

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

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**60th EDITION
OCTOBER 2019**



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1939-1940**

INCLUDING

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DISAPPOINTING SUPPORT FOR OUR V-J DAY SERVICE AT THE NMA ON 15TH AUGUST, THE DAY ON WHICH WW2 ENDED 74 YEARS AGO

16 MEMBERS OF THE MALAYAN VOLUNTEERS GROUP ATTENDED THE V-J DAY SERVICE AT THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM ON THURSDAY, 15TH AUGUST THIS YEAR, TOGETHER WITH 3 FRIENDS AND RELATIVES, AND 16 MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

DESPITE A PLEA IN LAST YEAR'S OCTOBER NEWSLETTER FOR MORE SUPPORT FOR THIS VERY IMPORTANT DATE IN OUR DIARY, OUR NUMBERS REMAINED THE SAME AS LAST YEAR. IT IS VERY DISAPPOINTING THAT THE 15TH AUGUST- THE DAY ON WHICH OUR RELATIVES WERE FINALLY SAVED FROM THE HELL OF WAR IN THEIR JAPANESE PRISON CAMPS, BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN - RECEIVES SO LITTLE RECOGNITION. SURELY ON ONE DAY IN THE YEAR WE CAN REMEMBER THE MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN WHO ENDURED THREE AND A HALF YEARS OF DEPRIVATION, HARDSHIP AND TORTURE, AND GIVE THANKS FOR THEIR SAFE RETURN? WE SHOULD ALSO PAUSE TO REFLECT ON THOSE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES AND DID NOT RETURN. AS STATED IN LAST YEAR'S EDITORIAL - "PLEASE PUT A BIG RED RING ROUND THE 15TH AUGUST ON YOUR CALENDAR FOR NEXT YEAR, KEEP IT FREE AND MAKE THE JOURNEY TO ALREWAS TO ATTEND NEXT YEAR'S V-J DAY SERVICE." [See arrangements for the 75th anniversary of V-J Day next year on a separate sheet].

Members who attended the V-J Day Service this year came from Cornwall, Devon, Sussex, London, Avon, Shropshire, Cheshire, Suffolk, Derbyshire, Oxfordshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire. It is always the same members from addresses in these counties who come to support our annual service. We thank them for coming, but I am sure they do not come to be thanked, they come as an act of remembrance for those who were lost, and thanksgiving for those who returned.

Despite the perceived idea that the NMA is difficult to get to, it is not. It can be accessed by car or train. It is within easy reach of the A38, M1, M42 and M6 toll roads. Lichfield Trent Valley Station is 5-6 miles from the NMA, Burton upon Trent and Tamworth are 8 miles and taxi services operate from all three stations and are bookable. In addition to the impressive Armed Forces Memorial, the Arboretum features over 370 other thought-provoking memorials for both military and civilian service and organisations, along with tributes for charities and individuals. It is also home to the MVG's Memorial Garden with its Memorial Benches, Memorial Stone, Memorial Plaques and Asiatic trees and bushes. This year, in particular, we pay tribute to our two Veterans, **Olga Henderson**, who was interned as a child of 9 with her parents and siblings in Changi Jail and Sime Road Camp, and **Merle Hesp**, widow of **Harry Hesp** who was captured on the *Empress of Asia*. Both made the journey to the NMA to attend our V-J Day service. **Olga** travelled to Lichfield from Eastbourne by train; **Merle** came from Warrington by car with a friend.

We are grateful to **Bill** and **Elizabeth Adamson** for once again arranging their annual Merdeka Commemoration Service at the State Memorial in Kings Park, Perth WA, on Saturday 31st August. Organised under the umbrella of the Association of Malaysians in Western Australia Inc. (AMWA) and the Malayan Volunteers Group, it was well supported by Australian Politicians; Senior Service personnel; local Australian and Malaysian citizens; and MVG members. The buffet lunch after the service was provided by **Bill's** daughter **Margaret** who had cooked her usual array of marvellous curries - beef, chicken and vegetable with plenty of rice. As always the lunch was well attended.

Sallie Hammond, our Secretary in Canada and the USA, writes to say that it may not be possible to arrange a get-together of members to lay a wreath at this year's Remembrance Day Service in Toronto due to travel distances and various health issues. Sallie writes "Last year, 2018, we honoured the MVG globally, and our loved ones - as well as the WW1 Veterans at the Ontario Veterans Memorial in Toronto. This year, I am not sure we will do the Toronto Remembrance Day events We may just attend our own Remembrance Day ceremonies in

our respective cities/towns." We thank her for all she has done to make members in Canada and the USA feel more inclusive. [See P.4]

To date we have applied for our 12 tickets for Remembrance Sunday's March Past at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, but wait to hear whether our prospective marchers have been approved and granted tickets. These will be issued in October. It is interesting that the RBL have named it a "Veterans' Parade." They are definitely not keen to include civilians such as ourselves, and begrudge every ticket given to a non-military veteran. This year they have allowed "first generation descendents" to march, but we may not be given this opportunity next year. However we will fight 'tooth and nail' to get our 12 tickets next year to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of WW2.

2020 – the 75th anniversary of the end of World War 2

The MVG is organising 2 important events in 2020, both of which need your support if they are to take place:

1. V-J Day – Saturday 15th August

Please read the enclosed leaflet carefully and return the tear-off section to me if you are planning to attend, as soon as possible – or e-mail your reply. The Chapel and dining room have already been booked and a non-refundable deposit paid for an estimated 80-100 people.

2. Singapore – September 2020

The Historical Battlefield Tour is still in its planning stage, but the estimated cost is given in Singapore Dollars due to the fluctuating rates of exchange. Please indicate the visits you would like to make and return the tear-off section to me – or e-mail me your preferences. Please make your own travel and accommodation arrangements. Hotel places are already at a premium and you should book as soon as possible.

N.B. We are very grateful to Singapore's National Heritage Board and National Museum for offering to pay for the cost of the refurbishment of the Sime Road Plaque which the MVG presented to the Changi Museum in September 2015.

Report on V-J Day Service – Thursday 15th August 2019

After torrential rain the day before, Thursday, 15th August, dawned bright but very windy. Due to high security for the "Op Banner" service at the Arboretum on 14th August, it had not been possible to check the state of the MVG's Memorial Garden. However, we found it neat and tidy – the bamboo cut back and well under control; the paved areas weeded and brushed; the grass cut; and the benches cleaned. As MVG members collected in the Visitor Centre before the service at 12 noon, it was good to meet old friends and catch up on their news over a cup of coffee. As mentioned in the Editorial, our numbers were even fewer than last year and we only had enough readers to cover the readings and prayers. The service started with a rendering of "Nimrod" from Elgar's Enigma Variations, played on the organ by **Gerald Lindner**. The opening remarks were given by **Rosemary Fell** who welcomed all those present. She said that in searching for readings and poems she tried to reflect both capture and freedom, and also include stories about the little known maritime tragedies – the fate of the Singapore evacuation ships and POW hellships. An anecdote from Sir Percy McNeice's memoirs about his time on the Death Railway showed how survival depended to a certain extent on luck in avoiding starvation. Hunger enabled men to eat the most noxious and disgusting food. In Sir Percy's case, he managed to overcome the offensive smell emanating from a stew made from a pig which had died from swine fever and eat it, when even starving men found it too unpalatable. He also had the luck to find a discarded egg which was bad. This he also ate without suffering any disastrous after effects from either food. The service proceeded with the laying of the wreath. We stood while **Olga Henderson** and **Keith Andrews** laid the wreath on the Altar, followed by the 2 minutes silence. The opening hymn was "Abide with Me" and **Michael Mowat** read Psalm 23, The Lord is My Shepherd. The first reading by **June Jackson** was from Denis Russell-Robert's book, "Spotlight on Singapore." This told the story of the extraordinary capture of the evacuation ship, "**Mata Hari**" by the Japanese Navy in the Banka Strait, near the mouth of the Moesi River. Unlike nearly all the other small ships which hurriedly left Singapore over that last weekend before capitulation on 15th February, 1942, and were sunk, the Japanese Navy spared the "**Mata Hari**." On board this ship were Denis Russell-Roberts wife, **Ruth**, and MVG member **Vilma Howe** with her family who were taken into captivity. Another survivor of the "**Mata Hari**" was **Margery Jennings** who wrote the poem, "Solace for Grief" which she wrote in the civilian camp. This was read for us by **Imogen Holmes**. **Michael Mowat** lead the prayers which he had thoughtfully prepared, and we joined him in the Lord's Prayer. The next reading, taken from Sir Percy McNeice's memoirs, gave an insight into his move by train from Singapore to Thailand and the frustrating delays and interminable waiting around for things to happen. Food again played an important part of his memoirs – or rather the lack of it. Due to an accident **Sandy Lincoln** was unable to drive and her reading was made by **Jonathan Moffatt** who also linked the service for us.

Bob Hall read the excerpt from Ronald Hastain's book, "White Coolie" about the voyage of the hellship, "**Asaka Maru.**" This ship was shipwrecked en route to Japan in a tropical storm, and the voyage lasted nearly 2 months.

We sang "The Captives' Hymn" written by Margaret Dryburgh in captivity in Sumatra, and **Anne Hinam** read an extract from William McDougall's Diary in which he tells of how the end of the war was announced by the Camp Commandant Captain Seki, who was later tried by the Dutch War Crimes Tribunal and sentenced to fifteen years in prison for his mistreatment of civilian internees in Sumatra.

The final poem, "Freedom" was read by **Anthony Jackson**. It was written by Lt. Robert Fletcher after the war ended as he was waiting for repatriation.

We stood while **Guy Scoular** read the Exhortation, FEPOW Prayer and Kohima Epitaph to end the service. The closing music, played for us by **Gerald Lindner**, was "Nun Danket Alle Gott."

The congregation was invited to walk down to the MVG's Memorial Garden where **Olga** and **Keith** laid the wreath on the Memorial Stone and **Michael** said a few prayers.

Despite the wind, it was warm and dry and we had time to meet and chat in the Plot before returning to the Visitor Centre for Lunch. It was a very worthwhile day. A copy of this year's service sheet is enclosed.

Wreath on the MVG's Memorial Stone



Organist Gerald Lindner



Guy Scoular ends the service



REMEMBRANCE SUNDAYS 2019 AND 2020

We are grateful to our regular band of marchers, many of whom have marched past the Cenotaph in Whitehall on Remembrance Sunday since 2005 in memory of the Malayan Volunteer Forces and civilian men, women and children, who when captured became prisoners of the Japanese. Not only are the physical demands of standing and waiting in lines for nearly 3 hours before marching beginning to take their toll on those of us who were born before war started in the Far East, and who were evacuated from Singapore before the Fall, but also the Royal British Legion has made it plain that they want only Military Veterans to march. I have pointed out to them that we, too, are 'Veterans' – many of us having escaped from Singapore with our lives while our fathers and other relatives remained behind to fight. Many evacuees lost their lives on ships which were sunk, and we march in their memory too.

We are fortunate to have been offered 12 tickets this year – although we do not yet know whether all the names submitted will be allocated tickets, because husbands who are not "first generation descendents" may not be allowed to march. We hope that the RBL will grant us our modest application for 12 tickets. We will know in October when the tickets are released.

Next year is, of course, the 75th anniversary of V-J Day. There may be a greater demand for tickets, but I will fight for 12 tickets again, and possibly make this the last year on which the MVG marches on Remembrance Sunday, unless some younger MVG members would like to take over applying for tickets and marching? All offers will be gratefully received.

Sallie Hammond – MVG's Secretary in Canada and the USA – sent this information:

Dear MVG CANADA/USA members,

Vilma Howe and I discussed another wreath laying at the Veterans' Memorial, Queens Park, Toronto for the Remembrance Day Service on November 11th 2019. (Vilma laid the wreath on behalf of the Malayan Volunteers Group, 2018)

We decided that in lieu of this year (2019) and with all the arrangements which need to be made **THAT NEXT YEAR, 2020**, would be a more auspicious and meaningful occasion to lay the MVG wreath – because it will be the 75th anniversary of the Japanese surrender (September 1945) and the Liberation of the POW camps in the Far East. Therefore, this year, November 11th, 2019, we will NOT be participating in the Ontario Veterans' Memorial, Remembrance Day Service, in Toronto.

If individuals (MVG CANADA/USA) would like to make their own arrangements in their communities (2019) regarding a wreath laying for the Malayan Volunteers Group – then go ahead. That would be thoughtful and wonderful. A wreath will be laid for the MVG CANADA/USA at the Cenotaph in London, Ontario on 11th November, 2019. I will be in touch by July 2020 regarding next year's plan for another MVG wreath laying at the Veterans' Memorial, Queens Park, Toronto, on Remembrance Day 2020.

We continue to remember Wendy Freeman MVG (CANADA) who passed away May 2019 in Toronto.

APPEAL FOR INFORMATION **ON THE KUALA SELANGOR WAR MEMORIAL**

Please let Jonathan Moffatt know if you have any information

The MVG is gathering any relevant information about the Kuala Selangor War Memorial, which stands in the centre of **Medan Perwira**, formerly known as **Bellamy Circus** in Kuala Selangor. This was originally a First World War obelisk. After the Second World War a bronze plaque was attached bearing the names of men of the district who had died as a result of enemy action 1941-1945. MVG knows that the WW2 bronze plaque was unveiled approximately on the 15th February 1951, but has no other information.

If anyone has family diaries, letters or other documents that might make mention of this WW2 plaque or the commemorations held there, we would be very grateful for any relevant information.

As a guide – the British Advisers of the time were **R.J.F. Curtis** and **A.N. Ross**. The District Officer of the time was **D.A. Borrie**, who is believed to have retired to Bridge of Allen, Perthshire.

In my father's footsteps A trip to south east asia by David Sartin.

Preface:

Before I commence the story of my trip to South East Asia in search of my father's footsteps during World War 2, let me say at the outset, that I am open to correction of any of the geographical features mentioned in my story, and if any reader has any information they should wish to share which would shed further light on the story of my father and his comrades, they would find me a grateful recipient. The search itself was not without its difficulties mostly due to a very tight schedule, and also the time lapse of 70 plus years during which time due to the expansion of agriculture, and infrastructure etc., a number of the places I was searching for have since been obliterated, taking for instance the 101 STS training school at Tanjong Balai which is now a very large sea port, and the jungle camp of Vanrenen and co., at Tanjong Malim which has been obliterated by the construction of Proton City. Similarly the construction of a large reservoir in the 1970's between The Gap and Kuala Kubu Bahru has similarly thrown some doubt into my research. At the time of my trip I was armed with the only information available to me at that time, some of it accurate, some not. Therefore any mistakes are entirely my own, and hopefully for correction at some time in the future.



My father was **Lt. 263333 Ronald John Nicholas Sartin (MC)**, Royal Engineers, and a member of the Special Operations Executive (Force 136).

My father had joined the army at the age of 14, and went on to become a sapper with the Royal Engineers. He received a posting to South East Asia in 1938, to Singapore.

When the Japanese invaded South East Asia, my father was recruited into the SOE, and was a demolition instructor at 101 Special Training School in Singapore, with the rank of Sergeant, under the command of **Major Jim Gavin** and later **Major Freddie Spencer Chapman**.

As the Japanese advanced through South East Asia, my father joined a 'Stay Behind' Party in the Malayan jungle with (then) **Major Spencer Chapman** and **Lt. Bill Harvey**, a rubber planter pre-war. Other 'Stay Behind' parties were also established in the jungle.

My father was commissioned to **2nd Lieutenant** when he went into the jungle, and was later awarded the Military Cross for his actions (See appendix 1).

My father's 'Stay Behind' party was involved in acts of intelligence gathering, sabotage and ambush against the Japanese lines of communication from their hideout in the jungle.

On Christmas Eve 1941, my father and **Freddie Spencer Chapman** left the training school in Singapore on route to Kuala Lumpur, where they were given orders to proceed to Parit and to cross the Sungei Perak at Blanja Ferry on a reconnaissance mission and to attempt to link up with an Australian raiding party landing in the Trong area, being led by **Bill Harvey** and **Frank Vanrenen**. They picked up a guide/interpreter in Kuala Lumpur, **S.S.M. Ian Patterson** and the three men carried out a successful reconnaissance, gathering very useful information despite extremely difficult circumstances, but were prevented from linking up with the raiding party due to a heavy Japanese presence in the area and also due to the shortage of time. The men then made the arduous and perilous journey to reach allied lines at Telok Anson, arriving on the 28th December 1941 (see appendix 2).

Following their reconnaissance patrol, it was decided to put 'Stay Behind' parties into the jungle to sabotage the Japanese lines of communication.

In January 1942, a number of "camps" were established in the jungle, and supplies of ammunition, food, explosives etc. were driven into the jungle as the Japanese continued their advance. **Spencer Chapman** divided his 'Stay Behind' party into two, with one camp led by **Lt. Frank Vanrenen** being established near Tanjong Malim, and **Spencer Chapman's** party, with my father and **Bill Harvey**, establishing a camp in the jungle near to the Sungei Sempan between Raub and Tras. This was to be the main supply dump from which the other parties could draw supplies if needed. A further camp was established at Benta, under the command of **Captain Stubbington**. Unfortunately, shortly after the supplies were delivered at Sungei Sempan camp, the stores were raided by Chinese bandits, and most of the explosives etc. were stolen, including their supply of hand grenades. The men managed to recover some of their supplies but not the hand grenades or their supply of money.

Major Chapman then decided to try to meet up with **Vanrenen's** party at Tanjong Malim, a journey which he estimated would take 5 days to a week. The three men took supplies for the estimated 5 day journey, and had 25 pound packs each, together with ammunition and tommy guns. **Major Chapman**, however, had underestimated the difficulty of travelling through the jungle, and the difficulties of navigation which the jungle posed. The journey, which **Spencer Chapman** had estimated to take about 5 days, actually took them 12 days, and it was three utterly exhausted men who arrived at the Tanjong Malim camp. They were indeed lucky to have survived. However, due to their late arrival in Tanjong Malim, **Vanrenen's** party had already moved on after their supplies were also raided and they were unable to go into action against the Japanese.

After a brief rest at Tanjong Malim, the three men were soon in action against the Japanese, using explosives, ammunition and grenades which had been recovered by a friendly Chinese following the raid on those stores. During one fortnight period, known as the Mad Fortnight, in January/February 1942, my father's party accounted for 5-8 trains derailed; 4 large bridge abutments damaged; 9 small girder bridges destroyed; 60-70 rail cuts; 9 road craters; 400-500 telephone wires cut; 7-10 motor transports destroyed; and between 500-1000 Japanese killed. Full details of their operations can be found in "The Jungle is Neutral."

After the Fall of Singapore, **Major Spencer Chapman** realized that the 'Stay Behind' parties were in danger of being cut off and he made the decision to call in the parties and to attempt an escape from Malaya.

Spencer Chapman divided the parties into two groups for the escape, and he led the first group from Sungei

Sempan via Kuala Kubu Bahru, successfully evading a Japanese checkpoint.

My father's party as to follow two days later, but as they passed along the main road through Kuala Kubu Bahru, they found that the checkpoint had been reinforced, and my father, together with **Bill Harvey** and another SOE man **Pat Garden**, was captured and after initial interrogation, they were taken to Pudu Gaol in Kuala Lumpur.

Lts. Bill Harvey, Frank Vanrenen, Ronald Graham and five other prisoners were later to escape from Pudu, but were betrayed by locals, recaptured and executed. Fortunately, my father was not with them.

My father was eventually moved to Nong Pladuk in Thailand, where he was forced to work on the infamous Thai-Burma Railway, before being moved to Ubon, where he was put to work building an airstrip for the Japanese Air Force. He was liberated from Ubon in August 1945.

In later years, my father was a guest on "This is Your Life" which featured **Lt. Colonel Spencer Chapman**, and he was later taken back to Malaya to film in the BBC documentary "SOE Arms and the Dragon."

After my father passed away in 1989, I began to research his wartime history and again read **Spencer Chapman's** book, "The Jungle is Neutral."

I later joined COFEPOW (and more recently MVG) and subsequently a series of amazing coincidences began to occur. On joining COFEPOW and checking the list of members I noted the name of a FEPOW called **Bill Harvey**, with contact details for his niece. I duly wrote to the lady in question who wrote back confirming that this was the same **Bill Harvey** who had been in my father's "Stay Behind" party.

A week or two later, I was contacted out of the blue by a chap called **Stephen Snelling**. **Stephen** was an author from Norfolk, who was researching Norfolk men who had fought in the second world war, and was currently researching, of all people, **Bill Harvey [Ed: Bill was a Malayan Volunteer in the FMSVF]**. **Stephen** had come across my details on the COFEPOW members' list.

Stephen and I entered into correspondence and phone calls back and forth, and he provided me with numerous sources of information, books etc. which I duly followed up.

The next strange coincidence occurred at the COFEPOW 70th anniversary commemorating V-J Day. On this occasion, my wife and I had decided to partake of the excellent meal in the marquee, something which we had not done on previous occasions. We were seated at the table with other people we had not previously met, when a gentleman called **Ray Withnall**, who was on his own at the event and seated at our table, began to ask me about my father's medals, in particular the Military Cross. I explained to **Ray** about my father's service in SOE, and told him at which camps my father had been imprisoned, one of which was Ubon in Thailand. By strange coincidence, **Ray** was researching Ubon Camp, and in particular **Major David Smilie** also of SOE, who had helped to liberate the camp. Not only that, but **Ray** was married to a Thai lady called **Khamma**, and they had a house not far from Ubon. **Ray** and I struck up a friendship, and he was a mine of information about Ubon Camp and the airstrip there on which my father had been forced to work.

Fate was to intervene yet again when some time after meeting **Ray**, I was transcribing some of my father's notes and checking the spelling of certain Malay names on the computer when I came across a website for Commando Veterans, and there I found an entry from **Richard Parry** in Penang, Malaysia. **Richard** was seeking information on **Freddie Spencer Chapman** and the "Stay Behind" parties. The entry was some 12 months old, and had not received any replies. I posted a reply, not holding out much hope, but was surprised to receive a reply from **Richard**, thus striking up another friendship. **Richard** and his wife **Terry** were later to prove crucial in **Ray's** and my trip to Malaysia and our search for places mentioned in "The Jungle is Neutral." **[Ed. Richard is MVG's secretary in Malaysia and Singapore].**

In February 2019, **Ray** and I embarked on a 3-week tour of Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, trying to follow in my father's footsteps.

During our short stay in Singapore we were unfortunately unable to locate 101 STS at Tanjong Balai, as this area is now a large port and inaccessible, and our research showed that the training school had long since been demolished. We did visit other areas of interest, however, including Kranji War Memorial where we found the names of three of the Pudu escapers, **Bill Harvey, Ronald Graham** and **Frank Vanrenen [all FMFVF]**. We also laid remembrance crosses on behalf of two COFEPOW members and visited Alexandra Hospital where the Japanese soldiers had massacred staff and patients.

Whilst we were wandering around the hospital grounds, I saw a local Police Motorcycle Officer pull up outside the hospital, and being a retired UK Police Officer myself, I thought it would be nice to introduce myself and explain what **Ray** and I were doing. The officer was very pleasant and helpful, and he showed us the entrances to two underground tunnels which, he explained, had been built during the war as a means of escape for the hospital staff and patients in case of Japanese invasion. The tunnels apparently led under the hospital buildings to a nearby beach. The tunnels were sealed with locked gates and we could not gain access. However, what a find, and to think we would not have known about the tunnels if I had not introduced myself as a retired Police Officer. Later that afternoon, we went on a tour of the Battlebox at Fort Canning, an excellent guided tour about the surrender of Singapore, which put into perspective the difficult decision to surrender Singapore made by **General Percival**, and highlighted the factors surrounding his fateful decision. We also visited the Former Ford Factory where the surrender of Singapore was signed.

That evening, we met up with **Ray's** friends, **Shaun** and **Jess Heng**, who treated us to a lavish meal at a wonderful seafood restaurant overlooking the sea, with many ships in 'The Roads' waiting to enter port or pass through the strait. **Shaun** and **Jess** then took us on a night tour of the city where we experienced a massive firework display over Marina Bay, with the magnificent Marina Bay Sands Hotel as a backdrop. We also discovered the Cathay Building which had been the headquarters of SOE Orient Mission, but is now a cinema and café complex.

We next travelled to Kuala Lumpur by bus for two nights and visited the remains of Pudu Gaol where I was able to place two remembrance crosses, one for the 8 men who had escaped and my father, and one for all the POWs of Pudu. I had a few moments of quiet contemplation outside the prison gates and "whispered a prayer for the boys." The following day, we travelled to Raub for a couple of nights, before meeting up with our friends **Richard** and **Terry** at The Gap Resthouse near Fraser's Hill. From there we were to set out to find my father's journey through the Malayan jungle.

On our first full day in Raub, we hired a car and drove towards Fraser's Hill along The Gap road, a long road with many bends and bounded on both sides by dense jungle with steep drops to the right hidden by tall trees and vegetation. The weather was hot, wet and humid.

We met **Richard** and **Terry** at the Resthouse, a ruin of a building, almost taken over by vegetation. Being careful where we trod, and keeping a wary eye out for snakes, we passed through some vegetation and entered the ruined building. The exterior of the building, in the damp and misty atmosphere of the surrounding jungle, took on a ghostly appearance, and it would not have been difficult to let one's imagination run away. The interior was very atmospheric, and it wasn't difficult to imagine what it would have been like in times gone by. I decided to investigate the upper floor and, climbing a majestic open staircase, I entered an upstairs corridor and went into one of the bedrooms. The room I entered was exactly as described by **Spencer Chapman** in his book, "The Jungle is Neutral," complete with attic hatch in the ceiling (minus, of course, wardrobe and bed frames). I had found the very bedroom in which my father, **Bill** and **Freddie** had hidden for a night from the Japanese over 70 years ago. After taking several photographs inside the building, it was time to leave for our next port of call, Kuala Kubu Bahru, where my father, **Bill** and **Pat Garden** had been captured.

We were unable to find the exact spot where he had been captured at Kuala Kubu Bahru, but later research showed that we were about 400 metres away. The three men had been captured near to the old European Rubber Planters Club, which we now believe to be a Mosque and this was located a short distance from where we were looking near the old Police Station, although we did not know it at the time.

We also visited Tanjong Malim where my father, **Bill Harvey** and **Freddie Spencer Chapman** had attacked the railway lines, blowing up the lines and derailing a number of trains. All these locations were mentioned in "The Jungle is Neutral."

The day after our visit to The Gap and Kuala Kubu Bahru, **Richard** and **Terry** picked us up at our hotel and we drove to the small village of Tras, near Raub. We drove along dirt roads through the jungle and oil palm plantations to locate the Sungei Sempan and the powerhouse at Tras on the Sungei Sempan, above which my father, **Bill** and **Freddie** had their jungle hideout. Words cannot adequately describe or do justice to the sheer beauty of this place, with the clear turbulent waters of the Sungei Sempan tumbling over rocks and boulders and bounded on both sides by green verdant jungle. We saw numerous butterflies of different species and brilliant hues fluttering about near the river.

The powerhouse still supplies power to the Raub goldmine nearby, and we saw notices warning of armed patrols and saying "No Admittance" which appeared threatening and uncompromising. We decided that it probably wasn't safe to venture further along the tracks into the jungle, but instead decided to check out the powerhouse. We were pleased to be invited inside by the manager, a pleasant chap called **Sharif**.

As we entered the plant, I looked down to my left, and lo and behold there was the pipeline referred to in "The Jungle is Neutral" which my father and his comrades had followed up to their jungle camp.

After visiting the powerhouse and taking more photos, it was time to leave and make our way back to Raub and our hotel. Here we said our goodbyes to **Richard** and **Terry**, two very good friends without whom we would not have had such a successful two days. We had thoroughly enjoyed their excellent company.

[To be continued in January 2020.]

MALAYSIAN PALM OIL ASSOCIATION [PERAK] ANNUAL SERVICE AND WREATH LAYING 15th JUNE 2019 – Report by **Richard Parry**

As in previous years, the MPOA (Perak) organised the annual Commemoration Service and Wreath Laying Ceremony



**Richard Parry, MVG Secretary in Malaysia,
lays the wreath on behalf of the MVG**

at the Holy Trinity Church, Batu Gajah, better known as the "God's Little Acre Cemetery" after the popular name for the Cemetery at the Church. This annual Ceremony honours the memory of those Planters, Military and Police Services, and other civilians who lost their lives during the Malayan Emergency. The Service and Ceremony this year was held on Saturday, 15th June with representatives from the Malaysian Military and Polis di Raja Malaysia, and British and Commonwealth Forces, with the Australian military contingent being the largest. There was also a significant number of Forces Veterans from many countries which had been involved in the Emergency, from Civilian groups and from the families of Planters past and present. The MVG was represented by **Puan Sri Liz Moggie** and myself, **Richard Parry**, and my wife **Terry**.

The service began at 7.30a.m., led by the larger-than-life Vicar, the **Revd. Tom Cherian**, and included addresses by **Mr. R. Sivalingam**, Chairman of the MPOA Perak Branch, and **His Excellency Hunter Nottage**, the New Zealand High Commissioner to Malaysia. Following the Service, proceedings continued at the adjacent "God's Little Acre" Cemetery after the arrival of the Guest of Honour, **YDH DCP Dato' Lim Hong Shuan**, Deputy Chief of Police for Perak, who took the salute prior to The Minutes Silence, a Pipers Lament and Wreath Laying Ceremony by the Diplomatic, Military and Civilian representatives present. It was a great honour for me personally to lay the Wreath on behalf of MVG Members. There followed a very welcome breakfast at the nearby Batu Gajah Golf Club.

Later on, with the formal Service and Wreath Laying complete, a buffet lunch had been arranged at the Royal Ipoh Club for all participants and guests. I think it is fair to say that a convivial time was enjoyed by all attendees at the lunch, which clearly included many groups of old friends and colleagues for whom this event is so important. The lunch drew gradually to a close by mid afternoon, having been greatly enhanced by the presence of an Australian Retired Navy Veterans band, which played many old favourite tunes, including, naturally, a stirring rendition of "Waltzing Matilda"! This year's event was especially well organised and great credit is due to the representatives of the MPOA for their excellent efforts.

THESIS ON SOLDIERS' EXPERIENCES IN THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY

by Manuel Bollag (and also available online)

In 2011, I completed and successfully defended a thesis on soldiers' experiences in the Malayan Emergency and the Indochina War. The 300-page text was based, among other sources, on questionnaires and interviews as well as regimental journals and collections.

Although widely praised for its originality and use of sources, the thesis never made it into a publication, not least because the large publishing houses no longer accept theses. Rather than dividing it into shorter articles for academic journals, I decided to place the digital version of the thesis on open access platforms. The entire text is now available on these links:

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/146465857.pdf> (Kings College, London)

<https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.643435?> (British Library)

A word of caution: I wrote this as a student constrained by academic standards. The thesis is not a compilation of funny anecdotes (one tends to find in regimental journals) or heroic feats (to be found in some self-published accounts). Some may find the text too lofty or even critical (although I did my best not to shed a bad light on servicemen). I like to think that the text is understandable for a non-academic audience.

At the time I was not so much interested in military aspects as in social and cultural ones. Most of all, I wanted to find out what soldiers thought of their service and its wider purpose. Equally, I wanted to know to what degree servicemen were aware of the British Empire and its colonies before they embarked on their journeys. These findings were then compared with experiences of French servicemen fighting in Indochina.

Either way, I felt that I should make the thesis available to those who so willingly co-operated in its development. I remain very grateful for the help I received from various corners. I am aware that this message might come too late for some but hopefully not for their offspring.

With thanks to Bill Adamson for sending this information from his friend and former British Serviceman, George Tullis who is mentioned in the document himself.

A QUESTION FOR MVG READERS OF APA KHABAR

From Matthew Jeffery (MVG in Australia)

On Pages 19/20 of Edition 24 – October 2010 – of the Apa Khabar newsletter, **Audrey McCormick** asked that the person who requested photos of **Pte. 7830 Kevin Thomas Wadsworth FMSVF** to contact her as the photos had now come to light. If anyone reading this newsletter has the photos and is that person, please would you contact me because **CQMS 5707 J.M. Metcalfe**, **Pte. 7830 K.T. Wadsworth**, **L/C 13610 E.T. Miles** and my grandfather **L/Sgt. 7396 Thomas Patrick Cassidy** were involved in the "liberation" of medical drugs from some of the panniers whilst in camp, for which they were recommended for their efforts by **Dr. S.S. Pavillard**. I have information on **Metcalfe**, the AWM has info on **Miles**, but as yet I haven't been able to find anything on **Wadsworth**.

Audrey McCormick's message in Edition 24 said:

"Quite some time ago, I had an enquiry asking whether I had any pictures of **Ken Wadsworth** from Melbourne – ex-Railway POW - with whom I had been in touch several years ago. Since then **Ken** has died. At the time of the enquiry, I couldn't find the photos, but they have now come to light. If anyone made that enquiry or knows who did, please get in touch with me."

N.B. Audrey is now unavailable to contact – but if anyone can help, please get in touch with **Matt Jeffery**.

Matt has sent the following information about his grandfather **L/Sgt. 7396 Thomas Patrick Cassidy FMSVF** and family:

I am the grandson of **Thomas Patrick Cassidy** and son of **Janice Margaret Jeffery (nee Cassidy)**.

My grandfather was born on 27th July 1906 and known as **Rick Cassidy**. He went to work as an engineer for Pratten Bros. of 26, Jameson St., Sydney, Australia, and when this firm was incorporated into Anglo-Oriental (M) Ltd. he was sent to the Federated Malay States to work for them. Some time early in 1934 my grandfather joined the Federated Malay States Volunteer Corps and at the outbreak of war was a Sergeant in the Armoured Cars Regiment. My grandfather represented the State of Perak on several occasions in the inter-service Rifle Shooting contests. He was captured at the Fall of Singapore and sent to work on the Burma-Siam Railway with "D" Battalion.

He married **Vera Jane Cassidy** and they had two children, **John Patrick Cassidy** and my mother **Janice Margaret Cassidy**. My grandmother, uncle and mother escaped from Singapore on the **S.S. Orion**."

WEBSITES TO VISIT

<https://www.malaysia-chronicle.com/?p=173096> The Malaysia Chronicle.com

<https://www.theborneopost.com/2019/08/30/veterans-of-confrontation-pay-tribute-to-their-fallen-comrades/>

This is in Kuching at the Heroes' Monument. The ceremony was attended by the NZ High Commissioner as well as Dato' Lim Kian Hock who looks after the Batu Lintang Museum.

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/books/article-7384431/How-six-siblings-went-war.html?fbclid=IwAR0tTCeptL6RoJRvGLH9ckN-gLMU7aUpOVnnzCZMXFr3_tOLnDhXPU16fY A revue of Annabel Venning's book, "To War with the Walkers."

<https://www.powmemorialballarat.com.au/world-war-2-h-i.php> The Australian War Memorial at Ballarat.

SARAWAK WW11 HERITAGE – LAST CHILD POW DOWN ON MEMORY LANE

[Editor: We are grateful to **Anne Read** for sending this letter from **Dato' Lim Kean Hock** from the Sarawak Tourism Federation. [See the website above.] **Anne** says that she and her sister **Lucy Smith** met **Mr. Lim** in September/October 2015 when they retraced their father's footsteps and visited Batu Lintang Camp Museum. Their father, **A.H.P. Humphrey**, was British Resident on Labuan, and after capture was later interned in Batu Lintang Camp, Kuching.]

From Dato' Lim Kian Hock - Sarawak Tourism Foundation

Dear Friends,

We are happy with collaboration from STAR media, the many untold stories of Sarawak Wartime History are now connected with those in the world (youtube) bringing Batu Lintang WW11 heritage closer to the descendents of the POW and world readers. This further enhanced Sarawak Tourism Foundation's (STF) enduring initiative in creating greater awareness of Sarawak's unique history globally.

In this regards, we invite you to join and share STF's tourism experience and the said documentary video:

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/thestarRAGE/videos/2354029704844890/?t=11>

Youtube

<https://youtu.be/driCc07lpB0>

Besides this, the child POW (**Jeli**) book, "*A Priceless Journey*" was received and acknowledged by **Queen Elizabeth** at Buckingham Palace, London on HRH Diamond Jubilee of her reign in July 2019.

Following this, in our collaboration with Australia and New Zealand, the Joint NMBVA Commemoration and Celebration of the 53rd Anniversary of the End of Indonesian Confrontation (1962-1966) against Malaysia, to be at the Heroes Graves Memorial Park, Kuching, Sarawak on **Thursday 29 August 2019 at 9 a.m.** bringing together notable delegations of Aussie and Kiwi making their long distant homage trip. His Excellency High Commissioner of Australia, **Mr. Andrew Goledzinowski** and his counterpart **H.E. Mr. Hunter Nottage** of New Zealand will make their distinguished presence in support, bringing in the spirit of ANZAC for which their countries are long standing partners since WW1 of 1915.

In conjunction with this joint commemoration, a unique celebration follows through with the unveiling of the Royal Air Force (RAF) Memorial Plaque of the United Kingdom and the NMBVA (National Malaya Borneo Veterans Association) Memorial Plaque of the United Kingdom, bringing in another highlight on the strong spirit of the Bond of COMMONWEALTH brotherhood and friendship with the attendance of officials and veterans of Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Malaysia with special attendance of Gurkha Officers from the Sultanate of Brunei, representing the Gurkha Veterans Association of the United Kingdom. The Gurkhas will install their Memorial Plaque in 2020 next year, the 75th anniversary Jubilee year of WW11.

In this inspiring joint celebration and positive collaboration in our heritage development, Sarawak Tourism Federation (STF) takes pride with all your support in its initiative to bring this historical heritage in Sarawak and Borneo to be shared with the world stage as part of the resource for generations to come, and a linkage with our Batu Lintang WW11 Memorial Square and mini museum, the Bario Highland Z Special Unit Commando Sculpture Memorial and this our Heroes Graves Memorial Park.

Regards,

Dato' Lim Kian Hock.

THE S.S.V.F. YEAR BOOK

An important message from Jonathan Moffatt:

I am e-mailing MVG members and other friends who had parents or other relatives in the 1930s/1940s Straits Settlements Volunteer Force. Some of you may be aware of this publication which ran from 1931 onwards but is to be found in very few libraries in the UK or worldwide.

I know of only three in the UK including the Imperial War Museum. The editions in the IWM are delightful publications full of photos, articles, witty cartoons, nominal rolls and adverts.

I am asking if anyone knows whether a 1941 edition of the SSVF Year Book was produced, and if so, does anyone have a copy or know where one exists?

It is very important for us to acquire and protect copies of all editions that do exist – and also the various elusive FMSVF/MSVR magazines. Please be on the look out for any in family collections, second hand or antiquarian bookshops.

This topic has recently been discussed on the MVG Facebook, but needs wider notification.

I have in photocopy most of the SSVF Year Book pages from 1931 to 1940, and they provide a very handy reference.



THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL AT BALLARAT

[Ed: In 2011 we asked John Pollock (former MVG secretary in Australia) to approach the Australian War Memorial asking for permission to present a plaque commemorating the Australian members of the Malayan Volunteer Forces. We also wrote to Major-General Steve Gower and later to the Hon. Warren Snowdon MP, the then Minister for Veterans' affairs in Australia. Our request was turned down on the following grounds - and I quote:

"All Australian unit associations whose service is such that any deaths of its members would have qualified for inclusion on the Roll of Honour are eligible to request the installation of a plaque. A unit is considered to be an RAN ship, Army battalion or an RAAF squadron." [See Edition 27 July 2011 – P.3]

We sent the AWM a 17 page spread-sheet listing the names of 247 Australians who joined and fought with the Malayan Volunteer Forces. This document had been prepared by John Pollock and it listed their place of birth, jobs in Malaya, their membership of the Malayan Volunteer Forces, whether they survived the war or where and whether they were buried in war grave cemeteries.

The Hon. Warren Snowdon, however, did say in his reply that John's document (which now may have more names added) will be lodged in the Australian War Memorial's Research Centre.]

Jonathan Moffatt has received information from the daughter of a British Army Officer POW to say that she is disappointed to find that her 3 Australian Volunteer relatives are not listed on the Australian Ex-Prisoner of War Memorial. This is her information:

*I have just been sent a link to the Australian Ex-Prisoner of War Memorial in Ballarat, Victoria, Australia. It's a fabulous memorial in the Botanic Gardens. I am, of course, very disappointed to see that my three Australian POW relatives: **Thomas Edward Miles (1908-1971), Stanley Augustus Miles (1909-1966) and Brian Daniel Miles (1915-1982)** are not included. They were all members of the FMSVT. I note from the memorial site: "The Trustees of the Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial have defined a Prisoner of War to be a person who was captured by a common enemy and/or interned in a neutral or non-combatant country. To be defined as an Australian Prisoner of War, the person needs to be either an Australian Born person serving in the uniform of an Australian Service; or in the Uniform of a friendly country; or born Elsewhere and serving in the Uniform of an Australian Service. A Prisoner is a person who has lost personal privileges, suffers deprivation of liberty or is unable to return home or dies in captivity."*

N.B. The information given here differs from the information given above when the MVG asked to present a Plaque to the AWM in memory of the Australian members of the Malayan Volunteer Forces. However, as the Australian Volunteers were serving "in the uniform of a friendly country" then those who were captured should be named on the Ex-Prisoner of War Memorial in Ballarat.

Jonathan says his research has revealed that of 68 Australian Volunteers whose names should be on the Memorial, only 3 are named – one of the **Thurling** brothers is named but not the other, and neither of the FMSVT Armoured Car Military Medal recipients is there. The AWM has John Brown's data and John Pollock's list of 247 Australian Volunteers, and many of the names are on the AWM and National Archives of Australia website.

WORLD WAR 11 IN THE PHILIPPINES CONFERENCE

On Saturday, September 28th at the University of San Francisco

This is the 5th Conference on World War 2 in the Philippines, and speakers include award-winning authors, **James Hornfischer** and **Walter Borneman**. Leading historians from the U.S. and the Philippines will discuss the events that led to the liberation of the Philippines from Japanese occupation during WW11:

- The role of the Filipino and American guerrillas before and during the liberation
- The battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest naval battle in history
- The Leyte Landing and General MacArthur's return
- Zonification and War Crimes

More information about the Filipino guerrillas can be found from the **Bamban Historical Society**, founded by **Rhonie Caguiran dela Cruz**, who set up a Museum in honour of his grandfather and other Filipinos who fought the Japanese. His grandfather served in Squadron 101, later Company A, of the **Bamban Battalion** of the South Tarlac Military District under **Capt. Alfred Bruce**, who also established the **Aeta Squadron 30** composed of local indigenous people.

MALAYA AT WAR

REMEMBERING THE MALAYAN CAMPAIGN AND THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY

Report by Timothy W. Mitchell

I attended this Conference which was held on 10th-11th August 2019 at the Royale Chulan Hotel, Jalan Conlay, Kuala Lumpur.

The subject matter relevant to Malaya, as it was then known, included: the Japanese Invasion(1941-1942); the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945); and the Communist Terrorist period known as the Emergency (officially 1948 – 1960). Apparently this is the first conference of its nature to be held in South East Asia.

I only managed to hear about the conference two days prior to the event and I must express my gratitude to **Henry Ong** of Holiday Tours & Travels Sdn. Bhd. for pulling sufficient strings to secure me a seat. I probably missed previous flyers sent out, so will also thank **Mary Lourdu** of the Malaysian British Society for issuing a final reminder.

The subject matter was of immense interest to me – I am the youngest son of a planter who lived and worked in Malaya between 1929 and 1953. As with many other planters of the time, my father was a Volunteer and part of the allied army retreat to Singapore. He met my mother (born in Surabaya of Dutch parents) in Fraser's Hill in early 1941 and they were married in 1942 a matter of weeks before the fall of Singapore. Both my parents were interned by the Japanese, my father in Singapore first in Changi and then Blakang Mati (translated as the "*Island of Death*", now Sentosa and ironically a theme park). My mother was interned in Kamp Tjideng, Batavia in the Dutch East Indies (now Jakarta, Indonesia). Following the capitulation of the Japanese my mother and father, following a brief recuperation in the UK, returned to Malaya where my two brothers were born – **Mark** (also an MVG member) in 1947 and **Nick** in 1950. The commencement of the Emergency in 1948, and the risks that this entailed, was a strong contributing factor to the family's departure in early 1953. By that time some seventy nine planters had been killed at the hands of Communist Terrorists. If not for my father's decision to leave Malaya, the chances of their committing to a third child would have been unlikely, and I would not now be writing this!

During my youth in the United Kingdom, I vicariously absorbed something of my parents' time in Malaya: the numerous stories of estate life; references to various characters of many nationalities my parents knew or had dealings with; exchanges during visits to and from old hands with whom my parents kept in touch; delicious Malay cuisine rustled up by my mother; and the common use at home of terms such as '*gula*', '*susu*', '*jalan*' etc.

Having taken the plunge to venture and work overseas in 1987, Malaysia appeared on my career horizon in early 1990 when I was based in Hong Kong. I worked in Johore Bahru during 1990 and 1991 and then Kuala Lumpur between 1991 and 2001. I am now spending the last few years of my working life back in Kuala Lumpur. I feel somewhat privileged that I have had the opportunity to experience first-hand something of the life my parents lived all those many years ago. This I have achieved through visiting a number of the estates where my parents were based, engaging with ex-planters who retired in Malaysia and visiting the more remote parts of Malaysia where life and traditions may not have changed that much since the 1950s. I have also read many books relating to; the history of the peoples of Malaysia; the British influence; planting and mining; the Japanese invasion; and the Emergency. To extend the family connection with Malaysia to three generations, the youngest of my three boys was born in Kuala Lumpur in 1992.

It is with obvious reasons, therefore, that I would consider the subject matter of the "Malaya at War Conference" appealing.

The conference was organised by the War History Institute, co-organised by Holiday Tours & Travel Sdn. Bhd. and the Malaysian British Society, with support from "Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020."

The War History Institute in Malaysia is headed up by **Mr. Seamus Tan**, being the Research Director. Two of the conference speakers and one panel participant are either Fellows or Senior Fellows of the Institute; **Rear Admiral Guy Griffiths AO DSO DSC RAN (Rtd.)**; **Tan Sri J.J. Raj Jr.**; and **Dennis Weatherall**. Holiday Tours & Travel Sdn. Bhd. is a leading travel tour company in Malaysia. Attendees were advised that the objective of Holiday Tours & Travel Sdn. Bhd. teaming up with the War History Institute and the Malaysian British Society to co-organise the conference was a first step to encourage military history tourism in Malaysia.

The distinguished speakers were chosen for their personal experience during the two campaigns or their acquired knowledge through studies and investigations. Speakers' profiles and outlines of their talks were provided in the extracts of the conference handout. Several speakers were in their eighties, and we discovered that **Tan Sri J.J. Raj Jr.** had celebrated his ninety-eighth birthday a matter of two weeks prior to the event; 'younger' speakers and delegates were visibly in awe of the experience and fortitude of these gentlemen.

Attendees included historians, academics, researchers and individuals like myself having a connection with the Malaya of old through personal or family history or just possessing a deep interest in local history. As is often the case with such events, much was gained from discussions between attendees during breaks. A high light was **Rod Noble** providing me an introduction to **Puan Sri Datin Elizabeth Moggie**, a champion here in Malaysia of the recognition of Volunteers' efforts during the Japanese invasion.

The conference Master of Ceremonies and facilitator was efficiently performed by **Chris Syer** (President of the Malaysian British Society) who provided in good measure, stimulation, humour and courtesy in keeping the conference schedule on-time and questions to the point.

Unfortunately, I missed the after-dinner talk by **Michael Thompson** reminiscing his early years in Malaya and the effects of the Japanese invasion on his future life.

I will not dwell on the content of each speaker's talk, because the extracts of the handout provide an outline. In summarising, I would commend the organisers, supporters and speakers for delivering a successful and most interesting conference. The range of subjects within the conference theme provided a broad understanding of events and facts; the historical build-up and background leading to the two campaigns; the connection and applied tactics; and a view of matters from both the colonial and local perspectives.

In terms of the historical aspect and related tourism, one of the problems in my mind would be the lack of interest on the part of most Malaysians. Many Malaysians will likely consider the Japanese invasion a British problem ignoring the fact that Japan needed to expand its economic influence and obtain access to resources. Malaya would have been a target whether the British were there or not. The effect of this is that the era of the invasion is, perhaps, considered just another chapter in Malaysia's colonial history. Others may consider that the era was too painful in terms of the effects upon the lives of relatives and not a subject to rekindle. The Emergency maybe raises problems which relate to race and political affiliations considered taboo in Malaysia.

As was repeated as a common theme during the conference in differing forms, we need to learn from history to avoid the repetition of mistakes. This conference will go some way to assist war history tourism and hopefully encourage interested foreigners and Malaysians to learn something of the recent history of Malaysia and the country's battle for freedom from oppressors.

Profiles of two of the local speakers.

En. ZAFRANI ARIFIN – Malaysian Battlefield Guide & MVG member.



En. Zafrani Arifin

Malaysian Battlefield Guide

Zafrani joined the Malayan Historical Group which studied about Malaysia's military history starting from the World War II until the Emergency. The team collaborated with the Malaysian Army Museum in finding artifacts from the war, i.e. aircraft wrecks, and examining wartime battlefields. The team also worked with military historians from overseas such as Australia and Japan on the Malayan Campaign. They did battlefield tours together, not only in Malaysia but also in Singapore and Thai-Burma railway in Thailand. They collaborated with World War II history groups in Singapore and did reenactments to bring history closer to the public in certain events.

En. SHAHAROM AHMAD – Malaysian Military Historian & Researcher



En. Shaharom Ahmad

Malaysian Military Historian & Researcher

Shaharom Ahmad is the founder and lead researcher of the Malaya Historical Group (MHG). Born February 16th, 1974, Shaharom graduated in Bachelor of Graphics from Mara University of Technology Malaysia (UiTM).

After receiving his education, Shaharom started working at several companies as Graphic Designer and is now a Senior Media Executive at Malaysian National News Agency (BERNAMA).

N.B. Both Zaf and Shaharom accompanied **Richard** and **Susan Brown**, **Liz Moggie** and **Rosemary Fell** on their tour of the north-west battlefield sites in February 2019. [See **Richard's** report in A.K. 59 July 2019.]

**FOLLOWING THE PATH OF THE EVACUEES – FEBRUARY 1942
BY JUDY BALCOMBE**

Banka Island and Sumatra Report 2019

In June, our group of 8 travellers visited Singapore, Sumatra and Banka Island. Our goal was to follow the path of the evacuees who had left Singapore in February 1942 on a flotilla of boats and had been bombed by the Japanese, captured and imprisoned. Our party included family members of 2 Australian Army Nurses held in the civilian camps, the family of British Camp leader Mrs Gertrude Hinch, relatives of the civilian prisoners, a former child internee and a member of the Nurses' Memorial Centre in Melbourne.

In Singapore, we visited St Andrew's Cathedral which had been used as a makeshift hospital before the Fall of Singapore, with patients lying on pews. We travelled to a number of places where the Australian Army Nurses had worked in 1941 and early 1942, including the Malacca General Hospital, before being ordered to evacuate.

From Singapore, we flew to Palembang and then caught the ferry to Muntok. Here we visited important historic sites from World War 2. We drove to Radji beach near Muntok where 60 shipwrecked men, civilians and 21 Australian Army Nurses were killed on 16/2/1942. Next we saw the Nurses' Memorial at Tanjong Kelian lighthouse and the Customs house and former Cinema where shipwrecked prisoners were processed.



Radji Beach, Banka Island

Near the former Cinema, we saw the memorial to Mr Vivian Bowden, Australia's Official Representative to Singapore, who was killed outside the Muntok cinema by 2 Japanese guards on 17/2/1942 after bravely standing up for a British soldier.



**Memorial to Mr Vivian Bowden
near old cinema and mosque**

We entered the Muntok jail which had first housed military and civilian prisoners and later formed the Men's civilian prison camp. The jail is now bright and well-run and has a musical band – during the War, up to 900 Men were interned here. Then, food supplies and medicines were minimal and Malaria, Dysentery, beri beri and Banka fever were rife. In 1944 and early 1945, up to 6 internees died here daily.

Next to the jail is the Tinwinning building, now an excellent Museum telling the history of tin mining on Banka Island. It includes the Vivian Bullwinkel Gallery, with displays about the War years. The Gallery is named after Vivian Bullwinkel, the Australian Army Nurse who survived the Radji Beach massacre, together with sailor Ernest Lloyd and American Eric German.

The Sudirman Homestay guesthouse is opposite, a lovely old Dutch-style house which was appropriated by Japanese Commandant Captain Seiki Kazue during the War for his house and office. Miss Penny Sudirman welcomed us inside.



Sudirman Guest House, Captain Seiki's House in World War 2

Kampong Menjelang is the area of the former Women's prison camp, which like the Men's Camp in the jail, had a very high death rate. 2 wells remain from the original Women's Camp. Unfortunately an influx of visitors here means that tourists are no longer admitted to the Kampong. The plaque placed in memory of internees in the Camp will be moved from the Kampong to the nearby Muntok Peace Museum.

The Peace Museum was built in 2015 with donations from former prisoners and their families. It tells the history of the internees and Army Nurses with pictures and exhibits. The Museum has an excellent website created and maintained by David Man, whose Grandfather Gordon Reis died in Muntok jail in 1944.

<http://muntokpeacemuseum.org> Thanks to the Malayan Volunteers group, the Museum is now air-conditioned for the comfort of visitors and to preserve the displays. Visitors can obtain entry via Mr Fakhrizal, the Director of the Tinwinning Museum near the jail.



Muntok Peace Museum

The Women who died in Camp were buried by their friends under rubber trees in the Camp. After the War, they were taken by Dutch authorities to the front of Muntok Town cemetery. In 1981, a petrol station was built on this site and the remains of 25 people were found at the front of the land. These bodies were given to the local priest who arranged for their reburial in the Catholic Cemetery near Kampong Menjelang.

The Men who died in Muntok Jail were carried by their friends to the Town Cemetery, where their bodies mostly remain under the rear of the petrol station and houses. The Netherlands Dutch War Graves Foundation moved all of the Dutch military and civilian graves to Java in 1964. The British and Australian authorities, however, did not move their civilian graves, saying they had no responsibility for them. Some British civilian graves were moved by their employers, for example, Cable and Wireless and the ship Empress of Asia, but most remain in Muntok.

We have taken plaques with the names of the Men and Women who we believe still lie buried in Muntok with no individual named graves. This has been installed in the Muntok Catholic Cemetery on the graves believed to contain the Women internees.



Memorial Grave, Catholic Cemetery, Muntok

Near Kampong Menjelang, we visited the house of a lady known as 'The Mother with the Ring'. She possesses a ring and also a fob watch, with 'Robinsons, Singapore' on the face, given to her Father-in-Law by a lady prisoner seeking food for her 2 children. The serial number of this watch is 202988772 but enquires through Robinson's department store in Singapore and Robinson's watchmakers in UK have not been able to find the name of the original owner. The watch and ring are much-treasured and are shown to visitors.

Next we were welcome guests at a local school, where happy children sang and danced for the visitors.

From Muntok, our hosts drove us to the island's capital, Pangkalpinang, 3 hours away. Here we met with Mr Muhammad Rizki, the head of Timah Tin who has always been so kind and helpful in our quest to locate the prisoners' history, since our first visit in 2011. On leaving Pangkalpinang, we drove to Jebus, our first visit there. One of the Giang Bee lifeboats washed up at Jebus after the boat was sunk. Shipwrecked victims, including my Grandfather, were cared for by Chinese families for several days before the Japanese came in trucks, taking the prisoners to Muntok.



Kampa River, Jebus, leading to the sea

Returning to Muntok, we were permitted to enter the former Customs House on the seafront. Shipwrecked people who landed in Muntok in 1942 were first processed here as well as in the former Cinema. Parts of the building are in disrepair but the outlay, with central courtyard is preserved.



Low tide outside the Customs House, Muntok

We visited the Chinese Mayor's building, now a Museum. We were reminded that the War affected the local people harshly on seeing a room that had held 12 families during the War, with the Japanese using the rest of the spacious building.

The following morning, we caught the ferry to Palembang and visited the hospitable Nuns and medical staff. We saw the plaques placed giving thanks for the hospital's care of military personnel and civilians during the War, before the hospital was forcibly closed in 1943. The medal given to the Nuns by King George 6th is in place in the small but lovely hospital Museum.



Visiting Charitas Hospital, Palembang

In Palembang, we drove to the former Women's Dutch Houses Camp, once known as Irenelaan. Householders welcomed us inside the house where the Australian Army Nurses were imprisoned in 1942. An old well is in the corner of the front garden. Former house number 10, opposite, is now a pharmacy and beautician's premises – a far cry from the hard life experienced by the internees. We entered here and saw where 40 civilian Women and Children were imprisoned in a few small rooms.



Dutch Houses' Camp, Jln Cipto, Talang Semoet, Palembang

We next caught the train for the 8 hour journey to Lubuk Linggau (or 'Linggau'), the town closest to Belalau, the final camp. This was the route followed by the internees, who were sent in barges from Muntok to Palembang and then in enclosed cattle trucks to Belalau. 7 Women prisoners and a number of men died on this terrible journey. By contrast, we found the train journey comfortable although the seats were small for our European frames.

We spent a pleasant night at the Burza hotel and the following day, drove to the government office in Belalau 2 plantation, approximately 25 minutes from our hotel. We were met by the headman, Pak Sepono, who walked with us, showing us where the Camps had been. There was a small open area with wildflowers behind his house, which he told us had been the Women's Camp graveyard. The graves were moved by the Dutch to Java after the War but Pak Sepono said that European people continue to come and look at the area. It was quiet and peaceful with large yellow flowers growing. Remnants of 2 old derelict huts could be seen.



**Women's Camp graveyard,
Belalau**

Next we walked through undergrowth to a small stream, forded by steppingstones. This was likely where the Women collected water. Australian Army Nurse Betty Jeffrey's great niece, took a photo of Aunty Bet's picture and medals at the water's edge. Retreating, we then walked through an old abandoned grove of rubber trees to a rise where we saw a building which resembled a European house. We remember reading that Japanese officers had lived on a hill at Belalau.



Old Hut, Belalau



European-style house, Belalau

We proceeded down the road to another part of the stream, with concrete steps. We were now in the area where people live today. We passed a small shop and vegetable gardens, together with some tin and atap houses. Pak Sepono told us this had been the site of the Men's prison camp.



Concrete steps, Belalau river



Old building, area of the Men's

We returned to the office, where the police had bought water for us to drink. We farewelled Pak Sepono and the government staff, all very moved by having been to this special place. Belalau was just as Margaret Dryburgh had written on describing the burial ground for Women and children:

How silent is this place

The brilliant sunshine filters through the trees

The leaves are rustled by a gentle breeze

A wild and open space

By shrubs pink tipped, mauve blossomed, is o'ergrown

A hush enfolds me, deep as I've known

Unbroken, save by distant insects' drone

A jungle clearing

A track through which we bare our load to Him

How silent is this place

How sacred is this place.

We returned to Palembang and farewelled the Charitas nuns and our friend Komang, before returning to Singapore. We were saddened but glad to have experienced the path taken by the prisoners and to remember them, and grateful for the great kindness given to us by our Indonesian friends.

THE SINGAPORE MUTINY - FEBRUARY 1915

Captain Percy Netterville Gerrard (1870-1915)

Researched by Dave Croft RAFBPA

Malay States Volunteer Rifles



Dr. Percy Netterville Gerrard graduated as a Doctor of Medicine from Dublin, followed by a period serving as resident surgeon at the Royal City of Dublin Hospital, before entering the Colonial Service as a Malay States Medical Officer, where he gained the necessary tropical experience whilst working at a number of postings within Selangor and Perak. During his time as a medical officer he also wrote several works on tropical medicine and enlisted in the Malay States Volunteer Rifles.

In 1896, he married Alice Edith Scott who gave birth to a son, **Thomas Francis Netterville***, on 13th August 1897, at Kuala Kubu Bahru in Selangor State.

Unfortunately, Alice died shortly afterwards and Thomas went to live with his grandmother in Dublin. Dr. Gerrard later married Clare Hoffman, a nursing sister at the European Hospital in Kuala Lumpur.

The main contenders at the start of the mutiny.

The causes and actions resulting in the Singapore mutiny of 1915 have been described in detail in a number of online articles, and this article is mainly intended to relate to the death of Captain Percy Gerrard of the MSVR.

5th Light Infantry, Indian Army.

Prior to WW1, the regiment was employed on garrison duties in India. In October 2015, the 5th L.I. was posted to Singapore to replace the **Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI)** who were being shipped to France. The 5th Light Infantry was commanded by both British and Indian officers (**Colonel E.V. Martin**, Commanding Officer, and **Major W.L. Cotton**, 2nd i/c) and on

arrival in Singapore was based at Alexandra Barracks, less than two miles from Tanglin Barracks! The regiment took up garrison duties which also included the guarding of German internees and POWs at Tanglin Detention Barracks. A few days before the mutiny, the regiment was withdrawn from garrison duties prior to leaving Singapore for Hong Kong. Their garrison duties were taken over by the 'Volunteers' as described by a German POW, **Kapitanleutenant Julius Lauterbach****, navigation officer and prize crew officer of the German Navy light cruiser, *SMS Emden*, who was confined in the POW compound at Tanglin Barracks:

"The Indian guards were replaced by English Volunteers and Malay soldiers the very next day. The Englishmen were much overbearing in their manner towards us. They were in uniform, but it was evident that they were quite unacquainted with military life and ways."

Malay States Volunteer Rifles (from The Straits Times 1937):

"As a result of the Federation of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang in 1895, the Malay States Volunteer Rifles were formed in 1902, the force being raised from the Europeans in those States. At the start of World War 1, with the (Resident) British regiment being withdrawn for service at the front, the Volunteers (SVC and MSVR) were the mainstay of Malayan infantry defence and did some very fine work in helping to quell the (1915) mutiny within four days of its outbreak."

Also playing lead roles on the outbreak of the mutiny, were members of the **Singapore Volunteer Corps** (with numbers depleted over the period of the Chinese New Year 1915) and the **Johore Military Forces**.

Singapore Volunteer Corps:

The name replaced that of the **Singapore Volunteer Artillery Corps** in 1901 which was a well equipped and well trained volunteer force. The SVC, although reduced in numbers due to the Chinese New Year at the time of the mutiny, was still able to play a significant role in putting down the mutiny.

Johore Military Forces:

The JMF was an independent military force raised in 1886 and reorganised in 1887 into a regular military unit of Malay infantry. In 1905, the **Johore Volunteer Force (JVF)** was formed. The services of the JVF were offered to the Singapore Government at the outbreak of war, and accepted.

15th February - At the wrong place and the wrong time:

The mutiny of the 5th Light Infantry (not all mutinied, many stayed loyal to the British) started mid afternoon at

Alexandra Barracks, signalled with a single rifle shot. A party of around 100 mutineers advanced on Tanglin Detention Barracks with the aim of releasing German POWs to join the mutiny. Their arrival at Tanglin resulted in a number of deaths of those on duty or present, including **Captain Horace Cullimore** (JMF detachment), **2nd Lieutenant John Love Montgomerie** (Singapore Volunteer Rifles), officer i/c prisoner guards and **Captain Percy Gerrard** (MSVR).

There appears to be a bit of a mystery as to the whereabouts of **Captain Gerrard** at the start of the carnage. Some accounts as to the events leading to his death infer he was killed because he refused to hand over the keys to the ammunition store, or because

he was British, or a combination of both! It maybe also be that he was in the vicinity of the base hospital when the attack began although he was by profession a civilian medical officer and the hospital was staffed by a number (8) of RAMC personnel. But it has also been recorded that he was Commandant of the POW Camp? Of the Tanglin Barrack attack, **Kapitanleutenant Lauterbach** observed:

"On the afternoon of 15th February, about four o'clock, I was playing chess with a friend. Suddenly, the sound of rifle fire brought us to our feet. With a bound that would have done credit to a much thinner man, I got to my front door (as an 'Emden Officer' he was given the use of a bungalow separate to the other prisoners' accommodation). There, coming across the stockade were a hundred or more men armed with rifles. They were running towards us, firing at our new guards as they came. They had mutinied; there was no doubt of it. Some of the Malays guarding us became confused and opened fire on us. One of our civilians was shot in the belly and fatally wounded. A sailor got a bullet in the leg. Then the yelling Punjabis overwhelmed them. Ten minutes of hand-to-hand fighting and bloodshed and the incident was over. The Englishmen around Tanglin Barracks were taken completely by surprise. Montgomery (sic), the officer of the guard, got two bullets in the head. A few were lucky enough to escape, but not many.

Then off they went, the gates were open and we were free to march out. But first I ordered my lads to pick up the bodies scattered about. Some might be alive, I thought. But we might just as well not have bothered. The mutineers had done a thorough job if it. They had stabbed (bayoneted!) every guard through the heart after shooting him down. I counted twenty three bodies in all - English and Malays

Captain Percy Netterville Gerrard MSVR was buried on 18th February at Bidadari Cemetery*** in Singapore, along with others killed in the mutiny but not the mutineers! Also buried in Bidadari was the German internee killed at the Tanglin Detention Camp at the start of the mutiny.

The missing Dyson! Researching this story led to the confusing story of one or two European victims of the mutiny bearing the same name - **Dyson!** The first one being **District Judge Cecil Venn Dyson**, recorded as being a private (and also a cadet) of the **Malay States Volunteers**, and killed on 15th February while assisting to quell the riot! **C.V. Dyson** was born in Calcutta in 1873 and entered the Malay States Civil Service as a cadet in 1898 following Queen's College, Cambridge. There is a memorial to him in the college and a road named after him in Singapore. He is recorded as being buried as a civilian in Bidadari.

The second **Dyson** appears on the Cambridge Queen's College Roll of Honour for WW1 (for February 1915) as **Cadet Charles Dyson** (aged 18), murdered in the Singapore Mutiny. To date his burial details have not been found.

Notes:

***Thomas Francis Netterville**, the son of **Dr. Percy Netterville Gerrard** and **Alice Gerrard** was born in Kuala Kubu Bahru, Selangor on the 13th August 1897. Following flying service in the RNAS in WW1, he transferred to the newly formed RAF as a pilot and died from a cerebral haemorrhage following a fall when playing polo at RAF Mosul in Iraq in 1923. His uncle, **Eugene Louis Gerrard**, (1881 - 1963) brother of **Percy**, after service with the RNAS in WW1, joined the RAF (formed 1918) and reached the rank of Air Commodore before retiring.

** **Kapitanleutenant Julius Lauterbach** joined the **SMS Emden** as a navigation officer at the start of WW1. A naval reserve officer he had spent many years as a ship's captain in the China Sea and his knowledge of British shipping routes in the region was invaluable to the German cause. As a prize crew officer, he was placed in charge of an **Emden** prize crew on board a captured collier, the **SS Exford**, which was used as the coaling vessel for the **Emden**. Following the October 1914 Penang raid by the **Emden** and subsequent move to the Cocos Islands

Tanglin Barracks 1915



(where the cable station was sabotaged) he was ordered to ready the *Exford* for a mid-ocean rendezvous with the *Emden* after it left the Cocos Islands only it didn't happen because the *Emden* was engaged by *HMAS Sydney* and beached on North Keeling Island. By the 9th December, with no sign of the *Emden*, the *Exford* made its way to Padang, a neutral port in Sumatra. On entering Padang Harbour, despite Sumatra being neutral, **Lauterbach** and his prize crew were arrested by the Royal Navy personnel from the armed merchant cruiser *HMS Empress of Japan* and taken to Singapore as Prisoners of War, arriving on the 15th December. At the Tanglin Detention Centre, with German civilian internees from Singapore, the *Emden* POWs were guarded by men from the 5th Light Infantry. During the weeks up to the mutiny, **Lauterbach** made friends with his guards and preached sedition against the British, which eventually reached a climax in the 15th February 1915 uprising. Shortly after the attack on Tanglin, **Lauterbach** and a few internees escaped from the compound and with help from contacts outside the camp were able to reach the east coast of Sumatra and then cross over to Padang followed by many adventures before arriving back in Germany.

An adventurous account of **Lauterbach's** travels relating to his time in S.E. Asia is given in **Lowell Thomas's** re-worked 1930 book (for the American-German market): "**Lauterbach of the China Sea**" available as a free online download.

*** **Bidadari Cemetery** was used for military funerals from 1907 to 1941, including those (Christians) from the 1915 mutiny. In 1957 all Christian soldiers buried at **Bidadari** were re-interred at **Ulu Pandan War Cemetery**, and afterwards moved to **Kranji War Cemetery**.

BOOKS

"**The Special Operations Executive in Malaya. World War 11 and the Path to Independence.**" By **Rebecca Kenneison**. Published by Bloomsbury Academic 2019. 246 pages. Illustrated. ISBN 978-1-78831-389-6 Price £59.50

If you are looking for familiar anecdotal tales of daring-do, you may be surprised by this book which is, at first appearances, concise but actually contains a wealth of detailed, very well documented information. What begun for **Becca** as an attempt to unravel a piece of family history, culminated in a detailed study of the Special Operations Executive involvement with the various groups resisting the occupying Japanese in Malaya.

We are all, of course, familiar with the Communist-led MPAJA [Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army] which contained some 80% of the resistance fighters, but what of its rival, the Guomintang-inspired O.C.A.J.A. [Overseas Chinese Anti-Japanese Army] and the Malay "**Wataniah**" [Homeland] organisation in Pahang? These groups all received weapons and other support from Force 136. There is a very good chapter on the much neglected subject of the growth of Malay resistance to the Japanese. Thanks must go to **Mubin Sheppard MCS** who did much to gather and preserve the records on Malay registers to the Japanese – material now in the Malaysian National Archives [Arkib]

I found the tables in the book particularly useful and informative: 'The Malayan Population 1941'; 'Allied Clandestine Organisation in South East Asia 1940-1945' and a list of key characters in the story to name three.

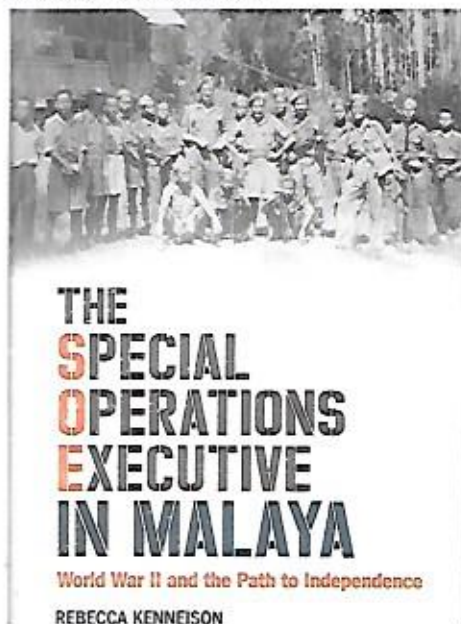
The narrative covers the Oriental Mission in Malaya 1941-1942; the development of Force 136 and its first Operations in Malaya from May 1943. We clearly see the relationship between former Malayan Volunteers, including Dalforce members, and subsequent Force 136 Operations. Members of the Malay Regiment are also mentioned.

A key event was the Blantan Agreement of December 1943, when the key men of Force 136 and the MPAJA met and made a trade off agreement of British Arms in return for co-operation. The key names: **Broome, Davis, Chapman, Lim Bo Seng, Chin Peng and Lai Teck**. The shortage of weapons remained an acute problem for resistance groups, who had to raid police stations for what they could get and early on scavenge the Slim River battlefield. There was, of course, much infighting between resistance groups, not least the 'two warring factions of the O.C.A.J.A. and the M.P.A.J.A. with the 'interregnum' period from mid-August 1945 to September 1945 seeing much elimination of opponents.

Myths about SOE and the resistance movement are busted, and intelligence failures, in particular the failure to anticipate the outbreak of the Malayan Emergency, are explored. Subjects such as the failure to encourage Asian leadership within Force 136 are also touched upon, with token mention of one prominent officer who may have been a racist in attitude, and another who almost certainly was.

Altogether an impressive book involving dedicated archival research in the UK and Malaysia.

Reviewed by Jonathan Moffatt.



“LAST STAND IN SINGAPORE. The Story of 488 Squadron RNZAF.” By **Graham Clayton**. Published by Random House, New Zealand, Auckland, New Zealand [2008]. ISBN 978-1-86979-033-2 284 pages.

In his introduction to this interesting and readable book, **Graham Clayton** explains that it is, *“an account of the saga of 488 Squadron’s operations in the Far East and the experiences at the time, through the eyes of one of its personnel, my father, **Albert Clayton**, known to his family and friends as **Bert**.”*

No.488 (NZ) Squadron was an RAF Squadron formed in September 1941 in New Zealand and destined to fight the Japanese, flying inadequate Brewster Buffalo Fighters and latterly Hawker Hurricanes, throughout the Battle of Singapore, before leaving for Java in February 1942.

Although an RAF Squadron, all of 488’s aircrew were New Zealand nationals. Ground crews were also made up mainly of New Zealanders with the addition of only a small number of RAF ground tradesmen who quickly became absorbed into the more relaxed atmosphere found between pilots and ground staff, a situation RAF HQ Singapore, and the Maintenance Unit at RAF Seletar were not happy about.

On arrival in Singapore the Squadron, untrained on the Buffalo, received the well-used aircraft of 67 Squadron (RAF) which had moved to Burma in October 1941.

488 Squadron ground staff took charge of the aircraft, all unserviceable, and while having no tools or spare parts, the ever resourceful Kiwis soon solved the problems on the ground, leaving the inexperienced pilots to do their worst, which they did!

**Squadron 488’s Crew Hut
Kallang, Christmas 1941**



say enough our ground crews worked terrific hours, had little sleep and bad food, yet never once did they let us down. They were the heroes!”

This well described and readable book is truly worthy of a place on the bookshelf.

Reviewed by David Croft MA. [RAFBPA]

[N.B. David adds that this book was recommended to him by MVG member Mary Harris, who had received and read it and asked him to review it.]



‘Dinah’ Aircraft 81 Sentai – Reconnaissance aircraft used by the Japanese, and which flew over Singapore daily. This one was brought down by 243 Squadron. They were described as “a thorn in the flesh” by Brewster Buffalo pilots.”



Sqdn. Ldr. Coulson – C.O. 488 Squadron

The book, as is to be expected, tells of the pilots in training and in action and also, unlike many other accounts of squadrons in action, it describes much about the life and times of the ground crews. It is especially descriptive of the bombing and actions of those on the ground at RAF Kallang, who also worked on aircraft recovery from other stations on the island, often at risk to themselves due to the rapid moving of the front line as the Japanese troops moved towards Singapore City.

The book goes on to describe the Squadron’s retreat from Singapore by air and sea. After seeing action in Java, the surviving personnel returned to New Zealand shortly after the Squadron was disbanded in Australia.

This book is an excellent addition to those already published covering the Malayan Campaign. In his preamble in the book, **Flt. Lt. John Hutchinson DFC, Flight Commander B Flight**, says of the pilots:

“Few, if any of them, had done more than twenty hours on Brewster Buffaloes at the outbreak of the Pacific War. Yet, in very inferior aircraft and with practically no training, they stood up without complaint to the best the Japanese could send. Of the ground crew personnel, I cannot

"To War with the Walkers." By **Annabel Venning**. Published by Hodder and Stoughton. ISBN -13: 9781473679337 £20
 Three Soldiers, a War Bride, a Nurse and a Doctor. One family's Extraordinary Story of the Second World War.

How would you feel if all your sons and daughters were caught up in war? What would it be like to spend 6 years of war fearing what a telegram might bring?

That was the heart-wrenching reality by so many families throughout WW11, including parents, **Arthur** and **Dorothea**, of the **Walker** children. From the Blitz to the battlefields of Europe and the Far East, this is the remarkable story of 4 brothers and 2 sisters who were swept along by the momentous events of the war. **Harold** was a surgeon in a London Hospital alongside his sister, **Ruth**, a nurse, when the bombs began to fall in 1940. **Peter** was captured in the fall of Singapore. **Edward** fought the Germans in Italy and **Walter** the Japs in Burma, while in London, glamorous **Bee** hoped for lasting happiness with an American Airman.

Annabel Venning, **Walter's** granddaughter tells the enthralling and moving tales of her relatives, six ordinary men and women who each faced an extraordinary struggle for survival.

A world war caught in miniature

The stories of what six siblings endured makes for a moving read, says **Yvonda Nintstone Graham**

The Walkers a family with a war-torn history, like a family in the past. In the past, Arthur and Dorothea, who of the Blitz to the battlefields of Europe and the Far East, this is the remarkable story of 4 brothers and 2 sisters who were swept along by the momentous events of the war.

Harold was a surgeon in a London Hospital alongside his sister, Ruth, a nurse, when the bombs began to fall in 1940. Peter was captured in the fall of Singapore. Edward fought the Germans in Italy and Walter the Japs in Burma, while in London, glamorous Bee hoped for lasting happiness with an American Airman.

Annabel Venning, Walter's granddaughter tells the enthralling and moving tales of her relatives, six ordinary men and women who each faced an extraordinary struggle for survival.



The Walkers: Arthur and Dorothea with their six children: Harold, Ruth, Bee, Edward and Peter

OBITUARIES

DR. HENRY TUNG – 30th January 1929 – 15th July 2019

We are sad to announce the death of **Dr. Henry Tung**, one of our long-standing members in Malaysia, who gave loyal support to the Group. His daughter wrote:

"It was my father's request that his passing should remain private among family members until after his funeral. We have honoured this as much as possible. He remained humble until the end and even thereafter. Always a discreet gentleman, helping as many as he could that crossed his path."

SALLY PURSSELL (nee Hay) – Died on 11th June 2019

We send our very sincere condolences to **Sally's** family and sister - **MVG member Alison Keating**. As a member of **COFEPOW** and former member of **MVG**, **Sally** let her membership lapse in the last few years after her move from Plymouth to Chippenham to be near one of her daughters. **Alison** has sent this short obituary about **Sally's** life.

"Having been shipped (on the **S.S. Sarpedon**) with mother **Joan** and siblings **Alison** and **John** to England in November 1945, **Sally** went to boarding school in Sussex. She left school in 1953 and trained and then worked as a physiotherapist. She married **Bob Pursell** in 1958, spending most of the succeeding years in Plymouth and Saltash, working in Derriford Hospital. She was busy with many local charities, including running the bookshop in St. Andrew's Church. Latterly, she moved to Chippenham, and passed away in June. She is survived by her three children, **Richard, Katherine and Sarah.**"

Sally was the daughter of **A.W. HAY Capt. 1/SSVF to RA**. He was the Camp Interpreter at Nakorn Pathom, where he died in 1944. Pre-war he was in the **MCS** and **Chinese Protector** and a **SS District Judge**.

FRED RANSOME-SMITH - Died on 4th August 2019 aged 99.

Fred Ransome-Smith died just a month before his centenary. He was a prolific artist and is probably the last **FEPOW** artist to die. He lived in Melbourne and **MVG member John Pollock** kept in touch with him.

A lieutenant in the 5th **Suffolks**, he was captured in Singapore and sent to Thailand. He worked closely with doctors both in Changi and in Thailand, recording medical cases and treatments. He was also involved with theatricals, creating sets, posters and programmes.

Post-war he continued his career eventually teaching art. He emigrated to Australia in 1964, and later in life he published several books about his captivity, richly illustrated with artwork done from memory. He designed the dental chair which was used in Chungkai and made of bamboo. A reconstruction of this chair will be on display in "The Secret Art of Survival" exhibition which is opening in Liverpool this October.

Fred's artistic talent helped inform, distract and entertain fellow **FEPOW** captives. Like other **FEPOW** artists, he also helped new generations to visualize the conditions of captivity and to understand better the resilience and ingenuity that kept so many men alive. See more on: <https://tributes.theage.com.au/obituaries/104957/fred-ransome-smith/>

ATHELSTAN LONG CMG Governor of the Cayman Islands. Born 2nd January 1919 - died on 31st July 2019 aged 100

Athelstan Long was the rebellious and self-deprecating governor of the Cayman Islands who survived 3½ years as a prisoner of the Japanese.

From school at Westminster, **Athelstan** went on to Brasenose College, Oxford and was then commissioned into the Royal Artillery.

He went on to serve with the 22nd Indian Mountain Regiment and fought in the Malayan Campaign joining the retreat down the peninsula to Singapore. Captured there by the Japanese, he was held in Changi before being sent to the Burma-Siam Railway. He maintained that "it wasn't too bad" although he lost a lot of weight and at times struggled to find food. After the war, he served in the Indian Political Service and after Indian Independence was appointed to the Burma Civil Service. Later he was posted to Nigeria as a colonial officer and in 1961 he was appointed chief secretary to Swaziland during the long reign of King Sobhuza 11.

His next post was to the Cayman Islands in 1968 as administrator. His arrival coincided with a time of transition in the Islands as they were becoming popular as an offshore financial centre and tourist destination. Previously, the male population went abroad, working as seamen, but they were now able to remain at home and find steady employment. In his capacity as administrator he visited all the Islands in the group, including Little Cayman – the smallest and most remote island. On his first visit by boat after a hurricane had swept away a number of its small population there was no working jetty and he had to wade ashore dressed in full regalia. On his arrival, the few remaining islanders formed a welcome party on the beach and sang "God Save the Queen". He said he was moved to tears because Britain had done almost nothing for Little Cayman, and yet here were the inhabitants singing the national anthem to welcome him.

One of his most notable acts was to call in a British warship, which was visiting the Caribbean, to quell the threat of a civil commotion in the capital Georgetown, much against the wishes of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office – but it worked. After his posting in the Caymans came to an end, he served as commissioner in Anguilla for a short while, but in 1976 he returned to Grand Cayman and settled there with his family for the rest of his life. He had overseen great changes in the islands during his time there.

Jan Ruff O'Hearne Born 18th January 1923. Died 19th August 2019 aged 96.

Jan O'Hearne's family was one of the many Dutch families who were imprisoned by the Japanese on the island of Java, where her father ran a sugar plantation before the war. But in February 1944, half starved and terrified, she was lined up in the camp with other Dutch girls over 17 and taken to an old colonial Dutch house where they were forced to act as "Comfort Women" for Japanese Officers. They were photographed, given a Japanese flower name, and a vase of flowers to put in their rooms. On the day the brothel was officially opened, they were sent to their bedrooms and told to wait for dark. As a strong Catholic, **Jan** had hoped to become a nun, but that night she was dragged from under the table by "a large, repulsive, fat, bald-headed Jap" and forced into a room where, at sword point, she was raped by him. After three months, the girls were returned to their prison camp, but told not to say anything to save their families from being killed. After the war, she married **Tom Ruff** one of the soldiers who had liberated their camp.

They lived for a while in England before emigrating to Australia in 1960. In 1992, she was asked to become a witness at a public hearing in Tokyo in support of 3 Korean "Comfort Women," and afterwards, decided to speak out in the fight to gain recognition for the war-crime of rape. The Japanese have never acknowledged their crimes against these women or apologized. They have even demanded that statues commemorating the "Comfort Women" should be removed.

Jan spent the next 15 years flying round the world campaigning against rape in war. Her memoir "*Fifty Year of Silence*" is a testament to the brutality of war for civilians as well as soldiers. Her family are preparing a feature film based on her life. "*I shall never forget the fear,*" she once said, "*and in a way it had been with me all my life.*"

Andai nya kita terlupa.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

LONDON – Saturday 12th October 2019. Annual Reunion and Luncheon, RAF Club, Piccadilly – 12 noon to 5p.m.

Please note: There is still time to book for the luncheon, provided payment is made at the same time.

The luncheon will take place, as usual, 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, and is well worth a visit.

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. Please advise of any dietary needs. There will be a pay bar as usual where drinks and wine can be purchased.

Please book in at the **MVG 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. **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 – Thursday 24th October 2019. Opening of the "Secret Art of Survival" exhibition – 6p.m.- 8p.m.

The opening of this long-awaited exhibition will take place at the Victoria Gallery & Museum, University of Liverpool, L69 3DR.

This very special exhibition is the culmination of over 7 years of research identifying and locating previously unseen art works, created secretly and kept hidden by British servicemen in Far East captivity during the Second World War. To date over 65 artists have been identified. The exhibition brings together their work for the first time, giving a rare insight into life as a Far East Prisoner of War (FEPOW).

With special guest **Philip Mould OBE**, British art expert, writer and broadcaster, and music from a chamber choir made up of singers from the Liverpool Philharmonic Youth Company. Light refreshments will be provided.

18.00 Arrivals & refreshments -- 18.20 Music & speeches. REGISTER BY FRIDAY 27th SEPTEMBER 2019

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

Tickets have been ordered for those attending this ceremony, and will be sent out when they are available.

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

12 tickets have been ordered for all those wishing to march on Remembrance Sunday, and will be sent out at the beginning of October, together with the instructions for the march. As first generation descendants, we have been given permission to march this year, although priority to march is now being given to military Veterans.

CANADA – Remembrance Sunday 10th November 2019.

Sallie Hammond, MVG's secretary in Canada and the USA, will lay a wreath on behalf of the Malayan Volunteers in her home town of London, Ontario. See P. 4 for further details.

MALAYSIA. Remembrance Sunday Services in Kuala Lumpur and Penang TBA.

FEPOW WEEKEND IN LIVERPOOL – 16th – 18th 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>

NMA – Tuesday 10th 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:

PERTH W.A – 15th February 2020. Fall of Singapore Service in Stirling Memorial Gardens.

Please contact Elizabeth Adamson for further details.

ANZAC DAY SERVICES – Perth WA and Thailand – 25th April 2020

LIVERPOOL – 5th-7th June 2020. 7th 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 30th June 2019.** For more information, please visit RFHG's website: <https://fepowhistory.com/>.

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

See separate sheet for details. It is important to let **Rosemary** know as soon as possible if you plan to come – even provisionally – so that booking arrangements can be finalised in good time. The Chapel, which seats 125 people, has been booked, together with the dining room, **OAK 1**, for morning coffee and a buffet lunch for 80-100 people. Entry will be by ticket **SINGAPORE - Saturday 12th September 2020. Kranji Service to mark the 75th anniversary of the date in 1945 of the Japanese surrender in Singapore**

Please keep the week before and after 12th September free if you wish to attend. See leaflet for programme of events. Please let **Rosemary** know if you are planning to attend – we need a minimum of 30 people for the Historical Tour to be viable. Hotel accommodation is already at a premium as well as flights, so book early, and if you wish to stay at the YWCA, it is best to contact them by e-mail on: reservations@ywcafcldodge.org.sg

Further dates for 2020 will be given in January.

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

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