

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



**61ST EDITION
JANUARY 2020**



**Rosemary Fell (R) receives her British Empire Medal at the Investiture
in County Hall, Exeter, on 11th October 2019**

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MVG MEMBERS ATTEND THE
DEVON LIEUTENANCY INVESTITURE,
ENJOY ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL ANNUAL REUNION
AND LUNCHEON AT THE RAF CLUB IN LONDON,
MARCH ON REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY IN WHITEHALL,
AND LAY WREATHS IN CANADA, KUALA LUMPUR
AND PENANG

A HAPPY NEW YEAR AND EVERY GOOD WISH TO ALL MVG MEMBERS
IN 2020 – THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WORLD WAR TWO

It was a busy Autumn for the MVG, with members attending various events in October and November. We try to encourage as many members as possible to participate in these events, and it is a sign of the popularity of our Annual Luncheons in London that they continue to be so well attended.

Shortly after the October newsletter was printed and sent out, **Rosemary's** investiture of the British Empire Medal took place in Exeter's County Hall in a simple but dignified ceremony. The award was presented to her on behalf of Her Majesty **The Queen** by the Lord-Lieutenant of Devon, **David Fursdon**. As mentioned in the July edition of *Apa Khabar*, it was a great honour and privilege to have been given this award, and it was accepted with gratitude, and a big thank you to those members who proposed it and submitted the application to the Cabinet Office. The support from members has been wonderful and very much appreciated. However, it should be acknowledged that the success of the Malayan Volunteers Group has also been due to the outstanding work of our historian and archivist, **Jonathan Moffatt**. Without his work the MVG would not have succeeded, or achieved the recognition it receives today. A very big thank you goes to him and to our other researchers - **Michael Pether** for his work on the evacuation ships' passenger lists; **Becca Kenneison**, for her research into SOE; **Mary Harris**, whose mother was the eminent scientist, **Elizabeth Alexander**, and **Judy Balcombe** for creating the Peace Museum and plaques in Muntok. There are other researchers within the MVG whose names have not been mentioned, and thanks go to them as well. However, we would like to acknowledge the contributions **David Croft**, Editor of "**Eastward**" the newsletter of the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association, has made to *Apa Khabar*, and thank him for his research into the wartime history of Malaya and the Malayan Campaign. Finally, thanks go to MVG member, **Jane Edrich**, and **Carole Elkins** for attending the Investiture with **Rosemary**, and for helping to make it a very special day. The award was accepted with pride and humility on behalf of the MVG, and is dedicated to the memory of all FEPOWs, civilian internees and local people of all races and creeds who suffered under the Japanese during World War Two. See **Jane's** report of the ceremony on P.2.

A very kind person sent a lovely 'Flower Card' to Millbrook House after the lunch week-end with the message:

"Congratulations on your well deserved award and for all your dedication to the MVG"

but there was no name! The flowers were much appreciated and many thanks go to the sender(s).

Once again the smooth running of the Annual Reunion and Luncheon depended on the wonderful help provided by MVG members - **Imogen Holmes** and **Yvonne Wurtburg** who arranged the flowers for the table and sold and folded up draw tickets; **Mary Harris** and **Liz Moggie** who also sold draw tickets and raised a wonderful total for the Peace Museum in Muntok; **Becca Kenneison** who manned the entrance table; and **Penny Dembrey** who helped to fold tickets. Our thanks go to them, and also to **Michael Thompson** for saying Grace, to **Hugh Chaplin** for the Toast to the Volunteers and to **Mary Harris** for her vote of thanks to our speaker, **Hilary Green**. [Report P.3.]

The Cross Planting Ceremony in the Garden of Remembrance, this year, was attended by **The Duke and Duchess of Sussex**. MVG members who represented the Malayan Volunteer Forces at the FEPOW Plot this year, were **Karen Harney**, **Jane Nielsen**, **Christine Cavender** and **Richard and Susan Brown**. We thank them for attending this important occasion. The Royal British Legion planted the Volunteers' large black cross and

Revd. Pauline Simpson – NFFWRA Padre – planted a cross with the MVG logo. Both were well displayed at the back of the Plot. We thank **Pauline** for ordering this cross for the MVG.

Marching on Remembrance Sunday is a commitment and a privilege. As everyone gets older, it is becoming quite a feat of endurance standing and marching for a period of about 4 hours. Those MVG members who march every year do so in memory of their Volunteer and other relatives, whose feats of endurance were far more extreme than ours. Nevertheless, due to the RBL's wish for only military veterans to march, and our creaking bones, we may not be able or allowed to march in future on Remembrance Sundays. 2020 may be our last year of marching – to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of WW2. This does not mean that MVG members cannot watch from the side as a group and meet up afterwards for lunch. It could still be an annual event, but a less demanding one.

We are grateful to **Sallie Hammond**, our secretary in Canada, for laying a wreath dedicated to the Volunteers in London, Ontario, on Remembrance Sunday, in snow and freezing temperatures. By contrast, Remembrance Sunday in Kuala Lumpur took place in tropical temperatures, where a wreath was laid by **Andrew Hwang**. The ceremony was also attended by **Liz Moggie**, **Anthony Cooper** and **Rod Noble**.

On the following Sunday, the Penang Veterans' Association (PVA) organised their 18th Remembrance Day service at the Cenotaph on Padang Kota Lama in George Town. 95 year-old **James Jeremiah**, Penang's last surviving WW2 veteran and MVG member, attended the ceremony and paid tribute to his late Volunteer comrades in "E" company, the Eurasian Company of the 3rd Battalion SSVF in Penang. The wreath was laid by **Andrew Hwang** on behalf of the MVG, and the ceremony was also attended by **Richard Parry** our secretary in Malaysia and Singapore.

2020 – the 75th anniversary of the end of WW2

Leaflets are being sent out again reminding members about the following 2 events taking place this year.

If you are considering attending these events – even provisionally – please return the tear-off slip by post or e-mail to Rosemary.

1. Saturday 15th August – V-J Day

We need an estimate of numbers for the catering, and Chapel seating.

2. Singapore – September

The historical tour can only go ahead if we have 30 pax and a deposit for the tour has to be paid in May. The tour may seem expensive, but does include a buffet lunch. For a bespoke tour of this kind, with the services of an experienced guide, it is competitive in price. Once we have sufficient numbers, we can book coaches for the other events if necessary and send out a final costing. We will also need to know where you are staying, with addresses and contact details.

Some of you may wish to attend the planned 'unveiling' of the restored Kuala Selangor War Memorial after the events in Singapore. The following information has been sent by **Liz Moggie**:

MVG is working on the restoration of the Kuala Selangor War Memorial. Should the programme continue as hoped, there is a possibility the restored memorial with the plaques replaced will be 'unveiled' on 16th September 2020. This is Malaysia Day and therefore a public holiday throughout the Country.

At this stage, the MVG cannot confirm that this will take place, but those who are planning to book air tickets to Singapore for the 12th September commemoration may wish to book their return ticket to accommodate this, perhaps no earlier than 17th or 18th September. The following is a rough itinerary of events:-

15th Sept: Fly to KL from Singapore and onto Kuala Selangor by road. [MVG will inform designated flights; arrange land transport from KLIA to Kuala Selangor; and book hotel accommodation there. All to travel on the same flight].

Possible visit to historic hill fort site or Museum.

16th Sept: Unveiling Ceremony. Evening trip to view the fireflies on the Selangor River.

17th Sept: Transport to KLIA for return flight to Singapore with the possibility of connecting to onward overseas flights that night.

N.B. Please let Rosemary know if you are interested in the Kuala Selangor trip. The MVG is sorry for the lack of concrete plans at this stage, but hopes to be able to confirm the details in April.

If the unveiling does not take place, the extra days can be spent at leisure in Singapore or elsewhere in the region.

An interesting comment in the Star Newspaper on 23rd November 2019 by 'Azim', entitled: "Remember the fallen" "Honouring our military history" by **Terence Toh** (*The Star*, 14th Nov) was such an interesting read. Yes, the deeds and sacrifices of war heroes past and present deserve to be preserved, honoured and promoted. However, some are suffering from the ravages of time and are forgotten. One such historical war site is the WW2 Memorial at Kuala Selangor that was built in memory of 23 valiant men (of whom seven were locals) who died as a result of enemy action from December 1941 to September 1945. A follow-up story on this forgotten memorial would certainly help us to honour these men and acknowledge their deeds.

MVG'S ANNUAL REUNION AND LUNCHEON
HELD AT THE RAF CLUB, LONDON
12TH October 2019

In the magnificent venue of the RAF Club's Sovereigns' Room, our annual get-together last October must rate as one of the most successful we have had. Despite the transport problems in London, caused by protesters blocking Trafalgar Square and other important areas, nearly 70 members and guests booked to attend, and managed to make their way to Piccadilly through the traffic chaos. Can we dare to hope that in October 2020, London will be free of marchers, protesters and other hangers-on determined to prevent MVG members and the public in general from travelling freely on the Saturday of our Luncheon!? Probably not.

Although most members who attended the reunion and lunch this year come every year and now know each other well, we were very pleased to welcome some new-comers to this event. We hope they enjoyed the afternoon as much as we did, and managed to make new friends and connections. Judging by the buzz of conversation, there is still plenty to talk about and it is good to hear that new friendships and acquaintances have been made at these gatherings.

We were delighted to welcome **Klaus Lunoe**, MVG member from Denmark, and **Zaharah Othman** who writes for the New Straits Times, both of whom came with **Ruth Rollitt** and her husband **Philip**. We thank **Zaharah** for taking a great selection of photographs during the afternoon – a few of which are shown below.

It is always good to meet the relatives of members – **Ginny FitzWilliams** brought her son and grandson, **Malcolm** and **Tom FitzWilliams**, and her daughter and son-in-law, **Emma** and **Henry Snow** with their son **William**. We also met **Anne Read's** sisters, **Lucy Smith** and **Fay Rubython** and **Olga Henderson's** two daughters **Catriona Murray** and **Jessie Cullen**. We hope they will be encouraged to join the MVG.

The security rules at the Club again meant that we were obliged to check members into Club and we are grateful to **Becca Kenneison** for manning the entrance. This new rule, together with the seating plan which was introduced last year, proved to be successful again, and I hope everyone was happy with their table arrangement.

The lighter menu option enabled us to keep the cost of the lunch the same as 2018, and it seems to have been enjoyed by everyone, although fresh fruit salad seems to be a preferred choice for dessert this year. We will liaise with the Banqueting Office about the menu later in the year.

In the absence of the **Jacksons**, who normally do such a sterling job at selling draw tickets, we are very grateful to **Imogen Holmes**, **Mary Harris** and **Liz Moggie** for raising a marvellous record total of £395, including money from the sale of **Mary's** book. This money is earmarked to pay for the electricity in the Muntok Museum of Peace. The wonderful array and variety of prizes which were on display near the entrance, made the draw a real feature of the lunch. This took place after the talk at the end of the lunch. It was carried out in double quick time, with tickets being handed out by **Imogen** and called out by **Liz** and **Rosemary**. A very big thank you to you all for your generosity and for the many lovely prizes you donated.

We also thank **Michael Thompson** for saying Grace and **Hugh Chaplin** for giving the toast to the Volunteers.

Hilary Green's talk with its intriguing title, **Malaya – A Family Affair** gave a fascinating picture of life in early 20th century Malaya, and the work done by those families who settled there and made Malaya their life's work. **Hilary's** grandfather **Alan Custance Baker MCS**, was the British Advisor to the **Sultan of Kelantan**. **Hilary** started her talk by reading from her grandmother **Barbara's** book, **"The Here-we-goes,"** which gave an insight into the lives of their children living in Malaya in those days, one of whom was **Barton (Barry) Custance Baker**, **Hilary's** father. During WW2, by now a commissioned officer in the Royal Corps of Signals, **Barry** was sent to Malaya in July 1941 in charge of the men of 27 Line Section. This was largely made up of the Glasgow Post Office Special Reserve Unit, similar to the Territorial Army but the men were mainly technical tradesmen and therefore could be considered as 'volunteers.' After the fall of Singapore, **Barry** and his men were sent up to Thailand to work on the Railway in November 1942. Thus a true 'daughter' of Malaya, **Hilary's** talk was both personal and informative. Her book, **"Surviving the Death Railway. A POW's Memoir and Letters from Home,"** tells the story of her father's war partly through a series of letters sent to him by his wife **Phyllis**, who also corresponded with the relatives of the men under **Barry's** command. It gives a fascinating insight into the lives of these men and their relatives left at home.

Mary Harris gave the vote of thanks to **Hilary** for her interesting talk about her family connections with Malaya.

This year's reunion and luncheon is on Saturday 17th October 2020.

Our speaker is **Colin Hygate**, who will be talking about his father's wartime experiences. **Len Hygate** served with the 1st Battalion SSVF. In April 1943, he was sent from Changi to Batu Lintang Camp in Kuching, Sarawak, as part of 'E' Force. **Colin** has made it his mission to discover the exact location of Poak Camp where a group of POWs, including his father, were transferred to build a road from Kuching to Pontianak.

Hilary Green and Mary Harris



**Colin Hygate with Dr. Nigel Stanley (left)
Anne Read (right) and Fay Rubython (back)**



**Jonathan Moffatt discusses a point
with Hilary Green**



**L to R. Klaus Lunoe, Ruth Rollitt, Joan Scoular
and Philip Rollitt**



**L to R. Zaharah Othman with
Jenny and James Northcote-Green**



**Ginny FitzWilliams' family members with
Anthony Cooper (left) and Erica Horsley (back)**



**R Foreground Olga Henderson with
Daughters Catriona and Jessie**



Members gather before sitting down for lunch



**REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY- 10th NOVEMBER 2019
AT THE CENOTAPH IN LONDON – Report by Imogen Holmes**

Assembling on Horse Guards Parade

L to R: Imogen, Ruth, Anthony, June, Rosemary, Karen, Jane, Alison, and Mary.



L to R: Alison, Karen, Ruth, Christine, Jane Imogen, June, Anthony and Mary in Whitehall



MVG marching behind the Gurkhas at the Cenotaph



On a beautiful crisp Autumn morning, sandwiched between days of rain, 10 members of the MVG gathered in Horse Guards Parade on Sunday, 10th November, ready to march in the annual Remembrance Day parade past the Cenotaph in London, to mark the 101st anniversary of Armistice Day 1918, which ended the Great War.

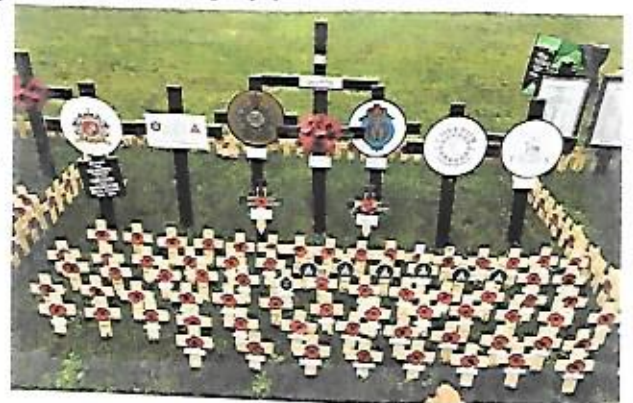
We all felt we were part of something very special as crowds of veterans began filling Horse Guards, looking for their designated places, just after 9 a.m. when the gates were opened. This year we were in Column D, which was

easy to find. **Rosemary Fell** was already there with the marker, which was incorrectly labelled 'Malayan Veterans', in our place just behind the Gurkhas. Marching this year with **Rosemary** were **Christine Cavender, Mary Harris, Karen Harney, Imogen Holmes, Anthony** and **June Jackson, Jane Nielsen, Alison Keating** and **Ruth Rollitt**. Places had been booked for **Yvonne Wurtzburg** and **Christine's** husband **Michael**; alas neither was able to march, although **Yvonne**, who had attended the Cross Planting Ceremony at Westminster Abbey on Thursday, 7th November, joined us for lunch later.

Shortly before 10a.m. we were marshalled into orderly rows and, as the clock struck, we began to march out through the archway into Whitehall, avoiding the puddles from the day and night before. Our Column being the first, we turned right towards the Cenotaph, which we could see, over a sea of people, in the distance. It seemed a long wait until 11 a.m. with feet becoming increasingly cold, when the first boom of guns, marking the start of the two-minute silence, made us jump. The silence was complete, with no sound of traffic and no murmur or cough from the enormous crowd. It felt incredibly poignant as we thought of that time 101 years ago. We were very close to one of the large TV screens, so we were able to watch the wreath laying and then join in the hymn singing during the service, following which, we began to march, cold feet immediately forgotten. We didn't have a march master this year so, as we followed the Gurkhas, we listened out for theirs – left right, left right, 'eyes left' at the Cenotaph and 'eyes right' at the dais, where **HRH Prince Andrew** took the salute. Throughout our route, crowds were thronged on the pavements behind the barriers, applauding all the way, making it all the more emotional as we marched to honour our relatives involved in the terrible wars of the last century, especially our FEPOWs.

All too soon we were back at Horse Guards parade and found ourselves standing very near Jeremy Corbyn, who was chatting to some ladies before walking away across the parade ground. Being the first column back, it was a long wait until all the marchers returned, the National Anthem played, **Prince Andrew** was driven away, and we were able to leave and walk to the Cellarium Café in Westminster Abbey, for a very welcome lunch of hot soup and rolls.

FEPOW Plot at the Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey with Volunteers Badge (L) and MVG Badge (R)



SERVICE AT TUGU NEGARA – SUNDAY 10TH NOVEMBER

Liz Moggie sent this report from Kuala Lumpur:

MVG members present were **Anthony Cooper, Tunku Zain, Rod Noble, Andrew and Lisa Hwang.**

I arrived by 7.10a.m. to find plenty of parking and seating. Guests were requested to arrive by 7.45 ready for the start of the Service at 8a.m. The service was attended by more than 700 people and ended with the wreath laying. Most wreath layers were called up in groups of 4, but only 2 names were called out when the MVG's wreath was laid by **Andrew Hwang**, the other wreath layer being **Tan Sri Thana Balasingam**, a distinguished ex-Admiral. Various other ex-servicemen's Associations were represented and several diplomats including from Germany, but not from Japan. The new High Commissioner to Malaysia, **H.E. Charles Hay MVO**, seems to be more focused on the "Commonwealth Contribution" rather than having a sense of what WW2 meant for Malaysia. One remark in his speech, which I felt was excellent, but hadn't heard before, was his idea that the first minute of the two-minute silence is for those who sacrificed their lives in war and the second minute is for those who returned. He also said, "Today, we remember the 80 years since the beginning of the Second World War which lasted over six years and involved more than 100 million people. We remember those who sacrificed their lives fighting for peace and for our liberty." Hymns included the singing of "A Wish for Peace"; "Abide with Me" and "I Vow to Thee My Country"; and readings were from "In Flanders Fields" and "For the Fallen." Breakfast was served at the High Commissioner's Residence following the service, by invitation only.

REMEMBRANCE DAY – MONDAY 11TH NOVEMBER in LONDON, ONTARIO

Report by **Sallie Hammond** - MVG's Secretary in Canada and the USA

The Remembrance Day Ceremony at the Cenotaph in London, Ontario, was very meaningful and enjoyable in spite of Minus 8 degrees with snow. BRRR!

Thinking that I would like to do the same again in London, Ontario, next year (2020) for the convenience and for my health (arthritis wise), I attended a debriefing meeting given by the Commander of the London Legion and the Legion Committee, and we (MVG CANADA/USA) have been invited to lay a wreath again in 2020.

Toronto is a good two hours on the train for me, and Remembrance Day is on a Wednesday which means that traffic and people will be busy in the city. London is more manageable. There were 3,500 at the Remembrance Day here, a good turn-out for a city which has a population of about 400,000.

If MVG CANADA/USA members wish to attend the ceremony – there are two good hotels located near the Cenotaph – half the price of Toronto. **Alex** and I would arrange to meet you to take you to the hotels and the Remembrance Day Ceremony.

I have also offered to be the "blanket nurse" for the Veterans at the Cenotaph. The city provides blankets for the Veterans sitting in their seats or wheelchairs. This year, no-one gave them out – not enough helpers – and we had some very cold Veterans at the Cenotaph, in spite of wearing their own winter clothing – gloves, hats and scarves.

In 2020, I have offered to give out blankets to these poor, brave souls!

Many Veterans arrived in heated buses and watched from the windows of their buses, too frail now to venture out.

They enjoyed the Parade and Ceremony in comfort. They waved to us all from their windows when the Ceremony was over – very touching indeed.

Our MVG wreath was well received and there were many positive comments, including responses from **Chung Chee Min** and **Jonathan Russell**.

"Malayan Volunteers Group. CANADA/USA
FAR EAST 1942-1945

The wreath was laid by myself at the Byron Cenotaph in memory of the 43 Canadians who joined the Malayan Volunteer Forces for the defence of Singapore in 1942, and also those Canadians and British whose lives were sacrificed at the battle of Lye Mun in Hong Kong on 25th December 1941.

2020 is the 75th anniversary of the Surrender of the Japanese and the Liberation of the prisoner of War camps in the Far East – including Hong Kong.

The Byron Cenotaph in London, Ontario, is a smaller version of the Cenotaph in Whitehall, London, UK. Funding for this memorial was raised in 1925 by the daughters of the British Empire in London, Ontario, to honour those who served their country in the Boer War and the First World War. Since then further inscriptions have been added to the memorial to honour those who served in the Second World War, Korean War and the Afghanistan War.

The City of London at the City Hall, and other Legions in the City hosted warm lunches and refreshments for Veterans, their families and members of the public who attended the Remembrance Day Ceremony in London, Ontario.

Sallie Hammond in the snow, wearing the Bomber Command Medal, The Argyll & Sutherland Highlander's Regimental Pin and her poppy.



“Lest We Forget – Andai Nya Kita Terlupa”
Report by Richard Parry MVG’s secretary in Malaysia

The Annual Penang Remembrance Ceremony was held on Sunday 17th November 2019 at the War Memorial located on the Esplanade adjacent to the Padang Kota Lama. As usual, the proceedings were efficiently organised by **Major Ramanathan Sivarajan** (Ret’d) of the Penang Veterans’ Association, who also acted as Master of Ceremonies. The MVG was represented by **Richard Parry** and **Andrew Hwang** who laid a wreath on behalf of the MVG.

Attendees began assembling at about 6.40am, and the pre-dawn hours had been marked by an extensive thunderstorm. The grey skies, loud thunder and flashes of lightening over the island somehow seemed appropriate, and lent a rather sombre note to the event. Fortunately, the weather improved after sunrise and the rain abated leaving a pleasantly cool morning. VIPs duly arrived and included **YAB Chow Kon Yeow**, the Chief Minister of Penang; **H.E. Mr. Charles Hay, KVO**, the British High Commissioner; the Nepalese Ambassador; the High Commissioner of Fiji; and representatives from the High Commissions of India, Australia and New Zealand. Among the senior serving military representatives were the Defence Advisors of the UK, India, Australia and New Zealand, and the Deputy Commanding Officer of the Butterworth Integrated Area Defence System, **Brigadier General Thong Veng Leong**. Many Veterans also attended from the Malaysian services, the Australian and British military and a contingent of veterans from the Naval Association of Western Australia. As usual, an especially warm reception was given to **Mr. James Jeremiah**, now aged 96, who received a rousing round of applause from the gathered crowd, which was estimated to number over 400.

The Ceremony began with the playing of the Negaraku and the State Anthem of Pulau Pinang, followed by addresses by Chief Minister **YAB Chow Kon Yeow**, British High Commissioner **HE Charles Hay** and **Major Sivarajan**. These were followed by the Wreath laying Ceremony, which culminated in the playing of the last Post, a two-minute silence, and Reveille.

Following the conclusion of the Ceremony, all attendees were invited to breakfast on the Esplanade.

MVG member James Jeremiah



Andrew Hwang lays the wreath for the MVG



The Cenotaph with MVG’s wreath bottom rt



KUNDESANG WAR MEMORIAL SERVICE by ANGLICAN LEADERS

On 5th October 2019, Archbishops from Australia and the UK joined leaders from the Church of East Asia in a memorial service in Sabah, Borneo, at the Kundesang War Memorial to pray for peace as they remembered the 2,400-plus victims who were marched to their death at the end of WW2. Speaking after the service, U.K. **Archbishop Justin Welby** said that the Reflection Garden, including stone plaques inscribed with the names of all those who died, was an extraordinary place, which enabled him to think about each person who had died and the family and loved-ones they had left behind.

Some 641 British soldiers and 1,787 Anzac soldiers died in 1945 during the Japanese occupation. They were taken from POW camps, where they had already been pushed to the edge of survival, and then forced to march 260 km inland to Ranau. Only a handful of soldiers managed to escape and survive these infamous Sandakan Death Marches.

Established in 1962 by a local family, the Kundesang Memorial was one of the first to commemorate the Australian and British POWs who died in Sandakan, and also remembers the people of North Borneo who risked their lives to help the POWs. Designed by a local architect, it is made up of 4 interlocking but separate gardens to represent the homelands of those who died: an Australian garden, a formal English Garden of roses, a Borneo Garden with wild flowers of Kinabalu, and at the top level, a Contemplation Garden with a reflection pool and pergola.

Dr. Philip Freier, Archbishop of Melbourne, said he felt privileged to be there and take part in the service. He said, “It’s a weighty remembrance of loss and the suffering of war – it’s been very touching to hear the local people talk about their respect for the sacrifice that was made.” He said the service and the memorial highlighted the reconciliation that is possible in Christ. [Editor: We thank Rt. Revd. George Connor for sending this article].

78TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SINKING OF HMS PRINCE OF WALES AND HMS REPULSE



On a cold and windy morning of 10th December, members and friends gathered together at the NMA. This annual memorial service is dedicated to the memory of those who were lost at sea or served aboard *HMS Prince of Wales* and *HMS Repulse*. Both these capital ships were attacked by several squadrons of Japanese aircraft while in the South China Sea. Over 800 men lost their lives, and many of those who survived were later killed defending Singapore. This year, we lost one of the remaining survivors from *Repulse*, Royal Marine Maurice Pink. [Ed: See Obits] He was 94 and passed away in October 2019. Maurice regularly attended these memorial services and will be sadly missed. Several other members were also missing, due to the commissioning of the new aircraft carrier from the Queen Elizabeth Class, *HMS Prince of Wales*. As honoured guests, they had been invited to Portsmouth where the ceremony was taking place.

Although we were few in numbers, we made our way to the Memorial Stone where a short service was held. The service was conducted by the Revd. Tony Wood, who offered up prayers and said a few words. He reminded us of not only those who lost their lives on 10th December, but also of those who became prisoners of war and suffered so terribly under the hands of the Japanese.

The service was followed by the Act of Remembrance, when a lone bugler played the Last Post. A short period of silence was observed followed by Reveille. Wreaths were laid and we all joined in saying the Naval and Royal Marine Prayer. After a short time of reflection and the customary tradition of enjoying a “tot of rum”, we made our way back to the very welcome refreshment area, where some of the party enjoyed a Christmas lunch and others tea or coffee. We trust next year will be a little warmer.

WEBSITES TO VISIT

<https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2019/10/anglican-leaders-pray-for-peace-during-kundesang-war-memorial-service.aspx> See report on Page 7 on the Kundesang War Memorial

<https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/living/2019/11/22/honouring-our-military-history> Article in the Star newspaper and posted on MVG's facebook page

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2019/11/542358/group-brought-chin-pengs-ashes-back-malaysia-slammed> Article in the New Straits Times on the subject of the repatriation of Chin Peng's ashes. Also posted on MVG's Facebook.

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2019/11/542352/home-ministry-unaware-chin-pengs-ashes-brought-back-malaysia> New Straits Times article

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2019/11/27/chin-pengs-final-wish-gets-fulfilled> The Star newspaper's article

<http://watch.sydneysymphony.com/detail/videos/sydney-symphony-live/video/5856181008001/the-happiness-box-with-the-sydney-symphony-orchestra?autoStart=true> The Happiness Box Story set to music

<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/notice/3443224> Correction to the citation in the London Gazette for Rosemary Fell's BEM

PRESENTATION OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL TO ROSEMARY FELL

By Jane Edrich



The Lord-Lieutenant of Devon, David Fursdon, presenting Rosemary with her BEM medal

I first met **Rosemary** in 1951 when we were at St. Felix School, a boarding school in Suffolk. We became very good friends in the Junior School, and have remained so ever since.

My interest in the MVG came about through our friendship and also through my late husband's brother, **Geoffrey Edrich**. He was in the Lancashire Regiment and sent out to fight in the Malayan Campaign. He was captured shortly after the fall of Singapore. As a prisoner of the Japanese, he first endured Changi, then the Railway and finally he was transported to Japan on one of the 'hell ships' to work in the salt mines. The latter were the worst conditions he endured. Luckily he survived and went on to play professional cricket for Lancashire after the war. My own husband, **Brian Edrich**, was a search and rescue pilot with the RAF during the war, based in Ratmalana in Ceylon, as it then was. He, too, went on to play professional cricket for Kent and Glamorgan post-war.

Rosemary invited me with another friend, **Carole Elkins**, to join her in the Committee Suites at County Hall, Exeter, on Friday, 11th October, to take part in the presentation and celebration of her British Empire Award. The awards were being presented by the Lord-Lieutenant of Devon, **David Fursdon**. He was a distinguished and charming host – very tall, slim and grey-haired. He looked particularly handsome in his ceremonial uniform with his sword by his side. He gave the occasion great presence, but also made it feel relaxed and friendly. During his army career, he had been commissioned into the 6th Gurkha Rifles, serving in Hong Kong and Brunei, which gave him a valid connection with the Far East.

When I arrived, I was shown into the Reception area of the Committee Suites where everyone was assembled prior to being ushered upstairs to the main Committee Room. **Rosemary** and **Carole** were already there, and I joined them for a cup of coffee. While we were chatting we were joined by a lady who was one of the deputy Lord-Lieutenants, and **Rosemary** happened to mention to her the mistake in her citation which had been printed in the Queen's Birthday Honours announcements in June. The lady, whose name we didn't learn, said she would check the citation which had been sent to Exeter from the Cabinet Office. To **Rosemary's** horror, it was again incorrect, despite the fact that the Cabinet Office had been contacted following the newspaper announcements, and asked to make a correction. Instead of reading, "for voluntary services to the Malayan Volunteers Group" the citation again stated, "for voluntary services to the British Malaysian Society." Luckily, the kind deputy Lord-Lieutenant was able to get the citation changed before the ceremony, and averted what would have been an embarrassing moment for **Rosemary** had the wrong citation been read out. [Ed: The citation was corrected in the London Gazette on 9th December, along with 15 other corrections! Thanks are due to Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Segrave, Registrar, Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. See website.]

Just before 2p.m. we were called to go up to the main Committee Suite. The Mayor and other Dignitaries were already seated with their impressive chains of office. We were seated in the front row on the other side of the room with the other recipients of awards. The chairs were arranged in a semicircle which made the ceremony less formal.

When everyone had found their place, we were asked to stand for the arrival of The Lord-Lieutenant and to sing the National Anthem. The Lord-Lieutenant then welcomed everyone and briefly described how the afternoon's ceremony would proceed. Each recipient was to come to the front, stand next to the Lord-Lieutenant in front of a large portrait of Her Majesty The Queen, while the citation was read out by an official at the lectern, together with a brief description of why the

award had been given.

Ten awards were presented that afternoon, one OBE to an elderly Professor, six BEMs and 3 group medals – the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS). **Rosemary** was the first of the BEM awards to be called forward and she stood while the citation and description of her work was given. The Lord-Lieutenant pinned on her medal and they were photographed together before **Rosemary** sat down. She must have felt so proud. She formed the MVG in honour of her father and she has certainly done that.

After the last award was presented there was a group photograph taken of all the recipients with the Lord-Lieutenant, and then friends and relatives were able to take private photos as well. We then went down to the Ante Chamber for a cream tea and cakes. It was a very happy occasion and I was so glad to have been part of it.

Carole Elkins added:

Rosemary and I have been friends for 41 years. I first met her when she became engaged to her late husband, **Donald**, who was a friend of our family.

I remember when **Rosemary** and her mother went on a pilgrimage to Thailand in the 1980s, to visit her father's grave. Upon her return, **Rosemary** told me how moving and emotional the experience had been for both of them. This inspired **Rosemary** to take it upon herself to set about the task of forming a memorial for all those Volunteers like her father, who had lost their lives defending the territory against the Japanese. Since then she has devoted many hours of her time to the cause, and must feel proud of what she has achieved in creating the Malayan Volunteers Group.

I felt privileged to have been invited to the presentation of the British Empire Medal to **Rosemary** by the Lord-Lieutenant of Devon on behalf of H.M. The Queen. There cannot be a more worthy recipient.

**Carole Elkins (L) and Jane Edrich (R)
before the ceremony**



The History of my Father's Watch – by Martin Everard



The Bravington Watch

Inscribed, 'From Barbara to Ray 30-08-37', is the watch that my mother bought for my father as a wedding present. It is a Bravington wind-up watch, an unusual art-deco design being octagonal rather than round. The watch has had a remarkable life.

This is my father's account of it, related in a letter to my mother, dated 14th September 1945:

"My wrist watch, which you gave me years ago, I kept until 23rd December 1944 in spite of a number of searches for valuables by the Nips. However, they spotted it in the end and made me hand it over. I have already made an application for its return but, knowing the Nips, I expect they have sold it by now. Waterproof watches were being sold all over Thailand for anything from \$180 to \$250."

The story continues when, later, he was taken to see a large pile of watches, which had been repatriated from the Japanese and, behold, his watch was near the edge and, because of the inscription, easy to identify. He wound it up and it started working. It required only a new face and he continued to use it until the 1960s when Bravingtons said they could no longer repair it, but an amateur watch repairer kept it going for another two or three years. My father recounted that the Japanese took the watches so that each soldier would have two, one set to Tokyo time, the other to local, so that they could bow to the East at 6 o'clock Tokyo time. Because his watch was not a famous make, the Japanese individuals were not interested in it.

My father died on 4th July 1987. The watch eventually came into my hands and for many years, I wore it regularly and it kept perfect time. Once I took it to Bravingtons in Brighton to service it, and to see what it was worth, but their interest was more in the metal linked strap rather than the watch. I still wear it occasionally and it still keeps time. When not on my wrist, it is in its box in the safe together with his medals and other memorabilia of his terrible years and experiences.

SINGAPORE'S FIRST WEEKS OF OCCUPATION

By T.P.M. Lewis – from the Malaysia Magazine May 1973.

Sunday, 15th February, 1942, had been a day of great confusion and uncertainty, yet when at about 5 p.m. rumours began to circulate in Stamford Road, Cecil Street and elsewhere that we were about to surrender, very few of those not in the know believed them.

One rumour was that a Signals officer had received an order to surrender and destroy all equipment at 4 p.m., yet **Captain Vanrennan**, a Volunteer officer, produced an official declaration denying any such intention. So when another officer said that rumours were all true and that plans for capitulation were already proceeding, I suppose it was a natural reaction for me to draw my revolver, arrest him as a fifth columnist, bundle him into my car and take him up to Fort Canning, my brother **John** and "**Panjang**" **Evans**, of the Straits Trading Company, acting as escorts.

We were not able to see **General Percival** (he, if we had known, was already on his way to see **General Yamashita**), but we did talk to two brigadiers. However, they were so vague and non-committal in their statements that we had to let our suspect go.

It was dark before we became convinced that capitulation was imminent, thought sporadic gunfire continued. By now I had left 13, Fort Canning Road where I had been staying, and joined my brother and other Customs officers at the Customs House in Maxwell Road.

Another Customs officer, **Arnold Gridley**, had acquired some sort of motor-launch and he invited me to join him in escaping across to Sumatra. Using my car, I collected 25 gallons of petrol in five 5-gallon tins by pumping out from deserted petrol pumps. Soon five or six other Customs officers wished to accompany us, too many for safety, so I was not too disappointed when it was discovered that the launch had been stolen and the escape plan was off.

Mr. H.W. Phear, Comptroller of Customs, whom I had known for some years, then kindly invited me to stay on at the Customs House with my brother and this I gladly did. But for his consideration, I would have ended up in one of the military camps. I was, I believe, one of only four Volunteers to enter the civilian internment camp in Changi.

I woke up next morning on the floor of the Customs House to a strange and almost eerie silence. As I walked down Anson Road to throw my revolver into the Telok Ayer dock, very few people were about. All shops were shut, one or two bodies still lay where they had fallen in the previous day's bombing, while Maxwell Road was crammed full of empty military lorries parked on both sides of the road.

The first Japs I saw arrived three or four at a time in private cars, poking their rifles out of the sunshine roofs and wearing white basin-shaped helmets. They posted sentries at strategic points, such as bridges, and stopped all cars (except, curiously, those driven by Europeans or army personnel) and ordered the occupants to abandon their vehicles and walk.

Those of us in the Customs House got down to organizing ourselves as soon as possible. Altogether there were 52 persons, mostly Customs officers, but also some Food Control officers and their wives, and here we remained for over two months, forgotten it seemed by the Japs, as we were never ordered to do any work. We were, however, issued with Japanese passes, though I personally was never asked once to produce mine.

PT and Prayers

Considering that we were living in the heart of Singapore, our contacts with the Japs were infrequent. A tank unit of 10 tanks occupied the Detective Station opposite for a month but then left, possibly for Java. Every morning they used to do PT on the flat roof; every evening at dusk they used to turn eastwards and offer prayers in unison for the Emperor.

One morning I spoke to one of their officers. The main topic of conversation was Rugby football, as he claimed to have played for a Kyushu University XV against a New Zealand Students XV.

A sentry guard post was set up close to where we lived and relations with this remained amicable. But we could not help noticing the groups of unfortunate Chinese looters on their knees outside the guardroom, trussed up like so many fowls. Their hands were tied behind their backs with wire and an extension of the wire was pulled tightly round their necks so that they spent many hours in a very uncomfortable position.

What happened to them eventually we never knew, but we suspected that they were beheaded. The heads of some looters were, I am told, displayed on iron spikes elsewhere, but I personally did not see these.

Very occasionally a Jap officer would visit us, and I well remember one colonel who was particularly fluent in Malay. It was fortunate that did not see me, as I recognised him as the Jap photographer who used to take the school photographs at my school in Kuala Kangsar. When the Japs has started to ill-treat British residents at Tientsin and elsewhere in early 1940 I had dispensed with his services in favour of a Chinese photographer, explaining in a letter why I was doing so.

Quite soon after the fall, we had had a visit from an irate Jap sentry, looking for the person who had urinated on him from an upstairs window. The culprit luckily for him, was not found but had, I believe, been drunk. Actually alcohol was already in very short supply as a result of government policy to deny the Japs the means of getting drunk and committing in Singapore the atrocities which they were alleged to have committed in Hong Kong. The general discipline of the ordinary Jap soldier was good, if one accepted his habit of publicly urinating in the street.

It was some time before the public services of Singapore (or Syonan, as the Japs called it) returned to something like normal. It was a month before the Municipal lorries began to clear away the accumulated filth, and many more weeks still before they could clean up the side streets where a plaque of flies multiplied.

Apart from ourselves, a number of other Europeans remained out doing various jobs. About 50 or 60 engineers, we were told, were employed in repairing and operating the sewage and water services; 25 more remained at the Central Fire Brigade Station, and there were also a number of health officers.

Visits were paid by **Bishop Wilson** and the **Rev. Hayter** and **Canon Adams**. Services were allowed to continue at the Cathedral on Sundays when a Christian Jap officer attended to ensure that no sermons or addresses were given. Instead we used to have extra hymn singing. Part of the Cathedral grounds was used as a repair depot for military vehicles and was guarded by armed Sikhs.

Transport in Singapore remained difficult for anyone without a car. We nearly always walked but when trolley buses began to run again we occasionally bought a third-class ticket up to the Cathedral, Jap officers travelling first class at the front of the bus. The more senior of them, however, had cars of their own, each with its coloured flag to indicate the rank of the occupant. Cars beyond repair would be chained together in batches of five or six and dragged unceremoniously on their hubs down to the docks for shipment to Japanese armament factories. Petrol supplies were obviously scarce, and it was a common sight to see a couple of Municipal lorries full of labourers with one lorry towing the other.

Sallying out for a 'look-see'

As we had no work to do time hung heavily on us after a while, and on many afternoons I used to sally forth with a friend to see what was happening and to have a meal of bacon and eggs in a café. Most cafes and shops now displayed the Jap flag, and one bullock cart driver I saw had painted a red circle on his bullock's forehead. Though I always wore my khaki uniform, it is remarkable that we were never stopped or questioned. Indeed, we frequently sat down to a meal at the Polar café at a table next to Jap officers.

On day I met a Danish planter named **Moller** at this café. As I knew he had been an officer in the Perak Volunteers only a month previously, I was intrigued when he told me that he was now a "neutral civilian". I believe he and all other Danes ended up at Cameron Highlands and were never interned.

On another occasion, I came across a batch of my former *Roseforce* Aussie comrades working in the street under armed guard. They recognized me at once and naturally some black looks were directed towards me until I was able to contact a captain in a neighbouring chemist shop and explain matters.

There was always the risk of being mistaken for a Quisling. On another occasion when I had relayed to some Volunteer friends the latest BBC news, they had gone off convinced (so I heard later) that I had defected to the enemy as they refused to believe my version of the news.

On or about 12th or 13th April, we noticed the arrival in the Singapore harbour of a very large Jap fleet of about 44 vessels, five or six of which were obviously aircraft carriers. This was the fleet that had attacked Colombo a few days earlier. The place was swarming with Jap sailors, and I met one under curious circumstances at a bookseller's stall on Collyer Quay.

I was looking at a book when I suddenly became aware of another head under my armpit. It was that of a diminutive but friendly Jap sailor obviously eager to display his knowledge of English. Pointing first to me he said, "You, one man?" and then pointing to **Johnny Johnston**, who was with me, he said, "You, two men?" He kept repeating this formula for five minutes.

With sacks into internment

There were various false alarms before we finally left for Changi Internment Camp. One particular occasion I

remember well as 20 of us actually started to walk there.

We had packed our few belongings into small suitcases, **Gridley** and I sharing a porter's trolley which I had found. As we trudged through the main streets the watching crowds did not jeer us; on the contrary, cries of *adohi* (alas) were frequent as we passed. But when we had gone perhaps two miles and were approaching the Geylang bridge, a Jap officer caught up with us in his car and ordered us back to Maxwell Road.

If we had been allowed to go a little further, we might have seen the devastation caused by the accidental explosion of one of our munition dumps at the Geylang English School. According to rumour there had been 2,000 casualties, including 200 Japs.

It was obvious, however, that our departure for Changi could not be far away, and some of us bought what we could for what could be a long internment – vitamin tablets such as Abidol, which we obtained at the Sincere Dispensary, Bovril, Marmite, razor blades, tooth brushes, etc. Many shops had, in fact, little to offer except rows and rows of empty shelves.

Jap soldiers indeed paid for that they bought, but only in the already devalued Japanese "banana" paper money. We in the Customs House were lucky in that we still held large stocks of sugar, tinned peas and 'Ayam' brand tinned sardines, so we were never short of these items of food.

Final orders for our departure came at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, 22nd April. At 3 p.m. about half of us left in two lorries. Apart from our own belongings, we also took with us some three sacks of sugar, 600 tins of sardines, and 1200 tins of peas, intended for the common pool. There was no cell accommodation when we arrived, and **Johnny Johnston** and I dosed down for the night at the foot of "B" Block staircase.

Next day, I was allotted Cell No: 39 on the third floor, next door to the cell to be occupied a month or two later by **Bishop Wilson**.

[Editor: It is interesting to note that despite wearing his khaki Volunteer's uniform, T.P.M. Lewis was not interned as military personnel, but as a civilian along with other Volunteers who were captured at their civilian posts. It was simply the luck of the draw!]

THE LIBERATORS ARE COMING – MALAYA 1944/1945

With thanks to Dave Croft RAFBPA

The Monsoon Boats.

In 1943, Admiral Donitz, Commander-in-Chief of the German Navy, authorised the sending of U-Boats to the Far East where it was intended, with their Japanese counterparts, to well and truly create havoc with allied shipping. The first group of *Monsoon Boats* left occupied Europe mid-1943 for Penang, the principal Far East base from which both Japanese and German submarines were to operate.

Major repairs were to be undertaken at the Singapore dry dock as Penang did not have the facilities to carry out major repairs. Further facilities were also provided at Djakarta and Soerabaya. The first group of U-boats (4) arrived during October/November 1943. Of the second group of four U-boats sent from Europe in late 1943, only one reached Penang during April 1944. By this time, the role of the Far East U-boats was being switched to attempting to send badly needed war materials (rubber, quinine, opium, tin and molybdenum) back to Europe. Penang ceased to be an operating U-boat base after October 1944 when those U-boats still 'active' in the Far East were transferred to Djakarta and Soerabaya.

1944. The RAF go Gardening(1)

For both Japanese and German submarines in wartime Penang, the island was regarded as being a safe haven in that it was far from Ceylon and India, believed too far for Allied aircraft to make the long journey and then return to their bases. Their complacency didn't last long. Following continuous Allied submarine activity and then a long distance flight by RAF long range Consolidated Liberator bombers from India on 27th October 1944, 1,000lb aerial mines(2) were laid in the waters between Penang and the Malayan coastline. To enable this first aerial mining flight to Penang to happen, aircraft of 159 Squadron based at Digri, near Calcutta had mid-position gun turrets and armour plating removed and bomb bay fuel tanks fitted to each aircraft intended to carry four aerial mines.

Flying from the USAAF base at Kharagpur, the 15 RAF Liberators of 159 Squadron successfully delivered 60 mines to the inner approaches of Penang Harbour on a 3,000 miles return flight. All safely returned to India.

160 Squadron follows on 159 Squadron success.

In November 1944, the role of 160 Squadron(3), based in Ceylon, was changed from general reconnaissance to mine laying. For

this role, the Squadron trained to drop mines with precision from a height of 200 feet at night. Should rain over the target obscure visibility, a low level Air-Surface-Vessel (ASV) radar approach was to be used ... not as good as a visual but better than returning from a long distant target with the mines still on board. Also, using the experience gained from the October 1944 flight to Penang, in order for each aircraft to deliver its compliment of mines over very long distances the Squadron Mark V1 Liberators were exchanged for Mark V aircraft (no front gun turret fitted). Also to lighten the aircraft further the top turrets, armour plating, oxygen systems and Elsan chemical toilets were removed and rear turret ammunition reduced from 6,000 rounds to 600. Bomb bay fuel tanks were also fitted to extend the operational ranges – with Singapore being a possible future target!

Special Duties Flight.

In 1944, a Special Duties Flight as formed within the Squadron for gathering information on Japanese radars sited in the operational zones. Equipped with 'listening' apparatus to measure radar transmissions and carrying a 'Special Operator', 160 Squadron SDF Liberators provided invaluable information on positions and possible types of radar i.e. aircraft early warning or ship detection.

On 18th January 1945, SDF Liberator BZ938 flew to the Penang area and 'listened in' to Japanese radar transmissions from Penang Hill. The information gained suggested a radar that gave good range and coverage over the approaches to Penang and this information would have been made use of for the first operational flight on 21st January to Penang where the mine carrying Squadron Liberators went in 'at wave skimming altitude to get under the Japanese radar'. However, at such a low level it proved impossible to visually identify landmarks and the mission as aborted.

Based on the failings of this mission it was decided for the next operation the Liberators would approach the area at 200 feet and then climb to 500 feet when five miles from the target. This was put into practice on the next mission, 23rd March to Singapore, where aerial mines were released at the harbour entrances. Following a rough journey back to Ceylon due to storms, the Squadron landed at base after a journey of 21 hours and 15 minutes. In all, 40 mines were laid and all aircraft returned safely.

1944-1945 'The Men from the Sky'.

South East Asia Command (SEAC) used the Cocos (Keeling) Islands (from 1945) as a forward operating base for its heavy bombers to 'soften up' Japanese airfields on Sumatra and Malaya in preparation for the retaking of Malaya and Singapore. SEAC Liberator Squadrons sent to the islands over June/July 1945 consisted of 99, 160, 356, 203 and 321 (Netherlands) Squadrons, tasked to carry out general reconnaissance, bombing and anti-shipping missions, and after the Japanese surrender supply dropping to Allied POW camps, searches for 'hidden' POW camps, POW evacuation flights as well as continuing the dropping of Force 136 liaison personnel. However, prior to the move to the Cocos Islands, Force 136 operatives were parachuted into Malaya by Special Duties Liberator aircraft from India or Ceylon where SEAC and HQ Force 136 were now established (from April 1944). These operatives were known as '*Joes*' or '*bods*' to the RAF aircrew flying them to their insertion areas and to the Malayan aboriginal people as '*the men from the sky*', a fitting description.

Taken from "*The RAF and Far East War 1941-1945*" (4). The Special Duties (Force 136) Liberator aircrews relied on "having a decent navigator, someone who could make his own charts as he went along". One advantage for SD aircrews was that each was made responsible for a particular area and by going to the same place, in effect every third day, a picture of special features along the route was built up, useful for long distance navigation over the sea (islands) and land. The dropping zones (DZs) were generally in thick jungle, some were as small as a cricket square, and sometimes the reception committee did not turn up. The SD Liberators were modified for parachuting small groups of operatives together as a tight bunch from a height of around 500 feet into jungle clearings – this was achieved with the installation of a slide in the rear fuselage, similar to a swimming pool slide. On this, 'operatives sat behind one another, connected to their individual static lines, and when the holding bar at the bottom of the slide was pulled away by the dispatcher, out they went one after the other through the rear hatch'.

- (1) RAF term for laying a pattern of aerial mines laid in enemy shipping lanes.
- (2) Aerial mines ... measuring approximately 9 feet in length and 17 inches in diameter and weighing in at 1,000 lbs. They were designed to be parachuted from a bomber flying at low level over shallow water. The parachute was attached to the rear of the mine enabling it to enter the water vertically. Following entry the parachute would become detached and the mine sink to the sea floor. Each mine contained 750 pounds of high explosive which was detonated by a ship passing over the mine – some mines incorporated a delay mechanism which prevented detonation until a set number of ship passes had occurred. Also, as mines were dropped close to one another, an attached device prevented mines being detonated by one exploding nearby.
- (3) The 160 Squadron aircrew were a mixture of nationalities with aircrew being mainly from Canada (RCAF) and RAF Volunteer Reserve, also Australians, New Zealanders and Rhodesians; ground crew were mostly from the UK.
- (4) RAF Historical Society, 24th March 1995.

Establishing a foothold in Malaya .

In December 1944, following several abortive attempts to land (once by night) in Malaya, a number of Force 136 Malay operatives, led by **Lt. Col. P.G. Dobree (Note 1)**, were parachuted into Upper Perak on the 16th December in order to form an intelligence network and guerrilla force. For this entry (16th December), the party made a successful drop at last light near Gerik (Grik). A second Malay party led by **Major G.A. Hasler (Note 2)** was 'dropped' in February 1945 by SD Liberator to set up a similar organization to that of **Lt. Col. Dobree**. During the same month, **Major J.A. Hislop (Note 3)** and his team arrived by parachute in northern Kedah in order to organise counter-insurgency operations against the Japanese using Malayan Chinese Communist guerrillas, followed in March 1945 by a group, led by **Major J.D. Richardson (Note 4)** who parachuted into Pahang to set up communications between Pahang and Perak, and additionally to make contact with the Pahang resistance group (*Wataniah*) formed by **Yeop Mahidin bin Mohamed Shariff**, the pre-war British Malaya Pahang Assistant District Officer (*Note 5*).

The loss of 356 Squadron Liberator KL654/R.

No. 356 Squadron flew their Liberator Mk V1s from India, via Ceylon, to the Cocos Islands on the 22nd July 1945, each aircraft carrying ground crew, with one aircraft taking the squadron messing staff and kitchen equipment. In order to arrive safely at such a small speck in the vast Indian Ocean a blind approach navigation system (Loran-B) was installed on the islands prior to the arrival of the squadrons.

Following the dropping of the two atom bombs on Japan in August 1945, the role of 356's Liberators changed to Special Duties (5), delivering supplies and information leaflets to POW camps, and Force 136 personnel to liaise with those on the ground. The long flights from Brown's West Island in the Cocos group to central Malaya involved flying through a gap in the Sumatran mountains just north of the equator and crossing over Sumatra to deliver personnel and supplies to the respective DZs 356 Squadron Special Duties aircraft did not have 'agent' slides fitted as previously described, the liaison officers either jumped, or were encouraged , maybe with the dispatcher's boot?

Liberator KL654/R, flown by an all RAF Volunteer Reserve crew, along with four other squadron Liberators left Brown's West Island on the 23rd August 1945 on Special Duties flights covering DZs in Malaya. KL654/R's task was to parachute supplies and two liaison officers, **Lt. Col. Claude Fenner (Note 6)** and **Capt L.V.C White** (Royal Engineers), into the Kuala Pilah district of Negri Sembilan. Both supplies and officers landed safely on *terra firma* , which didn't happen to the aircraft ... it crashed attempting, it is believed, to clear high ground with the loss of all the crew.

The crash site was first discovered in the 1950s and reported to the authorities. In 1996, two aborigines brought two machine guns from the crash site to a local police station. The Liberator Mk V1 Carried .50 machine guns except for the tail turret guns which were .303 calibre. Following recovery of the remains of the crew, all were buried at Cheras War Graves Cemetery in Kuala Lumpur on the 18th of October 2012.

- (5) Special Duties Liberators were those used to carry Force 136 personnel and supplies for insertion into specific areas of enemy held territory in the Far East. Special Duties FLIGHT Liberators carried equipment and a special operator for monitoring Japanese radar and usually accompanied a main squadron on bombing and mine laying operations.

Brief notes (in some cases, very brief) about some of the Force 136 Liberators.

(Note 1) **Lt. Col. Peter George James Dobree** FMSVF; OBE; DSO; MC was an assistant rubber planter in Malaya followed by a position in the Malayan Department of Agriculture, then as a diary farmer in pre-war in Perak. He joined the FMSVF Volunteer Light Battery at the outbreak of war and escaped from Singapore to reach Ceylon and was commissioned in the 3/3 rd Gurkha Rifles (in India) in August 1942, followed by secondment to Force 136 for training for infiltration into Malaya. Following his team's 1944 parachute drop into Perak, he made contact with the northern aboriginal groups which enabled him to gather intelligence about the disposition of Japanese forces and relay this information back to SOE HQ in Ceylon. His team also raised a local guerrilla army *Askar Melayu Setia (Loyal Malay Soldiers)*.

Post-war he was an agriculturist living in Wellington, Somerset and wrote a book, *"Hot Rain Means Danger"* (1994) of his escape from Singapore and with Force 136.

(Note 2) **Major Geoffrey Arthur Hasler** JVE; MC pre-war Rubber Industry. On reaching India he was commissioned in the 6th Rajputana Rifles, Indian Army and seconded to Force 136.

(Note 3) **Major James Alexander Hislop** FMSVF; MC was a pre-war trainee rubber planter who arrived in Malaya in 1937 to take up his post at a rubber plantation near Port Dickson. Previously he had applied to join the RAF but was rejected due to blindness in

one eye, the result of a childhood accident. As war approached in the Far East he joined the local Volunteer Force in 1939 and was selected to become a member of the highly secretive Border Patrol, a pre-war reconnaissance group monitoring the Thai-Malay border [See Article in *Apa Khabar* – April 2017]. At the fall of Singapore, **James Hislop** escaped to India, where he joined the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles, followed by secondment to Force 136. After failing to land on Malaya by submarine, he was eventually parachuted in to Kedah in 1945. With the war over in 1945, **James Hislop** returned to Scotland on leave, and on return to Malaya took up residence again on his previous plantation. On the outbreak of the Emergency (1948) he enrolled in **Ferret Force** as a Lt. Col. until it was disbanded in December 1948, after which he joined the Malayan Game Department as the Pahang Game Warden and Superintendent of King George V National Park (now Taman Negara). **James Hislop** was appointed as Chief Game Warden of Malaya in 1957, retiring from the post in 1959.

(Note 4) Major J.D. Richardson, FMSVF, pre-war Surveyor

(Note 5) When attending Anderson School (Ipoh) **Yeop Mahidin bin Mohamed Shariff** was discouraged from joining the Malay Regiment by his tutor who preferred him to attend the Malay College at Kuala Kangsar in order to prepare for a career in the Malay Administrative Service. Appointed a magistrate in 1938 at Telok Anson and then at Kajang in 1939, he transferred to Kuala Lipis at ADO in 1940. Whilst there, he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Malay States Volunteer Rifles. At the outbreak of the Far East war, he formed a resistance group called *Pahang Wataniah*, which is where **Major J.D. Richardson** comes into the story, as his secondary objective was to establish contact with the group. As a resistance group the *Pahang Wataniah* was successful against the Japanese Army.

After the war, following several semi-military type appointments, **Yeop Mahidin** was made First Director of the Malayan Territorial Army (*Askar Wataniah*) in 1958. Upon leaving in 1963, he was appointed District Officer of Kuala Lipis.

(Note 6) Lt. Col. **Claude Harry Fenner** arrived as a FMS police cadet Assistant Superintendent in 1936 (Negri Sembilan) and escaped from Singapore two days before the fall of the island. He arrived in Australia via Indonesia and later in 1942 was posted, for a brief period, to the Nigerian Police Force before joining the Intelligence Corps (India), later Force 136. He remained with the British Military Administration in Malaya during 1945 before rejoining the Colonial Police Force, becoming Inspector General of Police 1963. **Claude Fenner** was awarded the PMN (K) in 1961, appointed CMG in 1963 and awarded the KBE in 1965.

Some Literature consulted

1. *Our Man in Malaya*
2. *Radar – A Wartime Miracle*
3. *Wings of the Dawning*
4. *Jim Hislop – Unconventional Soldier and the last White Game Hunter*
5. *The RAF and the Far East War*
6. *The Special Flight – Liberator Operations on Radio Countermeasures with 160 Squadron, 159 Squadron and 1431 Flight – SEAC*
7. *U-Boat Base Penang*
8. *U-Boats in the Far East*

159 Squadron Aircraft



In My Father's Footsteps – Part 2 A Trip to South East Asia – by David Sartin

The following day, we caught the bus from Raub back to Kuala Lumpur for one night, and the next day we caught the train to Padang Besar, a 5 hour train journey, and then after clearing immigration, we re-entered Thailand and caught a connection to Hat Yai.

Nothing to be said about Padang Besar, an end of line sort of place at the border. The train from Padang Besar to Hat Yai was a third class carriage, quite run down. I wondered if that was the sort of carriage that the FEPOWs would have been transported in, but my illusion of such luxury for the FEPOWs would later be dispelled. The train to Hat Yai ran along a single track and took an hour to reach Hat Yai, all the time running through green jungle and palm plantations.

Hat Yai was fairly unremarkable, just another big town, and we only spent a night there. Our lodgings were cheap and basic, but the hotelier was a pleasant lady and agreed to bring our bags to the station for 4 p.m. as we were

catching the 6 p.m. train to Nakhon Pathom.

This was an overnight journey of 14 hours (how big is Thailand?), and we had sleeper berths on the train. Ray informed me that the rail line from Hat Yai to Bampong (just before Nakhon Pathom) was the route that the FEPOWs would have been taken by train.

We arrived the next morning in Nakhon Pathom, which appeared to be yet another typical Thai town. Our hotel was well out of the town centre (we seemed to be choosing hotels far from any reasonable activity or entertainment). We did have a reasonably good meal in Nakhon Pathom, and the Thai proprietor was very friendly towards us, genuinely so. Here we had barbecued Grouper, which was absolutely delicious.

The following morning we took the train yet again, 3rd class compartment, this time to Kanchanaburi. The train appeared to be quite slow at times, and kept stopping at various stations. Occasionally the train would put on a burst of speed. We were just approaching Kanchanaburi when we noticed a lot of dust and smoke emanating from outside the train, and then there was a sudden harsh braking from the train and we were thrown forwards. The train came to a stop on a level crossing.

We had been stationary for what appeared to be some considerable time, and my first thought was that the brakes had failed. The train was blocking the level crossing, with traffic building up on both sides. We eventually discovered what the problem was, the train had hit a cow on the line, and the rail staff were trying to dislodge the unfortunate animal from under the train.

After checking into our hotel in Kanchanaburi, we went for a short stroll and called in at the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre Museum. After paying the entrance fee we took a look around the exhibits, and I came across a section of Railway Wagon (a cattle wagon?). This exhibit explained how the FEPOWs would have been transported from as far afield as Singapore, over a 4-5 day journey, to work on the railway. There would have been as many as 28 men to each truck with their equipment, and with little or no water or food, and totally inadequate ventilation. The FEPOWs would not have had enough room in which to lie down properly.

I have to say that this was a very emotional experience for me, to think that my own father was probably transported in such an inhumane way. That exhibit was probably the one thing that made me decide firmly never to buy a Japanese vehicle, and to try my best to avoid buying anything Japanese ever again.

I was able to place a remembrance cross for my father at another exhibit museum, alongside other remembrance crosses as I was so moved on seeing the railway wagon.

Following our visit to the Thailand-Burma Railway Museum, we had lunch, and then went to pay our respects at the Kanchanaburi CWGC cemetery, where Ray was able to lay remembrance crosses at the graves of 2 Dutch Ubon POWs and one Australian soldier, **Sergeant Arthur Withnell** (very similar to Ray's surname). Due to the similar surname, this had prompted Ray to begin his research into the FEPOWs.

Whilst at the cemetery, I took the opportunity to photograph the names on a memorial wall of those FEPOWs who had died in captivity and whose ashes were buried in a communal grave in the cemetery. [Ed: These men died of cholera and their bodies were cremated.] I have these photographs on file, and should anyone wish to see them they only need to send me an e-mail; and I would be happy to share them – david.sartin1815@gmail.com

After leaving the cemetery, we took a short motorcycle taxi journey to the River Kwai where we walked along the Bridge over the River Kwai, made famous by the film with **Alec Guinness**. Despite the somewhat commercialisation of the area, one could not help but appreciate the beauty of the river and its surroundings. We spent quite a while on the bridge taking in the beauty of the place and contemplating the sacrifices that went into building the original bridge.

The following day we hired a car and drove from Kanchanaburi to the Hellfire Pass Visitor Centre and trail. The outside temperature that day was 40 degrees.

On arriving at the visitor centre one could not help but notice how beautiful and well maintained the approaches were and the visitor centre itself was pristine. The air conditioned interior was very welcoming, and we spent time here viewing the wall panels and exhibits, detailing the story of the POWs working on the cuttings for the Thailand-Burma Railway.

One of the most profound exhibits for me was a column of rock, which apparently each man was expected to move each day, and the meagre rations which he was fed.

We left the air-conditioned confines of the visitor centre to walk the trail to Hellfire Pass. It was our intention to walk as far as we could along the bed of the old railway. We were given headsets, which explained the exhibits we came across, and a walkie-talkie to summon help if we got into difficulty. We each had a small bottle of water, but we soon discovered that we were ill-prepared. The temperature was 40 degrees, and we were out in the midday heat, with no shade or shelter from the fierce sun.

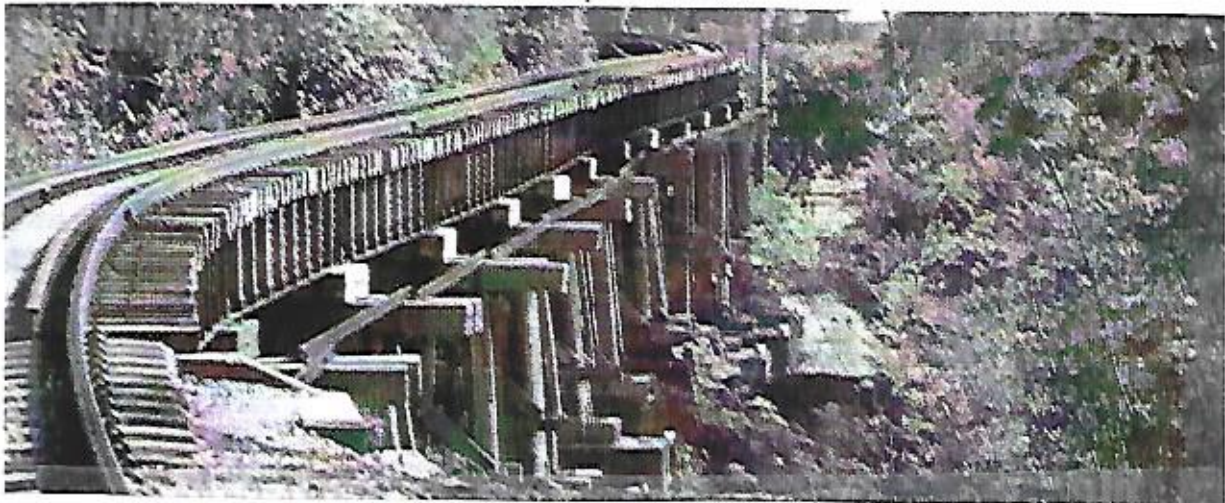
We soon reached Hellfire Pass, sooner than I had expected, and we spent some time taking photographs, and spending time for quiet reflection. We then decided that we would walk to the next cutting, but after leaving Hellfire Pass, the track became quite uneven and difficult to walk upon. We managed to reach "Hammer and Tap" cutting, and paused a while to take further photos, but due to the heat we decided that it was safer to make our way back to the visitor centre rather than try to walk any further. The heat was just energy sapping. We had been on the trail for perhaps an hour or so and were exhausted, and it defies all logic how sick men could work day after day, week in and week out, in such conditions. It is incredible how the human spirit can endure such hardship, and even more incredible that anyone could survive. Having visited Hellfire Pass, I was greatly relieved that my father had not been out to work there.

On leaving the visitor centre we then set out for the Wampo Viaduct, stopping for lunch on the way. We reached Wampo in the afternoon, and left the car at a small car park near a street market, and walked to the viaduct. The heat was still quite oppressive, but this time we had taken a reasonable supply of water with us. Walking along the single track line, we could not help but admire the views along the Kwai River. Such a stunningly beautiful place, but marred by such tragedy.

On walking across the viaduct, I was acutely aware of the possibility of a train approaching from either direction, and of having nowhere to go to get out of the way, and I was quietly relieved when we reached the other end. We walked along a small track at the base of the viaduct and took photos of the structure. An amazing feat of engineering constructed of wooden beams in trestle fashion, and to think that it was built so long ago and is still in use today, just incredible. Ray left a remembrance cross in memory of a FEPOW friend, **Tom Boardman**, on the viaduct structure. Ray and I took quite a few photos of the area, but to appreciate the incredible beauty of the river and the surrounding area, this can only be done by visiting Wampo.

On our way back to the car from the viaduct, we were stopped by two young women who were seeking a lift back to Kanchanaburi, but we were unable to assist as there were 7 people in their party, and we only had room for two or three in the car. The young women were Japanese tourists, and Ray asked them if they knew the history of the viaduct. It may have been the language barrier but we both had the impression that they knew nothing about the history, or the fact that the viaduct had been constructed by POWs of the Japanese, and at enormous cost in allied lives. I suspect that the Japanese of today have airbrushed their infamy out of their history. We returned to Kanchanaburi and returned the hire car, and prepared for an early start the following day, as we were to catch the early train back to Bangkok. Little was I to know of the surprise that lay in store for me the next day. We left early the next morning and boarded the train for Bangkok. The journey was relatively slow and stopped at several stations along the route. **[To be continued in April].**

Wampo Viaduct



CANADIAN CHINESE IN FORCE 136

By Catherine Clement – Curator, Chinese Canadian Military Museum

With thanks to Dave Croft RAFBPA and Sallie Hammond MVG

There are not many WW2 stories that ended up advancing the civil rights of an entire community, but a new exhibition called, *"Rumble in the Jungle: The Story of Force 136"* shares a relatively unknown part of military history that also changed the fortunes of every Chinese Canadian.

On display at the Chinese Canadian Military Museum in Vancouver, Canada, *"Rumble in the Jungle"* tells the story of a small band of Chinese Canadians who, during WW2, were secretly seconded to British Intelligence and trained in commando-style warfare and jungle survival. Their destination: behind Japanese lines in Southeast Asia. Their mission: to seek out and train local resistance fighters, and assist with sabotage and espionage.

Ironically, while these men were agents for the Allies, back home in Canada they were not considered citizens. Although born in Canada, these soldiers could not vote, nor could they become engineers, doctors or lawyers. Many were forced to live in segregated neighbourhoods. In some cities, they were forbidden to swim in public pools and were forced to sit in the back of theatres.

In fact, in the early years of WW2, heated debates took place as to whether Chinese Canadians should even enlist given how poorly the community was treated. Despite arguments to not volunteer, many young Chinese Canadian men marched into recruitment offices and offered to serve. Most were told, "we can take your name, but you are not likely to be called up because you are Chinese" then shown the door.

In late 1941, Japan entered the war. It quickly invaded large swathes of Southeast Asia. Many of these areas had been British, French and Dutch colonies.

Britain was desperate to infiltrate the region. They had some success in occupied Europe when Special Operations Executive (SOE) trained and dropped secret agents into France, Belgium and Holland. These agents organized and supported local resistance fighters, and helped with espionage and sabotage of infrastructure and German supply lines and equipment.

However, Southeast Asia presented unique challenges to SOE. It was a vast area with many islands, challenging physical terrain and diverse populations and languages. As well, most of the residents of the region resented their former colonizers.

SOE realized that Caucasian agents would stand out too much and would struggle to gain local trust. The British needed an alternative. There was one glimmer of hope. Scattered throughout the region was a sizeable population of Chinese who were vehemently opposed to Japanese occupation and angry about Japanese aggression in China. The question was how to contact and organize them?

That's when the British discovered Chinese Canadians. They could easily blend into the population. They could speak Cantonese. They were loyal to the Allies. And there were lots of these young men waiting for an assignment.

NO ORDINARY SOLDIERS



Between 1944 and 1945, Chinese Canadians were recruited and quietly seconded to SOE in Southeast Asia (Force 136). They were told they had a 50-50 chance of surviving. They were also sworn to secrecy. To do this kind of work would require much more than basic army training. The men would need to learn commando warfare techniques. Over the course of several months they learned skills such as: stalking; silent killing; demolition; jungle travel and survival; wireless operations; espionage; and parachuting.

Besides their gruelling training, the men would have to fight off illnesses (like malaria, dysentery and broken bones), and endure incredible heat, humidity and monsoons. Each man was offered a

cyanide capsule, in case of capture. Some were also given opium capsules or gold coins they could use for bribes. Eventually each recruit became a specialist and a part of a small, self-sufficient team.

THE OPERATIONS

Originally unsure that Chinese Canadians could pass muster, SOE recruited in waves. The first team consisted of only 13 hand-picked men. Eventually, about 150 were seconded for Southeast Asia with the majority based out of India.

Given how late in the war it now was, most recruits were not fully deployed before Japan surrendered in August 1945.

Some men had been assigned to do short trips into occupied Burma. But 14 Chinese Canadians found themselves operating behind



Japanese lines for several months in Burma, Malaya and Singapore. They endured primitive conditions as well as suffocating heat and humidity. They befriended headhunters and other guerrilla groups in the jungles. To survive, some men were forced to eat monkey and crocodile meat, and even insects. Sometimes, even getting to their destination was a test of endurance.

"It was supposed to be a three-day trip through the jungle," Ernie Louie from Vancouver recalled years later when describing his drop into Malaya. "But it lasted seven nightmarish days as we tramped 85 miles through swamps and dense jungle. For three full days, it poured with rain and our boots disintegrated."

ONE WAR, TWO VICTORIES

With the war over and the allies victorious, Chinese Canadians now wanted a second victory – the right to vote. Armed with their war wounds and service records, veterans became part of a chorus that demanded full citizenship for the community.

Their loyalty won out. Two years after the guns fell silent, Chinese Canadians were finally granted citizenship. By 1957, the country elected their first Chinese Canadian Member of Parliament, Douglas Jung, who had served with Force 136.

Today, through the Museum's special exhibition, a new generation is learning how the blood, sweat and tears of a small group of men, in a secret jungle war, helped change the destiny of an entire community. And how their service helped secure a coveted title: the right to be called a 'Chinese Canadian.'

[Note: The special exhibition ended in 2016, but for further information see: www.ccmms.ca]

THE JAPANESE CONQUEST OF MALAYA – Part 5 – by MARK MORRISON

[Editor: Part 5 continues from April 2019 – due to lack of space in the newsletters in July and October 2019].

THE LOSS OF THE PRINCE OF WALES AND THE REPULSE

Within two days after the Japanese launched their attack on Malaya, they succeeded in destroying their main naval opposition in Malayan waters; the two capital ships the Prince of Wales and the Repulse. A small navy containing these two ships had recently arrived in Singapore to reinforce the small fleet already in these waters. The entire British fleet in the Far East, even with Dutch support, was clearly not adequate for any offensive measure in Japanese controlled seas. Such a fleet may have been adequate for the protection of the Malayan area and to hold off enemy naval attack until some co-operation could be effected with the United States naval forces. The two capital ships were sunk by enemy aircraft in the vicinity of Kuantan. At the time when they were sunk, the British still held all the Malayan airfields except Khota Bharu and Gadoh but most of the aircraft of the northwestern aerodromes had either been destroyed or brought south. The ships were sunk within a short distance of the Kuantan aerodrome and within 200 miles of Singapore. The capital ships had no aircraft, other than their own, in support.

It is believed that the departure or diversion of these magnificent vessels arose from an extraordinary mistake on the part of the forces defending part of the sea coast near Kuantan. During the night, the pressure of heavy waves on the beach detonated land mines. This brought an immediate response of fire from the defence positions. Report was made of enemy attempts to land. Newspaper reported that the ships had been sunk apparently in an attempt to prevent the enemy landing at Kuantan. In fact there was no enemy attempt to land at or near Kuantan.

Very remarkable and ingenious were the reports issued by Official Headquarters after the ships had been sunk. These reports read as follows:

- December 10. There is no change in the situation at Kuantan, where our positions remain intact.
- December 11. There has been no report of further attempts to land at Kuantan. Nor were any ships seen in that locality by our air reconnaissance yesterday.
- December 14. There was nothing new to report from Kuantan on the East Coast area where it is believed that only a few isolated groups of the enemy remain to be mopped up.

In the face of such reports, it is not surprising that local inhabitants frequently resorted to enemy controlled radio stations in their efforts to envisage the true position of the campaign.

LOCAL DEFENCE FORCES

Many British Europeans over the age of 40 years, and any aliens including Dutch, Czechs, French and Poles, volunteered for service with the local Defence Forces. Officers appointed often were socially eligible but not militarily qualified. There was a lack of equipment, lack of ammunition, and a considerable lack of intelligent understanding of military requirements. Training was mostly on the parade ground; particular attention being paid to correct saluting, correct arms drill, and correct marching. Members were unaware whether they were to be used as combatant troops or to assist the police. Some hundreds of them had experience of the last war. Most of them could speak Malay and many of them knew Malaya intimately. In Singapore particularly, the early enthusiasm gradually waned. Resignations and transfers to the civil defence services increased. Many of the members were useless for any military or auxiliary duty. Indeed, they were a danger to their comrades and some distinction should have been drawn for the protection of the useful members. There were a large number of useful members prepared to undertake any risk and hardship if confident of intelligent leadership. Their knowledge of local conditions might have been used to implement the knowledge of the imported troops. [Ed: A harsh somewhat unfair judgement?]

LABOUR

No organization was ever created in Malaya to provide labour gangs to ensure that all indirect military requirements were satisfied. Military contractors had to provide for their own labour without government assistance. In the latter part of the

Campaign, labour was recruited from volunteers for direct military requirements but the recruiting was not very extensive. In general, labour in employment failed to operate according to the ratio of reasonable protection afforded against air raid bombing. Intelligently organised labour did not fail unless there was danger. If reasonable protection was afforded workmen somehow managed to carry on for some period. Many military contracts were still being carried out by Singapore contractors after the Japanese made their landing in the north-west of Singapore on 8th February.

In many of the larger towns on the peninsular some public air raid shelters were constructed. In the fortress of Singapore, public air raid shelters were not provided at government or municipal expense. After enemy air raids had caused widespread damage in busy areas, many of the shopkeepers closed their shops and sought convenient shelter. Government regulation requiring shops to remain open for a definite period each day were ignored; probably as much by the sympathetic law officers and police as by the shopkeepers. Most of the shopkeepers who had built or were provided with shelters remained open. During the course of the campaign, defence regulations were promulgated which could require an owner or occupier to provide air raid protection for the occupants of a building. The expense and difficulty of obtaining materials made this regulation only of particular application and the power granted was exercised in very few cases.

ENEMY PROPAGANDA AND LOCAL INFORMATION

Apart from their attack on the country, the Japanese directly struck at the morale of the people. The Japanese endeavoured to work on the intellect and sentiments of the Oriental inhabitants and Indian troops. Subjection of the Oriental and exploitation by the European were their main instruments in the attack.

The power created by capital was wielded in Malaya more by the Orientals than by Europeans. The efforts of the Tokyo radio to induce the local people to believe in the advantages of the Japanese co-prosperity sphere did not influence the inhabitants of prosperous Malaya who were lightly taxed and generally happy. It is indeed surprising that the local population remained so loyal and co-operated to the extent they did. Despite submerged natural antagonism on account of colour, the basis of loyalty of the oriental population was a prestige due to respect and not to power. The ruthlessness with which the Japanese had waged war against the Chinese had created an antagonism amongst the Malayan Chinese against the Japanese far transcending the mild sentiment of loyalty for the ruling power. This hostility against the Japanese could also be observed amongst sections of the population. The strength of the potential co-operation of the Oriental had its basis, not in loyalty, but in antagonism to the enemy.

During the two years immediately prior to the campaign, the prestige and respect formerly enjoyed by British Europeans, official and civilian, were considerably shaken by disclosures made in the course of a number of official enquiries, law cases and commissions. One commission sitting in Kuala Lumpur disclosed that a large number of officials holding senior positions in the Mines Department were in the habit of receiving bribes of large sums of considerable value. The court martial of a military officer for corruption extending over a long period, suggested extreme incompetency or widespread dishonesty in certain army departments. The evidence given in this court martial disclosed an organised system of corruption concerning fortress contracts involving nearly all important contractors, European and Asiatic, in Singapore. A series of cases against a number of Europeans or involving Europeans, and the banishment of some Europeans, all in connection with immoral conduct, caused considerable discussion in Oriental circles as to the standard of European morality in tropical countries.

The course of events during the campaign also contributed to some loss of the respect which formerly had been held for the European. The evacuation of Penang, the desertion of Asiatic populations by administrators, the rapidity of the retreat of the Allies before the Imperial Japanese Forces after the inhabitants had been led to believe in the strength of the defences, all tended to hold up the European to ridicule and contempt. Critical Chinese were given to compare the magnificent defence that was being put up by the Chinese in China without fifteen years of preparation and the backing of an Empire's resources. The manner in which news was published to the population did not create confidence. Penang, Saigon and Tokyo broadcasting stations were daily pouring out propaganda and news of the campaign. The propaganda was recognized but after a time, resort was made to enemy controlled stations to obtain the best advice as to the course of the campaign. The public was warned again and again not to listen to rumours but, in general, vague information only was given to the public. Much of the information as to the advances and landings was published two or three days after similar information had been broadcast by the Japanese. On occasions entirely incorrect information was given to the public.

EVACUATION AT SINGAPORE

In the last few days before the Fall of Singapore, many of the ships leaving Singapore were sunk by enemy aircraft. Most of these ships carried women and children and it is believed that some hundreds of people, possibly thousands, lost their lives. There was no organised evacuation of troops or civilians. Almost the entire civilian population and the great majority of troops became prisoners of the Japanese.

When the security of Singapore began to be threatened, a declaration of policy in respect of evacuation became a necessity. In the determination of government policy, the hostility which had arisen through privileges being assumed by officials and accorded to Europeans in Penang and the north, seems to have played an important part. In a broadcast some few weeks before capitulation the Governor spoke as follows:

"Before I say more, let me set your mind at rest on a more important matter. The General Officer in Command told you that our forces will stay here and carry out the high task of defending the Island and fight on till victory is won. For the rest of us are here to stay each of us to do our bit. This is total war in which the whole population is involved. There can be no question of some standing aside and leaving others to do the work. Let not the Asiatic population imagine for one day that they will find themselves abandoned."

There was no organization to provide defence work for many hundreds of thousands of civilians. Indeed, the organization which existed was not able to furnish reasonable defence employment for many of the Europeans. The presence of a large civilian population was a disadvantage to the defence but it was clear that the available facilities in shipping could not ensure

any large evacuation. The purpose of the speech and the policy of the Government were directed against any evacuation whatsoever. The Government did not at any time give its support even to the evacuation of women and children. When the enemy columns were drawn up along the Straits of Johore, women still had to comply with formality and pay their fares in order to get a passage by ship.

On 1st February, the Government stated that as many women and children as desired could be evacuated regardless of race as long as facilities existed for their removal. This statement was not made to encourage any evacuation but was made to ensure that European women should not have preference.

The policy of the Government with regard to evacuation seems to have had two main objects; the maintenance of civilian morale and the restoration of European prestige. It showed an utter disregard for reality. The consequences of the carrying out of the policy were tragic in the extreme.

The advance of the enemy was accompanied by the development of attacks on shipping. After the landing of the army on the Island of Singapore, people who departed from the Island had to stand the hazards of constant bombing. As late as Wednesday 11th February, when the Japanese were in possession of about two-thirds of Singapore Island, distracted women could be seen endeavouring to obtain passages from shipping companies. The leading company which controlled most of the bookings had a notice posted on its entrance reading, "No Sailing To-day". A number of ships did leave that day; some of them were passenger steamers. In all probability all first and second class accommodation, including single-berth cabins had been booked up. Entirely different was the attitude of the officers in charge of the ships which left Singapore during the last week. All women and children who walked on the ships were welcomed and many hundreds of women and children who had neither passports nor tickets were by this means, able to get away from Singapore.

The Japanese attitude towards the inhabitants of Malaya, repeatedly declared, was the eradication of European influence and the bringing of Malaya into the Japanese co-prosperity sphere. Japanese propaganda was aimed at influencing the masses to the advantages the Asiatic inhabitants would enjoy through Japanese victory. To the great majority of Orientals, the success of the Japanese army meant a possible limitation of their freedom. To most, if not all, Europeans of British nationality, including women and children, it meant deprivation of all freedom and possible humiliation. To those Chinese who had been publicly associated with the Japanese boycott and anti-Japanese societies it meant a probability of death.

It was clear throughout the campaign that the great majority of Asiatics had no desire to leave Malaya even in the event of a Japanese victory. Chinese, Malays and Indians, in general, remained when the Japanese advance approached their districts and did not seek to make their way southward. In respect of the evacuation of Penang, the criticism was not directed against the fact that Europeans had left Penang on the approach of the enemy. Intelligent Orientals resented the fact that Chinese, Indians and Malays who had wanted to leave Penang in the same way as Europeans were prevented from doing so, and that official arrangements were concerned only with Europeans. They did not expect European civilians were given the opportunity to escape to remain and become prisoners. They did expect that British Government officials who owed a duty to the public would remain in their official positions and maintain order and carry on pending the arrival of the enemy.

The Government policy was a disastrous failure. It did not help to repair the outlook of the Oriental towards the European and the Government. When the Japanese landing on Singapore Island made the defence position hopeless, official privilege and preference were again restored. Even prior to the landing some public departments were secretly preparing the evacuation of European personnel. In the confusion of imminent defeat, hurried attempts were made to evacuate women and children. Any attempt to leave Singapore and reach Sumatra or Java in the last few days was accompanied by extreme danger and it is believed that at least 75% of the ships which left Singapore on the Thursday and Friday before capitulation were sunk.

About the 19th February, the Naval Base personnel were evacuated from Singapore. The bulk of the Naval Base staff were withdrawn from the Naval Base about two weeks earlier leaving millions of pounds of equipment and supplies behind. European civilians, seconded to some extent by military forces, helped to bring away or destroy a considerable quantity of the equipment and supplies. The European personnel of the Ministry of Information and members of the Censors staff were evacuated suddenly on the 11th February. On the 13th February the Governor gave permission to about 70 leading residents to leave Singapore. Most of these were Europeans and included members of the Legislative Council and leading civilians. Even at this stage, one attempt would appear to have been made to send out of the country those many hundreds of Chinese who had been publicly associated with anti-Japanese societies and who would be the first to suffer. Lest the statements made in this paragraph should create a false impression, it is necessary to emphasize that only those members of the Malay Civil Service who had special claims were permitted to depart and that the great majority of the members of the Malay Civil Service remained in their positions. This can also be stated with regard to the Police.

An outstanding example of the abuse of power and assumption of privilege was in connection with the evacuation of the regular European staff of the Singapore Harbour Board. The Singapore Harbour Board was the public authority charged with arrangements for the arrival, departure and repair of shipping. Public and military police demanded, in theory, that whilst there was shipping, the public organization should remain at their posts to attend to the shipping.

At a time when the Governor and the General Officer Commanding were doing their utmost to strengthen morale and inspire the public so that all energies should be directed to the defence of Singapore, and the defeat of the enemy, the Chairman of the Singapore Harbour Board was secretly preparing an escape for himself and his European staff. He appropriated a public vessel to evacuate this staff. The arrangements were so secretly made that the Asiatic staff and European civilian volunteers attached to the department were unaware of the intended departure. At the first sign of immediate danger, the regular European personnel were collected and put on a vessel with their luggage and the luggage of the Chairman. A clearance had been obtained for the vessel. All this was contrary to and in defiance of official instructions emanating from the Governor. Just prior to the intended departure, the Chairman saw the Governor and requested permission for the vessel to depart. Only after considerable discussion and perhaps persuasion, did the Governor give this consent. Even this consent was given subject to some of the personnel remaining to look after the Asiatic staff. **[To be concluded in April].**

REPLACEMENT OF PLAQUE IN KAMPONG MENJELANG – Report by Judy Balcombe

The memorial plaque to the Women and Children Internees in Muntok is about to be replaced and relocated by the Malayan Volunteers Group. The original plaque given by the MVG was installed in Kampong Menjelang, the site of the former Women's Camp, in 2012. At this time, a brick plinth had been prepared by the town in anticipation and the plaque presented to the Kampong by MVG members. The Regent of Muntok spoke at the ceremony, requesting that the Kampong should please respect the Plaque. The Regent explained that the prisoners and the Kampong residents' ancestors had all lived in the area at the same time and that this means we were all part of the same family. MVG and prisoners' families have worked hard to foster good relations with the Kampong helping to build a new well there and donating proceeds from the 2013 Palembang Women's Camp Vocal Orchestra concert held in Chichester to conduct repairs and purchase equipment for the Kampong School.

Unfortunately, a landowner at the kampong believes he was promised a very large amount of money of compensation for the small plinth standing on his land and has now refused visitors entry to the Kampong. Permission to retrieve our plaque has also been refused. A replacement plaque has been ordered and, in February this will be placed in or near the Muntok Peace Museum adjoining the playing field which held the Prison Camp huts, at the annual service to be attended by prisoners' families, British, Australian and New Zealand Embassy and High Commission staff and Indonesian officials and local friends.



Presentation of the Plaque in 2012

Judy Balcombe (L) & Margie Caldicott®

OBITUARIES

Tony Hopkins – Born 25th September 1924 – died 21st September 2019

Tony Hopkins was a merchant seaman in WW2, surviving being torpedoed and later pioneering shipping links with China. Aged 18, he was on his second sea voyage as a midshipman on the Blue Funnel passenger/cargo ship *SS Myrmidon* when she was struck by a salvo of torpedoes and sank on 5th September 1942. All passengers and crew were able to escape in lifeboats including her Captain – **Alexander Caird**. They were rescued by the destroyer *Brilliant* who had hunted down the submarine, and landed in the Congo, eventually getting back to England on the *Orion*.

Hopkins had salvaged his leather writing case from *Myrmidon* but left it in the lifeboat. Months later, the writing case was returned to him in the post with everything intact but no indication of who had retrieved it.

[Editor: Survivors of the sinking of the *S.S. Ulysses* in April 1942, including the editor and her mother, were repatriated to the U.K. on the *S.S. Myrmidon* arriving in Glasgow on 12th May 1942.]

Major John Chandler AFC – Born 5th August 1929 – died 23rd September 2019

Born in Malaya where his father was a rubber planter, he returned to the England from Australia with his family in 1941-42 on a Dutch cargo ship via the Panama Canal and across the Atlantic in convoy to Belfast. The ship ahead of them was sunk by a U-Boat, which in turn was hunted and sunk by the convoy's lead destroyer.

He was commissioned from Sandhurst in 1950 and spent 6 months in Jamaica with the Inniskillings before being transferred to Suez and Kenya and a spell in Omagh where he fended off an IRA arms raid. He trained as a pilot at RAF Middle Wallop and was transferred to the Glider Pilot Regiment and posted to 656 Squadron in Malaya for the closing stages of the Emergency. Based in Ipoh he flew in his Auster in search of communist camps with only aerial photos for identification. The aircraft doors were removed to give a better view of the jungle and these pilots became adept at recognizing signs of cultivation and habitation. In 1959 he identified a large Communist camp near the border with Thailand. The Police Field Force took a week to reach the place which **Chandler** pinpointed with a parachute flare. After a short gun battle, the enemy withdrew leaving documents which revealed that it was the HQ of the missing Communist 12th Regiment and Chin Peng's hideout. **Chandler** was awarded the Air Force Cross and it is believed to be the first Army recipient since 1918.

His final posting was to Germany where he set up the first Army Air Corps Squadron.

Maurice Pink – Born 13th May 1922 – died 27th October 2019

Maurice Pink died aged 97 just a month before the annual service at the NMA to commemorate the sinking of *HMS Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* which he always attended. He had been a bandsman in the Royal Marines on board the battleship *Repulse* when it was sunk on 10th December 1941 in the South China Sea. He was among the 730 survivors from these ships and was one of the remaining survivors still alive. When the ship was hit by several torpedoes, **Pink** was in the transmitting station in the bowels of the ship. Deafened by the blast and disorientated, he owes his life to a teenage Australian midshipman who led him through hatches and up ladders to the deck. Swimming in the oily water naked for nearly two hours, he was eventually rescued by the destroyer *Electra* and taken to Singapore. As one of the lucky ones, he was then shipped on the troopship *Erinpura* to Colombo and eventually arrived back in England. He served as Chairman and later president of the *HMS Prince of Wales* and *HMS Repulse* Survivors' Association and campaigned vigorously against the looting of the wrecks in the South China Sea, which were designated war graves. He will be missed.

BOOKS

“Ordeal in the Sun.” By George Cooper with Dennis Holman. Published by Brown Watson Ltd. London in 1964. The book is about the POW camp at Makassar. These men worked on the airfield which is the site of the present day airport. When it was finished the men were sent off in groups – to Malaya in 1943; to Sumatra in Spring 1944; to Japan in May 1944; more to Sumatra in August 1944; and also to Flores with some Indian POWs some time later. Cooper’s men were told after the surrender that the Japs has forecast the date for the invasion of Japan as 1st November 1945 and that this would be the deadline for the massacre of all prisoners and internees in their hands.

“Operation Rangoon Jail.” By K.P. MacKenzie. Published by Panther 1957. A Doctor’s Story of Captivity Under the Japanese.

“Tin Hats and Rice. The diary of life as a Hong Kong prisoner of war 1941-1945.” By Barbara Anslow. Published by Blacksmith Books. ISBN 978-988-77927-4-1
Barbara Anslow (nee Redwood) was 23 years old when Hong Kong was attacked on 8th December 1941 by the Japanese. “I can’t visualize us getting out of this, but I want to TRY to believe in a future,” she wrote in her diary on 8th December. Her diaries (with post-war explanations where necessary) are an invaluable source of information on the civilian experience in British Hong Kong during the second world war. The diaries record her thoughts and experiences through the fighting; the surrender; three and a half years of internment in Stanley Camp; then liberation and adjustment to normal life. The diaries have been quoted by leading historians on the subject. A book well worth reading. She lived in Essex and sadly died on 29th October 2019 aged 100.

“Helen of Burma. The Autobiography of a Wartime Nurse.” By Helen Rodriguez. Published by Corgi Books. ISBN 0-552-99305-0
Helen Rodriguez, daughter of a Scottish nurse and a Portuguese Surgeon, was born and brought up in Burma, in the idyllic civil station of Taunggyi. Her childhood was one of intense happiness and after she had trained as a nurse in Rangoon, she came back to her beloved Taunggyi to work as a matron in the civil hospital. She was there when Japanese bombers destroyed the town in 1942. From that moment on she worked day and night, tending to the casualties in appalling conditions and under constant air attack. She defused a bomb single-handed; she evacuated the military hospital by carrying the patients one by one on her back over a period of four days. As the Japanese approached she refused to abandon her patients. Bayoneted, starved, tortured she faced each crisis with fortitude and she describes them simply yet eloquently, even with wry humour. This is a story of the triumph of human will over almost impossible adversity.

“Captive Artists, the unseen artwork of British Far East Prisoners of War.” By Meg Parkes, Geoff Gill and Jenny Wood. Published by Palatine Books. Cost £20. If ordered direct from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) before September 2020, profits on each sale will go directly to the FEPOW research fund. **Payment is by cheque ONLY**
Families of FEPOW or civilian internees can get it at the discounted price of £16 (plus an optional donation of £2 towards UK postage costs). For overseas orders contact fepow.project@lstm.ac.uk
Cheques payable to: Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and write “Captive Artists” on the back. Send with a note of your name, address & e-mail plus the name of your FEPOW or internee relative to: Comms Office (book orders); LSTM; Pembroke Place; Liverpool L3 5QA.



Charting the seven-year-long investigation by researchers at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, **Captive Artists: the unseen artwork by British Far East Prisoners of War**, features all 69 artists uncovered by the enquiry. To date over 650 items of artwork have been uncovered, most of which are unknown outside the artists’ families. In full colour throughout and over 400 pages long, it is hoped that this book will act as a catalyst for further enquiry and study.

THE EXHIBITION – Secret Art of Survival. Creativity and Ingenuity of British FEPOWs

The Exhibition was officially opened on 24th October, by **Philip Mould**, art historian, international art dealer and broadcaster. In the first month alone over 4,600 people visited the exhibition at the Victoria Gallery & Museum (VG&M) in Liverpool – Clock Tower Building, Ashton Street, Liverpool L69 3DR. The exhibition runs until 20th June 2020 and is the result of a 7-year-long investigation of British FEPOW artwork by **Meg Parkes** and **Professor Geoff Gill at the LSTM**

Over 100 items of documentary and creative art made during captivity by 40 of these “unrecognized” artists, feature in the exhibition, including former Malayan Medical Service medical officers, **Captain Robert Hardie FMSVF** and **Captain Thomas Wilson FMSVF** (both seconded to the RAMC). Some men had art training, others such as **Hardie** and **Wilson** were keen amateurs. All took great risks to keep their artwork hidden, and the majority have remained unknown to researchers until now.

There are a few sketches by **Jack Chalker** and **Ronald Searle** from private collections which act as a yardstick, highlighting the sheer quality of work on display. A piece of embroidery created by **Jack Chalker** in Chungkai POW Hospital camp is one of the formerly unseen exhibits. For more details see: www.captivememories.org.uk



Tropical Butterfly
by Capt. R. Hardie FMSVF

LEST WE FORGET

Forgotten army

26/10/19

SIR - Much is being made of celebrations for the 75th anniversary of V-E Day next year, and rightly so, but what of V-J Day on August 15?

My grandfather was captured in the fall of Singapore, surviving the *maru* ships and time in the mines on mainland Japan. My grandmother had no idea if he was alive or dead until he arrived in Canada and his host family contacted her. He spent the rest of his life dealing with the psychological and physical effects of his war.

Others were not so lucky. Fighting continued well after May 1945, with service personnel being sent to the Far East after V-E Day. I feel that these men have been forgotten.

Catharine Burgess
Greenhithe, Kent

Remembering V-J Day

28/10/19

SIR - Catharine Burgess (Letters, October 26) is right that we must mark the 75th anniversary of V-J Day.

The Fourteenth Army fighting in Burma was involved in some of the most ferocious close-quarter combat in the Second World War. It prevented the progress of the Japanese forces through India, and this eventually brought all hostilities to an end.

The Fourteenth Army was known then as the "Forgotten Army", and it seems the name still rings true.

We must commemorate the sacrifices made by those who fought and died in the Far East, prisoners of war, and those who returned forever haunted by their experiences.

Lt Col Merrill Bate (retd)
Hindhead, Surrey

Forgotten heroes

29/10/19

SIR - Lt Col Merrill Bate (Letters, October 28) is right about the importance of remembering V-J Day.

I am a member of Cofepow (Children of Far East Prisoners of War), which sent a petition to the Government asking it to "establish a national day commemorating the significance of August 15 1945", signed by nearly 18,000 people.

My father died at the early age of 44 in 1954 as a result of his incarceration. Not marking the day is an insult to the memory of those who fought and died so bravely.

Peter Pepperrell
Winslow, Buckinghamshire

SIR - As the daughter of a Far East POW who lies buried in Chungkai Cemetery, Thailand, I agree with Catharine Burgess (Letters, October 26) that those who fought there in the Second World War have been forgotten for far too long.

I am the secretary of the Malayan Volunteers Group and we have held annual services in the National Memorial Arboretum to celebrate V-J Day since 2005. In 2020, we are again organising our annual service of thanksgiving in the NMA, which Ms Burgess is very welcome to attend.

The group has worked tirelessly for 16 years to raise awareness of the terrible effects the Far East Prisoners of War suffered as a consequence of their captivity. We hope their sacrifice will be remembered, as well as those who lost their lives or became POWs in Europe and North Africa.

Rosemary Fell
Axminster, Devon

Trying to explain what VJ Day really means

31/10/19

SIR - While watching the news recently with a friend, who is head of department at a comprehensive school, she asked me what VJ stood for (Letters, October 29).

I explained that it commemorates the Allies' victory over Japan at the end of the Second World War.

She replied: "How racist is that?"
Simon Pike
Watlington, Oxfordshire

SIR - As trustees of the Burma Star Association, we share hopes that the Government will sponsor a suitable event to commemorate the 75th anniversary of VJ Day on August 15 2020. It did so to great effect on Horse Guards in 2015, when more than 200 of an ever-dwindling band of Burma Star holders were proud to attend.

We perpetuate the memory of "the forgotten army" through the Burma Star Memorial Fund Scholarship Programme, which finances the study of subjects relevant to the campaign

at postgraduate level at University College London.

Viscount Slim
Air Chief Marshal Sir John Day
Rear Admiral CHT Clayton
RAH Nunneley
JMArcher
London SW1

SIR - I was 10 years old in 1945 and will always remember it as the year of three bonfire nights - May 8, August 15 and November 5 - which were amazing after the years of enforced darkness when fireworks were banned. Many still bore their pre-war prices but, happily, most worked.

Peter Chatham
New Arley, Warwickshire

SIR - VE Day always reminds me of my mother-in-law. She told me that after celebrations at the local pub, they had to drive home, as nobody could walk.

John Langley
Alderley, Shropshire

Honouring VJ Day

1/10/19

SIR - VJ Day (Letters, October 31) falls on Saturday August 15 next year. Why can't the late summer bank holiday coincide with it?

The May bank holiday in 2020 has been changed from Monday May 4 to Friday May 8 to coincide with the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

My father and two of his brothers, one of whom was killed, were in the Fourteenth Army. Many of their friends fought and died, or became prisoners of war. Some have been forever haunted by their memories.

The Forgotten Army has been forgotten for long enough.

Carol Penstone
Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

PERTH WA – Sunday 9th February 2020. Service of Commemoration for the loss of the Vyner Brooke

The service to commemorate the 78th anniversary of the sinking of the *Vyner Brooke* will take place on the 9th February at the Army Nurses' Memorial at Point Walter Reserve, Bicton, Perth WA, on Sunday 9th February at 10.30a.m. Attendees are requested to gather at 10.15a.m. For further information please contact Robert Gray on rgraywa@hotmail.com

PERTH WA – Saturday 15th February 2020. Fall of Singapore Commemoration Service. City of Stirling Memorial Park

The service will start at 10 a.m. Please contact Elizabeth Adamson for further details if you wish to attend.

MUNTOK – Banka Island. Sunday 16th February 2020. Service on Radji Beach for the Australian Army Nurses.

Please contact Michael Noyes at noyes@me.com for information about this service to commemorate the massacre of the Australian Army Nurses on Radji Beach and all civilian and military personnel who died on Banka Island in WW2.

ANZAC DAY SERVICES – Perth WA & Thailand – 25th April 2020 TBA.

WYMONDHAM – Sunday 17th May 2020. Annual FEPOW Service at the Church of Our Lady & St. Thomas of Canterbury.

Please let Rosemary know if you wish to attend this service. Numbers are required for the catering. For further details please contact the FEPOW Secretary on: fepowchurch@btinternet.com The service starts at 12.30p.m. and a finger buffet lunch is served afterwards in the Church Hall. If you wish to view the names of your relatives in the Books of Remembrance, please contact the Church's Archivist and Historian Peter Wiseman on: phandtmwiseman@gmail.com

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

“Making and marking memory: widening perspectives on Far East Captivity.”

Co-hosted by the Researching FEPOW History Group (RFHG) and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), this conference will focus on the stories and creativity that sustained prisoners, internees and force labourers throughout captivity. Places are still available and offered on a first-come, first-served basis. For details see: www.fepowhistory.com
Registration forms can be downloaded at: <https://fepowhistory.com/2020-conference>

The form includes details on fees and a special discount code at The Liner Hotel for conference delegates.

MALAYSIA – June 2020. MPOA Commemoration Service in Batu Gajah (“God’s Little Acre”).

Please contact MVG's secretary in Malaysia, Richard Parry, if you wish to attend the ceremony.

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

Please see separate sheet for details, and let Rosemary know if you plan to come, as soon as possible. Tickets will be issued after April when the final details will be sent out, and payment requested. We have reserved the dining room facility OAK 1 for morning coffee before the service at 12 noon, and the buffet lunch after the service. Friends and guests are welcome to attend with members as long as they have tickets. Places in the Chapel will be reserved for members and their guests.

PERTH WA – August 2020. Merdeka Day Service in Kings Park. Date TBA

SINGAPORE – Saturday 12th September 2020. Service at Kranji to mark the 75th anniversary of Japan’s surrender.

Please see the separate leaflet for the programme of events and let Rosemary know if you are planning to travel to Singapore. A deposit for the Historical Tour has to be paid for in May, and there needs to be a minimum of 30 to make the tour viable. If you wish to stay at the YWCA, please contact them on: reservations@ywcaflodge.org.sg

LONDON – Saturday 17th October 2020. Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club, Piccadilly – 12 noon – 5p.m.

The Sovereigns' Room has been booked for the annual luncheon. More details in April including the menu and cost. Our speaker this year is Colin Hygate who will be talking about his father's wartime experiences.

LONDON – Thursday 5th November 2020. Cross Planting Ceremony at Westminster Abbey.

Further details about tickets will be given in April

LONDON – Sunday 8th November 2020. Remembrance Sunday and March Past at the Cenotaph in Whitehall.

We will endeavour to obtain tickets for those wishing to take part. More details when they have been received from the RBL.

MALAYSIA. November 2020. Remembrance Services in Kuala Lumpur and Penang

Wreaths will be laid on behalf of the MVG by Richard Parry.

CANADA - 11th November 2020. Armistice Day Service

MVG's secretary in Canada and the USA, Sallie Hammond, will represent the MVG and lay a wreath.

NMA – Thursday 10th December 2020. Anniversary of the sinking of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse.

More details later in the year.

MVG MEMBERS RETURN TO HORSE GUARDS PARADE ON REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY AFTER THE MARCH PAST



L to R: Anthony, Imogen, June, Jane, Ruth, Alison, Karen, Christine, Rosemary and Mary

LIST OF MEMBERS

The up-dated list of members is included with the newsletter. Please check your details and let Rosemary know if they are incorrect or you wish to amend them. This list is only distributed to current MVG members, and is not given to any other group.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

This is a reminder that subscriptions are due in **APRIL**. Despite increasing costs, the subscription rate remains at £20 per annum. The enclosed letter gives details of how your subscription may be paid. If you have set up a Standing Order, please make sure that it is paid in April. Cheques should be made payable to: **Mrs. R. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group.**

Info on Battle of Kampar now available on site

KAMPAR: An information board has been set up by a group of historians at the site of the Battle of Kampar.

Malaya Historical Group researcher Shaharom Ahmad said they are concerned that many Malaysians were unaware of the historic significance of the Kampar Green Ridge Battle Site.

"The story behind the Battle of Kampar is not known to many. We have seen people pass by the road every day oblivious to its history."

"As such, we and the Perak Heritage Society have decided to place an information board from our own funds at the entrance to Kampar Green Ridge Battle Site in the hope of educating more people," he told reporters after putting up

the information board at the site here yesterday.

The Battle of Kampar during the Japanese Occupation lasted for four days and four nights from Dec 30, 1941, to Jan 2, 1942.

In 2016, the Perak government gazetted the area as a historical site after historian Chye Kooi Loong fought for it to be recognised and preserved as a war memorial.

"Last year, we brought in at least 200 visitors, including students, who were interested to know about the story behind the Battle of Kampar," said Shaharom.

"We also received tourists from Britain and India who had relatives who fought in the battle. Some of them even conducted research here."

STAR 5 Jan 2020

HOT OFF THE PRESS:

A correction has been sent by **Shaharom Ahmad**. The report should have said that: "In 2016 the Perak State Government was planning to Gazette the Site."



CONTACTS

ELIZABETH ADAMSON – MVG Secretary in Australia

5, Penistone Street, Greenwood 6024, Perth, Western Australia. Tel: 089247 3374 e-mail: bunneyelizabeth5@gmail.com

SALLIE HAMMOND – MVG Secretary in Canada and the USA

68, Kinnear Crescent, London, Ontario N6K 1V8, Canada. Tel: 519 473 1542 e-mail: salliehammondnr@gmail.com

RICHARD PARRY – MVG Secretary in Malaysia and Singapore

Apartment A2, 12B-02, Infinity Condominium, Jalan Tanjung Bungah, Penang 11200, Malaysia. e-mail: rbparry@hotmail.com

JONATHAN MOFFATT – MVG Historian and Archivist

49, Coombe Drive, Binley Woods, Coventry CV3 2QU. Tel: 02476 545 013 e-mail: jonathanmoffatt@btinternet.com

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

Millbrook House, Stoney Lane, Axminster, Devon EX13 5EE. Tel: 01297 33045 e-mail: rosemaryfell11@gmail.com