

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



**63rd EDITION
JULY 2020**

LEST WE FORGET



Poppy "Victoria Cross"
with an unofficial sub-variant name "Arthur Scarf VC"
with thanks to Dave Croft RAFBPA

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COVID-19 CAUSES THE CANCELLATION OF EVENTS TO MARK THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF V-J DAY, AND VISIT TO SINGAPORE IN SEPTEMBER TO MARK THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE JAPANESE SURRENDER

We very much hope that you have all survived the lockdown period over the last 3 months and kept safe and well. We send our very sincere sympathies and condolences to members and their families who may have contracted the disease or suffered bereavement. It has been a testing time for us all, but as **Olga Henderson**, one of our indomitable former child internees in Singapore 1942-45, said in a telephone call – ***"This lockdown is nothing compared with what we had to put up with in Changi and Sime Road."*** It certainly put things into perspective in our very comfortable lives today. Those who feel hard done by could learn a few lessons about deprivation from a much forgotten group of incredibly courageous men, women and children.

It was with great sadness that the decision was made to cancel plans to hold the V-J Day service on Saturday 15th August at the National Memorial Arboretum, and the visit to Singapore in September to mark the 75th anniversary of the signing of the Japanese surrender on the 12th September 1945. At the time of cancellation, COVID-19, which has caused the worldwide pandemic, showed few signs of being contained or eliminated. Travel, accommodation and large gatherings had all been severely curtailed or forbidden and it seemed a prudent step to make the decision to cancel.

The NMA has notified us that the grounds will be opened shortly to the public on a pre-booking scheme, but not the restaurants or shop. In this case, it may be possible for members who live near the NMA to visit on Saturday, 15th August, to lay a wreath on the Memorial Stone in our Memorial Garden plot. We will let members know in due course. **[See Ps. 5 & 6].** Other events in our diary have also been cancelled due to the coronavirus. As mentioned in the April 2020 newsletter, the first of these was the Annual FEPOW Service in the Church of Our Lady & St. Thomas of Canterbury in Wymondham, on Sunday 17th May. Arrangements had been made for a wreath to be laid in memory of the Malayan Volunteers by MVG members **Karen Harney** and **Rosemary Fell**. This service is a very personal one in the Church where Books of Remembrance are kept with the names of all those who were FEPOWs and civilian internees. Initially the Books contained only the names of those who had died in captivity, but a few years ago a new Book was opened to include the names of those who survived captivity but have subsequently died in freedom. The Books of Remembrance can be viewed in the Church with the help of their Honorary Archivist, **Peter Wiseman**. **[See Report P. 4].**

As **Father Malcolm Cowin**, a FEPOW survivor himself who built the FEPOW Memorial Church, said:

"They died in misery, often in agony, upon no bed with nothing but a sack to cover them in squalor unbelievable. Here is the symbol of things they never knew in their last days - peace, quiet, cleanliness and the cool, soft air of prayer – a living memorial – God's house built in their memory."

Later we were notified that the Malaysian Palm Oil Association's Commemoration Service in "God's Little Acre", Batu Gajah, on 6th June 2020 had also been cancelled. MVG member, **James Devadason** had arranged to attend the ceremony and lay a wreath on behalf of the Malayan Volunteer Forces.

The plans for our visit to Singapore in September this year were started in 2019, so it is indeed a shame that the decision had to be made to cancel the events. In previous visits, bespoke visits were arranged with the tour company "Journeys" to the northwest battlefield sites where the Japanese invaded Singapore Island, and to the northeast where we visited the Causeway, Naval Base and wartime airfields. This year "Journeys" had put together an interesting tour of Kent Ridge where the last battle for Singapore took place, Labrador Park and Keppel Harbour, with lunch at Haw Par Villa, now their headquarters. We are grateful to **Neill and Morag Aitken** for once again arranging lunch for us in the Victoria Room at the Singapore Cricket Club. Visits to the BattleBox, Old Ford Factory and Changi Museum (if open) were on a voluntary basis. Disappointing as the cancellation is, **Sallie Hammond**, our Secretary in Canada and the USA, commiserated in an e-mail, ***"The date does not really matter – just the fact that loved ones will continue to be remembered is the most important thing – and that their legacy of heroism and courage continues to live on."*** We wholeheartedly agree with these words. As far as we know, at the time of writing, the RBL is still planning to hold the Remembrance Sunday Parade at the Cenotaph on 8th November, and 12 tickets have been ordered for MVG's marchers. We have not been informed how this will take place, but it is unlikely that it will be with the usual format. Marchers will be informed in due course.

We also report that **Revd. Pauline Simpson**, who is organising the V-J Day Service in St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church on 15th August in London on behalf of the NFFWRA, is still hoping that the Service can go ahead in some form. Some of our

members have booked to attend this Service. **CANCELLED NOTICE JUST RECEIVED - [See PS. 4 & 5 for information].**

"A Guide to Singapore in World War Two" by Jane Booker Nielsen.

Jane has produced exclusively for the Malayan Volunteers Group the booklet which is enclosed with this newsletter. We are very grateful to her for the interesting information she has included, and we thank her for the enormous amount of work she has put in freely to make this a worthwhile and valuable guide to the historical sites in Singapore which are open to visitors. Thanks also go to **Liz Moggie** for her help and advice with the booklet.

The booklet was originally intended to be offered for sale to members, but given out to all those who planned to visit Singapore in September for a small donation to MVG funds. With the cancellation of the visit due to COVID-19, it is felt that **Jane's** work and effort should not be wasted and that we should send out the booklet in July. However, we are asking members to consider sending a donation for the booklet to **Rosemary** in the usual way.

As far as MVG's other annual events are concerned, we do not know yet whether our Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club on 17th October will take place. At present, private functions cannot take place under Government rules. As soon as we have any information, we will let everyone know. **[See latest information under Dates on P.30 – JUST RECEIVED.]**

Bill Adamson.

We were very sad to learn of **Bill's** death on 28th March after a long and courageous battle with cancer. We send our heartfelt sympathies to **Elizabeth** on the loss of her husband after 8 years of marriage. Having met **Elizabeth** through the MVG in Perth WA, **Bill** very quickly became involved with MVG matters. He and **Elizabeth** researched and sought permission from the City of Stirling WA authorities to place two Plaques in their Memorial Gardens. One plaque was to commemorate the Australian members of the Malayan Volunteer Forces and the second was to thank the citizens of Western Australia for taking in and looking after the evacuees from Singapore in 1942. He was also instrumental in organizing the annual "Fall of Singapore Service" in Stirling Memorial Gardens on 15th February, and the Merdeka Day Service in Kings Park in August. As President of the Malaya Borneo Veterans Association WA, **Bill** knew many organizations connected with military veterans and the Malayan community in Perth. He called on these connections to bring everyone together for these services. We are very grateful to him and **Elizabeth** for making these occasions so successful. His last attendance was at this year's service in February shortly before he died. **[See P. 23 for his full obituary.]**

MVG Facebook page.

We are very grateful to **Richard Parry**, our secretary in Malaysia and Singapore for his encouragement to non-members of the MVG to join the Group. We are pleased to announce that as a result of his excellently worded posting on the MVG's Facebook page, 3 new members from Singapore have been recruited.

It was interesting to learn that there are over 400 "friends" of Facebook, but of these only just over 50 are paid up members of the MVG. It would seem that more needs to be done to encourage membership. Please would everyone who is a "friend" on MVG's Facebook try to recruit at least one new member. Sometimes people with no Volunteer connections, but with a keen interest in the Far East Theatre of World War Two, and in particular the Malayan Campaign, do not realize that they are eligible to join. They just need encouragement. Our aims do state that we welcome them.

When the MVG Facebook page was set up, it was with the idea of opening up the MVG to a wider audience in order to encourage and increase our membership. As a self-funding group, we would not have been able to present the numerous plaques and memorials which have been donated to various museums and elsewhere over the years, without the funds raised by the annual subscription and generous donations we receive from members. Nor would we have been able to support the Peace Museum in Muntok by paying for the electricity twice a year, to run the air conditioning units and lighting. Wreaths are not free either – they also have to be paid for, together with many other things from printing and postage to website maintenance. Therefore it is important to encourage membership as a way of supporting our funds.

THOUGHTS FROM MY GARDEN – APRIL 15th 2020

In lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic - By Judy Balcombe

[Editor: We all need some cheerful thoughts during this year of disappointments at cancelled events and sad bereavements. Thank you, Judy, for uplifting us!]

Just 2 months ago, we visited Muntok for the annual Walk for Humanity held on the beach where 21 Australian Army nurses, civilians and 60 British Servicemen were shot by Japanese soldiers on 16th February, 1942. Now at this ceremony, all present hold hands and walk towards the water, hoping and praying for World Peace. This year, the Political Advisor to the Embassy of Japan in Indonesia joined with the Australian Ambassador and the Australia, British and New Zealand Defence Attaches in planting a Rose Bush for Peace in the former Japanese Commandant **Captain Seiki's** garden, now the Homestay owned by **Mrs. Sudirman**. We saw some healing of the past and hope for the future.

We visited a Junior High School where we were greeted by many smiling faces, dancing and the beating of drums. **Michael Noyce** presented 2 basketball hoops, the gift of former visitor to Muntok, **Bruce Bird**, a retired naval commander, now stricken with Motor Neurone Disease and unable to make this journey. We thought this was as sad as things could become.

Mrs. Sudirman's Homestay house



Rose Bush planted in the garden



At the Muntok Peace Museum, there was more traditional dancing by primary school children wearing headdresses and crowns. Muntok has become a place of peace, education, beauty and happiness. Now a different type of crown, Coronavirus, is facing our friends, ourselves and the people of the world.

We learnt today that the mother of **Mr. Marc Sloodweg** from the Café D'Orange in Muntok, and whose family maintains the Nurses' Memorial there, has died from COVID-19 in Holland aged 90. We are so very sorry to hear this news. Please know that we are thinking of you.

My garden here resembles a jungle, for which I am glad. Palms, ginger lilies, a spreading loquat and great bay tree and mirror bushes (the Australian lavatory bush with leaves prized as a makeshift mouth organ), an olive tree, jacaranda and ivy. And now some vegetables planted in hope for the future.

Those who visited 10, Amberley Court will remember **Ruth** and **John's** rambling jungle garden. I think **John** chose this remote farmhouse to remind him of his own childhood in Malaya, much as he lived and worked in the tropics of Darwin in the 1950s.

Today, my garden is peaceful. Bees explore the pumpkin creeper and nasturtiums and the resident blackbird hops and pecks cheerfully.

There is no time in the jungle. There is day and night but things are as they were and will always be. There is my shy grandmother planting rubber saplings and talking kindly to the workers. My grandmother embroidering on the verandah. The hum of insects and the screech of monkeys. My young father and his brother dancing in the rain.

There are **Anthony Pratt's** young parents picnicking in a glade; **Margie Caldicott's** grandparents singing in St. Andrew's Cathedral and in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas; **Gordon Reis** writing a peacetime diary; **Neal Hobbs** taking the wrong dark road to the hospital and delivering his daughter on the back seat of the car.

A strong tiger walks slowly across the macadam surface, unconcerned. Orang Asli sell durian to travellers from bamboo shelters. Speckled paths lead onwards.

We have the past to hold on to and there will be a future, but how to live best in this present difficult time?

Psychiatrist **Viktor Frankl** who survived Auschwitz, although losing his entire family there, taught later that man must have a meaning, whatever he is experiencing. For internee, **Dr. Albert McKern**, this was giving his fortune into the future for obstetric research. For **Capt. Tom Moore**, 99, it is walking in his garden to raise funds for Britain's NHS.

We cannot all raise 12 million pounds [**Ed: as raised on 15th April**] like the gallant **Captain Tom Moore [Now 100 and Sir Tom Moore]** or give away \$12 million dollars like **Dr. Albert McKern** but we can look for things to make the way easier.

This is our challenge.

Can you send an e-mail, a joke, make some soup for a friend? Plant and water some seeds? Smile at a stranger? My neighbour, **Professor Kate Cherry**, an infectious disease physician at Melbourne's Alfred Hospital posts a Silver Lining on Facebook to her friends each morning. In the midst of the current crisis, she finds something to inspire us each day.

This is a most unusual, difficult and dangerous time. We do not know, as we have never known, what the future holds. But we have the past to think about and the present to work on.

The Jester – Rudyard Kipling

There are three degrees of bliss
At the foot of Allah's throne
And the highest place is his
Who saves a brother's soul
At peril of his own
There is the Power made known!

There are three degrees of bliss
In Garden of Paradise,
And the second place is his
Who saves his brother's soul
By excellent advice
For there the Glory lies!

There are three degrees of bliss
And three abodes of the Blest,
And the lowest place is his
Who has saved a soul by jest
And a brother's soul in sport.
But there do the Angels resort!

IMPORTANT NOTICES ABOUT CANCELLED VJ75 EVENTS

1. FROM THE FEPOW CHURCH IN WYMONDHAM.

The following letter was received from **Peter Wiseman** – Honorary Archivist FEPOW Memorial Church

Dear Journal, Newsletter and Website editors,

Hello from Wymondham (FEPOW Memorial Church). The COVID-19 pandemic put paid to many events including our 2020 FEPOW Memorial Service on the 17th May.

In its place, by kind permission of the Parish Priest, a trio of church members was allowed access to the church to create a static display in the FEPOW Memorial Side Chapel. The aim was to express the explicit desire in the FEPOW Prayer to "... remember the price that was paid ... not just in November" in place of wreaths usually laid at the service. Only three wreaths were available to represent all Military personnel (Regular & Voluntary Forces), Air, Naval and Mercantile services, whilst the ABCIFER Banner (on long loan from **Mr. Ron Bridge MBE AFC**) represented all Internees of that conflict. The banner, as a backdrop, is obscured, just as civilians were during their incarceration. The rifles' silhouettes are in the 'Reverse Arms' position, the honour accorded to only the most worthy in the land. This hollow honour is tempered, being bound by the barbed wire of captivity and rests on a Hessian sack. Two 'railtracks', constructed from bamboo canes, recall the two infamous 'railways of death' built by FEPOW. Poppy crosses in between each 'sleeper' are tokens for all who died in the course of their construction. Due solemnity and social distancing were observed.

Peter Wiseman designed and created the tableau. He also laid a wreath on behalf of Wymondham RBL branch and the Mariners' anchor wreath which he made. His wife, **Teresa Wiseman**, as East Anglia Catholic Womens' League Branch President, laid the CWL Services Committee wreath. The FEPOW Prayer and the Kohima Epitaph were recited. A video of this appears on the webpage: <http://www.wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk/fepow>

Mrs. Ann Rogerson, Secretary Wymondham RBL, skillfully videoed and photographed the occasion. Other video clips and photos should be uploaded to the church website soon.

The display will remain in silent witness of the collective memories of the FEPOW Community at large for VJ75 on 15th August, by which time perhaps we may have easier access to churches again.

Your presence was greatly missed, and we plan for May 2021. All being well, the Memorial Service will be on 12th May 2021 at 12.30p.m. when we can all meet up again in this 'Living Memorial' amidst peace, cleanliness and the cool, soft air of prayer which will help to keep the embers of memory glowing bright in our hearts.

If you have a FEPOW or Internee in your family, please be in touch with **Peter Wiseman** to see if they might be listed here.

When no instructions apply, you will be welcome to visit.

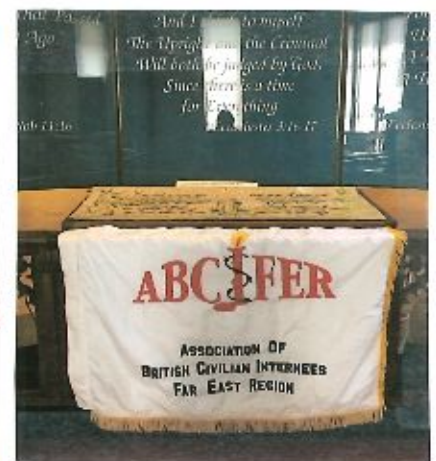
With best wishes that you are all managing this period of lockdown in our respective homes and countries.

Signed – Peter Wiseman

....remember the price that was paid

by FEPOWs and

Civilian Internees



2. FROM THE NATIONAL FEPOW FELLOWSHIP WELFARE REMEMBRANCE ASSOCIATION [NFFWRA].

The following information was sent by Revd. **Pauline Simpson**.

V-J Day 75

Sadly, our next get together will not be at St. Martin-in-the-Fields on the 15th August. This will not come as a surprise to any of you. Over the past few weeks, I have had sleepless nights deliberating and considering what-ifs! August still seems such a distance away and government advice changes almost daily, but also an occasion that brings together all of the UK, even Wales, Scotland and N. Ireland are governed by different restrictions. Furthermore, Churches are still closed and a decision over reopening probably will not be decided until the beginning of July. Should they be open, then social distancing will apply and it is fairly certain that our veterans and those in the vulnerable category would not be permitted to attend.

Over the last couple of weeks, I have been speaking with the Ministry of Defence, The Royal British Legion and the priest at St. Martins. Prior to that I have consulted with our committee for their thoughts and at the beginning of May a questionnaire was sent out to our Associate Members (those who pay an annual subscription) with a number of options. My very grateful thanks to all those who responded and although this did not affect the cancellation of the event on 15th August 2020, it did help enormously to assist with plans for 2021. I am sure you will understand that I have had no option but to cancel our event. It is very disappointing not to be able to honour our veterans and remember those left behind who gave their life in this conflict. It is hoped, however, that the preparation and work already given over to this event will not be wasted as we plan ahead for next year.

May I reassure you that you can obtain a refund from The Union Jack Club for accommodation booked for this weekend. [Tel: 020 7902 7379 Simon Croft – Reference 199444 Pauline Simpson.]

I am exploring the following options for continuing to commemorate VJ Day 75 on behalf of NFFWRA:

1. To stream a form of service from St. Martin-in-the-Fields with the help of **Revd. Sam Wells** (priest in charge). The Bishop of London who was due to speak to us at the service has agreed to participate. This will be available online (U-Tube) if successful and possibly via our website.

2. I am in talks with the BBC (Songs of Praise) who plan to record a service on Sunday, 16th August and hope that part of the programme will feature NFFWRA and FEPOW contributions.

N.B. I have been given permission personally to lay a wreath and deliver an Act of Remembrance with a bugler and standard bearer at a local FEPOW Memorial. It is important that I stress that this is a **private agreed arrangement** between myself and the Town Council and I would not want to jeopardize the relationship that exists by inviting others to attend the moment. Of course, if government advice changes, then I will, of course, publicise the details and hopefully this will allow for media coverage. It has become apparent that social distancing will be with us for some time.

VJ Day 2021

We will mark the occasion and to quote HM The Queen – “We Will Meet Again!!” Please keep the weekend of 13th– 15th August 2021 FREE.

NFFWRA will organize a commemorative event and service over this weekend to commemorate V-J Day, time and location to be advised when confirmed with the relevant organisations. (The Church and RBL and City Council). A front contender is the FEPOW Church of St. Peter Mancroft in Norwich where we have previously commemorated The Fall of Singapore and been their guests on one further occasion.

Following the response of the questionnaire sent to Associate members, it is felt that to reinvent the service in London will not have the same impact without the national recognition and support that has been guaranteed for this year, the 75th anniversary. Accommodation enquiries are being made as well as seeking a venue large enough to host a reception. We hope, therefore, that you will all feel able to support this commemoration as enthusiastically as your response for 2020 with over 600 applications.

Please Note: A 2021 Reunion is currently on hold until more is known about when hotels will reopen; how safe people feel where public transport is required to travel; and also a possible vaccine is introduced.

3. FROM THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM - IMPORTANT MESSAGE ON RE-OPENING.

Letter from the Managing Director, **Philippa Rawlinson.**

Hello,

The whole team at the National Memorial Arboretum hopes this message finds you and your families safe and well. Whilst undoubtedly for a much greater good, we were incredibly sad to close to our visitors in March. Although a small number from our dedicated team have been working hard to ensure that our grounds and buildings have been maintained, the missing presence of the wider Arboretum community has been truly felt; the bustle each day brings and the memories shared and created by each and every visitor.

Taking resolve from the inspiring individuals and organisations represented around our site has helped both me and the rest of my team operate through this incredibly challenging period. Although we have not been able to meet in person, I have been inspired by the stories that you have continued to share with us digitally and the personal acts of Remembrance observed. On behalf of my entire team, I want to extend my thanks for your continued and unwavering support.

Over the past months, the importance and benefits of enjoying green space have been brought to the fore, and I know that many of you are now as eager to visit our site as we are to welcome you. I am therefore pleased to be able to share that we will be open our grounds on 8th June.

To ensure that you get the most from your forthcoming visit, whilst exploring our site safely, we will be introducing a number of **new measures** which will apply to all visitors immediately from opening

A. PRE-BOOKED TICKETED ENTRY ONLY.

We will be limiting the number of people able to access or site each day, therefore it will be essential that visitors **book in a vehicle before they visit. A daily parking charge of £4 per vehicle will apply.**

This daily parking charge supports the work of our charity and ensures that we can remain free to enter. A limited number of parking tickets will be issued on a daily basis. Visitors who **have NOT booked** will, unfortunately, be unable to enter the site. All visitors, including dog walkers, **must** access the site via the Remembrance Centre.

We are currently only operating with a very small part of our team. With this in mind, tickets can only be booked online.

B. LIMITING OUR OFFER.

Visitors will only be permitted to enter our grounds and use the toilets in the Remembrance Centre. Our shop, restaurant, coffee shop, exhibitions, Chapel and Far East Prisoners of War building are not open. We will only re-open these facilities when it is safe and we are permitted to do so. Our Daily Act of Remembrance will be relayed into the amphitheatre, but all other talks, tours and activities, including the land train, will not be operating. We will also be unable to hire scooters or wheelchairs until further notice.

C. SOCIAL DISTANCING.

I must ask that all visitors continue to maintain the social distancing guidelines that we are observing as a nation during their visits. Onsite signage, one way paths and queuing systems for facilities should be followed. Please also use contactless payments where possible.

D. HYGIENE.

An enhanced cleaning regime will be in operation in high footfall areas, including our toilets. Measures to keep our team safe, including hygiene screens, will also be in place. Please remember to wash your hands frequently during your time with us. Although we are eager to welcome you back to the Arboretum, **please do not visit the Arboretum if you are required to remain in isolation due to current Government guidelines.**

For further enquiries see – **Visiting FAQs** and on **Social Media**.

At the Arboretum we pride ourselves on the welcome and service we provide to each of our visitors and I hope you will appreciate that, at the moment, it won't be possible for my team to welcome you in the way that we traditionally have, although you can continue to expect a friendly smile, even if it's from a distance.

I thank you in advance for working with us over the next few months and look forward to seeing you again soon.

ADAM BERGIUS – X-CRAFT DIVER

Adam Kennedy Bergius, known as "**Jock**", was one of the exceptionally daring men who manned midget submarines known as X-craft during the Second World War.

At 21.20 on the night of 30th July 1945, in the Mekong Delta, the submarine "**Spearhead**" slipped the tow on the midget submarine XE-4. The Australian **Lieutenant Max Shean DSO**, commanding XE-4, had orders to trawl for and cut the underwater telephone cables from Saigon to Singapore and Hong Kong to Saigon, thus forcing the Japanese to use wireless communications, which could be intercepted and deciphered.

For this difficult task, hampered by the tide and in rough weather, **Shean's** crew consisted of his first lieutenant, **Sub-Lieutenant Ben Kelly** from Edinburgh, **Chief Engine Room Artificer "Ginger" Coles** from Newbury, diver **Sub-Lieutenant Ken Briggs** and the 20-year-old Scot, **Sub-Lieutenant Adam Bergius**.



The 30-ton, 52ft midget submarine, powered by a Gardner diesel, completed the 40-mile underwater journey towards Saigon, at which point **Shean** began to drag a steel grapnel and chain weighing about 80 lbs along the sea bed. He made a number of runs through waters crowded by fishing junks, before being brought up suddenly as the grapnel caught the Singapore cable.

Briggs, wearing a heavy diving suit, was the first to leave the submarine. He returned soon with a short length of cable as evidence of a job well done. About an hour later, the Hong Kong cable was found, by further trawling, at a much greater depth and **Bergius** emerged from the X-craft. He recalled, "The cable lay about 40 feet from where our submarine had come to rest. The water was a bit muddier than Loch Striven where we had done our training, but I didn't have much difficulty in finding the cable."

Bergius's air-powered cutter failed, however, and,

exhausted by the effort, he was obliged to return to the XE-4 to rest. Entering the wet-and-dry chamber, **Bergius** was offered the chance to abort his solo mission on the seabed, but, after a spell of breathing mind-clearing air rather than pure oxygen, he resolved to leave the midget submarine, taking with him a replacement cutter. He was then able to cut the Saigon-Hong Kong cable.

In that period, underwater breathing apparatus was in its infancy, the water was deeper than expected and only a short time before two highly trained divers had been lost attempting to cut cables at similar depths. However, **Bergius** was successful at the second attempt, and returned with a length of cable as proof that it had been cut. He proudly kept it as a souvenir. For gallantry, perseverance and outstanding skill he was awarded the DSC.

Bergius joined the Royal Navy in 1942, and after initial training was drafted to the auxiliary minelayer "**Armageddon**", based in the Kyle of Lochalsh, and employed laying the Northern Barrage, a minefield in the

REMEMBER BATAAN
www.bataanlegacy.org

Postponement of the Bataan Conference from 11th April to 29th August 2020

78 years ago on 9th April 1942, Bataan fell after 99 days of fighting in the peninsula of Bataan in the Philippines. **Major-General Edward P. King Jnr.** was forced to surrender approximately 75,000 Filipino and American troops of the U.S. Army forces in the Far East (USAFFE). Despite the lack of training, equipment and ammunition, the USAFFE troops continued to fight while cities in other Asian countries capitulated to the Imperial Japanese Army.

In the past, the fall of Bataan was only seen as the biggest single surrender in US military history. Today, thousands of students in California and the rest of the USA and the world are learning its bigger significance. The USAFFE troops were able to delay the 50-day timetable of the IJA despite suffering from massive disease and starvation, (they were placed on half rations by early January 1942, quinine no longer available by February etc.) fighting without any air support (the US Far East Air Force was destroyed during the first week) and no reinforcements in sight. Thousands died during the gruelling march under extreme tropical conditions to their prison camp at Camp O'Donnell some 65 miles away, with no provisions for food, water, shelter or medicine. Those who could no longer go on were beaten, bayoneted or shot by their Japanese captors. Many more perished while in captivity under despicable conditions. But the indomitable force of the human spirit lived on despite hunger, disease and man's inhumanity.

Today there are only a handful of Bataan survivors left. Although we are unable to honour them with commemorative events at this time let us remember them, their mates who have passed on and those whose lives were cut off and who made the ultimate sacrifice 78 years ago.

We are still hoping to have our rescheduled Bataan Death March Commemoration (originally on Saturday 11th April 2020) on Saturday 29th August. We shall keep you posted of any developments. Because of the uncertainty of the effects of COVID-19 we are forced to cancel our 6th Conference on WW2 in the Philippines scheduled for 19th September 2020 in San Francisco. We hope to have the Conference sometime in 2021 and we shall keep you posted on the exact date. We are hoping our WW2 exhibition at the San Francisco Main Library scheduled this year can still happen and we will give you the latest updates.

But we must not let COVID-19 prevent us from continuing our work and from remembering the legacy of our ancestors in their fight for our freedom. The fight continues today and in the frontline are thousands of doctors, nurses, healthcare workers, first responders and ordinary people who provide vital resources to keep us safe and alive. Like WW2 many of our healthcare workers do not have the proper equipment to fight this dreaded disease and many have already paid with their lives.

Perhaps we can take some lessons from WW2. Even though war was already raging in Europe, the political and economic climate in the U.S. did not prepare it for an impending world war. However, **President Franklin D. Roosevelt** signed Executive Order 8802 on 25th June 1941 which paved the way for the massive mobilization of the defence industry (after Pearl Harbour) and eventually helped the Allied Forces to win the war.

Today, during the 78th anniversary of the Fall of Bataan and the Bataan Death March, let us take a moment to remember the lessons of WW2. And when we finally overcome this treacherous disease, we can become better human beings who can feel the sufferings of those who are still at war.

78th Anniversary
BATAAN
DEATH MARCH

75th Anniversary
END OF
WORLD WAR TWO

Saturday 29th August 2020 at 10 a.m.
Golden Gate National Cemetery
1300, Sneath Lane, San Bruno,
California.

Secret Art of Survival – exhibition update From Meg Parkes

[Ed: Those of us who planned to visit this exhibition during the FEPOW Conference weekend have, sadly, missed the opportunity to see the exhibits.]



N.B. Information just received

Memories of the end of captivity & liberation

In the lead up to VJ75 the Researching FEPOW History Group is running a series of guest blogposts on our webpages:

<https://fepowhistory.com/2020/05/28/vj-day-remembered/>

The focus is on interview extracts and memories from both FEPOW and Civilian Internees, recalling the end of captivity and liberation, and memories of those waiting for captives to return.

We hope the series will run until 2 September, the anniversary of Japan's formal surrender and welcome submissions for consideration (up to 300 words) please send to: meg.parkes@lstmed.ac.uk Later in the autumn we hope to run a further series, focusing on memories of repatriation and homecoming and we invite submissions for this too.

NB. RFHG retains full editorial control

"Nothing prepared me for the overwhelming content of this exhibition" is just one of nearly 300 comments left by visitors to the Secret Art of Survival exhibition in Liverpool.

The Victoria Gallery & Museum (VG&M) had to close its doors on 18th March due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We recently heard that the exhibition would not be reopening (it was due to close on 20th June). Closure was, of course, unavoidable but we console ourselves that during the four-month run over 12,500 people visited the two galleries! Incredible!!

The education project, having produced the replica bamboo dental chair on display, now includes final year degree work by a design student at Liverpool Hope University. Captivated by **Jack Chalker's** stunning embroidery panel and by discovering Liverpool's connections with FEPOW history, she was inspired to create designs (based on elements from the willow pattern) for a set of blue and white ceramic plates.



We are now creating the online virtual gallery which is the exhibition's legacy. The VG&M webpage already hosts a video of the galleries, the information booklets for the four themes: environment, medical ingenuity, camp life and survival. Images of all the exhibits loaned by FEPOW families, plus the blue and white plate designs, will soon be uploaded.

Thank you to all the MVG members who supported us and who made the trip to Liverpool to see this unique exhibition. To view the art in its new digital form, go to:

<https://vgm.liverpool.ac.uk/exhibitions-and-events/special/fepow/>

For further information contact:

Meg Parkes: meg.parkes@lstmed.ac.uk

LSTM's Captive Memories website will be updated in the autumn as the focus now is vital COVID-19 vaccine research. School has an urgent appeal running to support the COVID-19 research and to purchase equipment and medical supplies for the frontline response in Malawi. For further details see:

<https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/LiverpoolSchoolofTropicalMedi/COVID-19Fund.html>

My visit with Lawrence Ross – “C Force” Royal Rifles of Canada – October 1941
Report by Sallie Hammond - MVG Secretary in Canada and the USA

12th January 2016

Parkwood Hospital, LHSC 4th Floor – Bruce Wing

Mr. Lawrence Ross has a single room overlooking Pond Mills Wood. He has a lovely view of the woods and wild life from his room on this bleak winter's day.

Mr. Ross is in a wheelchair. He is the only surviving Battle of Hong Kong war veteran in SW Ontario. The remaining Battle of Hong Kong veterans live in Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. There are fewer than 20 Hong Kong war veterans still alive in Canada. [N.B. This report was written in 2016].

During our conversation, Mr. Ross shared photos of his twin daughters (now in their 60s) at the Hong Kong War Memorial in Ottawa – taken at a Remembrance Day Service on 5th December 2015, the 74th Anniversary of the Battle of Hong Kong, 5th December 1941. “*Sergeant Gander*”, the Newfoundland Labrador mascot of the Canadian soldiers, is also mentioned on the Memorial.

We discussed how long it had taken for the Memorial to be erected in Ottawa.

The simple Memorial, in recognition of the heroism, sacrifice, suffering and courage of those who gave their lives during the Battle of Hong Kong and for those who died in captivity, was only completed in 2000.

The families of the Hong Kong veterans took it upon themselves to take a petition to the Canadian Government in Ottawa and demand recognition for their loved ones.

The remaining Hong Kong veterans felt the Canadian Government ignored the Battle of Hong Kong because the Surrender was seen as shameful in Canada. Shocking judgement in view of the political gaffs and irresponsible decisions made by the Canadian Government who wanted Canada to have some representation in the WW2 action.

The men and women who served in Hong Kong for Canada were merely cannon fodder.

“Even Churchill cautioned McKenzie King in Ottawa about the sheer recklessness of sending two regiments to Hong Kong as the Japanese would overwhelm Hong Kong during an invasion because they had more soldiers and better weaponry.

Mckenzie King ignored Churchill,” said Mr. Ross.

The conversation continued with his description of the journey across Canada by train to Vancouver once he and his brothers had been conscripted for the Royal Rifles of Canada in Quebec.

“We boarded the train from Quebec to Halifax – then travelled back across Canada via Toronto and the Prairies to Vancouver – the journey took 18 days. New conscripts were picked up en route.”

Lawrence Ross was accompanied by his brothers Les and Andrew. The Canadian Forces were forced to surrender after many days of constant battle, fatigue, no food and no more weaponry supplies.

Lawrence Ross and his two brothers survived the Battle of Hong Kong and the horrendous POW conditions. They were repatriated to Canada with other Battle of Hong Kong survivors in 1945.

Mr. Ross's brothers are now deceased (Very tearful again recalling those memories).

Mr. Ross mentioned the Canadian nurses – and their tragic deaths. 7 raped and murdered in Hong Kong. Others survived – some in his POW camp. (More tears).

Regarding Sergeant Gander

Sergeant Gander was from Gander, Newfoundland. He was a “one regiment” dog. He did not share himself with the other regiments and seemed to know who did not belong to his regiment. “He was very protective of his boys.”

Sergeant Gander provided morale for the young, barely trained Canadian soldiers. “The dog hated the Japanese. He died whilst grabbing a grenade thrown into a group of Canadian soldiers – some had been wounded.” (Another tearful reflection). “The dog was given a medal for courage, you know.” I showed him the page in the book, “*Sergeant Gander – a Canadian Hero*,” by Robyn Walker. The Dickin Medal is mentioned.

Mr. Ross did not discuss his Hong Kong or POW experience. Too painful for him to go there.

On return to Canada – he was 24. He married his childhood sweetheart. With their family of five children, they decided to move to Ontario in 1956 from Quebec.

London, Ontario was the new home to the family. The population then was 80,000. Now it is 831,000.

Back in civilian life, Mr. Ross worked in a steel factory making cutlery. He hated the job. He decided to become a truck driver and liked his job for the next 25 years. (He does not present as a typical trucker – not a big macho man).

His wife died 45 years ago leaving him with 5 children to raise on his own. He was 50. His children were probably young teenagers by then. Mr. Ross did not remarry – unusual as 75% of men will find another female relationship or another wife within the first year of the wife's death for companionship and cooking reasons.....

Mr. Ross's twin daughters live in London, Ontario, as do his two sons and another daughter. They see their father frequently. He is very proud of their accomplishments – educationally and otherwise. One grandson is pursuing a Ph.D in

History – with an emphasis on WW2 history – the Far East and Hong Kong in particular. His grandfather is very proud of him. Mr Ross said he is happy at Parkwood Hospital on the Veterans’ Unit. He loves the nurses, the excellent care (he is in a wheelchair now) the food, the fellowship with other veterans and the clean, organized and bright facility with lots of recreational activities organized by volunteers – concerts and other activities. The Department of Veterans’ Affairs in Ottawa is very supportive to veterans. They have adequate pensions and most other needs are met by the Department of V.A. – including funeral costs.

Mr. Ross seemed to me to be a very kind, gentle and thoughtful man. He is at peace with himself. He feels lucky to be alive surrounded by the love of his family.

It was a memorable experience for me and a great privilege to spend time with this Hong Kong veteran in London, Ontario. I took his picture and he smiled.

2 “C” Company Royal Rifles of Canada on the “Awatea” on the way to Hong Kong



Royal Rifles of Canada – 1st Battalion with mascot “Sergeant Gander” the Newfoundland Labrador



GRANDPA MALIK – by Sugia Kam With thanks to Judy Balcombe

[This story was sent to Judy by Sugia Kam a Chinese lady who lives in Jebus on Banka Island where she owns a Tea Plantation. The Judy met Sugia in February this year, and was interested to hear the story because her grandfather, Colin Campbell, was on the “Giang Bee” lifeboat which landed in Jebus.

The English grammar has not been altered and the news that this group was massacred at Radji Beach is not true.]

A. Malik Hamid was born in Sungai Buluh village subdistrict Jebus born in 1937 aged 83 in 2020. Called **Atok Malik** and used to be a member of the DPRD. Even though he is old, his condition is still healthy and we tell him about his memories of the Japanese occupation in Indonesia, which at that time he was 5 years old. **Atok Malik** said the incident started with fishermen finding a number of groups (of people) who were stranded in Teluk Nipah. The entourage is of Westerners but that is of civilians not a prisoner of war and consisting of middle-aged men and women and small children and there are girls. They were stranded in Teluk Nipah where there were lifeboats and mattresses and boards.

Then the fishermen take the group to Sungai Buluh village which is 30 minutes away by boat. Arriving at the camp, the group distributed biscuits to the local residents. **Atok (Grandpa) Malik** was the one who got it, and said it was very good. The group also offered a sum of money to entrust their daughters to be treated at the camp but were rejected by residents for fear of being discovered by the Japanese army. At that time, the Japanese headquarters was in Jebus which was 10 minutes away by car. **Atok Malik’s** parents had given the gunny sack tied to the feet with a rope instead of shoes to the group. **Atok Malik’s** parents were trading at a junction in Sungai Buluh village. Because the group at that time were all barefoot or (had) shoes. Soon the Japanese army came and escorted the group walking to Kampong (sic) Jebus. Arriving at Jebus, the group was immediately put in a car and headed to the camp in Muntok. According to the news the group was taken to Radji Beach and executed (killed) all. This is what I can tell Judy. Hope it helps you to trace the history of the Australian army.

WEBSITES TO VISIT

https://www.nzherald.co.nz/hawkes-bay-today/opinion/news/article.cfm?c_id=1503459&objectid=12327376&fbclid=IwAR3dtL8Uk4Hw6MKLGQRDaBDsa9ke5UCZchmEViuN4iGrNjAkoIBx6DeR9zQ - Article in the New Zealand Herald about Stanley Edgar ESAM - SSVF Volunteer who wrote a diary while in captivity.

https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/18430087.southwick-mans-journey-find-fathers-pow-past/?fbclid=IwAR0SDSEPKidfBS7SBu4_1MLZkyV7UI2ZzcOunZmMoMzaYtEjfh-k2I7xukk - Article in the Argus about the Yettons, father and 2 sons. Son William Yetton was in the SSVF Armoured Cars and sent to Thailand with “U” Party.

https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/arts-culture/article/3086924/king-and-country-not-so-danish-volunteer-soldiers-world-war?utm_source=Facebook&utm_medium=share_widget&utm_campaign=3086924&fbclid=IwAR3SdIPX1Jx89OhPWCcXsRwcY4gK_xFCJ88RenxZgWKCvYrXiC5tEY1DyIQ - Article in the South China Morning Post (Hong Kong) about Danes who fought with the British Volunteer Forces defending Hong Kong in December 1941.

STRATEGY, WHAT STRATEGY?

By Graham Lee

[Ed: Following Graham's remarks which were printed in "Information Exchange" in April 2020's edition of Apa Khabar, about Mark Morrison's article (published in 6 parts in previous editions of Apa Khabar), Graham has sent a more detailed analysis of the political situation in the Far East in the lead up to the Japanese invasion of Malaya.]

Graham writes:

I would like to correct any omissions in, and make some additions to, my piece in Apa Khabar of April 2020. My aim is to illustrate vividly and succinctly the salient features of the tragedy.

1. The Tianjin crisis involved several disputes, but broke out on 14th June 1939 because the IJA (Imperial Japanese Army) harassed and humiliated British or others entering or leaving the sovereign British concession area in the city, after the British consul's refusal to return to the IJA two Chinese men seeking refuge there. The IJA claimed they were terrorists who had murdered Japanese nationals. For a time there was uproar in the British press about the treatment of British subjects, especially women, by the Japanese, and also, in June and July, the bombing of open cities in China for the first time.

The first Sea Lord of the Royal Navy, **Admiral Sir Dudley Pound**, advised the Cabinet at that time that, in the event of war with Japan, a fleet with a core of at least seven capital ships (battleships, battle cruisers or aircraft carriers) would need to be sent to Singapore, but only two could be spared, owing to the danger of war with Germany and Italy. (Curiously, that was the same number of capital ships as were in the Far Eastern Fleet in October 1941.) After **Pound's** verdict, the cabinet was desperate to avoid war with Japan.

But something had to be done. Many were watching developments, especially in Australia and New Zealand, where suspicion of Britain's commitment to defence in the Far East was widespread. To defend the Singapore naval base, the garrison had been expanded by September 1939 to about 20,000 men: anti-aircraft and coastal defence artillery units, engineers, nine regular battalions (four British, four Indian, one Malay) and three Volunteer ones. Thereafter the proportion of non-British infantrymen would remain high in Malaya/Singapore. Shortly after, the RAF augmented its meagre force there by two Blenheim bomber squadrons. This expansion was designed to impress, but could be seen as a minimum commitment.

The Royal Naval presence in the Far East was officially called China Station, based in Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Wei-hai-wei, China (only evacuated in October 1940). In September 1939 it consisted of one small aircraft-carrier, four cruisers, ten destroyers, fifteen submarines and many lesser vessels. In the next few months, most of the larger ships were quietly moved homewards, including the aircraft-carrier and all submarines bar one. There remained a token naval force at Singapore and Hong Kong until December 1941 with the arrival of the Eastern Fleet: battleship *Prince of Wales* and battle cruiser *Repulse*.

The land and air expansions, together with **Churchill's** promise to hold Singapore in November 1939, seem to have satisfied the Australian and New Zealand governments who, in 1941, sent army and air contingents to Malaya/Singapore which were vital to the defence effort. **Churchill** often referred to Fortress Singapore – although the British chiefs of staff never thought of it in this way – and this expression raised the expectations of the Australians. When warned of imminent defeat in late January 1942, their government accused the British of 'inexcusable betrayal'. What had happened to the 'impregnable fortress' hinted at by Churchill? In reality, **Churchill** had seen a US fleet based at Singapore as the best defence. In 1940 and 1941 the Admiralty spent great time and effort working on the US Navy to this end. It failed. **President Roosevelt** feared a strong isolation reaction, suspicious of 'Pulling Britain's chestnuts out of the fire'; it could erode his majority in a peacetime congress. To the Admiralty, the US Navy insisted that its fleet at Pearl Harbour was quite enough to deter the Japanese from attack. On 5th December 1941 (45 hours before the Pearl Harbour attack) **Roosevelt** told **Churchill** the USA was committed to entering the war. This was conditional on a Japanese invasion of the British Far East or the Netherlands East Indies. But when would an invasion be held to have begun: the actual attack, or when Japanese forces were poised to attack at sea or in the air?

The same day, **Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham**, C-in-C Far East Land and Air Forces, was authorized to invade south-east Thailand to frustrate the landing of a Japanese force there. On 6th December, RAF reconnaissance spotted what seemed to be unknown naval forces close to the Gulf of Thailand and to the coast of south-east Thailand and north-east Malaya. A large number of transports with cruisers and destroyers were seen. **Brooke-Popham** had the chance to gain a decisive advantage for his command. The ships spotted could only be Japanese. But he found reasons for inaction. He dithered, and the pregnant moment passed. When at last he ordered an advance, the IJA had landed, largely successfully, in Thailand and north-east Malaya. Through further delays and errors – of **Brooke-Popham** and the army commander, **General Arthur Percival** – the IJA were able to move swiftly to the Malayan border with minimal interference. Had the air chief marshal made the bold decision, he would not have been too much out on a limb, because the chiefs of staff in London had time to countermand his order if they thought violating the Thai border was too great a political risk to take. In fact, he may have thought the plan unsound. From the sighting of the enemy fleet on the 6th to a likely time of landing only gave about 12 hours of daylight to move a division of troops 40 to 50 miles to the southern ports of Singora and Patani and deploy them (with probable Thai army resistance on the way) – and the IJA landing force was likely to be formidable. In any event, the force he had at his disposal fell short in numbers of troops and firepower from that which both the chiefs of staff and **General Percival** felt was the minimum necessary for the task. Thus **Brooke-Popham** adopted a very risky offensive strategy that diverted the Army from putting in place a stronger defensive strategy in north-west Malaya, which would have had some chance of success. It seems that he was in two minds in November and December 1941, and never resolved the dilemma.

2. Fortunately for Britain in 1939, there was another factor that deterred the IJA: Nomonhan, a village on the Manchurian-Mongolian Soviet Republic border. Here, in a local clash over the demarcation of the border, the USSR army, in alliance with Mongolia, destroyed an IJA division and spread dismay in the IJA and among nationalists. It increased anger with **Hitler** over the Nazi-Soviet pact. Nomonhan influenced British military planners in their assessment of the IJA capabilities and intentions. It added to the tendency to downplay IJA effectiveness and the likelihood of an Japanese attack on the British Far East.

3. In the course of 1941, Keeper of the Privy Seal **Marquis Kido Koichi** was the Showa Emperor's most trusted and hawkish adviser, but **Hirohito** also listened to the contrary opinions of the Hamlet-like **Konoye, Yonai** and **Yamamoto**, for two years C-in-C Combined Fleet, who still believed war against the USA and Britain to be fatally mistaken. In autumn 1941, **Hirohito** faced an excruciating dilemma:

- (i) the great risk of a war with the USA, Britain and the Netherlands, and
- (ii) the equally great risk of a veto of the war, facing nationalist fury and a likely coup d'état, with a modern Shogun taking over as a military dictator and the Emperor reduced, like so many of his predecessors, to a sacred symbol, or even civil strife between different IJA and IJN factions.

In summer 1940, navy minister **Vice-Admiral Yoshida Zengo**, a staunch ally of **Yonai**, whose government had been brought down about the matter, opposed the hawks' desire for a tripartite pact with Germany and Italy. In September 1940, **Yoshida** had to resign after a nervous breakdown brought on either by overwork or the strains of his political isolation, or both. That same month, Japan joined the Pact, causing consternation in the USA and Britain. His successor, **Admiral Oikawa Koshiro**, claimed that the loss of the Pact would have precipitated an IJA coup. Simultaneously, the IJA secured an agreement, under duress, from Vichy France's governor-general that Japanese troops occupy part of Indo-China. Angered by this and the pact, **President Franklin Roosevelt** resolved upon economic sanctions against Japan. **Oikawa** tried to appease both war and peace factions within the IJN, but gave way to the former when in July 1941 Japan secured bases for both the IJA and IJN in southern Indo-China – thus threatening both Britain (Malaya/Singapore) and the USA (Philippines) and triggering severe economic sanctions. These were perceived in Japan as a real threat to its economy, particularly in the supply of oil and essential minerals.

Some hawks clung to the comforting hope that, after initial victories, Japan could secure a favourable peace with the USA. Pearl Harbour – tactical triumph, strategic disaster.

When, in October 1941, **Prince Konoye** had hesitated over war with the western powers, and **General Tojo** – determined (as army minister since July 1940) to defy the USA and Britain – was forming his cabinet, the IJN put up **Rear Admiral Toyoda Soemu** for navy minister. He was open in his hatred for the army and opposed to war with the west. **Tojo** rejected him. **Prince Fushimi** – cousin of the Emperor and former chief of the naval staff for over seven years until April 1941 – was highly influential and a compromiser. His protégé, **Admiral Shimada Shigetaro**, renowned in the IJN as a yes-man, became navy minister. The Emperor ordered **Tojo** to review the case for war with the west. But with **Shimada** and the chief of naval staff **Admiral Nagano Osami** in office, the chances of a change of heart in the cabinet were minimal. **Nagano** often seemed torpid. His critics said it was the effects of recently acquiring a young, very pretty wife, and that he abhorred the prospect of a clash with the army. There seemed no chance of an IJN challenge to the IJA, especially with so many middle-ranking IJN officers now hawks. **Shimada** had asserted before his appointment that war must be avoided, but he changed his mind after a talk with **Fushimi**. The hawks found justification for their attitude in the insistence by the USA and Britain that Japan evacuate troops from China and Indo-China in exchange for ending economic sanctions against Japan. On 29th November (the final decision was due to be made on 1st December) the Emperor held an 'informal talk' with the Jushin (eight ex-prime ministers). Five of them, three strongly, opposed a decision in favour of war. The mood was sombre, fatalistic.

4. Shortly after 7th December 1941, the chiefs of staff in London saw that without air reinforcements in Malaya/Singapore, the battle would be lost. But Singapore is a very long way away, even from Egypt, from where some of the bombers flew. Eight squadrons of Hurricane fighters were planned. The first arrived in Singapore by sea, 51 in kit form, in mid-January 1942. Largely due to the efforts of Chinese fitters, a squadron (16 aircraft) was operational just before the army fell back into Singapore Island. By then all four airfields there were being bombed constantly by enemy aircraft, and many Hurricanes never left the ground. A diminishing few fought on for two weeks against great odds. But there were no Battle of Britain plaudits for the vanquished. The pilots were billeted in the luxury Sea View Hotel. After a hard day in the skies, the fliers were confronted by a long-term hotel resident who complained that they were frolicking in the swimming pool without permission and did not dress for dinner! Two squadrons of Hurricanes never reached Singapore. They were diverted to Sumatra and Java.

My father often joked that he led the retreat with his troop of First World War-vintage armoured cars, considered too precious or vulnerable to hazard in battle. They only saw action in the final days of British Singapore.

Very quickly in December 1941, the Japanese established naval and air superiority over the peninsula of Malaya. Both were vital. I believe this doomed Commonwealth forces in Malaya/Singapore to defeat against a competent and resolute enemy, which the Japanese certainly were. **Air Chief Marshal Brooke-Popham** had asked for air reinforcements in summer 1941. There was no prospect of naval reinforcement after the sinking of the Far East Fleet. If those aircraft, which were sent too late, had arrived before 7th December 1941, the Army might perhaps have averted, or postponed defeat. A more protracted battle would have increased the sufferings of the local people, but this was hardly a consideration for Allied strategists. Until the autumn of 1941, often citing the US fleet at Pearl Harbour as a deterrent to the Japanese, **Churchill** had gambled on the Japanese, at the crunch, doing the sensible thing. There is a certain logic in this, especially as he had, in 1941, immense defence problems at home, in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. But he underestimated the power of the resurgent **Yamato Damasgii** (the 'spirit of the old Japan') proclaimed by the militant patriots, who were blinded by this (and a low regard for intelligence) from seeing the true economic might of the USA.

On 30th January 1942, my mother **Dora** (with me in utero) left Singapore, with many other women and children, on board the *Empress of Japan* (an event described elsewhere in *Apa Khabar*). Thus I could be said to be a survivor of the war with Japan, unlike millions of others. Those victims were mainly Chinese, if you date the start of the war from 18th September 1931 when the IJA, in defiance of their own government, invaded Manchuria, a sovereign part of

China (having conjured up a pretext) and thereby violated international law.

The major democracies of the west – the USA, Britain and France – did not have the will to, and did not, intervene beyond words of condemnation. They thereby undermined the League of Nations and set a precedent for successful aggression that **Hitler** and **Mussolini** could later exploit. Manchuria, under a puppet emperor, was annexed by Japan as a first step towards the conquest of China and beyond.

Is there a similarity between this event and Russia's invasion of Ukraine and annexation of the Crimea, and the West's reaction?

A note on diplomacy

As we have seen, diplomacy played a part in the Tianjin crisis which was finally resolved on 12th June 1940 after a climb down by the British, unnoticed amidst the clutter of the fall of France and the Netherlands. Shortly after, **Konoye** appointed **Matsuoka Yosuke** Foreign Minister. He was ardently pro-German and eager to exploit the discomfiture of the west and promote a tripartite pact, but faced the opposition of navy minister **Yoshida**. After securing the pact, **Matsuoka** sought a treaty of neutrality with the USSR, achieved in April 1941. Meanwhile, Japan, Britain and the USA were intensifying war preparations in the eastern hemisphere.

All changed on 22nd June 1941, when Germany attacked the Soviet Union. There was a surge of interest among anti-Soviet zealots in the IJA, hoping for a strike against the USSR, but this abated when it soon seemed clear that **Hitler** was winning without Japanese help. After the July sanctions by the west, **Konoye** sought a rapprochement with the USA, taking the lead in negotiations with Japan, but **Matsuoka**, backed by the IJA, opposed further talks. **Konoye** resigned, but re-emerged with Vice-Admiral **Toyoda Teijiro** at the foreign ministry. More broadminded than **Matsuoka**, more flexible, more urbane, **Toyoda** (hoped **Konoye**) could be expected to mollify **Roosevelt** and Secretary of State **Cordell Hull**. But army minister **Tojo** held firm in refusing to withdraw Japanese forces from China and Indo-China, key demands of the USA. **Konoye** proposed a summit between himself and **Roosevelt**, but **Roosevelt** thought Japan had little to offer and refused. **Toyoda** managed to prolong talks to early October. But **Roosevelt** and **Hull** were also now playing hardball. With navy minister **Oikawa** evasive and navy chief of staff **Nagano** inclining towards **Tojo**, who insisted on talks ending, **Toyoda** had nowhere to go – neither had **Konoye**, who resigned. On condition of reviewing the case for war, on Imperial Order, **General Tojo** was appointed Prime Minister on 18th October 1941. For the next seven weeks, Japan and the USA maintained a façade of diplomacy. The Imperial Order somehow evaporated.

JOHN BRADBURNE: The Volunteer who never was.
The remarkable story of one man's life from Soldier to Missionary.
With thanks to Sallie Hammond and Dave Croft.

At Gresham School, **John Bradburne** undertook military training in the Officer's Training Corps (attendance was compulsory), and also to climbing challenging structures such as very large trees and church organ pipes for example. He was also a keen bird watcher.

In June 1939, he qualified for admittance to the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst but failed to secure a placement. However, the outbreak of war on 3rd September 1939 and the introduction of mandatory conscription, guaranteed him a place in the Army, and in June 1940 he attended the Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU) course 162 at Bulford Camp in Wiltshire. On the 20th December, along with his older brother, **Philip**, he received a commission as a second lieutenant in the Indian Army. Both sailed from Liverpool to India in February 1941 aboard the *S.S. Mulberr*.

On arrival in Bombay on the 15th April, both brothers were sent to Hyderabad, but to different divisions: **Philip** to the 27th Indian Infantry Brigade, **John** to the 28th Indian Infantry Brigade – 2nd Battalion/9th Gurkha Rifles. The 28th sailed for Malaya in August 1941, landing at Penang and **John** writing to his parents that:

"All is well. I like it very much, ten times as much as India."



2nd Lieutenant John Bradburne

The Japanese 'Blitzkrieg' of South East Malaya.



2nd Battalion 9th Gurkha Rifles training in Malaya, 1941

Following the Japanese invasion of Malaya in December 1941, the 28th Brigade were placed on Divisional reserve for the Battle of Jitra. Following the fall of Jitra, the 2nd Battalion were soon in action with heavy fighting when taking rearguard action in the retreat from Alor Star. At the battle of Slim River (7th January 1942), the battalion suffered many casualties and many soldiers were effectively stranded being unable to join the retreat south towards Singapore. **John Bradburne** and his commanding officer, **Captain James Hart**, were two of those stranded and took to the jungle, hiding from the Japanese for some five weeks, relying on what food they could find and the goodwill of native villagers. Both headed, via secret forest paths, to the coast at a point near Selangor where they were able to commandeer a sampan and set sail for Sumatra. Unfortunately, the tail end of a typhoon wrecked the sampan and they ended up back on shore in an exhausted state, with **John** suffering sunstroke and starting to show signs of cerebral malaria and a nervous breakdown.

Both joined up with some soldiers from a Highland Regiment, presumably from the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. The group commandeered a sampan at gunpoint and forced the owner, a Malay fisherman, to ferry them across the Strait of Malacca to Bagansiapiapi on the north east coast of Sumatra, arriving on the 15th February, the day Singapore fell to the Japanese. By this stage **John** was very ill and completely relied on **James Hart** to get him to the local hospital, which in turn forwarded him to the more modern hospital at Medan where, for the next ten days, he received 'excellent treatment' before being moved on to Padang, where on the 1st March he was carried, unconscious, aboard the destroyer *HMS Tenedos* which was on transfer to join the fleet in Ceylon.

Rejoining the Gurkha Rifles in India.

On arrival at Colombo, **John** was transferred to the cargo steamer *S.S. Chitral* and taken to Bombay where, after hospitalization, he was able to return to the 9th Gurkhas, joining the 3rd battalion (3rd Bn 9th Gurkha Rifles) in late March 1942. He started training in the foothills of the Himalayas, where he was later promoted to Captain (April 1943). His time in the foothills enabled him, to some extent, to overcome the effects left by the Malayan war and cerebral malaria.

Burma – Operation Thursday.

The second Allied expedition into Burma – the Chindit Invasion of 1944 - started on the evening of the 5th March with the aerial delivery into Burma of Chindits by troop/cargo carrying American Forces WACO CG-4A gliders towed by C-47 Skytrain aircraft (Dakotas). The target areas were originally the Stronghold(1) landing grounds of Broadway, Chowringhee and Piccadilly, but a late aerial photograph of Piccadilly showed the landing ground to be covered by felled tree trunks, not a deliberate act by the Japanese, but normal practice by Burmese loggers to dry the felled timber. Obviously the Burmese had not been informed about the intended use of the landing ground!

The 3rd Bn. 9th Gurkhas (with **Captain John Bradburne**) was one of several battalions of the 77th Indian Infantry Brigade that landed at Broadway and all worked in preparing the area for aircraft and establishing a stronghold, with the battalion taking on the role of garrison battalion - a defensive role.

John Bradburne served as officer i/c in the mortar platoon at Broadway, despite contracting malaria (again) even when dosing himself with quinine(2). The mortar platoon often operated under heavy fire during attack by the Japanese ground troops without the protection of infantry. A fellow officer recalled that in the midst of battle, **John** leapt out of a slit trench and strode around with his arms outstretched shouting to his Gurkha troops that, "**God will protect you!**" There were also mixed reports as to his behaviour further into the campaign; some officers remember him as being highly effective and brave; other described how in the thick of battle he was mostly bird watching, (*one would think that any self respecting bird would have departed the battle area with all the noise and activity going on?*), singing psalms and attending to the wounded.

Spitfires at Broadway.

Whilst not specific to **John Bradburne**, this section follows the experiences of the 3rd Bn. 9th Gurkha Rifles in describing the overall conditions he, and others, would have experienced in Burma.

By the 11th March 1944, the defences of the stronghold were in place with the 3/9 as the garrison troops and two columns of the 1st Battalion, King's Liverpool to take on the role of 'floaters' columns. A troop of field artillery had been installed, also a troop with bofors anti-aircraft artillery. On the 13th March 'the Japanese Air Force' attacked Broadway with 'twenty Zero and Oscar fighters'(3), unaware that six RAF Spitfires had arrived on the previous day and five of them were scrambled to intercept them, with the loss of one Spitfire to four enemy aircraft. Air attacks on Broadway continued over time and the anti-aircraft gunners were very successful, especially when a Spitfire with an Oscar on its tail deliberately flew over the AA battery. Later the remaining Spitfires were withdrawn.

On the 26th March, the Japanese 2nd battalion 146 Infantry Regiment was reported to be approaching the airfield and was repulsed over a period of several days (nights), suffering heavy casualties. They never breached the perimeter of Broadway. Fighting patrols from the stronghold were sent out to attack the enemy and recover the bodies of those killed....the usual barbaric practices of the enemy and their sword carrying officers were in evidence. An attack on the Japanese positions was carried out by one of the King's columns on the afternoon of the 29th March, with heavy enemy losses! A successful attack on the enemy was made on the 31st March with a company of Gurkhas and a column from the King's, following an air strike by Mustang aircraft of the 1st Air Commando Group of the United States Army Air Force. Broadway was finally evacuated on the 13th May, with the two battalions eventually joining 111 Brigade.

With 111 Indian Infantry Brigade.

On the 9th July, two companies of the 3rd Bn. 9th Gurkha Rifles, advancing under the western slopes of Hill 2171 (in the encircling mountains overlooking Indawgyi Lake) attacked a Japanese machine gun outpost with the loss of a good number of men(4), but did take the hill(5). A medical orderly with the Gurkhas described their general state of health following the taking of the hill point: *"The men were exhausted and sick with malaria, dysentery, typhus and other diseases. They gallantly held the hill against numerous counter-attacks by the fanatical Japanese. Their condition deteriorated as the torrential monsoon rain continued for several weeks. Fatigue became so serious that several men fell asleep whilst actually firing their guns. Once when our medical unit was searching for casualties around the hillside we came upon three Japanese in deep sleep only a few feet away from two Gurkhas who were also sleeping. Another time we found two Japanese and a Gurkha sleeping in the same foxhole, all half buried in mud – they were too weak and sick to kill each other. On the 17th July, a medical examination centre was established and an Allied Medical Commission conducted a medical examination of every man still with the brigade. They discovered all were suffering from malarial fever and amoebic dysentery. Their weight loss averaged between 35 and 40 pounds, and many had typhus, foot rot, tooth rot, septic sores, dengue fever, fungi, yaws, scabies, leech ulcers, insect bites and blisters. There were also a dozen psychiatric disorders. The Commission concluded that only 120 out of 2,200 men were fit for further duty. The rest of the brigade were to be evacuated for hospitalization in India.... Major Bill Towill, the 3/9th Intelligence Officer, was passed as fit, but when he finally reached India, he spent five weeks in hospital with a fever that would not respond to treatment."*

Evacuation of the Chindits.

Evacuation of the large number of sick and wounded of the Chindit force from Lake Indawgyi started on the 3rd June using two RAF Sunderland flying boats named **Gert** and **Daisy** from 230 Squadron based at Koggala (Ceylon) and operating from Dibrugarh in north Assam. Casualties flown by **Gert** were evacuated up to the 9th June before returning to normal squadron duties in mid June. **Daisy** carried out two casualty evacuations on the 7th June and another on the 19th June before extreme weather conditions, starter motor failure and a DUKW colliding with the aircraft when at anchor on the Brahmaputra River on the 20th June was followed by the aircraft sinking at moorings on the 4th July. **Gert** was recalled to 'Operation River' and carried out casualty evacuations on the 30th June and 1st July. The last flight from Indawgyi was on the 3rd July and included a Japanese POW. Eventually, using boats, a significant number of Chindits were moved upriver to Warazup during July and August, with an evacuation route by land and air to India being established from there. This would most likely be the evacuation route from the lake taken by **John Bradburne** with an eventual return to India by a casualty evacuation Dakota for hospitalization and then rest and recuperation (R&R) for the fittest before further training for a later return to Burma ... the last of the Chindits left Burma on the 27th August 1944 and their return as a special force didn't happen – they were replaced by the British 36th Division and the Chindits were disbanded in February 1945. **John Bradburne** was demobilized in September 1945 and arrived back in

England in October. Later in that month he was admitted to the military hospital in Dumfries but for what purpose and for how long is not known.

(1) The role of the stronghold in the Burma Campaign was to establish an area remote from main roads and railways to avoid attacks by tanks and/or heavy artillery. Each stronghold was to be sited on flat ground enabling an airstrip to be laid out that could support both light aircraft and the C-47, where the aircraft could fly in supplies and fly out the wounded. The stronghold was also to be manned by a garrison battalion (for defence) and two troops of 25-pounder guns, also having earthworks, minefields, machine guns and 3-inch mortars to help secure the site. From each base Chindit columns were intended to move out to destroy Japanese communications, transport and supply lines.

(2) In March 1943, Military Command ordered the replacement of quinine with atabrine (mepacrine) for malaria prevention. This did not take place immediately for a number of reasons as outlined in *Medicine and the Culture of Command*.

(3) It is doubtful that Zero fighters (of the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service) served in Burma; of the Oscars (Imperial Army Air Force) there is no doubt!

(4) Major (Temporary) F.G. Blaker MC 3/9 Gurkha Rifles was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for his action on Hill 2171 on the 9th July 1944.

(5) A Japanese flag captured in the action was later presented to the 9th Gurkhas' Officers Mess by the 3/9 GR.

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Part 2 - by Sallie Hammond

Introduction. Dave Croft asked me to add Part Two to the story of John Bradburne, as I grew up in Rhodesia after the war, and know Mutemwa which is near Mtoko and Mrewa in the north eastern part of Rhodesia. As well there is an affiliation for me with John Bradburne because of his Malayan and Indian connection during WW2. My parents were in Malaya and later in India during WW2, where I was born in 1944.

Wanderlust. Post-war, John Bradburne seemingly led an unsettled life, wandering through different life experiences and countries until, in 1962, he contacted his ex-military friend from India, now Fr. John Dove, asking for the opportunity to visit Africa. He was invited to become a missionary helper, and in 1969 settled with the Mutemwa leprosy colony in Rhodesia.

There is very little I can add of my own experience other than the countryside near Mutemwa is fairly inhospitable with different rock formations and lots of baboons! The leper colony where John Bradburne chose to spend his life is isolated and remote.

John Bradburne's story, *“Strange Vagabond of God,”* is recorded by his friend Father John Dove SJ (Society of Jesus). They met in India during the war and shared similar interests – the love of classical music, the Arts and Literature. Both men had English backgrounds.

John Bradburne converted to Catholicism because of Fr. John Dove. He went to Rhodesia to find peace, solace and God. He found all three, but his life ended tragically as a martyr in 1979 during the War of Independence.

[This was the prolonged conflict in Rhodesia from 1964 to 1979 - the conflict without military victory. In 1980, at the end of the civil war between

Mugabe's ZANU PF Forces and the Rhodesian Security Forces, loyal to

the Salisbury Government after unilateral independence from Britain in 1965, the country became Zimbabwe.]
A Report by Shingai Nyoka BBC Harare 20/9/19 on why Briton John Bradburne should become Zimbabwe's first Catholic Saint.

"You're not safe here, John. You are going to be killed." The bearded lay missionary with long straggly hair stopped playing his flute for a moment, and then shrugging off the thought resumed playing his music. John Bradburne was a lay Franciscan monk who ministered to and took care of the lepers in the large leper colony near Mutemwa in Zimbabwe. A few days later, on 5th September 1979, John Bradburne would be dead. Abducted from his small hut in Mutemwa, north-east Zimbabwe, tortured and shot in the back – he was accused of being an informer for the Rhodesian Security Forces.

The warning had been delivered by Catholic Priest Fidelis Mukonori, his friend and driver, as they wound their way through the dusty roads to Mutemwa's leper colony. The War of Independence was encroaching on the settlement and the Rhodesian forces had withdrawn from the area. John Bradburne was warned by the Rhodesian Security Forces that they could no longer protect him in that part of the country.

Since his death, John Bradburne has become a revered figure in Zimbabwe's Catholic community. Thousands travel to Mutemwa on annual pilgrimages to pray, and there is a growing movement within the Church in support of his beatification.



John Bradburne with his beloved lepers

A Letter to Sallie Hammond from Father Nicholas Stebbing, Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield (Anglican) Monastery, Yorkshire, UK.

I only met John once, in November 1975. This was at Mutemwa. He was then living in a tin hut just outside the colony. I was taken there Mrs Jill McKay who was a parishioner of ours. We were with John for about 2 hours. Physically he looked exactly as he does in his photographs. (I once stayed some months at Silveira House and lived in the hut dedicated to him with pictures of him all around – a good experience.) What struck me most was his energy: he was so enthusiastic and talked so much. He was so delightful to be with. Throughout that visit I felt the JOY that was in him. We had brought a picnic lunch but he ate practically nothing. We gave him a bottle of wine which he said would go into the punch he made for the lepers at Christmas! He took us round the leper colony. What really struck me and has remained with me is the love he had for the lepers, especially the sick ones he was caring for. He gazed into those aged, deformed faces as if they were the most beautiful faces he had ever seen. We also went into the chapel where, if my memory serves me right, there was a small harmonium on which he played with great gusto, good old fashioned Anglican hymns, rather unusual for a RC in those days!

I was a priest in the neighbouring district of Chikwaka during 1976/7 so I knew at first hand the strain of living with the war, wondering each night if men would come and shoot you. Through this time and for two years afterwards John of course was living in a much more dangerous place, with even less protection than I did, and for much longer. Is that personal courage, or a proof of his devotion to Christ and his lepers? I think the film on the Atlas Cistercians "Of Gods and Men" is a good commentary on John's life at this time. Perhaps the greatest proof of John's sanctity is the testament of the common people. Clearly the thousands who go to venerate his memory are an important witness to the impact he had. I was touched by the way a young friend of mine, Ben Bradshaw, fell in love with John after a single visit to Mutemwa nearly 40 years after John's death. I have never forgotten his overwhelming emotion at John's story and what he saw at Mutemwa. I expect that can be replicated many hundreds of times.

I know nothing much of his death. At the time it happened I asked an African priest who lived near Mutemwa why the guerrillas should kill such a friend of the people. He said "I think they couldn't bear to have someone who was more important than they were." Another friend (Jill McKay) said she thought they were probably exasperated with John because he refused to be frightened of them and probably walked even faster than they did! Both those remarks, whether true or not seem to be in character.

John's canonisation would be a great encouragement to people in Zimbabwe during this difficult time (I still stay there for a couple of months each year so I know what it is like). Not only does it assure them they have a friend in heaven but it reminds Zimbabweans constantly that we are called to care for the poorest, the most despised, the most unattractive of people. ZANU-PF do not give that message. The rich and the powerful certainly do not. The Church (RC and Anglican) is constantly tempted to imitate the rulers and seek the friendship of the powerful. John Bradburne calls us constantly to the kind of life Jesus set out in the Beatitudes, and of course in his own death on the Cross. He would be a great and necessary witness to the church to keep its eye on the areas he cared for and resist the temptations of power.

Nicolas Stebbing CR
29.10.18

BRIEF HISTORY OF SS/MRNVR (SINGAPORE DIVISION)

By Lt. Adrian Villanueva MRNVR (1960s)

"The Reservist is twice the Citizen" P.M. Winston Churchill

SS/MRNVR (Singapore Division)

The SSRNVR (Straits Settlements Naval Volunteer Reserve) was formed on St. George's Day, 27th April 1934. Singapore was the pioneer division of this Naval Volunteer Reserve Force. Officers were recruited from British Colonial Civil Servants, Port Officials, Executives of trading houses and those in the Medical and Legal professions. It was an "in-thing" to belong to the SSRNVR at that time. Besides training at shore establishments and on board visiting RN ships, there were a good number of official functions including Wardroom dinners for officers. The additional attractions were social activities such as the New Year's Eve Dinner and Dance on board the HQ Ship, *HMS Laburnum (1)*, and the children's Christmas Party.

The majority of the ratings were at that time Malays who worked at the port and harbour master offices, or were employees of the Colonial Government and private companies. The first Commanding Officer of the SSRNVR (Singapore Division) was Lt-Cdr **LAW Johnson, MVO, RN (Retired)**. CSM **Adnan Raji**, a Company Sergeant-Major from the SSVC (Straits Settlements Volunteer Corps), a "Territorial Army" Unit, became Chief Petty Officer (CPO) and appointed Drill Instructor. Shore training was carried out in an assigned area of the SSVC's Drill Hall at Beach Road, and sea training was carried out on board the Colonial Governor's Yacht "*Sea Belle 11*". The SSRNVR (Singapore Division) had an initial complement of 25 Officers and 150 Ratings. The RN that had a Base in Singapore provided instructors for both the Volunteer Reserve Officers and Ratings. In 1938, a smaller Penang Division of the SSRNVR was established.

In 1935, the British Admiralty presented the Singapore Division with its first ship *HMS Laburnum (1)*, a Flower Class Sloop, which was from the Royal Navy (New Zealand Division). She was steamed to Singapore and berthed at Telok Ayer basin (TAB), the SSRNVR (Singapore Division) Headquarters. Three other vessels were attached to this division: *HMS Penyengat (HDML)* for Seamanship and Navigation training; two 75-foot Mort or launches - *HMS Panglima (1)* and *HMS Palawan* were commissioned for sea patrols. *Laburnum (1)* was sunk on 13th February, 1942, in Singapore harbour by Japanese aircraft; while *Penyengat, Panglima and Palawan* were scuttled to deprive the Japanese from commandeering the vessels.

"Malay Navy" & the SSRNVR during World War 11

When World War 11 was declared in Europe, the British government formed the "Malay Section" of the RN (The Royal Navy) in 1939. This was the government's effort to beef up the RN in the Far East, so as to defend the coastal waters of Peninsular Malaya, and protect British interests in North Borneo, Labuan and Sarawak. This Section, a Regular Force was commonly known as the "**Malay Navy**", as they comprised entirely of Malays. A good number of Ratings from the SSRNVR (Singapore Division) were among the 1,430 men who joined this newly established "Malay Section" of the RN. They were given training in Seamanship, Communications and Gunnery on board their Training Ship *HMS Pelandok*.

The SSRNVR continued with its Naval Reservists' training, and was a separate Division from the "Malay Section" of the RN. The RN Officers, CPOs and POs from the Singapore Naval Base continued to provide the SSRNVR with training for Officers and Ratings at its Divisional Singapore HQ in TAB (Telok Ayer Basin). Officers and Ratings were also given mandatory Annual 14-day sea training on board RN ships.

Officers had to undergo courses in Drill, Gunnery, Communications, Navigation (Coastal and Astro), Radar Operation, Seamanship and Ship Handling. They had to sit theoretical and practical tests set by the RN Far East Fleet (Singapore Naval Base), before they could advance in their ranks.

The Ratings also had intensive training courses that included Seamanship Gunnery, Communication and Radar Operation. Engineering and Electrical training were given to Ratings who were mechanics and electricians in their civilian jobs, and opted for such specialisations. It was quite hectic for these "civilian sailors" (both Officers and Ratings), as they had to attend 3-hourly twice a week parades at TAB, besides having regular "civvy street" jobs to attend to. But as "sea loving" Volunteers, they were enthusiastic and dedicated to their assigned part-time duties. These included coastal patrols in the Singapore Straits during the early years of World War 11, where German ships were occasionally sighted.

In 1941, when Japan declared war on 7th December, after bombing the US Naval Base at Pearl Harbour, the Imperial Japanese Armed Forces began to invade Southeast Asia. Malaya and Singapore were targeted as the

British Empire had most of its military forces stationed in these two territories, besides having the largest Naval Base East of Suez located in the Strait Settlement of Singapore.

During the time of the Japanese invasion of Malaya and Singapore, the SSRNVR was placed under the RN (Royal Navy) Captain Auxiliary Vessels (Singapore), who had more than 100 patrol and minesweeping vessels under his command. The Volunteer Reservists were quick to go into action. Troops stranded behind enemy lines in Malaya were rescued, and many mines were disposed of or rendered safe. The SSRNVR Headquarters ship *HMS Laburnum (1)*, became one of the heaviest targets and sunk by Japanese aircraft. It was later raised by the Japanese who used it as a decoy in anticipation of possible counter-attacks by the RAF and Allied Air Forces. The SSRNVR's operational roles during the Japanese invasion of World War II, included evacuating civilians and key military personnel from Singapore to Sumatra and Java's port (then called Batavia), which were by then unknowingly, due to lack of intelligence, already under Japanese control. In one engagement with Japanese Cruisers in the Banka Island area (off Sumatra), 53 SSRNVR Officers and Ratings were killed and 120 missing. Of the 61 ships, the majority manned by the SSRNVR which broke out of Singapore, only nine managed to get through to Sumatra and Java, and then to Colombo, Ceylon (now called Sri Lanka). Those who were lucky to escape to Sumatra without being intercepted by the Japanese warships, managed to board a few Merchant Vessels to Western Australia.

A Memorial for the SSRNVR Officers and Ratings and the "Malay Section" of the RN who died during the World War II was officially unveiled by the Governor of Singapore, **Sir Robert Black**, at the MRNVR (Singapore Division) Headquarters at TAB (Telok Ayer Basin) on the 16th July 1957. This Memorial is, unfortunately, "missing", and was probably a "casualty" during the land reclamation around TAB in the 1970s.

(Note: The Straits Settlements made up of Singapore, Penang and Malacca came under the direct rule of the British Crown in the 1930s, while the individual states of Malaya were governed by the Malay Sultans who had British Advisors. In 1946, after World War II, the status of the Straits Settlements changed, with Penang and Malacca coming under British Malaya, while Singapore became a separate Crown Colony. The designation "SSRNVR" could no longer be used within the changed status from a Singapore component of the Straits Settlements to that of a British Colony of Singapore. The Naval Volunteer Reserve was revived and reconstituted with the new designation: **MRNVR (Malayan RNVR - Singapore Division.)**

MRNVR Reactivated and Reconstituted

The War in the Far East ended in 1945, and in 1947 plans were drawn up to reactivate the Naval Reserve Division in Singapore i.e. the former SSRNVR to a reconstituted MRNVR. This reconstitution came about in 1952, with **Captain FEW Lammert, CBE, DSC, VRD** appointed as the Commanding Officer, MRNVR (Singapore Division). A Japanese 1890-ton Minelayer *IJN (Imperial Japanese Navy) Wakataka* earlier commanded by the RN was presented to the Colony of Singapore by the British Admiralty. Modifications of this vessel were completed in 1950, and **Lady Gimson**, the wife of the Governor of Singapore named the ship *HMS Laburnum (2)*, the second replacement ship for the Naval Volunteer Reserve. This ship was berthed at the original location of *HMS Laburnum (1)*, SSRNVR HQ Ship at TAB (Telok Ayer Basin) in 1935. TAB had berthing facilities for the HQ ship as well as for 2 patrol boats and an assortment of motor launches. On the adjacent wharf was a small parade square, 2 large go-downs housing Administration, Store, Engineering and Electrical Sections as well as a Sick-Bay and Dental Clinic. The premises were under tight security, and guarded throughout the day and night. (24/7). On the 14th January 1956, a new sea-training tender, *HMS Panglima (2)* (Chieftain in Malay), built by Singapore Thornycroft for the MRNVR, was launched by **Lady Black**, the wife of Governor of Singapore, **Sir Robert Black**. This vessel was not only used for training purposes but was also manned as an MRNVR patrol craft during the Malayan (Communist) Emergency (1950s and 1960s), guarding Singapore and Malayan waters. She was also deployed for sea patrols by the RMNVR (Royal Malaysian Naval Volunteer Reserve) during the Indonesian Confrontation (*Konfrontasi* in Indonesian, 1963-1966). This ship was later transferred to the RSN (Republic of Singapore Navy) that was established in 1967. *Panglima* was finally decommissioned in 1991 after serving two Naval Volunteer Reserve Divisions (MRNVR and RMNVR), and the regular RSN. Her name *RSS Panglima* is retained by the RSN for its training shore establishment at Changi Naval Base.

From mid-1950s, the number of the British expatriates who joined the MRNVR gradually declined, and local Chinese, Malays, Indians, Eurasians and a few other minority races from all walks of life were recruited and trained as Officers. They included Teachers, Polytechnic Lecturers, Merchant Naval Officers, Civil Servants, Executives of private companies, Lawyers, Engineers and Port Officers. Local Doctors and Dental Surgeons also joined the MRNVR (Singapore Division) and did duties at the sick bay of the MRNVR HQ at TAB. There were

opportunities for those from the lower deck to become officers and a few of them who were outstanding were given Commissions.

Many Chief Petty Officers, Petty Officers and Leading Seamen were Malays, and some were World War 1 Veterans. The Ratings were a mixture of Malays, Chinese, Indians a few Eurasians and other Races. There were about 30 permanent staff (Senior and Junior ratings) employed as Quartermasters, Armourers, Store-hands, Technicians and Engine-room hands for the *HMS Panglima* and the Motor Launches of the Division. There were also 3 highly qualified, former RN Chinese (Hainanese) Cooks and Stewards who worked for the Wardroom of *HMS Laburnum (2)*, the MRNVR HQ Ship berthed at TAB. The Wardroom was well known for its parties, and the New Year's Eve party was considered one of the best, if not the best, in Singapore during those Colonial days. The 5 Commanding Officers of the MRNVR (Singapore Division) were:

Lt-Cdr L.A.W. Johnson MVO, RN (Rtd.)	- 27.4.34 - 27.12.37
Captain V.C. Ward RN (Rtd.)	- 28.12.37 - 13.2.42
Captain F.E.W. Lammert CBE, DSC, VRD	- 18.4.48 - 1.1.58
Captain R.S. Tufnell CBE, VRD	- 12.1.58 - 1.11.60
Captain R.G. Banks OBE, VRD	- 1.11.60 - 21.9.63

A retired RN Commander was employed as Staff Officer (SO), and 4 Specialist Permanent Staff Officers (PSOs) who were Retired RN Officers or CPOs were recruited and appointed as Lieutenant Special Duties (Lt-Sds). They were responsible for Gunnery, Communication, Engineering and Electrical at the MRNVR Headquarters. The MRNVR HQ shore office was supported by civilian clerical and administration staff.

Administrative matters were under the responsibility of the Supply and Secretariat (S&S) Section. In the mid-1960s, this Section was headed by Lt-Cdr Brian Marks and supported by the HQ civilian staff. It looked after personnel management, pay, general administration and logistics. Training was also carried out for S&S Ratings, and was based mainly on the RN administrations and S&S procedures. The Section was also responsible for disseminating internal communications, and this was done through bulletins and in-house newsletters. The S&S record-keeping duties included maintenance of attendance records of all ratings, and the payment of monthly allowances and annual bounties (bonuses).

MRNVR Specialisations

The MRNVR (Singapore Division) was large, besides the Seaman and S&S (Supply & Secretariat) Sections there were various supporting specialisations that included Engineering, Electrical, Medical and Dental. These Sections had professionals who in civilian life held appointments such as Mechanical and Marine Engineers, Polytechnic Lecturers, Electrical Engineers, Medical Doctors and Dental Surgeons. They comprised both locals and expatriates serving in government or in the private sector at that time. [To be continued in October.]

Preparation for WW2 before Japanese invasion
SS/MRNVR Fairmile Patrol Boats circa 1939



Mobilised SS/MRNVR ratings on gunnery
training in Singapore pre-war circa 1940



MRNVR Veterans celebrating 75th
Anniversary, 27/4/2002, Singapore



Adrian Villanueva with Senior Officer,
Maj. Nigel Martin & visiting RMR Lt-Col 1964



Photo 9A: L-R Sub-Lt A Villanueva, XO SDML, Cpt (Later Maj) Nigel Martin, 42 RM Cdo-SOYAG, Visiting Royal Malay Regt Lt-Col on board SDML 3507

AV with 42 RM Cdo Trooper on board HMS
Albion, Singapore Naval Base, 2018



OBITUARIES

BILL ADAMSON

It was with enormous sadness that we learnt of **Bill's** death on 28th March, shortly after he had valiantly organised the annual Fall of Singapore service in the City of Stirling Memorial Gardens in Perth, Western Australia, despite his illness. We send our heartfelt sympathies to **Elizabeth**, his widow and our Secretary in Australia, and to **Bill's** daughter, **Margaret**, and other members of his family.

Bill and **Elizabeth** met through the MVG and married in 2012, followed by 8 happy years. **Bill** threw himself with great enthusiasm into helping **Elizabeth** run the MVG in Australia, with great success. With **Bill's** organizational skills, they proved to be a very successful team in getting together various other organizations in Perth, WA, to join forces in arranging the annual services of remembrance in Stirling City Memorial Gardens (15th February) and Kings Park (31st August). His expertise will be sorely missed.

Bill Adamson was born in Batu Gajah, Perak, Malaya on 11th September 1935. His father, also William, was a Scottish rubber planter of many year's experience, as was his grandfather before him. Bill's mother, Mabel (nee Fraser), also Scottish, was a nurse.

Bill had one sibling, Frances, who was three years older. As youngsters, they went to boarding school at Tanglin School, Cameron Highlands. However, they had to be pulled out of school in late January 1942 at the advance of the Japanese invasion of Malaya. **Bill** was aged 6½ at the time, and vividly remembers seeing the bombing of the town of Tapah, as they drove down the hill to meet their parents. Also remembered was the chaotic road convoy that eventually arrived in Singapore, where they had to find accommodation whilst awaiting passage by sea to be evacuated from Singapore, the bombing of that city and the fires raging.

The children and their mother eventually reached Scotland to be with the family there, and after a year of 'home schooling', they were able to get a vacancy at Morrison's Academy, Crieff. At the end of education, **Bill** followed the family tradition to go rubber planting, and gradually climbed the ladder of seniority to become plantation manager before emigrating to Australia. His service in Malaya was during the time of "The Emergency", the undeclared war against the Chinese Communist insurgency. Although **Bill** was not in Military uniform, he was an Inspector of Police, as he was able to speak three local languages – very useful at that time. He was also married and had two young children, so decided to take his family to Western Australia and to safety.

Bill had a variety of occupations after that, having a fruit orchard in the Bickley Valley, being employed with the Shell Oil Company in the North West, and having a home building company. After a disastrous financial experience with colleagues who turned out to be untrustworthy, his life fell apart when he lost his beloved wife **Denise** to cancer. Luckily, an old friend came to his rescue and insisted that he get back to work for him, which involved finance and much travel.

Bill eventually retired to Parkerville, living quietly on his own. However, he kept busy as a voluntary Welfare Officer with the WA RSL. He was able to advise veterans of entitlements, which was greatly to their advantage and comfort in their old age. He also studied the effects of PTSD and 'Suicide Watch' and saved a few good men from that fate. He met an ex-SAS veteran, who was the President of the Malaya Borneo Veterans' Association (MBVA), who encouraged him to join, with his knowledge of the Malayan Emergency (1948-60). **Bill** later became the President of that Association himself, and his organisational skills were much appreciated in the running of the annual commemoration in Kings Park of the Emergency which led to the Malayan Independence or "Merdeka", for many years. He proudly led the members in the ANZAC Day march until two years ago when the march was too much for him physically.



Bill at the Stirling City Gardens service on 15th February 2020



Bill Adamson,
President of MBVA, WA, and
MVG member

After being alone for 26 years, it was through an old friend from Malaya that he met **Elizabeth**, who was the Secretary of the Malayan Volunteers Group in Australia. They Married in Guildford in June 2012, and found much in common. Travelling to Malaya, Singapore and latterly to the Indonesian Island of Banka was a joy to them both. Also, a trip back to Scotland to do research into his family tree was a feat of endurance – tramping around old churchyards to read headstones for information that might not be found by computer!

Elizabeth's involvement in the Malayan Volunteers Group drew him in, and he willingly organised the annual Commemoration of The Fall of Singapore held in the Stirling City Gardens on 15th February annually right up until a few weeks before his death this year. **Bill** always emphasized the importance of family, and he and **Elizabeth** visited them at Lesmurdie as often as possible, although they all have busy lives.

Sadly, **Bill** left us on the morning of the 28th March after bravely fighting a long battle with three forms of cancer – the Prostate and resulting secondaries having finally caught up with him. He died peacefully at the Kalamunda Hospital.

Elizabeth and **Bill** were a good team! He is now greatly missed by **Elizabeth**, **Margaret** and **Peter**, **David** and **Leeane**, and grandchildren **Liam**, **Shannon** and **Felicity**.

HEATHER CHASEN – born 20th July 1927, died 22nd May 2020

We are sad to report the death of **Heather Chasen** who was briefly a member of MVG introduced by her friend **Susan Whitley**. A great character, **Heather** regaled us with her acting stories at one of MVG's early lunches in an upstairs room at a Chinese restaurant in Soho.

Heather was born in Singapore in 1927. Her father, **Frederick Nutter Chasen** was an ornithologist who became Director of Raffles Museum in 1932. **Heather** and her mother **Agnes** left Singapore shortly before the Japanese occupation, but her father died aboard the **HMS Giang Bee** which was sunk by the Japanese as he was evacuated from Singapore.

Heather fell in love with acting at school and spent a term at RADA but was not awarded a scholarship to enable her to continue there. Instead she went into Repertory theatre, touring with actors such as **Frankie Howerd**. She made her

name in '**The Navy Lark**' the record-breaking radio show on BBC's Light Programme, which she played for 18 years. She was the only regular woman cast member, and she played several other characters on the show in addition to her main role as **Wren**. One of her favourites was **Romona Povey**, wife of the hapless **Commander Povey**. Later she joined the cast of the TV soap opera **Crossroads** as **Valerie Pollard**. Other TV roles followed, including the part of **Margaret Thatcher** in the drama-documentary '**Who Bombed Birmingham.**'



Heather with her father, mother and brother

WILLIAM FRANKLAND – born 19 March 1912, died 2nd April 2020

Dr. Bill Frankland lived an extraordinary life to reach the age of 108, having endured 3½ as a prisoner of the Japanese in Singapore in WW2. He became a one of the most eminent and senior practitioners in the management and treatment of allergies and developed the idea of a pollen count to help hay fever sufferers.

William Frankland studied medicine at Oxford and St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, where his first job was as house physician to **Winston Churchill's** doctor **Charles Wilson**. At the outbreak of war he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) and was promoted Captain. In September 1941, he was posted to Singapore, and on arrival tossed a coin with a fellow RAMC Officer, **Lance Parkinson**, to decide in which institution each would work.

Frankland was the winner in that he chose Tanglin Military Hospital while his colleague went to Alexandra Hospital where he was massacred by the Japanese as they invaded the hospital killing all as they went through. **Frankland** was captured and imprisoned on Blakang Mati Island, which the POWs called "Hell Island" (now Sentosa) where he and other officers were subjected to regular beatings. Due to the shortage of food, they suffered from tropical diseases such as berberi, dengue fever and dysentery. Despite their appalling conditions, he noticed that their Japanese guards were unaffected by insect bites to which so many POWs were allergic. After liberation, he returned to St. Mary's to specialize in Dermatology, but decided to apply for a part-time job at the hospital working in allergies. This became his vocation in life and he continued his work into his eleventh decade. In the early 1950s, he served as registrar to **Alexander Fleming** and later wrote a chapter on penicillin for a book edited by **Fleming**, in which he predicted (correctly) that this 'wonder drug' could cause allergic reactions in some patients. **Fleming**, who did not believe in allergies, made him change the passage, but as **Frankland** said, "Your cannot really argue with a Nobel Prize winner."

He became Director of the Allergy Department at St. Mary's Hospital, later working at Guy's Hospital as an allergist before returning to St. Mary's as an emeritus consultant. He treated royalty, stars and even the dictator **Saddam Hussein**, who was not allergic to anything – his problem being he smoked 40 cigarettes a day.

William Frankland made significant contributions to many organisations concerned with allergies. His biography, "**From Hell Island to Hay Fever**" was published in 2018.

See the New York Times Obituary:

[https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/03/science/William-frankland-](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/03/science/William-frankland-dead.html?referringSource=articleShare&fbclid=IwAR16KxJybvNjoCHXMQtF5x_8ZSsb2l-70GcbAPDvZoAUivjiSb2Cwt2B21A)

[dead.html?referringSource=articleShare&fbclid=IwAR16KxJybvNjoCHXMQtF5x_8ZSsb2l-70GcbAPDvZoAUivjiSb2Cwt2B21A](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/03/science/William-frankland-dead.html?referringSource=articleShare&fbclid=IwAR16KxJybvNjoCHXMQtF5x_8ZSsb2l-70GcbAPDvZoAUivjiSb2Cwt2B21A)



A TRIBUTE TO THE SOOK CHING MASSACRE



I FOUND A BONE – by Teo Kah Leng (Peter)

I found a bone at Ponggol Beach
Half buried in the sand
And bleached as white by the sea and sun -
I picked it with my hand.

I held the arm bone in my hand,
And let my warm tears fall;
My brothers were slain at Ponggol Brach,
My brothers Peter and Paul.

[For the whole poem see A.K.50 April 2017]

HUNTING, TATTOOS AND BELIEFS IN MALAYAN ABORIGINE SOCIETY IN MID-20TH CENTURY

With thanks to Dave Croft RAFBPA

"An amusing incident occurred in late 1953. An Orang Asli (*Original People*) came downstream to Pekan from the deep jungle. He had brought with him 38 baby crocodiles in order to claim a government reward. It transpired that this was his first foray out of his jungle habitat for very many years, and that he did not know that there had been a war and that the Japanese had occupied the country." Source: '*Smashing Terrorism in the Malayan Emergency.*'

The *Orang Asli* are mentioned in several texts relating to deep jungle operations by Force 136 operatives in wartime Malaya and the Security Forces in the Malayan Emergency. The name *Orang Asli* covers three main groups, the Negritos of the north, the sub-groups of the Temiar and Senoi of the mountainous jungle in the centre of the Peninsula, and Proto-Malays of the south [H.D. 'Pat' Noone*1, 1930s]. P.D.R. Williams-Hunt*2 in his book "*An Introduction to the Malayan Aborigines*," (1952) referred to the groups as *Negritos* (small Negroid people), *Senoi* (slimly built, wavy haired relatively fair skinned peoples) and *Aboriginal Malays* (Malay-like peoples, stoutly built, dark skinned and with straight or slightly wavy hair).

The following subjects are used to illustrate a way of life in general among the Aborigines following WW2, not all practiced within the different groups, or sub groups, or even further down the line. All are taken from Major Williams-Hunt's excellent publication put together and published in 1952 for use by the Security Forces. Most of the content of the book relates to the *Semai Senoi* Aborigines of the central highlands for a number of reasons given in the book.

Food from the jungle

Williams-Hunt notes, "*The Aborigines are not uniform in their way of life but follow an infinite variety of patterns ranging from the wild wandering hunters to the firmly fixed communities ... with the hunting community the men will go out every day with their bows and arrows, or with their blowpipes. Snares will be laid or perhaps a community organised fishing expedition with baskets, spears or the poisonous tuba root arranged. Whilst the men are hunting the women and children will search for jungle fruits and grub up wild yams with their digging sticks.*

*Fishing is carried out in a variety of ways, the most effective seen over a very short time period is that of poisoning the watercourse with crushed tuba root (*Derris elliptica*) which contains rotenone, a natural compound that acts on the respiratory system of fish. Unfortunately, the use of tuba root is not selective and kills all sizes of fish it comes into contact with. Also frequently used are traps designed to allow entry into the device but not back out, often used in conjunction with dams and wiers (sic)." Additionally, barbed spears, and those constructed in trident form using six inch nails set in long handles, are used to 'spear' larger fish.*

"Animal traps consist of simple running ground nooses made from rotan or wire, and may be used in conjunction with a captive bird, usually a jungle fowl." Also laid are ... "small running nooses actuated by a springy pole and placed on tree trunks, in animal burrows, or runs along the ground. Such traps are often placed along paths, usually in considerable numbers."

Spring spears are also used by some groups: "*These are found in areas where wild pigs are common and are really dangerous - the spear easily passing through a man's foot or leg. They are usually set in pig runs or along lading (jungle clearing) fences and consist of a thick pole up to 20 feet in length, pegged back into the shape of an U. One end is firmly anchored whilst on the other is mounted a bamboo headed wooden spear held back by a twisted wood bark trip released by a cord. These traps should be obvious to anyone who is not completely asleep because of the easily seen bent pole. Any unnaturally bent piece of wood at ground level should always be investigated before passing on."*

Most Aborigines mark their more dangerous, and concealed, traps using leaves and small branches but the unwary can still be caught out as Roy Follows on jungle patrol during the Emergency explains, "*One afternoon, treading delicately as leading scout, I felt something grip my ankle and then, in an instant, I was hanging upside down. I had walked into one of the extremely effective native game traps consisting of a noose attached to a strong flexible sapling, which as soon as something was caught in the noose it sprang up and dangled the victim in mid-air."*

The next section describes the two types of blowpipes and poisonous darts used by the *Malayan Aborigines* and some *Senoi*, as described as Major Williams-Hunt's book:

(i) A bamboo blowpipe with an inner tube in one or two pieces with an attached mouthpiece of bamboo, wood, dammar gum (resin from a tree), or hornbill ivory and an outer strengthening tube of bamboo, and having a length of seven to nine feet. Smaller ones are made for children.

(ii) A wooden blowpipe in which two pieces of heavy wood are grooved, bound together with rotan, covered with latex and provided with a dammar mouthpiece, and have a length of five to seven feet. The distribution is confined to Aboriginal Malays but not in all areas they populate.

(iii) In the case of the *Negritos*, the majority do not make their own blowpipes but buy them ready made from highland *Temiar* and *Senoi* groups, who in turn might need to purchase the special bamboo from other communities.

The blowpipe darts 'nicked below the point and coated with poison, are given a distinctive mark to indicate poison strength. The darts are carried in a bamboo quiver, ranging from those intended for small birds to those carrying a lethal dose for a tiger.'

Of the poison(s), the **Senoi** use a brown coloured latex tapped from the Ipoh tree (*Antiaris toxicaria*) and after it coagulates over a fire it is rolled onto the darts. The other poison is produced by boiling down to a concentration (**Strychnine**) Ipoh creeper (*Strychnos* group of plants). Other 'cocktails' produced are generally a combination of the above with, perhaps, other added ingredients.

Ipoh poison was also used by the **Negritos** when they used the bow and arrow*3. The bow was generally constructed of Langsat wood (*Langsium parasiticum*) with a bow string of twisted tree bark. The arrows, three feet in length, were made using a bamboo shaft with a barbed head made from a six inch nail. To complete the arrangement, the barbs were coated with Ipoh poison.

Tattooing

"Many Aboriginal groups tattoo their faces but rarely their bodies, although some groups tattoo their upper limbs. Tattooing of the hand or arm is found with Aboriginal Malays in south Selangor, Negri Sembilan and north west Johore. Women are more frequently seen with tattoos than men ..." although by 1952 whole face tattoos were disappearing, being replaced with "... only part of a pattern, often on one side of the face only ... in many cases there is only a single line down the nose."

"The tattooing is achieved by the **Semai** of Pahang using soot from a cooking pot and thorns of a **Bertram** palm. The soot is mixed with water, the pattern drawn on the face and pricked with three or four thorns held between finger and thumb."

"Painting the face in gay colours, red, yellow, black and white for festive occasions is popular with all **Senoi** and **Negrito** groups. The paints are prepared from natural sources, red from the seeds of the **Kesumba** shrubs (although lipstick bought in towns were also used), yellow from the root of the **Kunyit** plant, white from lime or pipeclay, and black from the latex of a jungle tree, all applied with finger or porcupine quill, or prepared wooden stamps ... with both men and women of remote groups painting their faces, the women having more elaborate patterns."

Beliefs

Beliefs differ with different Aboriginal groups, but for all "... there is an absence of a hot, flaming hell. Really bad spirits merely become earthbound and isolated. Most Aboriginal groups have a belief in a deity, often several who are frequently ancestor deities, and various other lesser beings who might be described under the headings of fairies and demons."

The **Negritos** have a number of deities - "They are mostly of the ancestor variety and the most feared is **Karai**. Any sin on earth is punished by **Karai** with a heavy thunderstorm and (the) sin expiated by a blood sacrifice - cutting the leg with a sharp bamboo, catching some of the blood on a leaf and throwing it up into the sky." Other **Negrito** sins include "...drawing water in any vessel that has been blackened by fire, wearing hair combs during a thunderstorm or, after a death, laughing at butterflies; a rather strange thing to do at the best of times!"

The **Senoi** also fear thunderstorms and have a "...wide range of good and bad fairies, and for some of the wilder groups, every corner of the jungle, pools in the rivers, rocks, trees and flowers etc. have their own genii (sic)."

Of the **Aboriginal Malay** groups there is a deity called **Tun Allah** who is believed to predate Muslim days.

Ghosts

The **Aborigines** believe the jungle to be haunted "...by a series of ghosts and demons, who are just waiting for the opportunity to pounce." No death is regarded as natural, the "...death fear is widespread..." and there are special demons who will lie in wait at certain points in rivers to grab someone crossing by the ankle. There are those who close cave entrances when one is inside and "...others who have an interest in pushing people off trees." The jungle is certainly a dangerous place to be in when ghosts are in residence, especially to those Europeans of a nervous disposition!

Finally, a 1952 aboriginal 'travellers tale' talks of mysterious blue tongued, black toothed, tailed, wild aborigines living in central Pahang, still waiting to be discovered today (2019).

*1 **Pat Noone** - married **Anjang**, an aboriginal girl prior to the start of the Japanese occupation of Malaya. Whilst living in the 'ulu' during the occupation, he was blowpiped to death by his blood brother in a crime of passion in 1942.

*2 **P.D.R./Williams-Hunt** was the post-war (1950-53) Advisor on Aborigines for the Federation of Malaya. He married **Wa** (a female prefix) **Draman**, daughter of a Semai chief, in 1950. He was seriously injured in June 1953 when attending a wedding at his wife's village, a wooden bridge he was crossing collapsed. As a result his chest was pierced by a wooden support; he was taken to Batu Gajah hospital where he died eight days later after being admitted.

*3 According to **Williams-Hunt** the decline of the making and use of the **Negrito** bow and arrow may have been due to the expansion of Malay and Chinese communities 'forcing' the **Negritos** to leave their open living spaces, where a bow was more suited for use than the blowpipe, and move into the foothill jungles.

Books consulted, and also worth reading:

1. "An Introduction to the Malayan Aborigines" by **P.D.R. Williams-Hunt**.
2. "Noone of the Ulu" by **Dennis Holman** (Gives a detailed account of the blow piping of 'Pat' Noone) 1958.
3. "The Jungle is Neutral" by **F. Spencer Chapman** 2003.
4. "Our Man in Malaya" by **Margaret Shennan** 2007.
5. "Smashing Terrorism in the Malayan Emergency" by **Brian Stewart** 2004.
6. "The Jungle Beat" by **Roy Follows** with **Hugh Popham** 1990 (Describes his involvement at Fort Brooke in 1954 with the Aborigine, **Busu Jamin**, who was implicated in the murder of 'Pat' Noone in 1943).

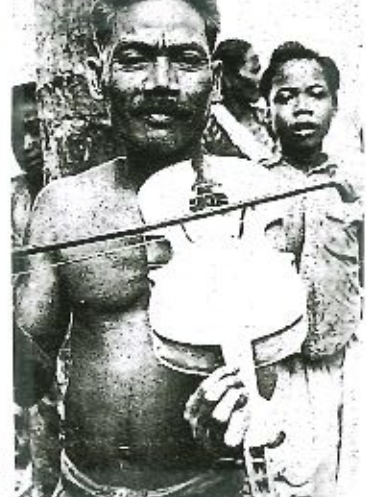
Semai Senoi from Ulu Jelal Kechil, Pahang.
Bamboo stamper band for accompanying dancers



Shooting with bamboo blowpipe
Semai Senoi, Bukit Betong 1949



Homemade 'violah'
in Raffles Museum



Amani Williams-Hunt (born 21 May 1953 in Tapah, Perak).

Amani Williams-Hunt is a notable indigenous Malaysian social activist and politician, who campaigned for most of his life seeking greater social justice, land rights, and improved life opportunities for Aboriginal Malaysians in Peninsular Malaysia.

He is the first Orang Asli male to be admitted into the legal fraternity. He was called to the Bar in front of High Court Judge **Datuk Zainal Adzam Abdul Ghani** in Ipoh on 22nd October 2010. He is also the first Malaysian Aborigine to stand in Malaysia's 13th election; the first time in the history of the Peninsular Malaysia.

He is fondly known as **Bah Tony** amongst the Orang Asli communities throughout the country; is very active in Orang Asli advocacy and was President of Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia from 1987-1990.

Wa Draman – P.D.R. Williams-Hunt's wife



BOOKS

"Malayan Climax" by **Carline Reid**. The Experiences of an Australian Girl in Malaya, 1940-1942. Published in Tasmania. This is the story of **Carline Reid's** work as a secretary in Malaya in the 2 years leading up to the Japanese invasion, and her subsequent evacuation from Singapore on the **Empire Star** to Batavia (Jakarta), her transfer to the **Plancius** which took her to Ceylon and then to Bombay. She finally arrived back in Australia via various other ships. During her 2 years in Malaya she worked as a secretary for the Selangor Defence Corps in Kuala Lumpur.

HOME – by Vivien Bowden, Summer 1900.

[**Vivien Bowden** – Australia's Official Representative to Singapore, was brought up as a child in Japan. How sad that as a fluent Japanese speaker he was murdered by the Japanese on Banka Island 1942 after his evacuation & capture on the "Mata Hari."]

There is a land that I call "home", far off in old Japan;
The land of lotus blossoms, the maple and the fan;
The land of cryptomeria pines, beneath whose fragrant shade
The old red lacquer temples doze, while generations fade.

A land of lakes and rippling streams, where rainbow colours blend,
Where snow-clad Fuji sits and waits until the world shall end.
Would that I might return once more, ere my life's sands are run:
Land of the Gold Chrysanthemum! Land of the Rising Sun!

To hear the old familiar sounds - the ceaseless temple drum,
The clatter, clatter of the clogs as people go and come.
To wander once again about the temple's sacred grounds,
And hear once more the old bronze bell, as fledged hours it sounds.

But 'tis too late – my day is past; Japan I'll see no more;
I can but dream of what I called my home on days of yore.
The mind must now replace the eyes, their visions it must see,
For though I am now far from home, my thoughts lie o'er the sea.

WORLD WAR 11 EXPLOITS OF LT. (LATER LT-CDR) F.O.S. MAN DSC SS/MRNVR (SINGAPORE DIVISION)
ESCAPE FROM MALAYA AND SINGAPORE
With thanks to Lt. Adrian Villanueva

Introduction

Two remarkable Straits Settlements RNVR (later renamed Malayan RNVR) Officers, who were holding civilian executive positions with British Companies (Boustead and Malayan Tobacco) in the 1930s, were mobilized for active service during World War 11 in the Far East. They faced the Japanese invasion of Malaya and eventually of Singapore in early February 1942, and were involved with the evacuation of civilians and service personnel. **Lt. Frank O.S. Man, SS/MRNVR (Singapore Division)** was lucky to have made it to safety from Singapore to Sumatra and Java, and finally to Australia and the UK. **Lt. Ronald G. Banks, SS/MRNVR (Singapore Division)** was unfortunate, as his boat on its way from Singapore to Sumatra was intercepted by the Imperial Japanese Navy, and he was interned as a POW until the war ended.

Lt. F.O.S. Man was later promoted to Lt-Cdr and was awarded the DSC on his return to the UK. **Lt. Ronald G. Banks** continued with his service with the MRNVR (Singapore Division) while at the same time held his civilian job and became the Managing Director of the Malayan Tobacco. **Banks** was promoted to Captain and became the Commanding Officer of the MRNVR and the HQ Ship **HMS Laburnum**. He was awarded the OBE and the VRD.

The following is **Lt. F.O.S. Man's (MRNVR)** story.

Attacks at Singapore Harbour

On 4th February 1942, whilst in command of **HMS Penghambat**, I returned to Singapore from the Johore Straits patrol where we had been patrolling for the past few days in between the two front lines – Johore and Singapore. We were withdrawn owing to incessant machine gunning from the Johore shore line as well as from the air. From 5th-9th February 1942, we were moored alongside the wharf at Telok Ayer Basin (TAB) awaiting instructions. During this period, there were continual air raids and dive-bombing attacks on the wharves, as well as on the ships anchored in the Roads; luckily no-one was hurt, nor was the ship damaged. We were sent out on various jobs within the harbour limits, such as transporting women and children to the evacuating ships and also taking out medical assistance to ships returning from patrol with casualties. We were also called out to pick up survivors from the "**Empress of Asia**" when she was bombed and sunk near Sultan Shoal.

At 19.30 on 9th February 1942, we received instructions from **Captain Muloch R.N.** to pilot and escort a lighter and tug to Pulau Tekong in order to relieve the Garrison there who had been without food for several days. We were warned before leaving that once we had been spotted by the Japanese batteries on Pulau Ubin, it would be useless to carry on. We proceeded in line ahead, **Penghambat** leading on the inside of No.3 minefield (a tricky passage even by day). **Lieutenant Milne MRNVR (1st Lt. Panghambat)** was put on board the tug in order to keep station on **Penghambat**, and we proceeded at 3 knots, which was the tug's maximum speed with tow. We arrived at Angler Bank Buoy (which was still alight though dimmer) at 01.00 where I secured **Penghambat**, and the tug proceeded alone to Pulau Tekong Pier where she slipped the lighter and returned at 04.25. The return journey was made in the swept channel outside the minefield, passing Peak Island at dawn. We tied up alongside the wharf at 07.00 on 10th February 1942. There were the usual air raids throughout the day and some street fighting in Singapore town during the evening.

At 13.00 on 11th February 1942, during a particularly heavy raid on the wharf, **Penghambat** received several large pieces of shrapnel through her side both above and below the waterline. As it was impossible to save the ship and she was sinking rapidly, it was decided to abandon her. We saved as much gear as possible, as well as all the personnel without suffering any casualties. Later in the day, verbal instructions were received from **Acting Captain (Commander) Bailey, MRNVR**, to transfer to **HMS Malacca** (a minesweeper). We boarded **HMS Malacca** at 16.00 on 11th February. I had previously given members of the Malay crew the choice of joining me in **Malacca** or of returning to their families ashore. Those with wives and children to look after decided to return to them and I gave each of them a signed certificate saying that they were returning to their families with my full permission

and that they were not deserters. Those that did come with me were listed by name in the ship's log. On the morning of 12th February 1942, **Lieutenant Milne** and I went ashore to assist in the evacuation of women and children and also to help land casualties from a patrol vessel which had been bombed coming up the western entrance. On 13th February 1942, the air raids became even more vicious, although our A.A. Batteries were doing magnificent work. At about 15.00, the wharf at Telok Ayer Basin was crowded with women and children who were waiting for transport to ships anchored in the 'Roads'. Amongst these were a considerable number of hospital nurses. Behind them, and within 20 yards of them, was a AA Battery of eight guns and it was at this precise moment that the Japanese decided to make a determined dive-bombing attack on the Battery. Some of the bombs missed the target and fell amongst the women and children – there were a number of casualties. The AA Battery was also put out of action except for one gun.

When darkness fell, all the women and children embarked on various ships. By this time the Japanese guns were firing on the wharves, and shells were landing on the target at regular intervals. The whole water-front was ablaze and I counted 27 large fires, it seemed as if night had been turned into day. At 24.00 we received verbal instructions to proceed alongside the wharf and take on board as many soldiers as we possibly could. We managed to squeeze 60 on board in addition to the ship's company. During this embarkation, which lasted about an hour, shells were falling all around us, and by luck we sustained neither damage nor casualties, although the ship berthed astern of us received a direct hit.

Leaving Singapore Waters

We slipped at about 02.00 on 14th February 1942, and proceeded out past Peak Island. Navigation was very difficult owing to the smoke from the fires, and the wrecks of various ships littered the harbour. We came through safely, and set a south-westerly course to the Durian Straits. The latter had recently been mined by the Dutch, and there was only a very narrow swept channel through it which was not lit at night. On the way, we were signalled by five different ships who asked us to guide them through the minefield, they all followed astern of us but we informed them that they were doing so at their own risk. We completed a successful passage through the minefield.

At dawn on 14th February 1942, we were well past the minefield and those ships that had been following us overtook and passed us, we being the slowest of all doing about 6 knots. We had received verbal instructions from **Commander Alexander** before leaving Singapore to hide out for the first day to evade Japanese aircraft and then carry on non-stop to Batavia (now Jakarta). At about 07.00 we found a suitably small island near False Durian Island where we anchored close inshore and did our best to camouflage the ship with camouflage netting which **Lt. Milne** had very cleverly collected from a burning godown on the wharf just before leaving. There was not quite sufficient to cover the whole ship, but we covered the seaward side and also painted out the white markings on the funnel. The ship's boat was lowered and the majority of the military personnel was put ashore. During the morning a careful AA watch was kept and there were continual alarms but most of the planes were flying very high. A total of 187 enemy planes were sighted between 09.00 and 12.00. Two other small craft were hiding out about 1½ miles away from us and they were identified as the launch "**Fanling**" and the tug "**Elizabeth**", both full of military personnel. At about 11.00 the tug "**Yin Ping**" accompanied by a S.H.B. (Singapore Harbour Boat) *Water Boat* and a *Eureka* joined us. The "**Yin Ping**" signalled saying that she had lost her anchor and cable and asked permission to make fast to our stern. Permission was reluctantly granted, and she made fast with a hawser about ½ cable astern. The *Eureka* made fast alongside "**Yin Ping**" and the *Water Boat* ("**Daisy**") anchored in close proximity. The proceedings then began to look like the final day at the Henley Regatta. Dispersal was the obvious solution to avoid being spotted hence our reluctance to allow "**Yin Ping**" to make fast to us, however, **Captain Atkinson, RN**, was on board "**Yin Ping**" so deference had to be made to a senior officer. **Lt. & Mrs. Wilkinson** were also on board.

Attack by Enemy Bombers

At approximately 13.00 a formation of nine large enemy bombers appeared from the direction of Palembang flying lower than usual and heading straight for us. The alarm was sounded and guns manned. Unfortunately just prior to this the tide had changed and swung the ship round so that her uncamouflaged side was to seaward and facing the approaching bombers. With the hustle and bustle of securing the "**Yin Ping**" there had been no time in which

to change over the netting. The bombers flew right over the top of us and for one moment it looked as if they had not spotted us. However, to our dismay, we saw them turning off their course and come back in a wide circle over the top of us again and losing height. It was obvious what was going to happen so everyone took cover and then the bombs dropped from a height of about 4,000 feet. None of the bombs hit the ship as all the ones which fell were more than 10 yards away. The force of the combined explosions nearly capsized the ship and she was very nearly swamped by the cascade of water which fell from the bomb splashes. Luckily, there were no casualties, and this was due to the fact that the majority of the ship's company and soldiers were ashore. After the shock of the explosions had subsided, a minor panic started amongst those remaining on board, as the ship was listing heavily. She had holes in several places near the waterline. It was useless to try and launch the boats owing to the angle at which the ship was listing so the order was finally given to abandon ship and try to reach the shore by swimming. Our departure was accelerated by the fact that the bombers were circling around for a second attack, and all swam like blazes, and several swimming records must have been broken. No further bombs were dropped although the enemy planes circled over the top of the ship for a second and third time. After the planes had disappeared it was decided to return to the ship and discover whether any of the damage sustained was repairable. The ship's company returned in the one boat that had already been launched, and after inspection it was discovered that although she was leaking badly, it might be possible for the bilge pumps to keep the leak under control long enough for us to reach the main land of Sumatra. After some difficulties, we were able to get the bilge pumps working and, with the help of a bucket party, the level of water remained more or less constant. The real danger was that if the water came up to the level of the storage batteries in the forward hold (which were used in anti-magnetic mine sweeping), chlorine gas which was poisonous would be formed. The water level in the forward hold was then 4 feet, about 6 inches below the storage batteries. It was then decided to weigh anchor and get under way as soon as possible. However, we had hardly started when the engine room reported that the main condenser pipe was broken as a result of the bombing and that it was impossible to continue. Lt. Milne then performed a miraculous amateur engineering feat by repairing the pipe with the help of a piece of wood and an old shirt. We then proceeded on our way with the bilge pumps working and the bucket party being relieved every half hour. By this time the list was only slight.

During the bombing "*Yin Ping*" had slipped her hawser and proceeded to anchor between us and the shore which made us dubious of her signal saying that she had lost both her anchor and the cable. The *Eureka* and the *Water Boat* both ran themselves aground on the island, the former on some rocks. After the bombing "*Yin Ping*" towed the *Water Boat* off the mud, leaving the *Eureka* on the rocks as it was impossible to get her off. "*Yin Ping*" and the *Water Boat* followed on astern of us. For the rest of the day we proceeded along peacefully and were not molested in any way. [To be continued in October].

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

In view of the ongoing Coronavirus in the UK, the following dates are still pending until we know more about the lifting of lockdown and the changes to social distancing. We are not sure whether any of these events can take place, or if they do how they will be arranged. Members will be informed as soon as we have more details about the annual luncheon at the RAF Club. If this can take place, members will be asked if they feel safe to travel & attend.

AUSTRALIA – August 2020. Merdeka Day Commemoration Service in Kings Park WA.

Restrictions from COVID-19 have now been lifted in Perth, WA. Please contact Elizabeth Adamson for details about this service.

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

Please indicate on the enclosed form whether you wish to attend this event if it goes ahead, and return it to Rosemary at the address on Page 31. We have no details, at the moment, about the menu or the cost of the meal, but in view of the extra hygiene measures which will be necessary, the cost is likely to be more than £40 per person. If social distancing measures are still in place in October, our numbers in the Sovereigns' Room will be a maximum of 40.

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

We have not received any details from the Royal British Legion about this ceremony to date. Those members who normally attend will be notified if this ceremony takes place.

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

12 tickets have been ordered and those who have indicated that they wish to march this year will be notified as soon as we hear from the RBL about this year's parade.

MALAYSIA – November 2020. Remembrance Services in Kuala Lumpur and Penang. No information as yet.

CANADA – 11th November 2020. Armistice Day Service.

Sallie Hammond writes: If all goes well and public gatherings are encouraged once more – may I suggest that the MVG wreath is laid at the Veterans' Memorial, Queens Park, Toronto, instead of coming to London, Ontario, as previously mentioned. I will be in touch with you closer to the time regarding the Remembrance Day Service in Queens Park, Toronto. It will be interesting to see whether Wednesday 11th November will be the day – or whether Sunday 8th November will be chosen.
NMA – Thursday December 2020. Anniversary of the sinking of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse. TBA.

THE EASTERN'S PRAYER

Displayed in Judy Balcombe's grandmother's house in Singapore



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

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