like to investigate the opportunity of who bought that watch (probably in Singapore) in the 1930s.

The watch was swapped in 1942/43 from a POW camp person to a local lady for access to food.

I do have a picture of the watch and I am happy to share it if someone can reconnect with me please.

Thank you and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Kind Regards,

Bruce Bird

Reply from **Erm Igaya** (Customer Service) at Robinsons:

Dear Mr. Bruce,

We refer to your e-mail dated 04 May 2019.

It is with regret to inform you that we are unable to assist on the aforesaid request, as it is a transaction which was made long ago. Our system data base is only able to keep record for transaction made maximum of one year from the date of purchase, hence your request is not possible.

We thank you for your kind understanding of this matter.

Regards

Erm Igaya

Other watch stores in Singapore cannot assist with this request, to date.

## UPDATE ON MATTHEW TREVORROW NAMED IN CAPTAIN J.W. SMITH'S REPORT OF 5/11/1945 By Gordon Payne

[Editor: In January 2018 (A.K. Edition 53) a report about the ambush of 4 men at Benkolen (sic) was included on Ps. 7-8. One of the men killed in this ambush was Matthew Trevorrow. His nephew, Gordon Payne, has been able to find out more about his uncle, and his formerly unnamed grave will now be marked by an inscribed cross.

Gordon wishes to express his gratitude to **Judy Balcombe** for her initial identification of Matthew as a civilian POW, first in Benkolen Jail before being transferred to Muntok Jail and finally ending up in Belalau Camp. Her input into Matthew's movements through the camps in Sumatra has been invaluable in this search.]

After **Gordon Payne** first contacted the Commonwealth War Graves Commission about having a named headstone for his grave in the War Graves Cemetery in Jakarta (as advised by **Judy**) with all the data he had collected on **Matthew Trevorrow**, the information was forwarded to the National Army Museum in London. The investigation took 18 months and the reply from the CWGC is as follows:

Dear Mr. Payne,

An adjudication has now been received from the National Army Museum in regards to your relative Matthew Trevorrow. Unfortunately, due to lack of evidence they were unable to confirm that Matthew had been employed in an official capacity by the British military forces in the Far East. It was not unusual, apparently, for civilians to

be used in a voluntary capacity by the RAPWI. As a result, Matthew does not qualify for war grave status. However, based on our records, we can confirm that Matthew is buried in Jakarta War Cemetery in Plot 3, Row J, Grave 18 and we would still like to have his grave marked appropriately. As he doesn't qualify as a war grave, his grave will be classified as 'non-war civilian', which means his details will not appear on our website, but we still wish to provide his grave with a new bronze plaque.

Gordon writes that he completed a special form for the CWGC which asked him to design an inscription and the reply is as follows:

Dear Mr. Payne,

Thank you for returning the Final Verification Form. In light of what you have requested we will provide a marker inscribed as follows:

(CROSS)  
M. TREVORROW  
R.A.P.W.I.  
5<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 1945 AGE 34

SON OF JOHN AND MARY  
ST. JUST, CORNWALL.  
GOLD MINER DIED WITH  
DR. MOCKLER, SUMATRA



Matthew Trevorrow

We will now order the plaque on this basis and will send you photos of it as soon as we have heard it has been installed in Jakarta War Cemetery.

As requested, please find attached the documents we have regarding his grave.

And finally, thank you for your thank and patience. I'm so glad we can finally provide Matthew with a marked grave. It is also very interesting to learn of the activities of RAPWI, which I and none of my colleagues had never heard of before. We are also learning here!

Yours sincerely  
Roy Hemington

Gordon added that this is a very satisfying result with input from so many people around the globe helping him. He added that they had to compromise on the wording on the plaque due to a limit on the number of characters per line. Matthew was more of a "Gold Assayer" but this was too long to fit the line. The Tandai mine is still operating and owned by a Western Australian Company.

Matthew's prison movements are currently thought to be as follows:

Benkolen Prison - About 02 April 1942- 29 Sept 1943

Transferred to Muntok - Sept - 12 Mar 1945

Transferred to Belalau, Locbock Linggau - March 1945 - 23 August 1945

Released August 1945 and somehow made it back to Palembang

Seconded to RAPWI Team with Dr. Mockler Nov 1945

The final sequence of events was as follows:

- Killed 5 Nov 1945 with Capt Dr. John Mockler - bodies sent back to Palembang
- Buried in Charitas Civil Cemetery - Row 2 C 5 (Mockler also, I think, the same place)
- Relocated to Palembang Military (Old Dutch Military Cemetery, I think it was previously called) on 26 Oct 1946 in Row 2 C 3 with Mockler in Row 2 C 2
- Relocated to Jakarta CWGC 21 Nov 1957 to Plot 3, Row J, Grave 18 and Mockler, Plot 3 Row K, Grave 18 opposite to each other again.

[Ed: As a final note, Gordon Payne says that Captain Smith's original report, made in the 1940s, is still in the archives of both the Singapore National Library and the Straits Times. He traced Capt. J.W. Smith (Royal Artillery) on Forces-War Records. He was wounded twice on 19/1/43 in Libya and on 9/3/43 in Tunisia. He received no commendation for surviving in Sumatra and for getting Trevorrow's and Mockler's bodies back to Palembang. Driver Jackson was in the Royal Lincolnshire Regiment.]



## RAPWI – Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees (N.E.I.)

With thanks to Gordon Payne for this article

[Editor: It seems strange that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission knew very little about this unit, as mentioned in Roy Hemington's letter above. I'm sure their work in recovering our FEPOW loved ones is well known to most members.]

In February 1945, the office for the Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees (RAPWI) was established at the headquarters of **Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten**. The organisation's mission was to free internees and prisoners of war in the South East Asia Command (SEAC) zone. In July 1945, **Mountbatten** was told that as of 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945, his command zone would be expanded to include all of Thailand, southern Indochina and the Netherlands East Indies except for Sumatra. The sudden Japanese surrender on 15<sup>th</sup> August meant that the plan for having RAPWI teams follow the advancing Allied forces had to be scrapped. Instead, all internees in the entire zone required relief simultaneously. In response, **Mountbatten** set up a RAPWI Co-ordination Committee to lead the relief efforts. A RAPWI control staff was attached to each of the six regional military staffs in his zone of command to co-ordinate the relief efforts. Java was only one of the operational areas, in addition to Malaya, Singapore, French Indochina, Thailand and Hong Kong, and it was not one of **Mountbatten's** priorities. He also lacked the resources needed: on 17 August there were only 40 RAPWI teams available for all 150 internment camps.

Once the Allies were assured that local Japanese commanders would obey the order to surrender, RAPWI relief efforts began to take off on 28 August. In Operation Birdcage aircraft dropped pamphlets above the camps with instructions for the internees and the Japanese guards. This was then followed by Operation Mastiff, in which contact teams parachuted over the internment camps.

The first contact team (in the Netherlands East Indies) under the command of **A.G. Greenhalgh**, landed at Batavia on 8 September. Magelang, Surabaya, Bandung and Semarang soon followed. In Sumatra, 12 teams from the Korps Insulinde had been active since August. By the middle of September, RAPWI teams had arrived and begun to evacuate prisoners from the Camps to Medan, Padang and Palembang. All of the camps had been evacuated by the end of November. In Java, however, relief efforts were hindered by a lack of transportation and the quickly deteriorating political situation. By the end of September it was becoming clear that the Japanese were no longer able to maintain order on the island, so on 28 September, **Mountbatten** decided only to occupy bridgeheads in Java. All internees were to be brought to these key areas. Tensions grew until mid-October, when Indonesian forces came into conflict with the Japanese and British Troops on the island and Dutch and Indo-European internees were subjected to widespread violence. Under these conditions RAPWI found it difficult to carry out the evacuations, but the organization nevertheless managed to evacuate and care for 223,250 former internees and refugees in Java and Sumatra. RAPWI was officially disbanded on 26 January 1946, and all of its relief services were taken over by the Dutch administrative organization AMACAB.

## RAPWI – RNZAF Prisoner of War and Civilian Internee Evacuation Flight, Singapore, September 1945

With thanks to Dave Croft RAFBPA

On the 17th August 1945, a flight of 12 Dakotas from 41 Squadron RNZAF left New Zealand for Singapore to assist with the recovery, and return to New Zealand, of released NZ Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees following the formal surrender of Japan on the 15th August. Each aircraft was fitted with bunks, capable of accommodating sixteen ex-POWs/internees and carried medical staff as well as the aircrew.

The flight was a part of the larger Allied recovery operation, RAPWI, the *Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees* and was based at Kallang (Singapore), being tasked with flying recovered (rescued) New Zealanders to receive treatment at Singapore before transfer to New Zealand, either by air or sea. The flight also took with them 30 tons of supplies and lists of NZ POWs and Internees; the lists were found to be fairly accurate.

The flight travelled from Auckland to Singapore via Santo Island (Vanuatu), Bougainville, Admiralty Islands, Morotai (Moluccas), Labuan, arriving in Singapore on the 12th September, the date the Japanese formally surrendered to the British in Singapore. Their operational area covered Malaya, Siam and the East Indies. Following recovery of New Zealand ex-POWs from the outer areas and being flown to Singapore, one hundred and fifty eight were airlifted to New Zealand over the five week period the Evacuation Flight was operational. It was not certain that having been flown back to New Zealand on an individual basis, whether the aircraft concerned then returned to Singapore to continue NZ RAPWI operation or remained in New Zealand? The newspaper, **Auckland Star** for the 24th October (see below) in reporting the last aircraft to return to New Zealand, seemed to indicate each did not return to Singapore after delivering their 'VIP' passengers! The newspaper also mentions two aircraft becoming unserviceable at Morotai; it is likely there were replaced by two more aircraft flown from the squadron base at Whenuapai (Auckland). The return route for all the aircraft was by way of Labuan, Morotai, Darwin, Townsville, Brisbane and Auckland.

AUCKLAND STAR, 24th October 1945

LAST PLANE BACK  
RNZAF TASK ENDED  
EVACUATION OF PRISONERS

The task of evacuating released internees and prisoners of war from Singapore began five weeks ago by the RNZAF Transport Command, was completed yesterday when the twelfth Dakota arrived in Auckland. Since September 21, when the first 'plane arrived, 158 former prisoners of the Japanese have been flown to New Zealand.

The successful accomplishment of the undertaking in little more than a month is greatly to the credit of the RNZAF which has earned the gratitude of former prisoners and their relatives. It was no easy matter to locate the New Zealand internees and prisoners as they were widely scattered. In addition to the flights between Singapore and New Zealand, the RNZAF made flights to Java and Bangkok to evacuate New Zealanders.

Personnel of the RNZAF sent to Singapore to organize the evacuation have now been withdrawn, but an Army team is remaining to complete the registration of graves and the listing of the dead. Its activities will extend to Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Burma, Siam and Indo-China.

The twelve passenger flights to New Zealand were completed without incident. The only mishap occurred when the first two 'planes were hit on the airstrip at Morotai when an American Liberator got out of control when landing. From the two wrecked 'planes, one very serviceable aircraft has now been assembled and it will be flown back to New Zealand after testing.

H.Q. RADIO S.E.A.C. SINGAPORE

With thanks to 'Laurie' in Penang and Dave Croft RAFBPA

(More about ex-POW New Zealanders and their return home to New Zealand in 1945)

APPENDIX "N" (contd.)

[Comments made by S/Ldr W. Maurice Brown of the RNZAF on air in 1945.]

Penang appears to have suffered a little, mainly from Japanese bombings, but the damage is small and the island is as beautiful as ever. The snake temple and Ayer Hitam Temple are in a fine state of repair, and sightseers are about as usual. Fortunately throughout Malaya, civilian property has escaped lightly. Some owners returning to their houses, have even found the odd sentimental treasures, and others have been welcomed by the old houseboys, complete with family, ready to set up house again and produce the odd valuable which he has saved from the Japanese.

Most of the large rubber plantations appear to be relatively undamaged, except for the factory, while the tin mining dredges appear to be in fair order and look as if it won't be long before they are operating again.

In the shops, surprising quantities and varieties of British and American goods are re-appearing in the windows. The goods were hidden and stored for the last three and a half years. All in all, it looks as if Malaya will have business in an incredible short time.

As we returned south to Singapore Island we again passed through many thousands of struggling and somewhat exhausted Japanese. These are the final remnants footing it to the concentration areas. Much of their sting and arrogance has gone and as the fittest assist the exhausted, they do not present the tough spectacle they would wish. As we cast our memories back to the stories of unparalleled atrocities and to the sights which greeted us in the prisoner of war camps on our arrival in Singapore early last month, we felt absolutely no feeling for the most dishonourable of all so-called gentlemen, the Jap.

On our travels it was gratifying to see the odd New Zealander in the Service assisting in the restoration of order. Here and there we found a New Zealand Civil Service Affairs Officer. Those who have worked so long for the elimination of the Japanese should remember that already the Japanese has boasted that the past few years of war are but the first round of what might be a 100 years' war. No-one should appreciate this better than the peoples of the Pacific. Good night everyone.

**COMPERE:** Thank you, Maurice. That was S/Ldr. W. Maurice BROWN of the Royal New Zealand Air Force who has been giving you a picture of Malaya as it presents itself today.

And now for a little appreciation of what others have done to assist the Royal New Zealand Air Force P.O.W. Evacuation Flight in carrying out its mission in the S.E.A.C area. Everyone has helped, but we would like to praise especially the work carried out by the women of the Australian Nursing Service and the other Australian Medical Services.

Where no hospital existed before, one was built in two days and at the end of that time, furthermore, it was as efficient as if it had been running for month instead of days.

**Miss Begg, Miss Lorimer** and the other ladies of the Y.M.C.A. in Singapore have done wonders at Raffles Hotel to provide good accommodation, rest and every other comfort possible for the Civilian Internees recently released. And finally, as I shall be leaving Singapore in the near future, and therefore shall be handing the microphone over to someone else from today, I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the staff of H.Q. Radio S.E.A.C., Singapore.

We realise here just what this broadcasting service has meant to people at home in New Zealand who have been anxiously awaiting news of their loved ones. Of the staff, I would particularly mention **Captain James MOODIE**. **Captain Moodie** was a member of staff of the B.B.C. prior to the out break of war and has been unfortunate enough to be a P.O.W. himself. It is with his co-operation that we have been able to keep this programme on air, surmounting various obstacles with no trouble at all, and I am sure that this assistance will not be forgotten by New Zealanders.

And that concludes the broadcast to New Zealand and Australia by the Royal New Zealand Air Force Detachment, based in Singapore. We shall be on the air again on Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> October (1945) at the usual time, and so until then, Cheerio, and for myself, Goodbye. Goodnight everyone.

## GERALD BROSSAU GARDNER (1884 – 1964) - The Nomadic Volunteer

With thanks to Dave Croft RAFBPA

### **The Early Years**

**Gerald Gardner** lived in South East Asia during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During that time he was a tea planter, rubber estate manager, customs officer, researcher and amateur archeologist. He was also a 'Volunteer' on two occasions during his time in the Far East.

As an asthma sufferer from early childhood, he was placed in the care of a nursemaid who persuaded his well-off father to pay for the pair of them to spend time in warmer climates to help ease the effect of the illness! The first overseas visit (to the Mediterranean region) was made in summer 1888 where they stayed for three years. They then moved to the Canary Islands in 1891 where, to while away the hours, he developed a child's interest in historic weaponry. A long term move to Madeira followed where his interest in weaponry continued to develop. He never attended school or received a formal education; he was self taught becoming an enthusiastic reader, but his writing suffered.

In 1900, his nursemaid married a Ceylon tea plantation owner (**Ladbroke Estate**) and she was accompanied by **Gerald Gardner** (aged 16) to learn the tea trade. He stayed with the couple as an assistant manager until 1904 and then moved to **Nonpareil Tea Estate**, still in Colonial Ceylon. At the end of the year, through his father, he invested in the **Atlanta Y Estate** tea plantation, where 'rubber' was to be introduced as a possible additional crop; he became manager in 1909. He joined the local Volunteer Force, the **Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps** (a local volunteer regiment of Europeans that were tea and rubber planters) in 1907, followed by a long leave in England in the same year, where he also joined the Legion of Frontiersmen.<sup>1</sup>

The rubber growing project on the **Atlanta Y Estate** was unsuccessful and when his father decided to sell up in 1911, he left and took up employment as a rubber planter in Borneo. The working conditions were not to his liking and following an attack of malaria, he planned to return to Ceylon via Singapore. Despite his dislike of the working atmosphere on the estate, he was able to take up friendships with the indigenous people and show an interest in their way of life and weaponry.

### **World War 1**

Whilst in Singapore, **Gerald Gardner** was offered the post of assistant manager at the **North Borneo Estate** in Perak. Shortly after his arrival, he purchased his own rubber estate (**Ladang Bikit Katho, Perak 1911-1926**) and also joined the **Malay States Volunteer Rifles** in 1915. He returned to Britain in 1916 in order to help with the war effort by joining the Royal Navy. Unfortunately his ill health was against him and instead he became a VAD orderly at a Liverpool hospital and was there when casualties from the Somme Offensive (1<sup>st</sup> July – 1<sup>st</sup> November 1916) arrived. A reoccurrence of his malaria whilst at the hospital forced a return to Malaya in October 1916, departing London on 12<sup>th</sup> October on board the **S.S. Nankin**.<sup>2</sup> He returned to the North Borneo estate but following WW1, with lowering prices in rubber and the general trade depression in 1921 found him without a job following yet another visit to Britain. He found employment with the Public Works Department, although where, and in what capacity, is not known.

### **Post War**

From September 1923 he became Government Inspector of rubber estates for the Office of Customs within the Johore Civil Service., later promoted to the position of Principal Office of Customs involved with the regulation and sales of rubber. In 1926, he was the officer overseeing the monitoring of licensed opium establishments.

He married **Dorothea Rosedale** when on home leave in 1927, returning to Malaya where they moved to **Bukit Japon**

(Johore Bahru) and from where he further developed his interests in native folk lore, weaponry and archeology. His search for the lost city of **Kota Gelanggi** led to the discovery of the ancient capital of **Johore Lama**, the old fortified capital of the sultanate that was destroyed by the Portuguese (twice!) and also the ruins of **Sayong Pinang Fort**.<sup>3</sup> It must also be stated that *"He [also] claimed to have discovered the site of the ancient city of Singapura!"* At a later date (c.1935) his main research interest became the Malay Kris (*keris*) eventually to form the main component of his 1936 book, **"Kris and Other Malay Weapons"** edited by **Betty Lumsden Milne**.<sup>\*</sup> In addition to the detailed descriptions of the weapons, there is also an excellent description of the layout and defensive use of the early Malay forts.

#### 1936 – 1940 and after

**Graham Gardner** retired from the Johore Civil Service in January 1936 and returned to England taking a circuitous route via Palestine, Turkey, Greece, Hungary and Germany. His wife travelled directly to London from Malaya. He again left England in late 1936 to over-winter in Cyprus, thus avoiding the cold season. In 1939 he volunteered for the ARP as a warden and then in 1940 volunteered for the LDV (later the Home Guard) but as turned down as he was already an ARP warden. He managed to circumvent this on a technicality by joining as an armourer, a technical staff role! As the war progressed, and then after, he became progressively involved in witchcraft, an activity that is covered in many references to him, for those who are interested in this later phase of his life.

In 1960 he was invited to attend a garden party at Buckingham Palace in 'recognition of his distinguished civil service during his time in the Far East.'

**Gerald Gardner** died on the 12<sup>th</sup> February 1964 at sea.

1. The Legion of Frontiersmen was a voluntary uniformed service founded in 1905, intended to act an intelligent corps should there be an invasion of Britain.
2. The *S.S. Nankin* (built 1912) was carrying passengers, including women and children, from Fremantle to Colombo when captured on the 10<sup>th</sup> May 1942 by the German raider *'Thor.'* Both the *Nankin* and passengers were taken to Yokohama, the passengers becoming POW/Internees for the duration of the war.
3. The Malay for fort is 'kota', meaning a large town or city. They were places of administration, military fortifications, centres of commerce and royal government.

\* Mrs. B.L. Milne (b.1895) was a school teacher married to Alfred M. Lumsden Milne, a planter who died in 1941. She edited *"Kris and Other Malay Weapons"* for publication in 1936. A headmistress in the Johore Education Department at the start of the Japanese occupation, she was interned at Changi and later in Sime Road Camp, where, in consultation with H.R. Cheeseman, Camp Education Officer who had been Deputy Director of Education in pre-war Malaya, a programme of education was organised for the male and female camps. Betty L. Milne died in 1960 at the British Hospital, Lisbon.



Gerald and Dorothea Gardner

Rt. Betty Milne  
Photo taken after  
release from  
internment



Rt. H.R. Cheeseman  
Camp Education  
Officer, Changi &  
Sime Road



### **BOUCHES INUTILES – Part 3**

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

I've tried to make categories for the white women who were in Singapore during the last days, simply because it is easier to find records that include them than finding records for Eurasian, Chinese, Malay, Indian and other women. But it is cheering that much more has now been published in English and time spent on the online oral archives of National Archives Singapore is always well spent. But I want to return to the terms *effectives* and *ineffectives* mentioned by McCrum in the words of Sir George Maxwell before I return to another of my categories from Literature A, the flibbertigibbets who must have been the mythical dancers at the end. Maxwell had been Chief Secretary to the Government of the Federated Malay States and a member of the Association of British Malaya, who was in England when the war broke out in Malaya. In February 1943, in the knowledge that no official record could be made until after the end of the war, the Association issued an appeal for information from people who were in Malaya at the time of the invasion and compiled Maxwell's narrative from the information it received from Government Gazettes, from Malayan newspapers of the time and from books from persons who were then in Malaya. I am grateful to Becca who introduced me to this book and the dynamite it contains for it publishes much that does not seem to get into Literature B, that is live, first hand and very outspoken and it bears the unassailable stamp of authority. The second-hand copy I was able to find is undated but has May 1944 written in ink on the first page under the name of the owner. On page 69, Maxwell records that, "*Almost every able-bodied European woman without small children was employed in Passive Defence or in some other essential service,*" having remarked on the previous page that as soon as the Medical Auxiliary Services were started they received the enthusiastic support of the non-European women on the First Aid side of the work and of Asiatic men on the Ambulance side. He also noted that European and Chinese women worked side by side and refused to be separated on racial grounds. So far as the European women went, "*In Malaya, the European women were in two distinct categories: (i) Those who, whether they had small children or not, were capable of taking part in military or civilian defence, and who were classed as 'effectives' and (ii) Those who, by reason of infirmity, illness, old age or the ties of small children, were prevented from taking any part in defence measures, and who could, therefore, be classed as 'non-effectives'.*" These two categories were not recognised by the Government in the Regulation of Travel Order, 1941. (My emphasis).

The concept of '*bouches inutiles*' has now gone, but it could not have worked anyway either for the civilians on which the military absolutely relied but could not control in a situation of impending defeat. With the speed of the Japanese advance, an individual woman could be an *effective* in the morning and an *ineffective* by nightfall. And it doesn't help at all in trying to identify who actually were the women who were crowded on to the docks trying to get away at the end. And here I hit another really big problem because, as we know better than anyone, the incoming British Army, a fighting force which therefore did not bring its women with it and therefore had no *bouches inutiles* to identify and remove, seems to have seen the Volunteers as a form of local cannon fodder. There was no structure in which there could have been a programme for evacuating Volunteers' families, because they had effectively destroyed what there was by over-riding it. There are many accounts in A.K. of women receiving a phone call from a husband at his post or a friend telling them to get out – now. I think it is reasonable to assume that a large number of those women down on the docks, were the wives of Volunteers who had got there mostly through their own initiatives and that of friends. It is appropriate again to remind ourselves of the conditions there. To a climate where many people find the heat and humidity difficult to live with we must add: the almost continuous noise and destruction of the Japanese shells from Johore while the big guns turned round and firing from the south made the ground shake on every firing; the flying shrapnel that sliced into bodies; the stench of death as the clearing parties failed to keep ahead of the number of bodies buried in the rubble; the filthy, thick, black, sticky soot from the burning oil installations adding to the stench and soot of the burning rubber warehouses; the crowds of people not knowing where to go with the remains of the armed military trying to control the dock entrances; the piles of luggage just dumped as the result of contradictory advice on what people could take and what they could not. It was a hot, stinking fiery Hell.

The one category of women attempting to get out most easily identified is the nurses who were still in uniform. The pages of A.K. contain much detail of who they were and what happened to them and a searing article by Michael Pether about the Sumatra camps and there is no time or space here to do them justice. A point that I would like to make however, is that the continuing medical research into the effects of the war is devoted almost entirely to men prisoners. There are several reasons for this and they include the fact that so many doctors and related specialists were interned or imprisoned that there is a literature written at the time or soon after release. But women doctors were interned too and their work does not seem to have the same status in the literature. Within the literature there is a consistent thread that sees women more as plucky and wholly admirable victims, rather less as capable professionals so that they do not have the parity of esteem

they should have. A.K. has much detail not published elsewhere and we need to find a way recognizing it for there is a gender imbalance within the medical research literature that needs addressing. I am not suggesting that the continuing and very necessary work on the men's stories should cease, but that it should be balanced by that well-known fact of life that women are, in fact, extraordinarily tough. We are built for childbirth and as my uncle, a surgeon, remarked when I nearly did not make it when my son was born, *"Speaking as a surgeon, it is almost impossible to kill a young woman."* It takes cold steel and a total lack of morals in a still unacknowledged war crime at sea, and deliberate withholding of food and medicines in internment camps to achieve it. And most of the medical literature is also about the men's physical in contrast to mental health. The women's toughness includes maintaining sanity as well as physical health while at the time providing for the intellectual growth of their interned children. In A.K. 31, **Peter Brampton** reported on the appearance of nursing sisters from the women's camp in Sime Road, rather more comfortable, we can say, than the Netherlands East Indies Camps, to help the unqualified nursing orderlies in the men's camp. Minimally dressed themselves, the men just could not understand how 2 nursing sisters could appear a few minutes before 8 in the morning, *"in immaculate white uniforms,"* and even make miniscule camp rations on a tin plate look appetizing. My father, who was in the men's camp, used to remark on how much higher morale was in the women's than the men's camp. When one of the women was sent one of the tooth-brush-handle-spectacle-frames made by **Ernest Hodgkin**, she returned it saying she couldn't possibly wear pink! In the very few photographs of women taken on release, the women are astonishingly well-dressed and it could not have all been Red Cross donations. They knew how to mend, patch and remake garments and that takes considerable skill. Research is still going on at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine but when I asked them recently what they had on the mental, in contrast to the physical, health of ex-FEPOWs and internees, they had almost nothing. It is the wives to whom the men returned who had to deal with it, usually with no help. It is not a popular thing to say, but at the age of 80 when social conventions don't matter so much, I would like to stand on the nearest roof top and shout that looking after a returned prisoner or internee who suffers recurring bouts of mental illness, tests unconditional love to the limit, but it can be done. I want to shift the perspective from what the women suffered to what they achieved, while still maintaining a balanced accuracy in what happened.

While still on the track of who actually were the women who were supposed to dance to the end, I need to return to my category of flibbertigibbets. Possibly they were the wives of the whisky-swilling planters of equal fame. In all cultures, there are silly young things, male and female and there was certainly a population of white women in Singapore whose behaviour justified the anger with which they were judged. They were easily identifiable by their rudeness to people their husbands' status placed beneath them, and **Jock Oehlers** did a good hatchet job on them on page 31 of his 2008 book, *"That's how it goes."* **Elizabeth** disliked them intensely and dismissed them as, *"government women"* but, living on the Raffles College campus a good way out of town where it was normal for students, who were of all races, to pop in and out of professors' houses, it was easy to avoid them. It is a sad and distorting fact, however, that the social damage these women did is out of proportion to their numbers and possibly behind some of the stereotyping that survives in Singapore today. There is some explanation, but no excuse for their behaviour which can and had been examined (I have references) with the tentative conclusion that they behaved as their husband's rank expected of them and were then blamed for it.

But European women going out to Malaya and Singapore for the first time were not helped by formal government advice either. Although the advice of the Colonial Office re-published in 1935 tried to demolish the picture painted by **Somerset Maugham** and **Noel Coward** some years before, neither of whom had straightforward attitudes to women anyway, it ended up contradicting itself by sticking to the rather dated remarks of earlier editions that, *"In the larger towns, where there are European stores, it is possible to go shopping during the morning, or to visit friends... The climate is unsuited to housework, and too much sewing or reading may have its effect on eyesight... In the early evening she may indulge in golf, tennis or social intercourse, often followed by bridge or dancing before dinner. The afternoon is usually devoted to a siesta which most ladies find necessary in a hot or sometimes enervating climate."* Such stuff was easily laughed off by a woman with a geological hammer in her luggage, but the alternative was already better known in practice. **Derek Mackay's** much later book, *"Eastern Customs,"* remarked that employing servants of the capability of our mothers', cooks and amahs enabled them, *"...to taken up occupations of their own... They possessed the skills and academic background the country needed and they were highly valued for their integrity."*

For our mothers' generation was, without doubt, better educated than the previous generations of European wives. The between-wars women's movements, following the enormous amount of boffin work women did in WW1, were about education as well as suffrage and our middle-class mothers were taught in their grant-aided or private schools by women who were the first wave of women graduates who still had little chance of employment other than teaching. They had

fought hard for their own education and passed on their spirit, capability and confidence to their pupils, who became just the sort of women who might marry the sort of socially responsible man who joined the Volunteers. Singapore's incoming military men of the officer class, however, would have been older, more traditionally educated at public schools and with more traditional attitudes to women. The social situation of white women in Malaya and Singapore was too often judged by standards that were male, traditional and out of date. In spite of her scientific achievements, my mother was just a 'Mem' and to some in Singapore she still is.

But every culture has its silly young things, male as well as female, and there is the account of a teenage girl given only minutes to leave her home on the peninsula, grabbing the thing most important to her, her pretty new frock, and it is surely understandable that more mature women, given almost no notice to get out, grabbed a few valuables as they packed the children and their basics into the car. Accounts of silly young things always make a better press story than the common sense of older ones. A more realistic picture comes from **George Rocker**, again after he had got his wife away: *I went upstairs to have a last look round our room, still cluttered with the forsaken impedimenta of a succession of refugees – including no less than seven sewing machines...ranged around the wall.* [Rocker p.73]. In those days, all women could sew and the sewing machine was an essential piece of domestic equipment in the days when there was no air-conditioning and no anti-perspirants. You will remember that at the end it was Chinese New Year. There was a lot of red cloth around and Chinese sewing machines were running hot, in the only defence the people had left. They cut out large red circles and sewed them onto the middle of the largest white cloth they could find, to hang the Japanese flag from the window with the implied but hopeless signal, *"please just leave us alone."*

#### What happened next?

There were certainly heroines among the heroes left behind: we know about **Elizabeth Choy** as well as **Cicely Williams**, and we have **Becca Kenneison's** work on just how impossible the situation was for Eurasians. **Chin Kee Onn** on page 16 of his, *"Malaya Upside Down,"* wrote that, *"thousands of women and girls were simply lost without trace – only cabaret girls, waitresses and sing-song girls slowly made their way back to town."* **Josephine Foss**, (A.K. 37 p.10) having retreated to Singapore from K.L. where she had headed Pudu School, was sent to the YWCA to help out and found, *"280 girls of all types, diseased, prostitutes, raped, not wanted – and 60 babies under 1... No water after a bit; no lavatories could be used, the kitchens constantly shelled, the girls and I cooked between and dived under cement tables when the shells came."* Her account of her internment joins the honourable ranks of those of **Freddy Bloom**, **Mary Thomas**, **Sheila Allen** and many others.

But I have not been able to find any one literature that collects, co-ordinates, analyses and records a comprehensive picture of what happened to the women who got away and survived. Again the pages of A.K. either directly, or indirectly in **Jonathan Moffatt's** painstaking book references and reviews, are a rich source for anyone wanting to build a clear, balanced picture. But sometimes unconscious bias remains. In A.K. 31, I refer to **Geoffrey Brooke's** mention of 2 pregnant women who had been helped ashore when their escape boat was sunk and had given birth on the beach. The name of the Coxwain who helped at the births was recorded, but not the names of the women. I am reminded by yet another passing remark in an article in A.K., that women did not wear identification discs. And by following a lead from A.K., I found that it was **Mrs. Low** who, on Pom Pong Island with Chinese friends, deduced that the junk standing off would have been a fishing vessel, and that the fishermen would probably have spoken the Amoy dialect, so in dialect, it was they who called them in to help. [Low *"When Singapore was Syonan-to 1973"*].

From what I have found, and there is a great deal more work to do in accessible records, women experienced both warm welcome and cold criticism when they finally reached land. One woman was welcomed into an Australian farmstead to work as a family member, another was used more as slave labour, given food and lodging but no pay. One senior academic wife found herself a tin shack somewhere outside Melbourne until rescued by the Quaker community in Tasmania. One who had given birth in Singapore General Hospital 3 weeks before the end, eventually got home to America to meet absolutely no understanding at all from her family about the way her toddler son behaved a bit oddly. One whose London nursing qualifications were not recognized in Australia, brought up her daughter as she worked on an egg packing station somewhere outside Perth: another became a taxi driver in Durban. My mother's welcome in New Zealand from her husband's family was chilly, on the grounds that she had married the man expected to marry the girl on the next door farm.

But I have found no evidence, other than some temporary weeping from stress, of evacuee and escapee women sitting down in a heap feeling sorry for themselves and not being able to manage without servants. That is another myth that

needs exposing for what it is. As far as I know, there is no physical evidence that having the privilege of being able to pay for somebody to do the housework, atrophies the brain and the arms. I know it is only anecdotal evidence, but in many difficult situations that I have found myself in since I was a 3 year old evacuee, to more recently the fire in Grenfell Tower 150 metres from my home, it has been noticeable that women, their menfolk mostly working somewhere else, go straight in to help out. **Elizabeth Alexander** was an exceptional scientist but I don't believe that she was an exceptional woman.

As we know, there is a literature and some good work by **Julie Summers** and others on the men coming home, but I'd like to see more on what happened to the women when they eventually got home and if they were reunited with their emaciated and traumatised husbands. I would like to be able to read more of a positive response to how such women managed, for here again we tend to hit the negative image of the little woman as victim again, bravely coping because everyone knows that we do cope, but let's hear more, about their coping strategies where your presence is absolutely necessary one minute and absolutely not wanted the next.

#### **So where do we go from here**

As I said at the beginning, it is my conviction that MVG leads the field when it comes to knowledge about what actually happened to people when Singapore fell. The problem remains of how we are to educate the high-status, market dominating **Literature B** people, and the romantic piffle people, into recognizing the value of our knowledge. The Big Books By Blokes just keep on coming, diminishing half of humanity as they come. To return briefly to **Mary Beard**: "*You can't easily fit women into a structure that is already coded as male: you have to change the structure.*" We are not going to be able to change the structure over night, but at least we can be aware of it, expose it and keep chipping away at it. Perhaps the question should not be whether or not to bring a gender perspective into the gentleman's club, ivory tower or garden shed, but to ask why these people are so reluctant, even frightened as to want to maintain barriers round something which happened 70 years ago. I have published a little on this before but in my book on my mother's life, I have just put back the women scientists who got left out, as I went along. There was no need to be aggressive about it: just a sort of un-rubbing out of history. There is a big difference between beginning a sentence with man X who happened to be married to woman Y who did all those plucky but not very high status military things, and introducing the tough, expert woman Y who happened to have married man X, and I've been very interested to discover how my publisher, most of whose editors are young women graduates, has not mentioned Elizabeth's husband at all. The book is about her, though there is a chapter within it on his life while she was an evacuee in New Zealand.

I want to end with a few comments on where we are now, having started with how far we have come. Most of us who started with A.K.1 are now beginning to move towards its expanding obituary pages, but we do have **Becca Kenneison** who has got us into social media and members in Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Obviously we need to plan for the future. I wish I could find a way of raising our profile without losing our identity because the need to rebalance the literature is urgent. There is very little anyone can do when it comes to communicating with closed minds that want to stay closed, so we have to find ways of opening them. In my talk, I made a few suggestions and other members will have more but, with great respect, we need to attend to the matter urgently. We should also remember that our editor who started with one side of A4 now regularly produces a 24-page mine of information, as well as being our superb ambassador, but surely there must be some recently retired young thing out there who could help out with administrative trivia like chasing people who forget to pay their subs. *Apa Khabar* is now an authoritative publication, both **Literatures A** and **B** need to know about it and we must not lose it.

I ended my talk with an image that has nothing whatsoever to do with the fall of Singapore but which I find inspiring. I do not know what the copyright situation is, but if you 'google' **Iesha Evans Johnathan Bachman** you will see a young woman with a straight back, facing 2 Louisiana State Troupers in full riot gear with another row behind and you will see that she is holding them back because they don't know what to do.

There is a rider to all this which I want to record. Looking after a father or husband returning from captivity by the Japanese, and I have done both, is not easy and also needs much more recognition. Many male internees, and I don't know enough about the after effects on female internees, developed a personal survival technique which, in civilian life comes out as an extreme, driven selfishness quite oblivious of its effects on others, however damaging. I have communicated with other women of my generation who have experienced living with it but who do not complain because the expectation on us is that it is our role, if not our duty, to give up our own lives for our men, a duty that extends even down the generations. I can understand how a wife would accept such duty without question, but see no reason why it should be visited on daughters. The child-rearing practices of our day produced the mantra which we now know to be nonsense, that children who were evacuees, escapees or internees would soon forget about it. Very recently, I had lunch with the daughter of another Raffles College professor with whom I have kept in touch over the years. Our fathers and our husbands are now dead and at the average age of 82 we enjoyed the most relaxing event that either of us could remember. We agreed afterwards, that it was probably the first time we had really relaxed since 1942.



**A TALE OF KELANTAN IN THE JAP TIMES**  
**By Lim Kean Hong**  
**and printed in The Straits Times - 18<sup>th</sup> August 1950**

[This story of the early days of the Japanese occupation in Kelantan was written by Mr. Lim Kean Hong, of Kota Bahru, formerly Straits Times correspondent in Kelantan, after reading the note on Dr. W.J. Geale in, "On The Margin" on 11<sup>th</sup> August.

Dr. Geale was Government Medical Officer, Ulu Kelantan, and at the same time Visiting Medical Officer to all the estates in Kelantan. He acted as Residency Surgeon and Chief Medical Officer in Kota Bahru several times. He took no Home Leave during his service of more than twenty-five years in Kelantan, and made valuable contributions to malaria research.]

I served under **Dr. Geale** as a hospital assistant, and I was in close contact with him when he was interned here in Kota Bahru for the first six months, my quarters being next to him.

During the evacuation of **Kuala Krai** on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1942, **Dr. Geale** and **Capt. H.A. Anderson, I.S.O.**, the former Commissioner of Police, Kelantan, volunteered to remain behind.

The then British Adviser, the late **Major Kidd** (who was killed on active service), allowed only one officer to do so, and the choice went to **Dr. Geale**, much to the disappointment of **Capt. Anderson**. For nearly one week, from his residence at **Geale Road** to the District Hospital, a distance of about a mile, **Dr. Geale's** portly figure, tall, robust, and healthy, was seen going to and from the hospital to attend to his patients.

Wonder of wonders, the Jap sentries lining the route appeared to take no notice of him. I can well believe **Cecil Street's** statement that he was complimented by the Jap commander for his courage and devotion to duty.

But just before **Dr. Geale** was sent to Kota Bahru, he was kept standing in the hot sun on the main road for hours, at the same time insulted by the Jap minions, but he stood calm, restrained, and dignified. (This information was gathered from various sources when I was Acting Medical Officer from 4 June, 1942, to 6 Feb, 1945, at **Kuala Krai**).

The ruthless and murderous behaviour of the Japs towards civilian prisoners quickly became notorious, and when **Dr. Geale** arrived at Kota Bahru – it must have been after Christmas 1941, but I forget the date – and was sent straight to the District Hospital, it was a great relief to most of the hospital staff, for he was a much-loved Medical Officer.

The former Medical Officer's quarters were allotted to **Dr. Geale** by the Jap Garrison commander. We did our utmost to cheer him up and make him comfortable. We started sweeping and cleaning, but before we had half-finished the rooms our efforts were frustrated by a bespectacled Army Surgeon with the rank of Captain.

Drawing his sword in an angry mood, and with a threatening attitude, he forbade us to render assistance to the while man.

In pidgin English he further warned us, "**ALL WHITE MEN JAPAN ENEMY. YOU HELP WHITE MEN YOU ALSO ENEMY. GERMAN! ITALILEE! NOW WAR FRIENDS. NO WAR NO FRIENDS. ALL SAME WHITE MEN.**"

Two or three days afterwards, **Dr. Geale** was shifted to the Health Inspector's quarters, which were next to mine. After **Dr. Geale** had settled down in his new abode – but not comfortably, being insulted by the Jap sentries almost daily – that Jap bloke mentioned above was replaced by another Army surgeon. **Dr. Geale's** companion was the late **Mr. Baker** of **Semerak**. He was, indeed, a heartache to **Dr. Geale**, being not in his normal state of mind.

No-one was allowed to visit the two Europeans. Nevertheless, my neighbours and myself, with our wives, used to smuggle food to them: and in the dead of night with Jap sentries patrolling outside, we used to bring **Dr. Geale** through the back door to our rooms to hear Allied Radio News. (Of course, we were our own sentries by rotation.) The news was depressing and we always heaved a sigh after hearing it. Withdrawal after withdrawal, fall of Malaya, then Singapore, and then Java...

It was not until the early part of February, 1942, when two new Army surgeons, **Drs. Yamayuchi Tai** and **Nakamura** arrived, that **Dr. Geale** was left unmolested. They were sympathetic. They even personally attended to the ailments of **Dr. Geale**, a notice was posted on **Dr. Geale's** front door forbidding entry to soldiers, and visitors were allowed.

The hospital staff were well treated and had a fair deal. The wounded soldiers gradually realised our abilities, and thereafter they had more faith in us than in the whole batch of the Jap nursing staff.

We were reminded time and time again by these two Army surgeons that there was no war between Doctors and Doctors. Humanity looked to us for assistance, and it was our duty towards God to render such aid as lay in our means to do so, they used to say.

When the Japanese civil administration took over in April 1942, a few of us tried to devise ways and means to have **Dr. Geale** interned at **Kuala Krai**. After all efforts failed, we had no other alternative but boldly to approach the Chief Medical Officer to use his influence to have **Dr. Geale's** case heard before the Japanese Governor.

We argued that **Dr. Geale** was Irish, and Ireland was not at war with Japan; and we pointed out that since the late **Mr. O'Connor**, of **St. Cyr Estate, Temangan**, could be interned on his own estate, there would seem to be no reason why **Dr. Geale** could not be given the same privilege. Besides, we said, **Dr. Geale** could be useful to the Jap administration at **Kuala Krai** by reason of his vast experience in public health work.

The then Chief Medical Officer, **Dr. Takigawa** – who now has a hospital of his own in Bangkok, and who was later to undergo tortures at the hands of the Kempeitai for accumulating British Currency and hoarding gold – listened sympathetically (for he was pro-British at heart), but his efforts failed, and **Dr. Geale** was sent to Singapore for internment on 13 June 1942.

Under orders, I left for **Kuala Krai** on 4 June, but on learning that **Dr. Geale** was about to be sent to Singapore, I met him on 11 June in the afternoon, after pedalling 44 miles on a bicycle from **Kuala Krai**. The parting message from **Dr. Geale** was, "Tell the boys to face hardship bravely. Do not lose heart. The British will come back. Look after the old mother (**Dr. Geale's** housemaid and lifelong companion, now dead.) Do not fail me."

[Ed: S.T. We are happy to add to this account that **Dr. Geale** survived the internment, and that he and **Mrs. Geale** – formerly **Mrs. Ireland**, of **Kuala Nal Estate, Kelantan** – are now living in England.]

AN OLD-TIME MEDICAL OFFICER  
MEMOIR OF DR. W.J. GEALE  
By A. S. Haynes C.M.G., O.B.E.

[Editor: This article appeared in the Malay Mail, and continues the story of **Dr. Geale**.]

The death of **Dr. W.J. Geale** at his home at Clare in Suffolk on 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1957, will cause sadness to his many friends in this and other countries, especially in the Malay State of Kelantan. His friends were, indeed, many; he had a great capacity for friendship and companionship in a faithful and enduring way. He never forgot birthdays and never omitted to send warm-hearted greetings.

Born in Ireland in 1875, he emigrated to Australia in 1886 and stayed there until 1902, being engaged in the teaching profession in Sydney for seven years. He returned to England in 1902 and then underwent his medical training at Edinburgh University.

After some temporary jobs, he became Assistant Superintendent at Birley-in-Wharfedale Mental Institution for five years.

About 1914, he took up the great work of his life at **Kuala Krai** in **Kelantan** as a private medical practitioner, particularly on rubber estates. He was also the medical officer in charge of the Government Hospital at **Kuala Krai**. To go through the wards of this hospital revealed the quality of the man. The loyalty and devotion of his staff, the grateful looks and smiles of his patients when the broad outline of his robust figure approached them was something unforgettable. His patients felt that he knew them personally and individually, as indeed he did; and the warm tones of his voice and his cheerful smiles left them better in feeling and in fact.

Isolated to a certain degree in **Kuala Krai** he still kept in close touch with the foremost medical authorities, particularly on malaria and nutrition in various parts of the world. He must have had an immense correspondence. His house on the bank of the Kelantan river was open to all visitors; and none of those who enjoyed his warm hospitality and particularly his spacious curry luncheons have ever forgotten. One of his great activities must not be omitted. This was his annual "visitation" of the rubber plantations for the health of which he was responsible. It was the custom for the British Adviser to accompany him on this great walking tour. And on one occasion this fell to me. It was a tremendous business; we walked literally all day for several days under a burning sun; there was no respite until we reached towards evening comfortable shelter in the bungalow of a hospitable planter, whose welcome slaked our thirsts, leaving us moist but undaunted. This was a real business trip, from which much was learnt and much taught to the hospital staff.

But the war came and **Dr. Geale** stuck to his post at **Kuala Krai**. Volume 11 of the History of the Second World War – The Civilian Health and Medical Services (p.84 Malaya) contains this honourable mention of our old friend:

***“There were few civilian casualties in Kelantan. Provision was made for them in the hospital at Kota Bahru, where the local staff were able to deal with them, and at Kuala Krai, a small town some forty miles inland, where Dr. Geale, an elderly European private medical practitioner, elected to remain after the British forces had withdrawn. He was eventually arrested by the Japanese and kept prisoner in Kelantan for a year before being sent to Singapore for internment. According to him, the number of terribly wounded among the civilians in Kelantan was very small.”***

His cheerfulness and fortitude under the rigours of internment won the admiration of his fellow prisoners; he was well over 60 but his spirit did not flag and kept morale high. A great factor in his life and work was his interest in nutrition, and foremost in this field was his condemnation of white polished rice. In his hospitals on estates in Kuala Krai he had whole rice (*beras kampung*) provided; this was easy in a State like Kelantan where the Malay peasantry daily brought large supplies to the market. An outstanding feature of his character was his generosity. This brought to him many claims, not always worthy; but none of the claimants, whether worthy or unworthy, left him empty-handed. The only person likely to be left empty-handed was himself.

After internment in Singapore he was flown home, arriving in London a sick man possessing only the shirt and shorts which he was wearing and it was winter and cold. Medical friends saw to it that he was looked after in hospital.

In 1949 he married **Iris Ireland**, widow of an old Malayan friend; and the closing years of his life were happy ones in a loving home, where he was dearly loved by his five stepchildren.

**“Doc”** as he was familiarly called, was a wonderful character who will never be forgotten by those who knew him.

***“Multis ille bonis flebilis occidit.”***

### **RECOLLECTIONS OF HAROLD MARTIN** **AUSTRALIAN VETERAN OF THE THAILAND-BURMA RAILWAY**

**Report in the Western Australian News on ANZAC DAY – 25<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

**Harold Martin** said a few extra words after he recited 'The Ode' in Kanchanaburi, Thailand last year. This was goodbye he told the crowd gathered on Anzac Day to commemorate the lives lost on the Thai-Burma Railway. At 101, he would not be able to return to Thailand again. But the Albany World War 11 veteran is back there now, on yet another mission to honour those of his mates who did not make it home.

As a child, his mother told him never to give up – and it seems he listened. **Mr. Martin** and his fellow prisoners of war endured horrific conditions on the railway, characterised by backbreaking work, grossly inadequate meals and deadly sicknesses. Dead soldiers' bodies were burnt in an attempt to stop the spread of disease.

He had joined the army to defend Australia, but the powers that be underestimated the strength of the enemy. Singapore fell 10 days after he arrived. Having survived two years of slave labour on what came to be known as the Death Railway, **Mr. Martin** was put on a ship bound for Japanese coal mines. His ship was hit by US torpedoes, leaving him and hundreds of other skeletal prisoners of war treading water in the South China Sea.

He and 72 fellow Allied soldiers were picked up by the crew of the **USS Pampanito** after almost four days spent clinging to makeshift life rafts. **Mr. Martin** rarely spoke about those experiences in the decades after the war – he did not think anyone would want to hear about them – but he slowly opened up to **Morris** and **Gwen Blake**.

The **Blakes** own **Dylan's Café** in Albany, where **Mr. Martin** would start every day with a coffee at 7am. “He used to look after his beautiful daughter, **Bethany**, and when she passed away he would come into **Dylan's** for a cup of coffee first thing in the morning,” **Mr. Blake** said, “He used to tell us this amazing story. He said one of the things he'd never been able to do was to go back to America the way thank you for picking him out of the water. Gwen said 'What's stopping you?' And he said 'I've got no-one to go with.' So Gwen hopped on a plane with him and that's how it started. That submarine - **the Pampanito** – has pride of place at the Navy Museum in San Francisco. It has a big 73 on the side of it for the number of POWs they was just blown away.” Since then, the **Blakes** and **Mr. Martin** have become close friends.

**Mr. Martin** have become close friends. Myanmar three times, including two the 102-year-old would lay a wreath at Kanchanaburi for a service at the recite The Ode. His daughter, **Mr. Martin**, entitled, available to watch online, was released three years ago after **Mr. Martin** tracked down the graves of three of his mates in Myanmar. He said, “I stood there and saw there was row after row of silent headstones, all young men, their whole life before them – and there they lay. And I thought, these men should not be forgotten. More than 2,700 Australians died working on the Thai-Burma Railway.”



## **BANGKA ISLAND: The WW2 massacre and a 'truth too awful to speak'**

**By Gary Nunn, Sydney – dated 18<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-47796046>

[Editor: It was a difficult decision whether to include this report or not. However, for the sake of those 21 Australian Army Nurses who died, the truth about their massacre, which has for so long been hidden, deserves to be made known. **Lynette Silver** is a very well respected military historian and her findings are detailed in her new book.]

**In 1942, a group of Australian nurses were murdered by Japanese soldiers in what came to be known as the Bangka Island massacre. Now, an historian has collected evidence indicating that they were sexually assaulted beforehand – and that Australian authorities allegedly hushed it up.**

“It took a group of women to uncover this truth – and to finally speak it.” Military historian **Lynette Silver** is discussing what happened to 22 Australian nurses who were marched into the sea at Bangka Island, Indonesia, and shot with machine guns in February 1942. All except one were killed.

“That was a jolt to the senses enough. But to have been raped beforehand was just too awful a truth to speak,” **Ms Silver** says, speaking of claims she details in a new book. “Senior Australian army officers wanted to protect grieving families from the stigma of rape. It was seen as shameful. Rape was known as a fate worse than death, and was still a hangable offence [for perpetrators] in New South Wales until 1955.

### **The Survivor**

The Japanese soldiers had separated men and women on Bangka Island before shooting both groups out of sight of the other.

Nurse **Vivian Bullwinkel** was shot in the massacre but survived by playing dead. She hid in the jungle and was taken as a prisoner of war, before eventually returning to Australia. Of the small group of men who were massacred, two are known to have survived: **Ernest Lloyd** and **Eric Germann**.

**Ms Bullwinkel** was ‘gagged’ from speaking about the rapes at the Tokyo war crimes tribunal in the aftermath of WW2, according to **Ms Silver**, who researched an account **Ms Bullwinkel** gave to a broadcaster before she died in 2000.

“She was following orders,” **Ms Silver** says. “In addition to the taboo, there was probably some guilt from the Australian government – senior officers knew Japanese troops had raped and murdered British nurses when the Japanese invaded Hong Kong in 1942, but were tardy in calls to evacuate the Australian nurses from Singapore.”

According to the Australian government, the perpetrators of the massacre remain unknown and “escaped any punishment for their crime.”

An Australian Defence Force spokesperson says a decision on whether a new investigation into these sexual assault claims will commence is up to the government, but that “new historic allegations can be reported by family” to a unit which investigates such crimes.

### **Investigating what happened**

The other women whose work has revealed evidence of these alleged sexual assaults are broadcaster **Tess Lawrence** and biographer **Barbara Angell**, who did forensic work into the mismatching thread and bullet holes in **Ms Bullwinkel's** nurse's uniform. It indicated that buttons had been ripped off her bodice and sewn on in a different colour thread (after her death, when it was put on display) and the only way the bullet entry and exit holes lined up was if her bodice was open at the waist and down the front.



**Ms Lawrence** reported in 2017 that, before she died, **Ms Bullwinkel** confided in her that “most of” the nurses were “violated” before being shot, and that she’d wanted to reveal this but couldn’t – a secret, she said, that “tortured” her.

The Australian historian also cites an account of a Japanese soldier who was being treated for malaria nearby on Bangka Island, which is off Sumatra. He told an Australian investigating officer that he heard screams and was told soldiers were “pleasuring themselves on the beach and it’s be the turn of the platoon next.”

In addition, **Ms Silver** discovered that part of a page detailing that happened to the nurses in a key account had been ripped out in what she believes was an act of censorship.

The account was by **Jean Williams**, wife of **Major Harold Williams**, about investigations he conducted for the Australian War Crimes Section.

**Peter Stanley**, a military history professor at the University of New South Wales, says **Ms Silver’s** account doesn’t surprise him: “I’ve been waiting for this story to come out – it has been alleged for years, including by ex-servicewomen who knew **Vivian Bullwinkel** and told me. It correlates with on-the-record- sexual assaults by Japanese WW2 soldiers in Hong Kong, the Philippines and Singapore.

### The Army’s ‘Darlings’

#### Lynette Silver with her Award



Before the massacre, **Ms Silver** says, the Australian nurses had “a carefree, happy life” in Singapore until the end of 1941. “They were wined and dined, the darlings of the army. They were just dealing with the usual complaints you get in army peacetime – accidents in training, car accidents, malaria. When the Japanese attacked on 8 December 1941 – a few hours before Pearl Harbour – their lives changed. They were overwhelmed with battle casualties. Even houses in Singapore were transformed into hospitals. **Ms Silver** says she sees it as important to speak the “unsanitised truth” that **Vivian Bullwinkel** had wanted to tell in 1945 and 1946.

“If I didn’t tell this secret, I’d be part of

the culture of silence and the government clampdown, and protecting the perpetrators,” she says. “These nurses deserve to have their story told – that’s their justice.”

She has recently received e-mails from people who personally knew the nurses. “I was slightly concerned people might say I should let sleeping dogs lie, but I haven’t received a single derogatory remark,” she says.

**Ms Silver** now wants the Australian War memorial (AWM), which already includes the story of the massacre, to tailor its tours to include this account of the alleged sexual assaults.

AWM director **Dr. Brendan Nelson** tells the BBC: “We don’t deny or downplay these allegations, indeed, it’s known that rape and sexual assault are used as weapons in war. Nevertheless, as the sole survivor of the incident, **Lt. Vivian Bullwinkel**, passed away nearly 20 years ago, we do not, nor can ever categorically know what took place.”

**Ms Silver** draws parallels with the MeToo movement: “The same social mores are at play – whereby women felt compelled to wait before they could say anything. As victims, they’re made to feel responsible. I think MeToo would’ve given **Vivian Bullwinkel** the confidence to finally speak up.

Female history writers are generally more interested in the human element than how many guns there were. As a female, you have empathy.” She said it was revealing that it was three female historians who uncovered the evidence for this story: “I’ve heard of history being told as ‘his-story’. This was the opposite of that.

**ADVENTURES OF PATROLS THAT SEARCHED  
FOR JAPANESE INFILTRATION PARTIES**  
By T.P.M. Lewis – from the *Malaysia* magazine November 1971

The Australian raiding party known as “**Roseforce**” which had been responsible for the Perak Raid (described in the March 1971 edition of *Malaysia*) was not immediately disbanded. It was used to make two patrols to give warning of Japanese infiltrations in North Johore. The main Japanese advance was made along two roads – the main Segamat road and the coast road to Muar and Batu Pahat. But there was always a chance that the Jap forces working inland from the coast might attempt to cut off our troops on the Segamat front.

**The Tangkak patrol**

Our first patrol was sent to give warnings of Jap forces advancing up the Muar-Tangkak-Segamat Road. This 50-mile long road passes through a sparsely populated area with few large villages, though there are large rubber estates on both sides of the road.

We left our quarters in Tampoi Road, Johore Bahru, on the afternoon of 16 January 1942, and reached A.I.F. H.Q., Segamat, late that night, having been delayed by a long convoy of Indian troops moving south to Ayer Hitam. Next day, Jap planes demolished **Mr. De Burgh Thomas’** house which we had hoped to occupy, and cracked the clock-face of the Segamat English School. We eventually found accommodation at a brick factory some two or three miles south of the town and just off the main road.

Next day, our party of 15 led by **Captain Lloyd**, **Lieut. Sanderson** and two Volunteer guides, **Griffin**, of the Surveys, and myself, set off down the Tangkak Road. Lorries conveyed us as far as the demolished bridge at the 43<sup>rd</sup> mile, where we left the Loyals in occupation. We usually kept a hundred yards or so off the road to avoid the chance of surprise attack. The first seven miles to Gementah were covered without incident, though when we entered the village the inhabitants were ready to panic and run at the sight of uniformed soldiers, until the guides had reassured them in Malay that there was nothing to worry about. From then on we made a point of concealing the presence of our party outside every village until those of us who could speak Malay had contacted the villagers.

At Gementah, we learnt that 100 Jap cyclists had surrounded Tangkak Police Station at the 16<sup>th</sup> mile on the previous day. At the 34<sup>th</sup> mile, we stopped a lone Indian cyclist, a **Mr. Ariacutty** of the F.M.S. Railways, Kuala Lumpur, who was to prove most helpful to us. He was on his way to pick up his car on the far side of the next demolished bridge and to visit his family at the 26<sup>th</sup> mile. He volunteered to go forward to Sagil village at the 24<sup>th</sup> mile, and to report back that evening any further news of the Japs.

Meanwhile, we continued our march, reaching some large estate lines at the 32<sup>nd</sup> mile at 5 p.m. The labourers provided coffee and *nasi goreng* for our hungry men, discreetly hidden in the rubber, while **Captain Lloyd** and myself sat in the estate crèche. At 6 p.m. **Mr. Ariacutty** arrived back with confirmation of the Jap occupation of Tangkak, and this news was carried back to Loyals H.Q. by two of our men on cycles.

That evening, **Mr. Ariacutty** kindly provided a ferry service in his car which enabled us all to reach the 26<sup>th</sup> mile, where we slept in the deserted bungalow of the manager of Tangkak Estate, **Mr. Parker**. At dawn, as it was now fairly certain that no further Japanese advance was to be expected, we started our return journey, accompanied part of the way by the manager’s two dogs, whom we left in the care of one of his employees. [N.B. After the war, I was happy to bring **Mr. Ariacutty’s** loyal help to the notice of his superiors at Kuala Lumpur].

Back at the 32<sup>nd</sup> mile the labourers complained that local robbers had stolen goats and jewellery from them on the previous night. Reluctantly we had to decide not to interfere as any action taken on our part would have brought further trouble to them after our departure.

When we arrived back at Gementah, where we had to await the return of another party sent to Asahan, we put up at the Malay School, adjacent to an Agricultural Station stocked with prize Rhode Island poultry and 200 bags of seed padi. The guru, **Che Aziz** and his wife, kindly provided *nasi goreng* for 20 men, for we had now been joined by four stray Gurkhas from Asahan.

Next morning, we continued our return to Segamat but found the Loyals’ post at the 43<sup>rd</sup> mile abandoned and the road mined against tanks. After picking our way gingerly over the mines, we again contacted the Loyals who provided us with transport back to our brick factory.

Here we found the roadside crowded with jubilant Australians after their successful ambush of the Japs at Gemas (or **Jeemas**, as they called it). We noticed however, one unfortunate Australian lying dead by the roadside, covered in his camouflage cape. The poor fellow, “**Titch**” by name, had accidentally shot himself getting out of a lorry in the dark on the previous night.

### The Kepong patrol

Our next assignment was to find out whether Japanese forces were coming up the Muar River. We were expected to make a quick dash through the jungle at Kepong, a small village on the upper reaches of the river, and report back at Labis by the following evening.

This party of 15, led by **Lieut. Sanderson**, again had **Griffin** and myself as guides. A lorry took us late in the afternoon through Pogoh Estate to the edge of the jungle, and from there we followed the Labis River, which joins the Muar River, a mile or two above Kepong. As soon as it was dark we slept the night, in our camouflage capes, on the banks of the Labis.

Next morning we hit a track leading, we hoped, straight to Kepong. After two hours, we came to a Chinese squatter's hut, where the resident did not even know there was a war on, though the sound of gunfire coming from Segamat was plainly audible. A succession of Chinese woodcutters and tappers, and finally two Malay Policemen, father and son, dressed in civilian clothes guided to us to Kepong village.

The news there was that no Japs had been seen, but no boats with food had arrived from Muar for 11 days. It was then decided to push on to Lenga, another village five miles downstream, where we had been informed Indian troops were in occupation.

All idea of a return to Labis that evening had now to be abandoned because the direction of the gunfire we could hear indicated that the Japs would probably be in Labis before we could return. All we could now hope to do was to rejoin our troops, possibly at Yong Peng.

One of the Malay policemen volunteered to show us part of the way to Lenga, after which he handed us over to two Chinese woodcutters also going there. After several hours of following a tortuous jungle path we arrived at Lenga at 4 p.m. The village appeared to be totally deserted and looted, but we nevertheless proceeded with caution. Eventually we met some Malays who told us that the Indian troops had evacuated the village two days before, but that they had seen no Japs.

### On to Pagoh and Kangkar

We now set out on what appeared to be a newly made up road, part laterite, part tarred, which led first to Pagoh at the 17<sup>th</sup> mile and eventually to Muar. Apart from the lone Malay padi planter and Chinese woodcutter, we met no-one. The area seemed almost depopulated. We spent the night in the deserted manager's bungalow on Glenmuar Estate at the 26<sup>th</sup> mile, the owner of which, "**Patchi**" **Green** I was to meet some months later in Changi gaol.

The few estate labourers explained that the Indian troops had cleared both sides of the road to a depth of two miles and they themselves had only just returned to their estate. At dawn, we pushed on to Pagoh, 10 miles away, and we found half of the village burnt down when we arrived.

Here we turned sharp left and south, heading for a track which would bring us eventually to Kangkar. The road petered out after a mile or two near an Indian Chetty's house. The owner very generously provided us with a welcome meal. The track led us through very wild country, most of which was recently felled jungle, and it was late afternoon before we reached the outskirts of Kangkar.

A report that Japs were in occupation proved untrue, though it was obvious from the sound of incessant gunfire coming from the Parit Sulong bridge area to the south that they were not far away. Crossing a decrepit wooden bridge across the river which divided the village in two, we refreshed ourselves at an eating shop. The towkay owned a lorry, and he reluctantly agreed to drive us that evening the four miles down to the Parit Sulong bridge where we confidently hoped to join our own troops.

There was a pale moonlight when we started off at about eight o'clock. We had perhaps gone two miles when small arms fire opened up on us from both sides of the road. The towkay stopped his lorry in the middle of the road, jumped out and we never saw him again. Our party hurriedly dived into the *belukar* and we eventually found our way back to the outskirts of Kangkar, where we slept a disturbed night near a Malay kampong.

It was clear that our only chance of reaching Yong Peng now was to make a detour, and to join the road some miles east of Parit Sulong bridge, which was now probably in Jap hands. Early next morning, we set off towards the lower slopes of Bukit Inas, which we could see ahead of us. For several hours we waded across a vast expanse of bog, often up to our armpits in the stinking mud.

Eventually, we reached dry land and entered a large rubber estate, where we came to the banks of the Simpang Kiri river. A group of friendly Malays kindly ferried us across, warning us to keep clear of Parit Sulong, now bristling with Japs. A further brisk march brought us at last out on the Yong Peng road at the 83<sup>rd</sup> mile.

We were now confident that we would soon pick up transport to carry us the 13 miles to Yong Peng, but the road seemed ominously quiet.

### Contact with the Imperial Guard

The road at this point ran along a raised embankment. On the south side there was an open expanse of *belukar* and old rubber trees leading to the lower slopes of the jungle clad Bukit Payong (856 feet). While we were resting on this south side, a Jap plane sent us scurrying into the ditch.

Almost immediately, I heard what I assumed to be half-a-dozen Chinese cyclists coming along the road from Parit Sulong direction. But one glance at their German-shaped helmets, green uniforms and brown jackboots was enough. "Look out, Japs!" I shouted. Our party made off in the direction of Bukit Payong, those with Tommy guns giving the cyclists a burst.

As all the cyclists crashed on the north side of the embankment, I was unable to tell whether any were wounded. Meanwhile, as we ran for 150 yards or so across the open ground to the protection of the rubber, what seemed to be hundreds of yelling Japs who had been following closely behind the cyclists, took pot shots at us.

The Imperial Guard, for that is who they were, must have been poor shots, for none of us was hit. Once behind rubber trees, we all returned the Jap fire.

I remember wondering why the rubber trees seemed to be wintering rather rapidly. It was only later that I had time to realise that it was the Jap bullets which were causing the leaves to fall in such profusion.

### Night on Bukit Payong

We now retreated further up the slopes of the hill. From the summit, we had a bird's eye view of the Jap advance along the road below. In front were the infantry advancing cautiously along both sides of the road, looking no doubt for more like us. Then followed hundreds of cyclists, a few saloon cars and lorries camouflaged with palm leaves, and not a few tanks. This was the force which had cut off three-quarters of our troops at Parit Sulong bridge, and then murdered the wounded in cold blood.

We spent the night, hungry and exhausted, on the summit, though I was able to find a small spring from which we replenished our water bottles. As our retreat to Yong Peng was now cut off, we resolved to aim next morning for Batu Pahat, some 15 miles away, Bukit Banang being plainly visible from our vantage point.

Descending the southern slopes of Bukit Payong at dawn, we found ourselves on the edge of a rubber estate intersected by a series of parallel deep drains or *parits*, which could be crossed only by plank footbridges at irregular intervals. The local Malays were obviously frightened and reluctant to open their doors and speak.

We selected one of the bicycle paths running along the *parits* and had advanced some way in Indian file when the rear of our party reported hearing voices behind them. We had barely time to take cover in the adjoining undergrowth when up came 200 Jap cyclists, dressed in the usual variety of uniform.

We let them pass and then crossed a convenient plank bridge opposite, and struck out through another piece of rubber in a south-westerly direction. Eventually we reached a Malay village where a *haji* volunteered to find us a boat to cross the Simpang Kiri River which still separated us from Batu Pahat.

We reached the Simpang Kiri in company with several more Malays, but as no-one was able to find a boat, I went forward to look myself. I eventually came to a Chinese kongsi on the water's edge where a Chinese woodcutter informed me that all boats had been destroyed by the military, and that two days previously two white soldiers had swum across the river, which was, perhaps, 20 or 40 yards wide at this point where the Simpang Kiri and Simpang Kanan joined.

The offer of \$5 for further information, however, revealed that there was a barge available another few hundred yards upstream, and sure enough there it was, hidden under a boathouse and covered with palm leaves.

This was a great stroke of luck, but we still had no poles or oars to propel the heavy barge across, but close by, I noticed a dilapidated old plank shed. In a minute or two we had all armed ourselves with a plank each and were paddling ourselves across. But our troubles were still not over, for half-way over we noticed a launch approaching us at speed from upstream, containing, in all probability, some of the cyclists whom we had seen earlier.

We redoubled our paddling and staggered ashore into a swampy coconut estate. A mile or two of hard walking brought us to a Malay kampong, where the headman assured us that there were thousands of our troops in Batu Pahat, though it was obvious from gun-fire that it was under heavy attack.

### Singing a well-known rugby song

Somewhat unwillingly he agreed to lead us to the road leading to the town. When we reached this we advanced down the middle of the road singing a well-known rugby song to make sure we were not mistaken for Japs. We were soon rewarded by the appearance of the friendly faces of the Norfolks and Cambridgeshires from behind their camouflaged positions.

They were amazed to hear that we had come all the way from Segamat, but cheered us up by saying that Batu Pahat itself was surrounded, five food lorries coming from the south having been ambushed and destroyed by Jap patrols.

We walked through the bombed and deserted town to the lorry park, where a convoy was due to leave that night by the only remaining escape route along the coast. We moved off at about 9.30 p.m. but after proceeding only two miles we were held up by a road block until 1.30 a.m. most of which time we spent lining the ditches along the side of the road in case of attack.

Eventually a number of Bren-gun carriers cleared the way and we reached Johore Bahru at 6 a.m. We were probably the last convoy to get through, as soon after this the coast road was blocked and our troops had to be evacuated by sea.

Our trek from Segamat had taken us five days, and we probably covered 60 to 70 miles on foot, most of it cross-country. We had set out with only one day's rations, but thanks to our friendly reception in every village we never lacked for food, payment for which was refused more often than not.



## BOOKS

**"Rocks, Radio and Radar: the Extraordinary Scientific, Social and Military Life of Elizabeth Alexander."** By **Mary Harris**. Published by World Scientific 2019 RRP £75 ISBN 978-1-78634-664-3 Price to MVG members applying the concession: £39

Many MVG members know fellow member, author and historian **Mary Harris** who spoke at our last annual lunch on the theme of the much neglected and valuable role of women in the late 1930s and wartime British Malaya. The full text of the talk appeared recently in the MVG newsletters.

From what I know of 1930s British Malaya, the underlying theme comes as no surprise. Among the several hundred entries in my copy of, 'The Malaya Who's Who of 1938' I note there are precisely zero women and in several thousand pages of the Singapore and Malayan Directory, apart from a few Lady Medical Officers and listed nursing sisters, ladies are largely confined to the Ladies Directory, an address book intended for purely social contact.

**Mary's** substantial biography tells the story of her mother **Elizabeth Alexander**, a pioneering observational scientist in the areas of geology then radio astronomy and radar development in Singapore and New Zealand.

**Mary** argues that many women scientists who did crucial work in WW2 have disappeared from History – simply 'written out'.

Married in 1935 to a New Zealand academic and mathematician, **Norman Alexander**, **Elizabeth** arrived in Singapore in 1938 and wasted no time in introducing herself to the Malayan Surveys Dept. and Raffles Museum. With the outbreak of World War 2 and the increased threat of Japanese invasion, **Elizabeth** was employed as an intelligence officer at the Naval Base. A group of dedicated civilian women was also recruited to work for the intelligence organization FECB [Far East Combined Bureau] as Temporary Women Assistants [Twas]. Among FECB's tasks was wireless interception at Kranji Wireless Station. This is a well-researched, detailed book drawing on **Elizabeth's** unpublished diary and recently released government records. It gives the best explanation I've seen of the Educational set up in 1930s Singapore including Raffles College where **Elizabeth's** husband **Norman Alexander** was professor of Physics and 'feeder school' Raffles Institution. Among the students at both at the time was, of course, Singapore Prime Minister **Lee Kuan Yew**. Other interesting themes are the development of civil aviation in Singapore; racial attitudes supported by ludicrous theories of the time and the lives of 'Colonial orphans' such as **Mary** herself.

There are some entertaining anecdotes in the book too. There is the story of a mysterious Japanese student at Raffles College who was a keen runner but rarely, if ever, turned up for lectures. One of the best stories concerns a globe created by **Mrs. Alexander** at home and how it was employed very successfully by the Singapore Royal Artillery Battery [**Norman's** Volunteer unit] for 'predicting' range finding. This resulted in a regular Army report on the unit: 'Discipline non-existent; Gunnery excellent'.

**Elizabeth** was evacuated by air from Singapore with her three young children to New Zealand in January 1942. Having survived Japanese captivity in Changi Gaol and Sime Road Camp, Singapore, **Norman Alexander** was among internees airlifted to New Zealand where **Elizabeth** had been doing important radar development work.

Like the vast majority of 'British Malaysians' the **Alexanders** returned to Singapore very soon after the end of WW2, **Elizabeth** returning to Geology here and in her final years in Nigeria.

This book is a family history with a difference combining well explained scientific aspects of the story with a dramatic family narrative. It is a fine tribute by a daughter to her mother. Hopefully, from our point of view, it will encourage others to explore the true role of women in British Malaya.

Reviewed by **Jonathan Moffatt**

**"Cloud Boy" by Marcia Williams.** ISBN 978-1-4063-8121-4 Published by Walker Books. Price £6.99 paperback

This is a book based on veteran MVG member **Olga Henderson's** life story. **Olga** was a child internee in Changi and Sime Road camp and was one of **Elizabeth Ennis's** Girl Guide troupe which made the Girl Guide Changi Quilt. **Olga's** story is based on the character in the book called '**Grandma Gertie**, and her letters. The story is told through diaries kept by 2 friends, **Harry Christmas** and **Angie Moon**. A delightful children's story with a real life story threaded through it.

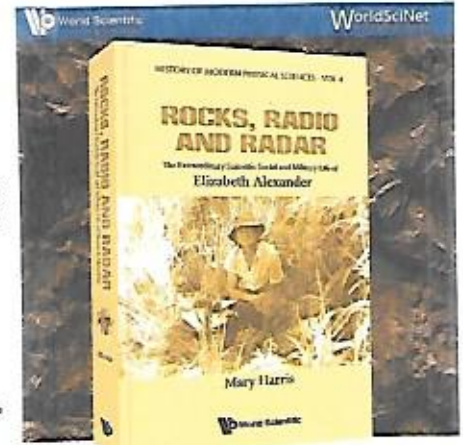
**"DALLEY and the Malayan Security Service 1945-48 MI5 VS. MSS."** By Leon Comber. ISBN 978-981-4818-73-5

Published by ISEAS Singapore.

This book fills an important gap in the history and intelligence canvas of Singapore and Malaya immediately after the surrender of the Japanese in August 1945. It deals with the establishment of the domestic intelligence service known as the Malayan Security Service (MSS) which was pan-Malayan covering both Singapore and Malaya, and the colourful and controversial career of Lieutenant Colonel John Dalley, the Commander of Dalforce in the WW2 battle for Singapore and the post-war Director of MSS. It also documents the little known rivalry between MI5 in London and MSS in Singapore, which led to the demise of the MSS and Dalley's retirement.

**"The Special Operations Executive in Malaya."** By Rebecca Kenneison. Soon to be available. For more details see:

<https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/the-special-operations-executive-in-malaya-9781788313896/>



Mary Harris

University College London, University of Aberdeen, UK

**M**ary Harris's extraordinary, previously unseen diary and letters tell the story of her mother, Elizabeth Alexander, a pioneering observational scientist in the areas of geology then radio astronomy and radar development in Singapore and New Zealand. This unique story is a testament to the extraordinary life of a woman who lived through the war and the challenges of a colonial society. The book is a well-researched, detailed account of her life, drawing on her unpublished diary and recently released government records. It gives the best explanation I've seen of the Educational set up in 1930s Singapore including Raffles College where Elizabeth's husband Norman Alexander was professor of Physics and 'feeder school' Raffles Institution. Among the students at both at the time was, of course, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. Other interesting themes are the development of civil aviation in Singapore; racial attitudes supported by ludicrous theories of the time and the lives of 'Colonial orphans' such as Mary herself. There are some entertaining anecdotes in the book too. There is the story of a mysterious Japanese student at Raffles College who was a keen runner but rarely, if ever, turned up for lectures. One of the best stories concerns a globe created by Mrs. Alexander at home and how it was employed very successfully by the Singapore Royal Artillery Battery [Norman's Volunteer unit] for 'predicting' range finding. This resulted in a regular Army report on the unit: 'Discipline non-existent; Gunnery excellent'. Elizabeth was evacuated by air from Singapore with her three young children to New Zealand in January 1942. Having survived Japanese captivity in Changi Gaol and Sime Road Camp, Singapore, Norman Alexander was among internees airlifted to New Zealand where Elizabeth had been doing important radar development work. Like the vast majority of 'British Malaysians' the Alexanders returned to Singapore very soon after the end of WW2, Elizabeth returning to Geology here and in her final years in Nigeria. This book is a family history with a difference combining well explained scientific aspects of the story with a dramatic family narrative. It is a fine tribute by a daughter to her mother. Hopefully, from our point of view, it will encourage others to explore the true role of women in British Malaya.

## WEBSITES TO VISIT

<https://www.rslwa.org.au/nitews/aif-malaya-nursing-scholarship/> The AIF Malaya Nursing Scholarship – created in 1946 by the Australian 8<sup>th</sup> Division and the AIF as a "living memorial" to the nurses who were captured and massacred on Banka Island.

<http://hansardpublic.parliament.sa.gov.au/layouts/15/Hansard/DownloadHansardFile.ashx?t=dailypdf&d=HANSARD-10-9359> Report in the South Australian Parliament in Adelaide about the service held on Banka Island annually in February under the heading of 'Matters of Interest'.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/programmes/black-sheep/story/2018671337/traitor-the-story-of-patrick-heenan-part-1>

and

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/programme/black-sheep/story/2018672587/traitor-the-story-of-patrick-heenan-part-2>

The story of the British soldier from the 1/16<sup>th</sup> Punjabi Regiment who became a traitor by giving away Allied positions to the Japanese. Mentioned also in Bill Frankland's book, "From Hell Island to Hay Fever" on P.126

## OBITUARIES

**WENDY FREEMAN (nee HARTLEY) 21<sup>st</sup> December 1947 – 18<sup>th</sup> May 2019**

**Christine Cavender, Wendy's sister writes:**

It is with great sadness that I have to inform members that after a very short illness, my sister **Wendy Freeman (nee Hartley)** who lived in Canada and was a member of the Canadian MVG, died on Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

Our father, **Melville Tillotson Hartley** was a member of the SSVF and, along with many other members of his family, was a POW in Changi and also spent time on the infamous Thailand-Burma Railway. Sadly my grandfather and uncles died in Changi and my grandmother died on the **S.S. Kuala** along with other relatives. Fortunately my father survived his incarceration and after the war travelled to England, met my mother and took us all back to Malaya in 1950. We have wonderful memories of our childhood and the time we spent living in Taiping, and have been fortunate to have returned there on two occasions.

I think our childhood in Malaya gave **Wendy** the love of travel and when she married **Ron** in 1968 they spent 3 happy years in South Africa and then emigrated to Toronto, Canada, where they have lived for the last 45 years. **Wendy** was very much a career lady and became the CEO of a famous hairdressing group. They visited the UK on many occasions to see family and friends and marched with the MVG in the Parade on Remembrance Sunday and have subsequently become active members of the MVG in Canada. **Wendy** and **Ron** were just settling down to retirement and had recently visited Antarctica and were planning their next holiday to Australia. Sadly this was not to be.

Even though we lived many miles apart, we were very close as sisters and along with our husbands we met up in Malaysia in 2014 and spent a month touring and visiting our childhood haunts where we were warmly welcomed back to our school in Taiping. Our visit brought back so many memories, and I can honestly say our school had hardly changed since our time there. We lived in Taiping at the time of Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1953 and I am proud to say that a photograph of us taken at the time now stands in the glass cabinet in the school foyer.

Sadly, the area has changed a lot, but we were able to visit Kamunting where our father worked and to see where our house had stood and also to visit Maxwell's Hill, Taiping Lake Gardens, Cameron Highlands, Penang and many other places.

Whilst in hospital, **Ron** overheard **Wendy** say to a nurse that she was a lucky lady and had had a wonderful life. I flew to Canada, and **Ron** and I were fortunate to be at her bedside holding her hand when she died. I will miss her dreadfully but most of all I will miss not being able to talk to her and reminisce about our childhood together. **Ron** is bringing **Wendy's**

ashes back to England in July and as a family we are scattering them on the Isle of Wight where our parents lived and where **Wendy** and **Ron** spent many happy days.

I urge all members to talk about their memories and experiences good and bad and to write them down to be passed on to the next generations otherwise all this knowledge will be lost for ever.

**Wendy**, I will miss you so much.

## **NEIL MACPHERSON aged 96**

Reported in the West Australian on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2019, was the death of **Neil MacPherson**, one of Australia's last remaining Thailand-Burma Railway POWs. He used his harrowing experiences as a WW2 POW to educate others. He was one of more than 22,000 Australians taken as POWs by the Japanese, and survived two years on the Railway before being shipped to Japan to work in a coal mine. He was awarded an OAM in 2009 for services to the community through the establishment of the Burma-Thailand Railway Memorial Association. He returned to Thailand regularly for ANZAC Day and read an address. It was read in his honour this year

**Jonathan Moffatt** adds:

**Neil MacPherson** was of 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Pioneer Battalion AIF. I corresponded with him for several years, and he sent me his book and other items including a copy of his inoculations page of his wartime pay book signed by medical officer **Rowley Richards**. **Neil** was born in Aberdeen and remained very active into his 90s. Another epic journey he made each year into old age was a trip from Albany WA, where he lived, to Broome in a camper van with his brother. He wrote the book: "The Burma Railway, Hellships and Coalmines."



Lt. to rt. Christine and Wendy

We are sad to report the death of **Roddy Dewe** who worked in the City of London in PR and devised the "Tell Sid" campaign that launched Mrs. Thatcher's flagship privatisation. His firm, **Dewe Rogerson**, scooped a large proportion of the PR work advising the Thatcher government on its £60 billion privatisation campaign in the 1980s. For more details see:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/roddy-dewe-obituary-mvsmg8pjj?shareToken=75fba18acbb9c6d605ecbb97e9356f8>

**Air Commodore Dame Felicity Hill**, who forged a path for women to flourish in the modern RAF, died on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2019, aged 103. She was the first woman to hold the rank of Air Commodore after members of the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) assumed RAF ranks. Based in Singapore in the late 1940s & early 1950s, at the H.Q. of the Far East Air Force, she was responsible for the administration and welfare of service airwomen in all parts of the Far East.

Also aged 103, **Lieutenant Colonel Richard Cole** died on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2019. He was the last survivor of the 80 US airmen known as the "Doolittle Raiders" who carried out the first air attack against the Japanese mainland in WW2. Using twin-engined B-25 Mitchell bombers from an aircraft carrier, the raid was led by **Lt. Col. James Doolittle** (hence the name) and he chose **Cole** as his co-pilot. 16 aircraft took off and bombed Tokyo and nearby towns causing little damage. But 15 aircraft were lost and **Doolittle** and his 4 crewmen baled out over China, eventually reaching Chungking. The raid was a major boost to American morale and **Cole** received the first of his DFCs.

We report the death on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2019 of **Lt. Col. Karl Beale** aged 89 who won an MC in Malaya during the Emergency and subsequently commanded the Sultan of Oman's Special Forces.

### FEPOW WEEKEND IN LIVERPOOL – 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2019

The screening of the film, "**Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence**" will take place at the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra Hall (RLPO). Tickets to attend the film **must be booked with the RLPO either online or by telephone 0151 709 3789**. There are no reserved seats. <https://www.liverpoolphil.com/whats-on/film/merry-christmas-mr-lawrence/3459>

Please note the **NEW DATE** for the official opening of the Art Exhibition, "**Secret Art of Survival**" is **25<sup>th</sup> October 2019** but if you are planning to go on the 19<sup>th</sup> October the gallery will be open.

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

#### KUALA LUMPUR – 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> August 2019. "Malaya at War" Military History Conference at Royal Chulan Hotel

This Conference covers the Malayan Campaign and the Malayan Emergency. Speakers include, **Rear Admiral (R) Tan Sri K. Thanabalasingam, Professor Brian Farrell, Rear Admiral Guy Griffiths and Encik Shaharom Ahmad** (friend of MVG member Zaf Arifin). For details go to: [www.warhistorysites.com](http://www.warhistorysites.com) or [info@warhistorysites.com](mailto:info@warhistorysites.com) or Tel: +603 6386 6286

#### NMA – Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> 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. 15<sup>th</sup> 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. Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019. Merdeka Day Remembrance Service – Kings Park.

Please contact Elizabeth Adamson for details and if you wish to lay a personal wreath.

#### LONDON – Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> 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.** The luncheon will take place in the former Ballroom, now re-named The Sovereigns' Room. If you missed seeing the fabulous new stained glass window dedicated to the Women of the Royal Air Force last year, it is next to the Victoria Bar opposite the Sovereigns' Room.

We have managed to keep the cost of the lunch at **£40** for another year. The starter is Vegetable Terrine with garnish; followed by a main course of Mint and Mustard Cushion of Lamb with Madeira Sauce, garnished with a trio of onions and served with sautéed potatoes and seasonal vegetables; and the dessert is Bakewell Tart served with Chantilly Cream, followed by tea or coffee with Petit Fours. A vegetarian option of Polenta cakes is available. There will be a pay bar as usual where drinks and wine can be purchased. Please let **Rosemary** know asap if you wish to attend, together with the names of your guests and any dietary needs. **Payment must be made either at the time of booking or by 30<sup>th</sup> September.**

Please book in at the front desk when you arrive. There is a gentlemen's cloakroom on the ground floor for coats and a ladies Powder Room on the first floor opposite the Sovereigns' Room. Name badges will be available and a seating plan displayed outside the Sovereigns' Room. Please bring a prize with you for the Draw. **This is the final reminder for the luncheon.**

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 – 25<sup>th</sup> 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 separate leaflet.

#### FEPOW WEEKEND IN LIVERPOOL – 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019

See notice above and separate leaflet for details.

**LONDON – Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019. Cross Planting Ceremony at Westminster Abbey.**

Please let Rosemary know if you wish to attend.

**LONDON – Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> 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 required for the registration for tickets, but I shall try to obtain our usual 12 tickets. To date I have not heard about tickets.

**CANADA, MALAYSIA and AUSTRALIA. Remembrance Sunday Services TBA.**

**NMA – Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019. Anniversary of the Sinking of HMS Price of Wales and HMS Repulse.**

Please let Bob Hall know if you wish to attend.

**2020 DATES:**

**ANZAC DAY SERVICES – Perth WA and Thailand – 25<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

**LIVERPOOL – 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> June 2020. 7<sup>th</sup> International FEPOW History Conference.**

The conference is entitled, "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 may still be open but this was due to close on 30<sup>th</sup> June. For more information, please visit

RFHG's website: <https://fepowhistory.com/>.

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

Details will be given at a later date.

**SINGAPORE - Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Kranji Service to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the date in 1945 of the Japanese surrender in Singapore**

Please keep the week before and after 12<sup>th</sup> September free if you wish to attend. See leaflet for draft programme which is being finalized.

**POSTCARD MADE IN CAMPS ON MUNTOK & PALEMBANG**

Drawn by Mischa (Iz) Warman – shipwrecked on the Vyner Brooke & landed on Radji Beach



**CONTACTS**

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